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THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 31ST MARCH, 1832.

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| SERMON by the Rev. Dr. WARDLAW, Glasgow. |

ON THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THURSDAY, 22^D MARCH, 1832, BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY HIS MAJESTY TO BE OBSERVED IN SCOTLAND AS A GENERAL FAST,

By the Very Rev. G. H. BAIRD, D.D.,

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"When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."—ISAIAH XLVI. 9.

I BEGIN, my friends, with remarking that by the term, "judgments of God," the Scriptures sometimes denote the decisions, whether favourable or adverse, which God passes upon the conduct of men. But more frequently this phrase is employed to denote the effect of such decisions, when they are unfavourable—to denote those remarkable punishments by which the Almighty chastises the wickedness of guilty individuals, and the crimes of guilty nations. In the course of God's providential procedure, we often see his judgments; we see misfortune and distress following so closely and visibly the conduct of men, that we can have no doubt whatever concerning the connexion that, by his appointment, subsists between them. Thus, when poverty, like an armed man, rusheth on the prodigal; when a failing of eyes, and trembling of joints, and rottenness of bones afflict the sensualist; when a dissolution of all the moral bonds that uphold government sweeps from a once high place among the nations an ungodly, and profligate, and effeminate people, we see in such cases an obvious relation between sin and punishment, between the sin and the judgment of God passed against it. They are connected as cause and effect, by the original constitution which the Almighty has imposed on man, and on the world in which man is placed; and where he acts; and we feel no surprise when we see these accompanying one another—the sin and the punishment.

But, my friends, there are many cases
Vol. I.—No. 1,

where the precise object of the divine visitation is unknown, and invisible to us. In many cases, the Lord holdeth back his face in his dealings with his creatures, and spreadeth a cloud of darkness over it: men behold the effects only of his interposition, without perceiving the particular end for which these visitations were produced. For instance, in the material world, we sometimes witness famine, and the raging tempest consuming all, and blasting the hopes of men; and so it is to this day in our land. At other times, we behold a terrible pestilence thinning, by its ravages, the numbers of the people. And in the establishments of social life, too, do we not often see deep distress brought on the inhabitants of whole kingdoms through political revolutions and war? Now, we know from the Scriptures, and the suggestions of our own hearts, that these also are the scourges of nations, in the hands of the Almighty. We are, at the same time, but seldom able to point out the individuals whose sin these judgments were sent more immediately to punish. The individual sufferers, like the eighteen men upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell, are often not more guilty than other people. Let it not, however, be overlooked, that the promiscuous calamities which happen to them, if they do not come as punishments, come in divine Wisdom, as salutary general warnings, or as improving tests and trials of their faith, or as exercises of their fortitude and patience. In all such cases, it would therefore be rash and unchari-

table to interpret particularly, and with reference to individuals, the views of divine judgment when affecting a multitude. It is enough for us to know that these judgments, whatever be their kind, whatever be their nature, or whatever their degree, are instruments of God's government of his moral and rational offspring, and that the inhabitants of the earth may learn from them lessons of righteousness. This is the view, you will remark, in which the text represents the judgments of God to our consideration; and, therefore, in conformity with the pious purpose for which we are assembled this day, I shall endeavour to suggest, briefly, two of the righteous lessons which the judgments of God ought to teach us.

In the first place, the judgments of God, whatever their form, and whatever their degree may be, when they are contemplated by an enlightened and devout mind, are found powerfully to excite within it sentiments of warm piety and deep devotion toward that God from whom these judgments proceed. My friends, that God continues to govern the world which he has made; and that his rational subjects owe to him reverence and obedience, are truths which scarcely admit of doubt. God has impressed so visibly on all his works the signature of that unceasing care which he exercises for their preservation, that we have only to open our eyes on his works and behold it. When we look up to the heavens which his fingers have framed, when we see the sun, and the moon, and the stars observing order and regularity in all their movements, we are at once convinced of the powerful superintendence and energy of their Creator; and when we turn our view to this earth, we meet every where indications of a similar kind. It is by the energies of his hand that all the things of this world are maintained, each of them in their due season and proportion, and it is upon him they depend for the wonderful maintenance of their condition. But above all, we can trace the watchful providence of God in the history of our race; we can trace the watchful providence of God communicating to man, at his first formation, the instincts and powers required for the new condition he was to fill; we can trace the watchful providence of God mingling men in society, and adjusting their talents to the situation which each of them has been destined to fill in it; and, through a most complicated

series of arrangements, we can see the watchful providence of God rendering men in their respective spheres, the instruments of promoting the destined and ultimate perfection of our race.

Now, to a man capable of reflecting on these marks of divine government, the Almighty surely presents an object most worthy of unbounded veneration—a being whose mercies in all things are conspicuous, and who has an unquestionable title to receive from his rational creatures the worship and homage which he requires. But, alas! my brethren, while things observe their ordinary course, how seldom do we permit our thoughts to rise from them to the power by which they are conducted? Alas! alas! the beauty and benignity which our Father in heaven has spread around us in the world, where he has given us our situation, detain our attention on themselves, without suggesting the source from which they flow. Nay, that very order, that very regularity which is the effect of his present power and care, lulls our minds asleep, and renders us insensible to the workings of his hand. It is, in truth, only when the general order of events seems to be sensibly interrupted; it is only when the elements composing the world and the frame of divine government seem to jostle, as it were, against each other; it is only when the pillars that support the society of men are suddenly shaken or broken down, or when some public or personal misfortune crosses the path of life, that the thoughtless multitude—and, alas! are we not all to be considered too much members of the thoughtless multitude, arise to reflection, and feel the presence of their God.

My friends, there are various principles in our constitution, by which the judgments of Heaven contribute to a salutary effect upon the minds of a thoughtless world. Unexpected revolutions, either in the natural or moral world, naturally arrest our attention. They demonstrate, in the most sensible manner, to our consciences, our own weakness, and the incompetency of our powers, either to produce or control the changing events around us; and to every mind that is not totally enfeebled and darkened, through corruption, such revolutions suggest with irresistible force the notion of a powerful Supreme Ruler; they alarm our fears at his displays, and awaken all those sentiments (this is at least their natural tendency,

or ought to be their constant effect) of humility and penitence, which form the beginning of a pious and devout temper. And I would especially call your attention to this view of the case, that we learn from Scripture that this is not only the tendency of the divine judgments when rightly improved, but often the very purpose for which they were sent by the providence of God. The early record of Moses proclaims repeatedly, that strange punishments came upon the disobedient. And why? That the people may hear, and feel, and do no more their iniquities. The plagues were sent upon Egypt that the Egyptians might know that God is the Lord. When Sennacherib was pursuing his severe conquests, and wickedly railing against the God of Israel, an angel of the Lord slew in one night a hundred and fourscore and five thousand men! And why? It was, that all the kingdoms of the earth might know that he is the Lord God, even he alone! And the Psalmist in express terms asserts the general proposition, that God maketh himself known by the judgments which he executeth, and snareth the wicked in the work of his own hands.

If, then, my beloved Christian friends, the judgments of God be both fitted and designed to awaken us to the ways of his providence, how should we labour to regard and improve them? Never let it be forgotten, that the prevalence of these judgments is a means of moral reformation for which we are accountable. They are chastisements which, after all gentler methods have failed, our gracious Father, desirous of our reformation and eternal safety, employs, and employs reluctantly, as the last efforts to recall us to the paths of obedience. And if we return not, if we still harden our hearts more and more, what must be the consequence? You all know what must be the consequence. This consequence may follow, and follow most certainly under the divine government it will, that our wickedness must be avenged by signal calamity. The denunciations made by the mouth of Isaiah must come: This "people turn not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day; for through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother." (Isaiah ix. 13, 14, 19.)

From these remarks, my friends, it will appear that the divine judgments have as their first and general purpose, whatever their kind and form may be, to rouse the attention of sinners to the proofs of divine government, and to recall them, before it be too late, from their sleep of inconsideration, and from the criminal practices of irreligion and vice. These purposes of the divine judgments, which we have affirmed in so many portions of Scripture, and which so heavily afflict our land, let us carefully improve. Let us remember, that, amid the calamity that is committing its ravages among our brethren, all is the doing of the Lord; and considering that, let us then, with habitual and awful reverence, bow before him, and in submission to his will.

But, my brethren, the judgment which has, by the divine permission, visited our land, and which has this day brought us, professing humiliation, to the house of prayer—a judgment as appalling in its effects as it is novel in its circumstances, not only powerfully impresses the general lesson of righteousness which all the divine judgments are calculated to do, but with a fatal and a loud voice reminds us, in the second place, of this other peculiar lesson, the uncertainty of life, and the necessity and wisdom therefore of instant preparation for a Christian death of peace and hope. For, my friends, what judgment has ever taught so widely and so alarmingly the truth, that we know not what a day or a night may bring forth? What judgment has ever so terrified the land with the similitude of the Psalmist, "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth." Yes, my brethren, how many are the dwellings around us, where the inmates, healthy and light-hearted when the sun arose, have, ere the sun descended, given the dust to dust, and their spirit to God? Oh! how alarming to unprepared and sinful men is a fate like this? No time is there for review—no time for repentance—no time for making assurance of peace with God. Who prays not earnestly at this moment for himself, from a fate like this,—“O God, of thy good mercy save and deliver me.” O my brethren, confine not your feelings to a brief momentary prayer, | Let them have a permanent and practical

influence on your hearts and lives. The disastrous inroads of the pestilential malady into the bosom of our own city have hitherto been, through the divine forbearance in mercy, comparatively limited; but who will say that our dwellings—who will say that our persons are for the future secure? Signal benevolence has been manifested for averting the mischief by the opulence among us. No labour of love has been spared; and as to the professional members of the healing art, they have, by their conduct, most richly deserved the gratitude of their fellow-citizens, and have won for themselves indelible reputation. They have won it by the fearless exposure of their own persons to the perils of infection in the discharge of their hazardous duty, in their unwearied and watchful toils at the beds of the diseased and the dying. Ye opulent—ye professional men, to whom I have now alluded, let not the unfounded and insane prejudices, as I must term them, of some ignorant and misguided individuals, damp your ardour, or relax your efforts, in your godlike work of well-doing. All that are enlightened and generous, approve and applaud; and even the ignorant will eventually feel shame, as they ought, for their uncharitableness and folly, while it is yours to enjoy, above all the praises of men, the gracious approbation of your consciences and your God.

But still, again the startling question recurs, under all that opulence and medical labour and skill have contributed to ward off the evil from our gates, are our houses, I ask again, are we ourselves for the future, with entire certainty, secure from the desolating disease, and that frightful rapidity with which it hurries its victim to the grave? Never let it be forgotten that opulence and medical skill are but secondary means and causes, and that their efficiency depends on the influential co-operation and blessing of our heavenly Father. Let, then, our devout, sincere, and ardent aspirations—let the devout, sincere, and ardent aspirations of every inhabitant of our city ascend to him—let us thrust our tears and supplications before the footstool of his throne, before the great Mediator, that he will be pleased still to be around us, and deliver us from our threatening dangers and troubles.

But, then, my people, let me impress on every conscience and heart, if we hope for success to our supplications, that it is not enough that in a momentary feeling of

devoutness we lift our hearts to the throne of the Most High, but we must carefully add to our supplications the acceptable incense of penitent hearts and holy lives; for thus only, let us be assured, can our hope be on rational and safe grounds. What is the language of Britons here this day? If it has any meaning, it is that you believe in the great truth of the constant superintendence of God over human affairs;—if it has any meaning, it is that he, by the general tenor of his laws, manifests favour to the godly; but that he does, and ever will, by the unchanging principles of his government, reward the evil according to his iniquities. If the language of Britons has any meaning, it is that you are conscious of much evil-doing; that you deplore it in your own personal case, and that you resolve to cease from doing it hereafter; that you resolve to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; which steadfastness and immovableness, and abounding in the work of the Lord, may justify your confessions here, and procure your acceptance in the day of final account.

Now, surely, never was there a louder call on Britons than there is this day, to adopt this language in the sanctuary, and in all their future conduct. Let all ranks among us, therefore, as the best preparation for stopping this calamity—as the best preparation for that death which, if not this calamity, some other cause will speedily bring upon us all; let men all repent and reform; let men of every rank consult this Book of God, which explains so clearly, and which alone can explain with authority, because it bears the stamp of divine religion; let all consult this Book, and learn what the terms are on which God is willing to forgive the sinner—what the terms are on which they can receive the assurance in their minds of their being heirs of that salvation which the Redeemer came to accomplish. They will find, that there is only one way in which the sinner can hope for forgiveness. It was said to a person of high rank, that there is no royal road to any particular science. So in the chair of Truth, the teacher of religion is called on to tell the people, that there is no privileged road to heaven; that there is no peculiar road by which the high may reach it to the exclusion of the poor—no peculiar road by which the poor may reach it to the exclusion of the high:—"Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto

life;" but there is but one gate, and one way, through which every living soul must rise to heaven—if to heaven he rise at all—and that is through faith in Jesus Christ, and through that holiness which follows that faith, if that faith is genuine. Let all ranks, then, from the highest to the lowest, learn this precious truth from the Book of God. Believe in Christ, and believe in him with the heart unto righteousness. This is the effectual way to be taken by every individual who wishes to obtain the diminution of the divine judgment now ravaging our land, by every individual who wishes to obtain for himself a ground of peace in the prospect of that death which its approach may bring to him, but which, at all events, must soon come to him. Let it be the business of all men to consider what faith is, to beseech the grace of God to bestow it, and to enable them to follow after holiness, without which they can never please nor see God.

My brethren, these are the means, the cherishing and acting of faith; these are the means by which you may make yourselves, as I have said, instruments of good to the public, and by which you may make yourselves ready for the hour in which the Son of Man shall come.

Now, surely, any long detail or remark is unnecessary to convince you, that for the hour of the Son of Man coming, the most important duty which a mortal has to discharge, is in the command to make himself ready. O, my brethren, how delightful will it be to you, how delightful will it be to the friends that may surround your dying couch, if you shall be one of those sainted men who, having been tried with tribulation, tried to the end of your earthly career by the world and seduction, shall be ready, at the call of your God, to resign its enjoyments; and, standing on the verge of eternity, shall be solaced with a conscience void of offence, when reflecting on the past, and refreshed with the prospect of an everlasting kingdom in the heavens? The ministers of religion are called to furnish consolation to the dying, and they see them in various conditions of character and feeling. But they will tell you that eye cannot behold a more sublime, or more instructing, or edifying spectacle, than the deathbed of a good man, full of humble confidence in God, rejoicing in the approbation of his own heart, triumphing over the fears of the grave, and singing, when he thinks himself standing on its very verge, "I am now

ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing."

My dear friends, if this dignified termination of our earthly trials be an object we desire to gain; if the state of our souls at death shall decide our eternal fate; if the hour of our departure from time shall be the hour of our passage to happiness or misery everlasting, I put it to your understanding, if you will reflect, how carefully, how intensely, how incessantly, we should prepare for its approach. Because we do not see it, we are apt to flatter ourselves that it is far distant. But need I tell you, my mortal brethren, that you were born to die? If, at this solemn moment, a heavenly messenger should descend from the sky, and announce the time of your departure, as to an ancient was done: thy sickness shall be unto death; this week shall be thy last week on earth; even this night thy soul shall be required of thee, who among you would be ready for this message of terror? Alas! what tears of affliction would run down our cheeks at the remembrance of our sins; what prayers we would give for a short prolongation of our trials; what thoughts would we have of those we left behind; what solicitude would be felt to finish our work of sanctification! But is an angel from heaven necessary to tell us that we are mortal, that our appointed days are few? As for the days that are gone, and the ages that are past, what has become of the multitude that filled them? Let us look around in quest of those in our own time; let us look around us in quest of those whom but a few moments we saw with delight on the stage of life, the companions of our youth, the friends of our bosom, the children perhaps whom nature designed to be props of our declining years, whither have they gone? A voice from their grave pierces the heart of the thinking soul, and calls on us all to be ready to follow them. Listen, then, to this warning voice. It accords with the dictates of universal experience; every change in our condition reminds us of its truth; infirmities as they draw upon us, tell that the hour of our departure cometh. In this, the day of a merciful visitation,

in this our present escape from the dreadful malady, let us attend to the things that belong to our peace; let us cherish the dispositions, and hopes, and habits, the remembrance of which may cheer our departed spirits; let us learn lessons of righteousness from the judgments of God; let us lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, and then when our Lord comes, whether he come in the first watch or in the second, whether this day or to-morrow, whether in the hour of our worship or in the hour of business, whether when we are asleep or awake, he will find us

ready. No painful retrospect will disquiet our consciences, no anxious forebodings terrify our souls. If we lead the life of the righteous, we shall die their death; we shall depart like them, and be with them, and our work shall follow us unto the habitation of our heavenly Father.

I only add, and let all join in the prayer: Do thou, O God, to whom belong the issues of life, do thou stand by us in our dying moments, support our feeble limbs in their passage through the dark valley, and receive them into their everlasting rest, for Christ's sake. Amen.

ON THE AGENCY OF GOD IN HUMAN CALAMITIES;

A SERMON PREACHED IN GEORGE-STREET CHAPEL, GLASGOW, ON THURSDAY,
22d MARCH, 1832, BEING THE DAY OF THE NATIONAL FAST.

By the Rev. RALPH WARDLAW, D.D.

“*Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?*”—Amos iii. 6.

I NEED hardly say, that it is not *moral* evil that is here meant. It is not sin, but suffering. It is not the commission of iniquity, but the pressure of distress. From Micah vi. 9, “The Lord’s voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.” I not long ago called your attention to the lights in which that Prophet taught Israel, and teaches us, to regard temporal calamities: namely, as the *warning voice* of God, as a *manifestation of the name* or character of God, and as a *corrective expression of the displeasure* of God; along with the grounds on which it is our *wisdom* and our *duty* so to regard them. The words now read from Amos are part of a similar appeal. By him, as well as by Micah, the Lord maintains his controversy with Israel. By which of the prophets, indeed, did he not maintain it? At what period of their history did they not give occasion, by their conduct, for expostulation, reproof, and warning? (Jer. xxv. 4—7.)

In the passage of which our text is a part, Jehovah pleads on the ground of his peculiar dealings with Israel, by which he had so highly distinguished them from other nations in honour, and in privilege, and in substantial blessing: verses 1, 2, “Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought

up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” This is the language of unimpeachable equity, of ill-requited kindness, and of injured honour. On every ground, the threatened punishment was merited, and in mercy alone had the infliction of it been suspended. He points out the impossibility of his continuing with them, ascribing it to their alienation of heart from him, by which they forced him away from them: verse 3, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” He then, by a variety of figurative allusions, expresses the reason they had for alarm, and the natural connexion between their character and his procedure towards them: this is the general import of the figures, of which “we cannot now speak particularly.” (Verses 4—6.)

“Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?” You can imagine—no, you hardly can, what the effect would be, if, in a city like our own, there were suddenly heard “the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war,” the announcement of an approaching enemy. What throbbing of heart! what violent excitement! what silent dread! what noisy terror! what bustle and confusion! what looking one upon another! what anxious questioning! what running together, for information, for the

mutual expression of hopes and fears, of wishes and alarms, of animation and discouragement, of sources of danger and means of safety! Now, when the voice of the Lord cried unto the city, the cause for alarm was as real, and far greater, than at the sounding of the trumpet of battle. This is the sentiment expressed in verses 7, 8. "The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophecy?" A truly benevolent spirit feels it a most painful restraint, to keep back either the warning of evil, or the tidings of good. This was one at least of the impelling motives in the bosom of the Apostles, when they said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard;" and in the bosom of Jeremiah, when, having been subjected to the persecuting violence of his enemies, and having found all his warnings so unavailing, he formed the resolution of shunning farther suffering by silence: "I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in his name: but his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." (Jer. xx. 8, 9.)

There is a natural atheism in the human heart, a constantly prevailing tendency to forget God. This tendency (alas! for our nature!) is more powerful amidst the abundance of the enjoyments of life, than under the pressure of its calamities. So true is this, that adversity has many a time been made use of as a means for counterworking the pernicious influence of prosperity, the former bringing back the heart which the latter had led astray. How rare is the case of a sinner brought to repentance and serious religion by prosperity and success in life! But the instances have not been few, of persons "chosen in the furnace of affliction," subdued and reclaimed by adversity. We dare not say, however, that this is the natural effect of divine judgments operating on human corruption. They tend rather to fret, and provoke, and alienate. And there is, moreover, a sad propensity to overlook the hand of God in them altogether; so that men stand always in need of having it pointed out to them, and pressed upon their observation. It is to the solemn truth of the divine appointment of calamities, that the attention is called, and called impressively, by the question in the text: "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

We shall consider the Lord's agency in

the infliction of evil, in contradistinction to three things—to CHANCE, to IDOLS, and to SECOND CAUSES.

This is a supplementary topic to those discussed on the former text, from the prophecies of Micah; and I wish to be understood, although without any very pointed mention of them, as having reference to the distresses of our own times, and country, and city.

I. We distinguish the agency of Jehovah from CHANCE. *Chance* is a word very common in the mouths of many; but it is a word, of the meaning of which very few of those who use it have ever set themselves to form any definite notion. The truth is, chance is nothing. It is a mere term of human ignorance. When we say that an event has happened by chance, we seldom think at all *what* we mean. If we intend to say that it has had no cause, that is atheism. It is the exclusion of all superintending agency. But the only rational meaning of the word (if a rational meaning it can be said to have) is, that we are in ignorance of the cause or causes of the event. The poet speaks truly, when he defines chance in these terms:

"All chance—direction, which we cannot see."

There is an atheism, directly and properly so called, which denies the existence of a God altogether. There is an atheism which admits existence, but excludes all superintendence of human or created beings, and of their respective concerns. Such, of old, was the atheism of Epicurus and his followers; which, however, had so far the merit of consistency, that it associated the denial of *Providence* with the denial of proper *creation*. And similar, though diversified in some particulars, have been the godless system of some moderns. But certainly we might as well have no God, as a God that takes no interest in his creatures, and exercises no superintendence over them. We might as well have no God as no Providence.

The sentiment of the text is the exact reverse of this: that there is a God, and that he directs and governs all things. The sentiment is not to be confined to our own world. It extends to all worlds. In all parts of the unmeasured creation, He is "ever present, ever felt!" This is the uniform affirmation, and the pervading principle of the Bible. It runs through all its contents, with an application such as the most heedless reader can hardly overlook. Its maxim is, "*All things are*

of God." At every turn of its historical details we meet his eye, we discern his hand. No such thing as chance is admitted by its writers, in even the smallest matters. It is much more consistent with itself than the systems of some philosophical speculators, who would grant a providence in great, but question it in little things; forgetting, first, that the true majesty of God consists in the unembarrassed universality of his superintendence, in its embracing, without confusion, and without an effort of thought, all the endless complication of events, and all the immense variety of being; and forgetting, secondly, how intimately and inseparably great events and small are involved and linked together, so that the continuity of the chain depends as much upon the least of the links as upon the greatest, the working and efficiency of the complicated machinery, and the evolution of the designed results, upon the minutest wheels as upon the largest, and most prominent and imposing. The mechanist, when he looks at the great wheels, is well aware, although his eye does not penetrate to them, any more than that of the novice, on what little, secret, and seemingly trivial movements the effective revolutions of these depend; so that, were a single pin taken out, or the smallest wheel in the unseen interior shifted or broken, all might be impeded or brought to a stand. Thus it is in the intricate movements of Divine Providence; as we might show you by ten thousand striking exemplifications, of which not a few, and the most satisfactory of all, occur in the inspired history.

In what at once and delightful terms is the doctrine of a universal and particular providence expressed by Him who "spake as never man spake!" "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Matt. x. 29—31.) "There is hardly any thing we can imagine less in apparent magnitude, in itself or in its consequences, than the death of a sparrow: and, in the words I have just quoted, the inference is drawn from the less to the greater, in a form, and with an emphasis, most encouraging and cheering to all the intelligent creatures of God, and especially to all his redeemed children. On the principle of inferential reasoning, we

may say, in terms of the text, If "without our heavenly Father a sparrow falleth not to the ground," how then "shall there be evil in a city," evil which affects the condition, whether temporal or spiritual, of intelligent and immortal beings, of beings who are susceptible, not merely of physical suffering, but of all the pains that arise from the tender sensibilities of social life, the sweet and powerful "charities of father, son, and brother," from which it is, in times of public calamity, that the most exquisite distresses arise?

What I wish, then, first of all, to impress on the minds of my hearers, and on my own, is, that in the heavy gloom that hangs over our city, in the variety and accumulation of personal and domestic, bodily and mental suffering that is endured, whether occasioned by the state of trade or the state of health, it is "no chance that has come upon us." It is the hand of the all-seeing and all-disposing Ruler of the Universe that is laid upon us, and laid upon us in a merited and righteous judgment.

II. We consider the Prophet as distinguishing the agency of Jehovah from that of IDOLS.

I have said, that there is a natural atheism in the human heart. This is a position which some may be inclined to dispute, as not only painfully degrading to our nature, but contrary to fact. Where, it will be asked, do we find men without some form or other of religion? And if religion, in some form or other, is every where to be found, it must certainly be natural to man. Nor am I disposed, taking the term in a vague amplitude of acceptance, to dispute the truth of this; though it may be remarked in general, that it is not easy to separate, in such matters, between what may be the suggestions of nature, and what the corrupted remnants of an early tradition. Suppose it true. The religion to which men are thus naturally disposed, we dare not, without impiety, admit to be worthy of the name: it is only one of the many forms of *irreligion*. The truth seems to be, that there is a tendency to two opposite extremes, both equally at a distance from truth and rectitude, the extremes of *atheism* and *superstition*. Superstition is the offspring of guilty fears; and the general character of the gods of the Heathen, in many cases indicated by their very forms, accords with the nature of their origin. Superstition ascribes every thing to some dreaded supernatural agent or other, every calami-

uous or unpropitious incident to some malignant power of evil. But polytheistic superstition, though admitting what it calls by the name of deity, "gods many, and lords many," is represented in the Scriptures as only one of the forms of *atheism*. Of the religion to which human nature has all along shown its proneness, there was an abundant profusion amongst those who "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, and who worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator:" and yet of them it is said, "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge." But if they did not retain God in their knowledge, they were in reality atheists. That surely is not religion, of whose feelings and acts of homage the objects are either nonentities, or possess a being whose qualities are as opposite to those of Deity as darkness is to light:—and *atheists* their worshippers are accordingly denominated: "Not knowing God, they did service to them which by nature are no gods," (Gal. iv. 8):—they were "without God" (atheists) "in the world," (Eph. ii. 12.)

Again: while the religion to which human nature has ever been prone is in truth irreligion and atheism, there has discovered itself, wherever the knowledge of the true God has been imparted, a mournfully consistent propensity to forget Him, to overlook his superintendence, to leave him out of our thoughts. Thus it was with the Jews. They required to be incessantly reminded of God. They were ever perversely and infatigably prone to the superstitious extreme, to let slip the remembrance of their own Jehovah, and to substitute for Him the gods of the surrounding heathen, imputing events to their agency rather than to that of the God of Israel. The text was meant, like many others, to remind them that Jehovah reigned; that Jehovah was the author alike of their calamities and their blessings; that the latter were his unmerited favours, the former his deserved corrections; that to HIM they were to cultivate gratitude; that to HIM they were to exercise submission: that it was not Baal; it was not Moloch; it was not Melcom, or Ashtaroth, or Dagon, or the Queen of Heaven, or any other of those senseless idols, which they had multiplied to themselves "according to the number of their cities," that brought upon those cities, at any time, their respective

or their common calamities; that it was Jehovah, the God of Israel, the only God.

On the ground of their utter impotence, their incapacity to do good or to do evil to their votaries, to save or to destroy, the heathen deities are not unfrequently, in terms of sarcastic irony and of a kind of sublime derision, challenged by the prophets, in the name of Jehovah, to comparison and competition. (Isa. xli. 21—24. Jer. x. 3—16.)

But we, my hearers, may be ready to say, *we* are very little in danger from *this* source of error—the error of acknowledging other gods—the fantastic or detestable absurdities of heathen mythology. This is not, you think, (and you think truly,) one of *your* temptations. And I will not at present urge upon you the various possibilities of idolatry, without your falling down to stocks and stones, or prostrating yourselves to the lights of heaven. Neither will I press upon you how the *world*, in all its forms of ambition, and avarice, and pleasure, may take away your hearts from God, and become the idol of your unfeigned and undivided devotion. I will not demand your attention to the proposition, true as it is, that whatever occupies that place in your affections and desires, which God himself ought legitimately to hold, is your idol; although the Scripture unequivocally justifies and sanctions the proposition, by pronouncing *covetousness* idolatry, and the *covetous man* an idolater, and affirming, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." But there is one species of idolatry, or of atheism, more immediately connected with our present subject, which comes under our third head, and to which, for a few moments, I must solicit your attention.

III. Divine agency may be regarded in contradistinction to an exclusive attention to SECOND CAUSES.

How frequently is something called NATURE, (a name which, though sometimes used for the God of nature, expresses, not seldom, a kind of mystical personification of some unknown existence, the employment of the term hardly, if at all, suggesting any thought of God,) how frequently is something called Nature, in language and in thought, in a manner deified! And not less frequently, second or subordinate causes are so contemplated and insisted on, as to indicate an exclusion from the mind of the great originating Cause of all being, and the supreme uncontrolled Director of all events! In account-

ing for our calamities (to which it is especially that the text directs our attention) we are in imminent danger of this kind of atheism, this overlooking of the Supreme amongst the subordinate, this stopping short before we have gone high enough. Let us be on our guard against it; and bear habitually and reverentially in mind, that all second causes are under the unceasing and sovereign control of the First; that no one of them, in any part of his universal dominions, can operate to the production of any effect, but under his own eye, and according to his superintending guidance.

Thus it is with the elements of nature. There are laws, it is granted, by which all the movements, and productions, and changes, of the physical or natural world are effected. But we are in danger of forgetting that they are *His* laws; that it was *He* who originally ordained them; that they are not in themselves powers, but the mere rules according to which *His* power operates; that the rules for the direction of his power resolve themselves simply into his infinite wisdom; that by *Him* every thing was arranged, at the beginning, and that in conformity to the laws of his wisdom, *He* has been, with a power "ever present, ever felt," superintending and directing all things since; the laws themselves subject, of course, to the sovereign will of their all-wise framer, and, both by their regular operation, and by their occasional almighty suspension, subserving the great purposes of his government.

We have dry or wet, hot or cold, healthy or sickly seasons. The astronomer, or the meteorologist discovers, or fancies he has discovered, the causes in nature for the one or for the other: but if, in his researches, and in the statement of their results, he stops short of God, as in every instance the director of those causes, the sovereign and wise ordainer of the fact, he is in the spirit of atheism. The Prophet Jeremiah finely teaches us, on such occasions, not only the exclusion from agency of the gods of the heathen, but also of the powers of nature, these being incapable of any thing voluntary, and the mere instruments of the will of another, and leads our minds directly to the Supreme Maker and Governor of all things: Jer. xvi. 22. "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? Art not thou *He*, O Lord our God? therefore we will wait

upon thee; for thou hast made all these things."

Such, too, is the lesson of rational devotion taught us by the Scriptures, as to famines and pestilences, earthquakes and volcanoes, thunders and lightnings, tempests by land and sea, with every other power or element by which destruction is occasionally wrought. All are comprehended in the question of the text, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" "Fire, hail, snow, vapour, and stormy wind, fulfil his word." (Psalm cxlviii. 8.) "He maketh winds his messengers, and flames of fire his ministers." (Psalm civ. 4.) Air, earth, and sea, with all that they contain, are thus subject to his will. We have not done enough, when we have, however satisfactorily, accounted for disease from the state of the atmosphere, for the desolations of the storm from the theory of the winds, for deficient crops from blight, and grub, and mildew. We must go higher. We must rise to *Him* by whom all these, with every other power of mischief, are commissioned to work their respective effects. It is atheism to forget his supremacy, to overlook the agent in the instrument:

"What is his creation less
Than a capacious reservoir of means,
Formed for his use, and ready at his will?"

Let us beware, then, of losing sight of the designing power, amidst the laws which guide its operations, and the means by which it effects its purposes. Let us never let slip from our minds the Bible maxim, "All things are of God:"

"This truth, Philosophy, though eagle-eyed
In nature's tendencies, oft overlooks;
And, having found his instrument, forgets,
Or disregards, or, more presumptuously still,
Denies the Power that wields it."

The same great general truth applies to men, and to the events of history, in which men are the agents. "Men are in God's hand." It is one of the "deep things of God," one of the inscrutable mysteries of his administration, how he controls and overrules human passions, and whatever exerts an influence on human volitions, amid all the unnumbered diversities of human character, and the intricate complication of human relationships and intercourse, without interfering with the freedom of human agency, and the grounds of human responsibility. Well may we exclaim, in contemplating this certain and necessary, but awfully perplexing truth,

"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it!"

I have said, it is not moral evil that is meant in the text. Of *this*, God is in no sense the author, or cause. He may, however, and we know he does, allow the wicked passions of men, with the wicked actions thence resulting, to be instruments of his judicial inflictions, and of the accomplishment of his purposes towards individuals, and families, and communities. The passions rage; but they are not his. They are neither produced by him, nor have they his approbation or sanction. Though they are amongst the means which he overrules for his own ends, the guilty agents "mean not so, neither do their hearts think so:" nothing is farther from their intentions than contributing to effect divine purposes, or to promote the divine glory. "Therefore their sin remaineth."

Many Scripture instances might be adduced, in confirmation of the truth of these remarks. The case of the king of Assyria, so strikingly depicted by the Prophet, does not stand alone. It involves a principle applicable to every enemy whom Jehovah, in the course of the history of Israel, employed as the scourge of his disobedient people. We may look at this case as a specimen of many. (Isaiah x. 5—16.) This, I repeat, is a case illustrative of a principle. The principle is one which pervades the whole of the Bible history; and we want only an inspired commentary on the divine administration in the history of all the nations of the world, in every age, to show us the same principle in universal operation.

Let us beware, then, my brethren. I have so repeatedly called your attention to the present peculiar circumstances of our country and our city, that I feel it unnecessary to particularize and expatiate upon them now. I wish now to impress the general principle of the text, leaving the application of it to yourselves. I am far from censuring the investigation of the secondary causes of any description of public distresses. Such investigation is more than justifiable: it is an indispensable step towards either their present removal, or, if this should be beyond our power, towards the prevention, as far as human means can operate, of their recurrence in time to come. But we must take care that, on no occasion, the Supreme Ruler be left out: we must beware of the atheistical propensities of our minds: we

must beware of resting in what is subordinate, and forgetting what is supreme.

Let it further, my brethren, be borne in mind, that the existing evils, though inflicted by a power which we cannot resist, are not inflicted in *caprice*. It is painful to hear the inconsiderate manner in which many speak of the divine *sovereignty*. They appear to have a notion of it, as if it were little else than caprice; that is, a strange unaccountable procedure, for which no reason can be assigned. But though there may be parts of the divine conduct for which we can assign no reason, it does not follow that no reason can be assigned. God himself, we may be assured, could assign the very best reasons for every thing he does. And here lies the exercise of his sovereignty. It consists in his keeping these reasons to himself. But while he may retain in his own mind the special causes of particular visitations, he has not left us in ignorance of the great general cause of all suffering. This he *has* told us.—It is sin. Natural evil is the offspring of moral evil, and is, throughout, the indication of divine displeasure. It is not on his creatures, as creatures, that any part of it is inflicted. It is as *sinners* that they are sufferers; nor was there, in our world, or, we may be assured, in the universe of God, any suffering till there was sin. There can be no such thing as the sovereign infliction of evil. Such infliction has to do, not with sovereignty, but with equity. It is all judicial, all merited. All good is from God; all evil from the sinner himself. All evil is deserved; all good undeserved and gratuitous. All evil is of the nature of righteous punitive retribution; all good the bestowment of free, untrammelled, rich, and sovereign benevolence.

But let me not be understood as meaning, that there is no benevolence in the infliction of suffering. There may be much. The evils are inflicted in righteousness; but they may have a gracious purpose: they may be dictated by mercy, and calculated to answer its ends. They are the declarations of justice; but they carry in them the admonitions of kindness. Would that men could be persuaded to regard them in both lights. But, alas! while men are quite sufficiently, and more than sufficiently sensitive, as to their temporal sufferings, how awfully regardless are they of the moral and spiritual lessons which these sufferings are fitted and designed to teach! Their anxiety is merely

to be free of them : and with this they are satisfied, even although no profit whatever of the kind referred to, is left behind. Let them but have health and prosperity ; and they care not for aught beside. The Most High may see to his own glory, and canting methodists and hypocrites may whine about the salvation of their souls : for *their* parts, they mind the present, and leave futurity to provide for itself—all in good time. In this way they are by their calamities *double losers*. They lose the temporal good ; and they lose what, were they to obtain it, would be infinitely more than a compensation, the spiritual benefit. They suffer in body or in estate ; but their souls are not profited, nor their prospects for eternity improved. Nay, even this is not all. For if they are not softened by affliction, they will be hardened by it : it will add to the moral and spiritual callousness of their hearts ; and their disregard of God's warnings, as well as their ungrateful requital of his goodness, will aggravate their guilt and accumulate their punishment. If ungodly men are neither softened by the sun of prosperity nor by the furnace of trial, they are, both in the season of joy and of sorrow, "treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

Surely, my friends, if, when "evil is in the city," it is "the Lord that hath done it," our *first* duty is that expressed by the Psalmist, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it:" and our *second* is conveyed in the admonition of Solomon, "In the day of adversity, consider." This is the divine injunction. Consider, then, *who sends it*: consider, *on what account* it is sent; consider, *for what end*. And O! let consideration (for it is unavailing otherwise) have an immediate and a practical result. The evil

which God sends contains a merciful admonition to accept the good which God offers. "Turn to Him that smiteth you." "Humble yourselves under his mighty hand." Accept his grace and his offered benefits. Thus will evil be converted into good, calamity into blessing, darkness into light. There will then be realized in your happy experience, what is not, as the Apostle James says, to be found in nature, "the same fountain sending forth both sweet water and bitter." In the language, then, of the same Apostle, "Submit yourselves unto God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up." Think of the consequence arising, in God's judicial vengeance, when a temper of mind is indulged, the opposite of that to which He, by his providence, calls. "And in that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts." (Isaiah xxii. 12—14.) O seek the favour of God; seek it now: seek it in earnest: seek it in the only way in which sinners can find it—in the name and for the sake of his Son. This is the chief good; it is life, and better than life, the sum of happiness, for time and for eternity.

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**THE CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL, AND THE CHARACTER AND
BLESSEDNESS OF BELIEVERS;**

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. MARY'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON THE AFTERNOON
OF SABBATH, 1st APRIL, 1882.

By the Rev. HENRY GREY, A.M.

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."—JAMES I. 25.

We find that James, the apostle of the circumcision, wrote this epistle for the instruction of the converted Hebrews who were living without the bounds of Palestine. His object was to comfort and animate the tempted and persecuted believer, and to admonish and reprove the inconsistent and formal professor. Errors of the most fatal kind appear to have early found a place in the Church of Christ. So speedily had a form of godliness, without the power thereof, prevailed, that even in the Apostles' time a formal external profession was by many accounted sufficient. Some there were who, under pretence of exalting faith, depreciated the value of good works, or denied the necessity of performing them; while others again, with Jewish ignorance or prejudice, priding themselves on their knowledge of the law or of the gospel, and on their regular attendance in the synagogue or in the church, were at no pains to illustrate and evince their faith by a consistent and becoming walk and conversation. Against such errors, the Apostle lifts up his voice as a trumpet. He inveighs against them with the greatest severity; he bears testimony against them with the utmost energy; he declares that that faith which is unaccompanied by works is dead, and that he who is a hearer only, and not a doer of the word, but deceives his own soul. In the verses preceding our text, he says, "If any be

VOL. I.—NO. 2.

a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." The views obtained by such a person are altogether superficial and transient, not penetrating his real character: they are soon intercepted, and the mind turns away to other objects. In short, they are soon forgotten, leaving no salutary impressions or real benefit behind. The Apostle proceeds to describe and to contrast with the formalist the character of the true Christian. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

In speaking from these words, we would remark,

I. The description here given us of the gospel;

II. The description of the true believer and,

III. The blessedness possessed by this character.

In the first place, we have here an interesting description of the gospel. The inspired writers of the New Testament make use of a variety of expressions to declare the excellence and importance of the gospel of Christ. Thus, the Apostle Paul, in addressing Timothy, calls it "the glorious gospel of the blessed God;" and

describes it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation. Elsewhere it is called the word of truth—the word of grace—the gospel of our salvation. In the passage before us, it is denominated a law; and the same appellation is given to it in other places. Thus, Romans iii. 27, it is called the law of faith—“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.” So, in the same Epistle, (viii. 2,) it is called “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

You may naturally ask why the gospel is called a law? I answer, Because of its authority. It speaks with the authority of God, and requires submission from men. “God hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son;” and if the word spoken by angels was perfect with authority, how much more that spoken by the Son of God? The gospel was begun to be spoken by our Lord, and by him was committed to his Apostles, whom he commanded to go to all the world, and to preach it to every creature, God himself bearing witness with signs, and wonders, and mighty miracles. The gospel is accompanied with the fullest evidence of its character as a revelation from God. Its doctrines are the dictates of unerring wisdom—the declarations of him who cannot lie—the testimony of the true and faithful witness. Its precepts are the commands of the King of heaven, and are enforced by all the authority of him who died for us, that those who live should no more live to themselves, but to him who gave himself for them. The testimony of the gospel is, that God gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins; and its high commandment is, that we believe in the name of the Son of God. And, therefore, my brethren, the neglect of the gospel is as unequivocal an act of disobedience as the violation of any precept. We all admit that the adulterer, the thief, or the murderer, is a transgressor of the law of God; but he is really not more certainly such, than he is who neglects the gospel, and refuses to embrace the Saviour. Nay, the neglect and rejection of the gospel is, in some views, a greater sin than the transgression of the law, because it is a greater proof of determined enmity; for it is not only to offend God, but to refuse reconciliation. If our offended Sovereign offers reconciliation,

shall we reject the offer? If he gave his only Son to die for us, shall we disregard the gift? What unspeakable perverseness is there in rejecting the proposals—the demands of love!

Again, the gospel is called a law, because of its sanctions. The very idea of a law implies that it is supported by sanctions; that it promises protection or reward to the obedient, and threatens punishment to those who transgress it. And how impressive the sanctions that accompany the gospel! He who believes in the blessed Saviour it reveals, shall never come into condemnation: he has passed from death unto life; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Once more, the gospel is called a law, because of its efficacy. A wise sovereign will not enact a law which he fears will be altogether ineffectual; he will provide for the efficacy of the laws he prescribes. Now, the gospel owes all its efficacy to the almighty power of God. God is engaged to secure the great end for which it is given—salvation through faith in the Lamb of God. The regular and irresistible order of nature is spoken of under the appellation of a law. We speak of the law of gravitation, the law that regulates the motions of the heavenly bodies, and the succession of the seasons. Now the gospel exerts an equally certain efficacy, my friends. It is true, God is not limited to a particular mode or time of operation; nevertheless, he gives as certain an efficacy to his word as to his works. The gospel accomplishes the end for which God has designed it: he renders it effectual; and where he begins the work he carries it on. He secures the destruction of the reign of sin, and the establishment of that of righteousness.

But further, the Bible calls the gospel the “law of liberty.” It may be so called in opposition to the ceremonial law, which was a yoke of bondage; and also in opposition to the moral law, which, to the unconverted, is a law of bondage; for the moral law prescribes duties which the unconverted sinner hates; it imposes restraints that he regrets and abhors; it denounces the wrath of God against his transgressions; it seals the impenitent to condemnation. But the gospel imparts a blessed liberty to all who embrace it. It

delivers them from the guilt of sin and all its dreadful consequences; it declares that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself; that God is in Christ not imputing their trespasses unto them; that all who believe are justified in all things; and, accordingly, he who believes in the Saviour is delivered from the guilt and condemnation of sin. How endearing, then, the views which the believer now obtains of God! and how precious the communications of heavenly grace! He no longer hates God as an enemy, or dreads him as a judge; but loves him as his gracious reconciled Father, and rejoices in his presence, in his favour, and in his government. The gospel encourages the Christian, and gives him authority to go to God; and he goes with boldness, therefore, to the throne of grace. It affords consolation in every sorrow, and relief under every distress. It sheds abroad in the heart a sense of the love of God, and it awakens the glorious hope of a blessed immortality!

Further, the gospel frees believers from the power of sin. It fills the soul with abhorrence of sin, and it strengthens it to break the bonds in which it had been held. It inspires the love of God, and love makes obedience easy and delightful. He who knows the gospel no longer complains that the law is too strict in its demands, or too severe in its penalties. He reckons it as holy, just, and good; and while he knows that his sins are forgiven, he delights in the law that condemns them. He yields it his willing and affectionate submission: he delights in it in the inner man—in the inmost feelings and principles of his soul: he runs in the way of God's commandments: he walks at liberty. The liberty which the gospel communicates can, indeed, be understood aright only by those who have felt the thralldom of sin; it can only work out joy to the soul that has understood the pardon of guilt. Oh, how invaluable the atoning blood of Jesus! how precious his promise, and his grace!

My brethren, it is a "perfect law of liberty." It is perfect in itself; nothing can be added to it—nothing taken from it. Devised it was by Unerring Wisdom, and carried into effect by Almighty Power, and the liberty to which it introduces the believer is perfect. Even in the present life, our justification is perfect; for there

is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus: and sanctification, though not indeed yet perfect, is nevertheless secure, "My grace is sufficient for you." Thus excellent is the gospel.

II. We proceed to notice, in the second place, the description of the believer. He looks into the perfect law of liberty, he continues therein, being not forgetful what manner of man he was. He looks into the perfect law of liberty. The word here used, is the same that you find in the gospel according to St. John, the 20th chapter, at the 5th verse, where we are told of John that he, "stooping down and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying." The same word is also used in the first Epistle of Peter, the 1st chapter, at the 12th verse, "which things the angels desire to look into." The expression suggests the idea of a man looking earnestly into another; and this is the figure, you may remember, employed in the preceding verses. The gospel is a mirror which exhibits the most glorious objects in the clearest and purest light. How noble and glorious the views which it presents of the living God, his wisdom, and holiness, and mercy, and faithfulness! how well fitted to awaken the deepest reverence and the warmest gratitude! How full, and just, and distinct, the views given us of the human character! How are the secrets of the heart unfolded, the moral character of man, all those circumstances that enter into the real estimate of his character! There is no man who may not find his own character portrayed in the word of God. And how interesting and encouraging the discoveries made of the way of life and salvation! how interesting and encouraging the views given of the person, and work, and grace of the Saviour! Now, my brethren, the true believer looks into this mirror with earnest attention, with diligence, with a desire to know and ascertain the truth. He contemplates the great and blessed objects there set before him, the glorious, the great, the awful discoveries. He inquires into the truth; he examines; he compares spiritual things with spiritual. It is not idle curiosity that actuates him, but a sincere desire to know the will of God. He fixes his mind steadily and carefully on the discoveries of himself, and of the way of life, given him in the gospel of God.

Moreover, he *continues* looking into this law. The study of the Word is a frequent and every day occupation with him; for he knows, that this is the fountain of life, or at least, a channel through which the waters of life are imparted. Every believer, I presume, in the general habits of his life, consults the Word of God affectionately and candidly every day, for he delights in that word; it is the source of his purest consolations; it ministers comfort in every sorrow; it ministers hope in all circumstances of difficulty and affliction. He gathers daily this heavenly manna, and converts it into sustenance for his soul. He is aware, that whatever he may know, much remains unknown. He regards the Scriptures as an inexhaustible mine, full of all precious riches, which yields nothing to the superficial observer, but every thing to the eye of deep research; and accordingly, he grows in the knowledge of it; he perceives more and more the excellence of its truths; he feels more and more how suitable they are for him, how they are adapted to his own state, how well fitted they are to arouse, and animate, and comfort him. He applies them more and more affectionately to his own heart, for he obtains increased and enlarged consolation from them. The exercise of faith in the Word of God is his daily work; he finds it work, even for life, every day, and during the whole period of his pilgrimage on earth, he feeds on this manna.

Again, he is not a forgetful hearer. Many persons complain of the weakness of their memory; and, undoubtedly, the faculty of recollection is possessed in very different degrees by different individuals. But, although the sincere hearer may not be able to recollect much with accuracy, of what he hears, yet he cannot forget the impressive truths of the gospel. The truths of the gospel are of such a nature that, if but understood and believed, they cannot be forgotten. If a man be warned that his house is on fire, does he forget the information, supposing him to be really persuaded of its truth? Does he forget, think you, till he has examined his premises, or provided for his escape? Or, if a man feel the pain of a deep wound, occasioning much distress, and at the same time be acquainted with the salve that will heal it, will he forget, think you, to apply that salve? If the gospel be un-

derstood, it necessarily remains in the mind and the heart; the truth reigns and lives in the individual who believes it, however feeble his natural powers, however defective his memory; he forgets not that he is a poor weak guilty sinner, and that Jesus is an all-gracious Almighty Saviour.

Once more: He is "a doer of the work." The expression may perhaps be considered as referring to the great distinguishing work of the Christian in the act of faith. "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." Faith is a principle that must be kept in constant exercise, and it is this that gives vigour to every other principle. But, further, the Apostle refers to the work of holiness. There is a work assigned to every believer. This work, in many respects, is the same, in reference to all. All believers are called to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. They are called to glorify their Heavenly Father, and to do good to those around them. Each, also, has his own appropriate work. Our duties are determined by the circumstances in which we are placed, by the capacities with which we are endowed, by the opportunities of usefulness which we enjoy. Each individual has something peculiar to himself in the sacred work in which he is called to engage. Well then, the believer is anxious to know, and to do the work specially appointed him. He consults the word of God, and goes to his Heavenly Father, saying, "Father, what wilt thou have me to do?" He addresses himself to that work; and though difficulties may stand in the way, and interruptions may be given him, he perseveres, and goes from strength to strength; as a faithful labourer, he faints not under the heat and burden of the day, but strengthened by an Almighty arm, still perseveres, and at length gains his high reward.

III. We remark in the third place, the blessedness possessed by this character. "This man shall be blessed in his deed." No blessing belongs to those who embrace not the gospel; no blessing belongs to him who hears, but does not do. Whatever be his knowledge, whatever his profession, whatever his apparent zeal, if he be not a faithful affectionate servant of God during his work, the gospel cau-

bring him no mercy; the gospel can convey nothing to the unfaithful and insincere, but reproach and condemnation. It warns them of their guilt; it disturbs their pleasures; it interrupts them in their favourite pursuits; it announces to them the wrath of God and the sentence of condemnation. Religion serves only to disturb and to annoy them; religion serves only to rebuke and condemn those who refuse to yield to its holy energy. But the humble, the obedient servant of the gospel, however imperfect his attainments, is blessed in his faith. There is a present reward enjoyed by him; there is a blessing in doing the will of God. The reward is not delayed to a future life. It is communicated, at least, in the earnest and foretaste of it, in the present life.

Many are the blessings that accompany true religion. There is a peace that passeth understanding; there is a joy unspeakable and full of glory. My brethren, to be able to subdue our irregular appetites, to restrain our inordinate affections, to be enabled to repel temptation, and to yield submission to the will of God, is greatly favourable to serenity and peace of mind. There are pleasures in the very restraints of religion, and the self-denial it requires; for there is a pleasing approbation in the testimony of our consciences; there is a hope awakened by every successful effort. But, when God lifts on our souls the light of his countenance; when he admits the humble and affectionate penitent into his presence; when he gives him access with confidence to his throne; when he admits him to a communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; when he enables him to say, My beloved is mine, and I am his; when he enables him to look out to the promised land, with all its joys and delights; well indeed may it be said, that the believer is conscious of a joy which the world knows not of. Then he feels that he has all in abundance; for whatever be the trials and sorrows, the wants and necessities of his outward man, he has all; he is possessed of all things; he belongs to Christ, and all Christ's possessions, all his property is, as it were, his. Thus, in the present life, the true believer is conscious of a true and sacred joy in the sense of the favour and love of his Saviour; so that I hesitate not to say, though there may be those that question the position,

that though religion were a dream—though there were neither heaven nor hell, yet, in reference to the present life, religion would be infinitely preferable to infidelity; a watchful, a humble walk with God would be infinitely preferable to all that formal religion can boast, or to all that a world lying in wickedness can bestow. True religion, even in the present life, with all the difficulties and trials attending it, would be infinitely preferable to a life of the highest worldly prosperity without it. But the sayings of God are true and faithful. He who serves him here, shall hereafter be advanced to participate in his glory. There is a crown of life, there is a throne of glory awaiting the obedient followers of the Lamb. Sharing, as he does, in the sorrows of his master, here, he shall hereafter participate in his glory and in his felicity.

Be excited then, my beloved friends, to examine yourselves. Have you recognised the gospel as invested with the authority of a law? Have you yielded submission to this law? Have you felt it to be a law of liberty, and a perfect law? And do you possess the character of the true believer, looking habitually into this law, contemplating it, meditating upon it, continuing in the study of it, being not forgetful hearers but doers of the word? Know you any thing of those foretastes of heavenly bliss that the spirit imparts to those who humbly wait upon him. Let us be faithful, then, and examine ourselves.—Let us not shut our eyes on our real danger. If we be not yet true Christians, O let us loose no time in seeking and obtaining the requisites for heaven. Let us now, while it is day, call on our God, and let us know and be persuaded that he is willing to receive us; that Christ will not reject those who come to him. There are many who regard the gospel as nothing else than a system of restraints; and when we call on them to obey it, they draw back, saying, This is a hard saying: they refuse to submit to it, under the apprehension that we deprive them of all that is delightful, and that it will confine and restrict them to severe self-denial. In place of this, it is a law of liberty. We find men enslaved by self, by sin, by Satan, and by the world. We invite them to break their chains; we offer them Almighty aid, and set before them the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Be not so

base as to prefer your chains to liberty, liberty, and of perfect felicity. Come, then, to Christ, that you may share in this bliss, and that you may seek to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things, and so to act as to induce others to submit to his gracious will. May the blessing of God follow his public ministry. Amen.

ON THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN DR. FERRIER'S CHAPEL, PAISLEY, ON MONDAY,
12TH MARCH, 1832, DURING THE PREVALENCE OF CHOLERA.

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“ *And as for his judgments, they have not known them.*”—PSALM cxlvii. 20.

IN the language of Scripture, judgment is invested with a double sense. Sometimes it denotes the decisions of the Divine understanding—judgments concerning persons and things, as propounded in his holy Word. Hence we read of “the judgments of his mouth.” This is that sense which is generally given to it in the 119th Psalm, where the term is synonymous with *testimonies* or *ordinances*. At other times, however, and most generally perhaps, the expression, judgment, has a different signification, and refers to those penal inflictions with which God avenges guilt; and in the course of which he afflicts nations and individuals, wasting their property, imbittering their comforts, and destroying their lives. It must be evident, that the term judgment is employed in the first of these senses in the preceding verse, “He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.” In the clause we have selected, however, as more immediately our text, the same word in the passage before us has a sense somewhat doubtful. Perhaps the meaning may correspond with the former explanation, intimating that his people, although they had received the ordinances of God, and were divinely and largely instructed by him, had proved themselves but poor scholars, and were all greatly ignorant of the spiritual meaning, and of the ultimate bearing of their own oracles and ordinances; and this, doubtless, is a sense which we by no means reject, as either inappropriate or inadmissible. Yet the transition

in this sense is apparently abrupt, and there is a force in the contrast before us, which seems to point to another and a distinct object. Accordingly, the sense and spirit of the passage may be conceived to be this: Notwithstanding all that God has done for you as his own people, notwithstanding all the privileges you have enjoyed, notwithstanding all the afflictions you have endured, and all the evils that have been poured out on the nations around you for their sins; still you are insensible and unbelieving, still you are disobedient and idolatrous. This is the sense which we shall assume at present, and which we propose attempting, through the divine aid, briefly to explain and to apply. With this view, in the first place, I would speak to you a little concerning the judgments of the Lord, in the sense we have assigned to the expression; and then, in the second place, I would show you when persons may be said “not to know these judgments.”

First of all, then, let us speak to you, my brethren, concerning the judgments of the Lord, considered in the sense of afflictive visitations poured out upon guilty individuals and communities for their sins, a subject, unquestionably, awfully interesting, on which many misconceptions prevail; on which much scepticism is indulged, and concerning which sometimes, perhaps, the scoff is raised.

We are to speak to you, then, of the judgments of the Lord as inflicted on guilty men. These, we have already said,

are punishments threatened and executed by God on account of iniquity. Sin, it has been remarked, is a common word, a little word, and some imagine there is little harm in it. But sin is the common source of all suffering and misery. It was sin that caused hell to be constructed, and cast down the angels who sinned into "bottomless perdition." It is sin which is the cause of all the calamities that have desolated our world, and destroyed our race from age to age. It is sin which will inflame the burnings of Tophet, and imbitter the pangs of the wretched for ever and ever. And sin is necessarily the cause, and the sole cause, of all the judgments of the Lord, understood as we have explained the term. Unless men were sinners they could not be sufferers; for infinite goodness cannot inflict pain unnecessarily upon the innocent being, and perfect justice cannot oppress, or even annoy an offending person. Sin, therefore, is the cause, the sole cause, of the sufferings of a mortal creature. Accordingly, we find it testified in Scripture, that the wages of sin is death; and sin, by a most emphatic expression, is termed "the sting of death." Nor is the following declaration less in accordance with reason, than agreeable to the other portions of divine revelation, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." God is a God of infinite benignity, "he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve (without cause) the children of men." "He delighteth in mercy." "Judgment is his strange act—judgment is his strange work." It is that to which the benignity of his nature rendered him originally averse, which he comparatively seldom executes, and which is, as it were, wrested from him by the claims of his government, and the crimes of his creatures.

Of these penal visitations of God, called judgments, there are two general classes, spiritual and temporal. The latter, as you will at once infer, are those inflicted on the outward state of man, destroying his property, injuring his connexions, affecting his worldly interests. The former, namely spiritual judgments, affect his more intimate concerns, withering his holy enjoyments, wasting his religious privileges, injuring his eternal interests; and though unheard, unseen, and oftentimes unfeared, they are the most dreadful, and

by far the most destructive of the two. The Jewish nation, to whom the words of our text were first addressed, were the subjects of judgments of both kinds at different times. Often did the judgments of God, in the shape of external calamities, war, famine, pestilence, captivity, sweep and desolate their land. And the spiritual visitations of heaven were also poured out upon them. For a long period God bore with them; but, at length, in the time of the Saviour, he executed upon them those judgments which he had threatened by the mouth of Isaiah the Prophet. He gave them eyes that they should not see, ears that they should not hear, and hearts that they should not be converted and healed. And now we see that they are lying under the extreme judgments of heaven, are bearing the burden of the anger of God, and are an object of fear and terror to themselves and all about them; exhibiting, in their history, perhaps, more of the severity and goodness of God than were ever displayed in the history of any one people on the face of the earth, of his goodness in their singular protection and long continued privileges, and of his severity in the divine judgments that have overtaken and are now oppressing them.

The judgments of the Lord will ordinarily manifest themselves in such a way as to make themselves known to mankind. Who is there that cannot recognise the anger of the Lord in war, famine, and pestilence, especially when these are exceedingly aggravated? And oftentimes there are such circumstances attending afflictions as demonstrate, to the reasoning mind as well as to the pious spirit, that they are the judgments of God, and are to be traced to him. When war is long continued, bloody and desolating; when famine breaks forth, in consequence of the extraordinary suspension of the influence of heaven, or of the agency of some terrible physical phenomena; when pestilence arises unexpectedly, when it marches from afar, when it comes forward, stalking in its terrible might as an armed man, and may be traced in its progress by the ravages it commits; when it overleaps boundaries, and despises precautions; when it cannot be anticipated in its approach, or arrested in its career; when, above all maladies, it proves itself the most frightful and the most fatal; when it bears upon itself, the characters of divine sovereignty legibly

impressed, in these circumstances, where is the man that may not recognise the agency of a God? And should not every reflecting observer exclaim, as even the magicians of Egypt did, when their enchantments failed them, and the plagues began to desolate their land, "This is the finger of God?" It is true, there are, as you will infer there must be, calamities which though most grievous in themselves, are not yet palpable to sense, and may not be recognised by men at all. We refer to spiritual judgments. These weave their own chains, and forge their own fetters. They bring their own blindness and insensibility with them. They inflate pride, stimulate perversity, and instigate to rebellion against the Lord. The men who fall under these judgments are not sensible of them, and others may not suspect them at all. Never was the nation of Israel more proud and impenitent than when they were sore afflicted during the days of our Lord, and never were their privileges greater than at that period, or their danger more imminent.

And, as certain judgments may not be observed, so others may be mistaken. We refer now to the calamities which are poured down by God upon individuals. There is much modesty needed in the interpretation of judgment here. These calamities, it is true, may be judgments, and, doubtless, often are so; but when the causes are unknown, when the designs of the Almighty are not understood, when the day of grace is not yet closed, when the call of the gospel is addressed to men generally, there is room for much hesitation in ascribing any personal infliction to the vengeance of God, and considering it as a judgment of heaven. You know Christ, our Saviour, has enjoined this modesty of interpretation by the following question, and the illustration accompanying it. Think you, said he, that "the eighteen men upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Who, my brethren, that had seen, on the one side, Lazarus lying on the ground, clothed in rags, attended only by the dogs, full of sores, and desiring to be fed on the crumbs which fell from the table; and, on the other side, the rich man clothed in purple and fine linen, and eating sumptuously every day, would not,

if he had judged merely by appearances, and had not known the characters of these individuals, and the designs of the Almighty, have at once pronounced that the former was the object of the infliction of heaven, and the latter of the favour of Almighty God? Yet the reverse was the truth. And ought not all of us to remember, that this was the very error into which the friends of Job fell? Viewing the sore and successive calamities which visited this man of God, wasted his substance, and oppressed his spirits; viewing his body covered by loathsome sores, and his mind afflicted by perplexing troubles, they rashly reproved him, and argued that he was a very wicked man, and that these were the infallible tokens of the anger of Almighty God against him!

After all, with these two exceptions of personal calamities and spiritual judgments, the former containing much that is unknown, and the latter not exhibiting themselves to view, we may know that there are visitations of the Almighty which are fitted to make themselves known to men, and which we ought, therefore, to observe and improve. That the children of Israel did not so, is the very crime charged upon them in our text. They did not know the judgments of the Lord: and this leads us, in the second place, to explain, as we proposed, the nature of the charge that is here brought against the children of Israel, or to show you what it is not to know the judgments of the Lord.

Now, in the first place, and most obviously, not to know the judgments of the Lord, is not to observe or remark them at all. We might think this was altogether impossible. What! it might be said, has a man eyes, when the judgment of God is sweeping the country, and does he not perceive it! Has a man ears, and will he not hear the sound of the chariots of the Almighty rushing to judgment, the rattling of the arrows in the quiver of the Lord of Hosts, as he marches through the land in indignation! Has he feelings, and will not his very sensibilities, while they induce him to sympathize with men amid these calamities, dispose him also to adore the majesty of heaven, and intercede for the sufferers! These are natural conclusions, and we might think that the question could be always answered in the affirmative. But it cannot be so. Many are too deaf to hear the loudest voice of Almighty

God, too blind to see, what the Prophet aptly calls, "his glittering spear." Even at present, how many are insensible to the whole train of that calamity by which others are agitated! How many have no fears amid the general alarm, and the frightful tokens of the Lord's anger gone forth against us! How many are quite insensible to the visitation, and unfeeling amid the afflictions which have befallen others! They are too busy or too selfish, too much engrossed with a present evil world, too infidel, perhaps, in sentiment, and too atheistical in feeling, to be accessible to any of these emotions or exercises! Nor is this temper confined alone to the unthinking multitude. It may be found among those who conceive themselves the children of wisdom, and are, generally speaking, men of sagacity and observation. So it was at least in ancient times. "Ye hypocrites," said the Lord to those who deemed themselves men of wisdom, "ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, why in yourselves judge ye not what is right?" And it is recorded in the book of Jeremiah, "The stork knoweth her appointed time; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgments of the Lord."

2dly, We may be chargeable with not knowing the judgments of the Lord, if we do not recognise them as *his* operations. As there are men who do not know the judgments of God at all; so there are others who remark the calamities, and yet do not trace them up to their proper source. It is sad to think by how many arts the deceitful and atheistical heart contrives to escape from the best instructions, and to evade the deepest and most salutary impressions. Accordingly, you will see many (and scientific and observing men are by no means excluded) who will remark the calamities, who will note the signs of the times, who will, perhaps, be speculating about what is to be done, yet will not observe the hand, or recognise the interposition, or adore the majesty of God, in these dispensations. And this is not only strange, but irrational; for, if there be a God that governs the earth, as all nature cries aloud there is, then he must take charge of all elements, and of all nature and its operations, and especially

of those things which affect most deeply the life, and comforts, and interests of man. Yet do we not hear men oftentimes speaking of every cause except the great First Cause? appealing to every influence except his interposition? availing themselves of every resource except the last and best refuge? Do we not perceive them tracing, with anxious care, the history and progress of the disease, but never adverting to the hand that inflicted it; invoking every human aid, and forgetting Jehovah; looking to the physicians, and not to the Lord? Unquestionably this is at once preposterous and irrational. It is a bias, not less unphilosophical than irreligious. Yet it has been so in every age. The people of God, in ancient times, amid the most direful calamities inflicted upon them, when they had provoked the Lord by the greatest crimes, and when he was about to punish them in the severest manner, "said, the Lord seeth us not; the Lord has forsaken the earth." And even at an earlier period, you find the same sad ungodly spirit working among that people. "I, saith the Lord, will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their heart the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." And, in a message by the Prophet Amos, which seems as though it were addressed to us, do we not read this declaration, "Shall the trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" And, adds he, "All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say the evil shall not overtake nor prevent us." Nor can we fail to remark, that, even in our time, there were found in the high court of our country, men who, in the midst of a people professing Christianity, would have struck out from the act of their legislature all the recognition of the sovereign will and supreme agency of God, in reference to that disease which has invaded our country, is raging in several parts of it, and is operating awfully in the midst of our population! O how much more pious and promising would it be, if we, like the men of Issachar, "had understanding of the signs of the times, and what we ought to do!"

3dly, We shall be chargeable with the crime of not knowing the judgments of God, if we do not revere them and stand in awe of them. There are certain disposi-

tious and feelings, my friends, that correspond with the objects with which we are conversant, and the visitations we contemplate. If we are men, the very sense of humanity will dispose us to feel for those who are in affliction. If we are friends, there is a deep and tender sympathy, which will incline us to enter warmly into their concerns, and especially to commiserate their painful feelings. If we are citizens, we are bound, by the law of God and man, to seek the peace, and prosperity, and health of those among whom God has caused us to sojourn. If we are mercantile and labouring men, we ought to bless God for those openings of providence, which give us the prospect of fair remuneration for our wealth or industry. And, in like manner, if we are religious men, our feelings ought to correspond not only with the ordinances of religion in which we may be engaged, but with the aspects and events of providence, as they bear the characters of Deity impressed upon them, announce his will, and affect our interests. If these dispensations be merciful, we ought to feel that they claim our gratitude, and call for our prayers. If, on the other hand, they be afflicting and bearing, they demand our patience, submission, and resignation; and we ought to say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." And, in the midst of those terrible things which God may do, our feeling should be that of solemn reverence; we should stand in awe of the majesty of the Lord God. Now, this is the spirit, which the wisest and best of men have indulged in every age. "When I heard this," says Habakkuk, "my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble." And says the Psalmist, (Psalm 119th,) obviously contemplating judgment in the sense we have ascribed to it, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments." And O, my brethren, should we not, amid calamitous times, "seek righteousness and seek meekness; that we may be hid in the day of the Lord's anger?" I appeal to your spirit of devotion, nay, to your sense of decorum, is not a light spirit altogether unfit for such solemn visitations? And of mockery, what shall we say, but that it is the very madness of impiety, equally insane and atheistical?

Yet, are there not found mockers in the midst of our community, men who can make themselves merry with the precautions of the prudent; with the alarms of the fearful; and even with the devotions of the pious?

4thly, and lastly, We shall, above all, be chargeable with not knowing the judgments of the Lord, if we do not improve them experimentally and practically.

In Scripture, knowledge is frequently put for practice: "Oh," cries Moses, "that they were wise, that they *understood* this, that they would consider their latter end!" "Oh, (exclaims a greater far than Moses, when he wept over Jerusalem and her coming woes,) if thou hadst *known*, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

What the improvement is, that we should make of public calamities, you do not need, I trust, in general, to be informed. They should lead us to abasement and resignation to the will of God; to repentance and amendment of life, to embrace the great salvation; and, by betaking ourselves to the atonement through the death of Christ, and the grace of God reigning by his righteousness, to prepare ourselves for whatever may befall us, and flee from the wrath to come. You will recognise the general source of your duties as indicated in such passages as the following: "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee." "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." I will tell whom you ought to fear; "fear not them that kill the body, and, after that, have no more that they can do; but fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell;" yea, I say unto you, fear him. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their soul to him, as unto a faithful Creator."

These duties are, it is obvious, powerfully impressed on us at present, and I

may anticipate the language of many here, who would say, These things will we do, if God enable us. But, O how little do we know what is in our hearts! These things have not always been done. Yea, has not the reverse been the case? I appeal to facts. Have you not heard of him, who recklessly laughed amid the howlings of the tempest, which might have whelmed him in the deep! have you not heard of those who have been busy intoxicating themselves when the vessel was foundering, and about to sink! have you not seen men, who, perhaps, have made themselves merry with the calamities of others, yea, as hordes of savages pounce on a wreck that has been cast on their coasts, and as thieves and evil doers avail themselves of a conflagration or of an execution to pursue their nefarious occupation! have you not known regardless beings fasten upon the spoil of the wretched and helpless, drench themselves in intoxicating liquors amid the ravages of disease, which seizes on the dissolute as its chosen victims, and, in the worst of times, work iniquity with increased greediness! We have read, that those whom God means to destroy, he first distracts, and this may be seen verified in too many indubitable instances. But there is one great fact in history, which illustrates this truth the most awfully. In the final sack of Jerusalem, when all were suffering, and every effort should have been made for mutual help, they were found slaying one another, and by their dissensions ensuring, as well as aggravating their destruction.

Thus, my friends, have I spoken to you, of these two things—of the judgments of Almighty God, and of the sin of not knowing them. As to the latter, we have shown, that not to know them, is not to observe them at all, or not to recognise them as the operations of God, or not to reverse the majesty of heaven in them, or not to improve them for the purpose of amendment of life, or the salvation of the soul. Now what general practical views may be deduced from this subject?

In the first place, you may see crime is the cause of all our calamities, and of all the judgments of God. If then, we suffer, let us at once conclude that we are sinners; and if we suffer much, that we are great sinners. And, I ask you, have not we, and our fathers, and our kings, and our princes, and the children of our people, sinned and provoked the Lord greatly to anger? Is there one among us who dare

wipe his mouth, and pronounce himself innocent? No: all of us have had a deep hand in the provocation. Let us then humble ourselves before the Lord. Let us repent ourselves as it were in the dust, and in ashes, crying each, What have I done?

In the second place, this subject suggests to us the extreme folly of mankind. How astonishing is it, when God cometh forth out of his place to inflict war, or famine, or pestilence, that men should not see the hand, or hearken to the voice of the Lord? That the men, who, it may be, hoast of observation and understanding, should not mark the dispensation at all; that men, with such striking and awful things before them, should not trace them up to the hand of God—should have no suitable feelings in regard to them—should feel no concern to improve them. And these judgments are the last lessons of God. If a man will not be taught by great and terrible calamities, by what else will he be taught?

In the third place, this subject directs our attention to the grace, the astonishing grace of God. The human family, almost since the beginning, have been the children of corruption and of crime; and, during that long period which has elapsed since the origin of our world, trespasses have been accumulating in a fearful ratio; and the guilt of man has been unspeakably aggravated. But he has, all along, pitied and spared. Here, then, are involved amazing views of the divine mercy. As for ourselves, have we not profaned God's ordinances and despised his judgments! If so, should we not expect, that God would come out of his place to punish us, every one for his iniquities! Should you not expect, that judgment would not be "his strange work," but his continual employment; and that he would have been still sweeping our land with calamity from age to age. And, if our nation has been distinguished, like that of Israel, above other nations, as it certainly has been, ought we not to dread that we should be distinguished also with the judgments of Almighty God? "For we are a people laden with iniquity: our land is full of sin against the Holy One of Israel." Yet, behold his grace! Amid all this defection, he waiteth to be gracious; amid all our fearful, and aggravated, and accumulated iniquities, he is ready to be merciful, and to bless us with the best of blessings, for the sake of his dear Son.

In the fourth place, this subject suggests our present and pressing duties. What does it become us to do amid the judgments of the Lord? Doubtless, we should look to the Lord our God, listen to his warnings, obey his call, and admire his forbearance. Come, then, my brethren, and let us humble ourselves before the Lord our God. Let those who have interest at his throne, like Abraham of old, intercede for our guilty cities and sinful country; and let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar; and let them say, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach." Let every man of God amongst us, with the censer in his hand, and incense thereon, like Aaron, stand between "the dead and the living," entreating the Lord to turn away wrath from us, and peradventure, the plague which has broken forth, may also be stayed.

Lastly, this subject suggests the high justification of the services of religion, in which we have been so lately engaged.

When the last and greatest plague was about to be poured forth upon Egypt, viz., the slaughter of the first-born; it is written, that Moses kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born of their oppressors, should touch the people of Israel. Now, we have been endeavouring to do so in the spirit of Moses; doing in effect what he did, and I trust also by faith. We have been betaking ourselves to that passover which was sacrificed for us: and this is the best preservative in all circumstances; this is the grand security amid all perils, especially those that are spiritual and eternal. Happy the man who reposes at the foot of the cross. Safe is the man who sits down under the shadow of the tree of life. The pestilence may walk abroad and waste at noonday; but his best interests are safe, and even afflictions are blessed for his good, as well as for the glory of God. Whatever his body may suffer, his spirit will be calm. Then, let us resolve and say, "One thing we have desired of the Lord, and will seek after, that we may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." And he will not frustrate our holy desires, but will "hide us in his pavilion in the time of trouble in the secret of his tabernacle will he hide

us, and set our feet upon a rock." Come and let us make our "refuge in God, until these sad calamities be overpast." Our Jesus is "a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." But if any should be disposed to trust in another refuge rather than in this, he cannot be saved; and his attention I would turn to a passage of holy writ, which is extremely appropriate to the subject we have been illustrating. It is in the 5th chapter of the prophecies of Jeremiah, verses 1 to 7, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. And though they say, The Lord liveth, surely they swear falsely. O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them; a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces; because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased." "If you sin, therefore, after having received the knowledge of the truth, know that there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of indignation, of judgment, and fiery indignation, to devour the adversaries." "Let sinners in Zion be afraid; let fearfulness seize upon hypocrites; who among us can dwell with devouring fire? who among us can inhabit everlasting burnings?" Let us seek grace, therefore, that we may serve God, amid all ordinances and dispensations of Providence, "with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." Amen! Amen!

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 14TH APRIL, 1832.

SERMON by the Rev. Dr. INGLIS, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. Dr. BURNS, Paisley.

THE BENEFICIAL TENDENCY OF AFFLICTIONS;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE GREYFRIARS CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON THE OCCASION
OF A GENERAL COLLECTION IN AID OF THE FUNDS OF
THE BOARD OF HEALTH.

By the Rev. JOHN INGLIS, D.D.,
Chaplain to the King.

'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.'—PSALM cix. 71.

EXPERIENCE teaches us, that the more patiently our afflictions are endured they are proportionably less grievous. Religion, also, opens up to us many sources of consolation under afflictions, and inculcates on us the higher duties of resignation to the will of God. Neither, however, is the voice of experience nor the salutary advice of religion always attended to; and even they who have in some measure learned to be patient and resigned in afflictions, and to look beyond the sufferings of this world to the glory that shall be revealed, do not often go the length of cordially adopting the sentiment of the Psalmist, that "it is good for me that I have been afflicted." They who are the most resigned under sufferings at the hand of God, are still too apt to consider their afflictions in no other view than that of real and substantial evils which it is their duty to submit to. Their minds revolt at the idea of acknowledging, in any measure, as good, what not only presents itself in the shape of evil, but is felt for the time to be a real calamity, and to involve them in positive distress. When they hear or read such an observation in Scripture as that which our text conveys, they seem for the moment to acquiesce, but their future intercourse with the world and with the troubles of the world, often manifests that they have not attained a just and practical conviction of its being good for them to be afflicted. As a forward child has

sometimes, however, been made to regard as a blessing the chastisement which it has received from a dutiful parent, so there are some men who are made to acknowledge in their heart, that it is indeed for their good to be chastised by their Father in heaven. And if this is the doctrine both of experience and religion, that it is good for us to have been afflicted, it is our bounden duty to endeavour after a practical and heartfelt acknowledgment of it.

There is no doctrine more consoling than this to the mind. That all things work together for good; no doctrine more fitted to reconcile the heart to our present condition and circumstances. It is the most sublime and elevating that the human mind is capable of conceiving—the most blessed for man to receive and entertain. The partial evil is overruled by the wisdom of heaven for promoting universal good—that the sufferings of individuals are intended for the good of the whole, is a doctrine which even unassisted reason inculcates; but, that the sufferings or afflictions of the individuals are in every case (in the case of every good man at least) intended and calculated for his individual advantage, is a far nobler doctrine, and presents a view of Providence, and of the ways of God, superior to any that the reason of man is at all capable of presuming upon. Without the revelation of God in this matter, the human mind could never have the boldness to have

calculated upon the possibility of this. Let us inquire into the evidence which Scripture and reason combine, that it is truly good for us to have been afflicted; and let us inquire into the subject with a willingness and readiness of mind, as one which, properly understood, may serve to disarm affliction of its sharpest sting.

If the assertion, that afflictions are for our good, shall at first sight appear to any in the light of a paradox, they will do well to remember that there are many things, both in the natural and moral world, much more paradoxical at first view, which we are notwithstanding constrained to admit. If we did but acknowledge that our afflictions proceed from the hand of God, this consideration affords a strong presumption that they will be for a purpose more benevolent than what their outward aspect shows. Hath he stamped on the creation many unequivocal marks of his goodness; does he show much that is unquestionably good—so many indisputable blessings; has he so loved the world as not to spare even his only-begotten Son, but to deliver him up for the benefit of his people on earth—and is it possible that he should, notwithstanding, afflict his people willingly, and with any other view than for their ultimate good? This consideration should at least remove any prejudice against the doctrine of affliction being for our good, and should prepare our minds for entering with candour into the consideration of the direct tendency of these afflictions.

Let me, then, call upon you now to consider whether you have not convincing experience that many of the seeming evils of life, which you feel at the moment as extremely afflicting, do not redound to your advantage, even in a worldly view. Have you not sometimes found that the disappointment of your most ardent pursuits and endeavours has been, in the hands of God, the mean of your escape from imminent danger of which at the moment you were not aware? Have you never found reason to acknowledge that your seeming misfortunes, over which at the time you sincerely lamented, have in fact turned out to your good? When the sons of Jacob told their father that they had been constrained to leave their brother Simeon in Egypt, and were required, as a condition of his release, to carry Benjamin thither, Jacob said, with

a heavy heart, "We have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Yet these things, he soon found were the means in the hand of God of making his cup to overflow. And they who are duly attentive to the ways of Providence can scarcely fail to discover in their own experience, in the case of some seeming misfortunes, many traces of both the wisdom and the goodness of the Almighty; nor is it unreasonable to conclude, that at many times, when we are incapable of tracing the ways of God, the very evils on account of which our rebellious hearts are most apt to murmur against him, may be the special means of saving us from far greater calamities or of conferring such advantages, even in this world, as we would not be unwilling to purchase at a much greater price. Now, if our afflictions appear to be in any measure for our good in this world, may they not safely be regarded as a pledge and earnest of advantage to us in another and more important world? It is only in our worldly condition that any obvious objection seems to lie against the doctrine. We may, therefore, proceed with more confidence to consider it in the more important view, in reference to our spiritual and everlasting benefit.

Consider, then, in the first place, whether our afflictions be not well calculated to beget in us such a salutary fear of God, and such a dread of offending him, as become children of a father. The effect of the chastisement of a child by a dutiful parent is of more efficacy in the way of producing a fear to offend again, and a gradual reformation of the conduct, than some are fully aware of. Our present state may, in strictest propriety, be considered a state of infancy or childhood. We know the salutary influence of chastisement in childhood, which is the period allotted for preparing for the business of life—for preparing for both the duties and privileges afterwards to be discharged and enjoyed in the world. It is strange if reproof be necessary for the just training of the unpractised mind in the morning of life, and not necessary for training us in this life for another and a better which is to succeed it. The whole of our time in this world is as certainly the period allotted for the education for the future

and eternal state, as the period of infancy is the time allotted for the education for manhood, it is the period of our education for that heavenly country in which the good are destined to live. Our natural aversion to that education is not less than the aversion of a froward child to the studies that are prescribed to it. Upon what ground, then, can you conclude that chastisement in this case may not be for good? The great use of the chastisement of parents in the days of our childhood, is to produce in us a salutary fear of offending them by a conduct prejudicial to our interests; and why may not our heavenly Father, prescribing a law for the regulation of our conduct, see it equally meet to enforce our obedience by such chastisement as may induce in us a fear of offending Him? Many of the troubles that befall us in the present life are the immediate and natural consequences of our own sin and folly in transgressing the law which God has given us. The wise and benevolent Author of Nature has so fixed and established the order and course of nature, that in many cases our sin immediately produces its own punishment; and though we may not be able to trace in every case so directly our sin to its punishment, we are strongly called to know that, either more or less, sin is the cause of all evil; that it was sin that first brought misery into the world, and that the only just improvement of what we suffer at the hand of God, is, to be thereby more and more induced to hate and forsake that accursed thing which alone continues to embitter the cup of human life. Is it, then, with a view to this blessed effect—to the alienation of our hearts from sin, that we are here afflicted? Do we in any measure feel that the salutary power of affliction is a mean of restraining us from evil; and shall we not allow that it is good for us thus to be chastised or afflicted? Our earthly parents are conscious of both the good design and the good effect of the restraints they impose, or the corrections they inflict, on the young over whom their authority extends; and shall we, notwithstanding, presume to doubt either the good designs or the salutary influence of the chastisements which we receive at the hands of our common Father? Do children as they advance in years gradually trace the advantages they have derived

from such parental restraints; and shall they not regard their present afflictions as an early and satisfying pledge of the greater advantage of whatever they shall be called to suffer at the hand of a parent more wise and great, who in no wise afflicts his children willingly? Others may chastise after their own pleasure, but He only for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.

Consider, in the second place, that the afflictions of the present scene are calculated to moderate our attachment to the world, and our dependence on whatever is in the world. There can be nothing more certain than that the immoderate love and desire of what is temporal and worldly are incompatible with our maintaining a just regard to the things that are spiritual. Afflictions serve the valuable purpose of weaning our hearts from the things that are, and of fixing our thoughts on the hope that is set before us. Worldly disappointments are, therefore, indispensably requisite for chastising and restraining those extravagant expectations of worldly enjoyment which men are so apt to entertain, more especially in the morning of life. Were the worldly hopes of the young, in particular, to be in all cases realized—were men never to be surrounded and visited with the afflictions which arise from disappointment, they would give themselves up entirely to things visible and present; the language of their hearts would be, This is our place, here do we desire to live; and the enjoyments of time and sense would engross their affections to the exclusion of objects more noble, and more worthy of their minds. Nor is there any noble or worthy resolution or practice which an uninterrupted round of pleasure and prosperity of a worldly kind may not endanger. If we look around us in this world, few instances indeed will present themselves, in which such long-continued prosperity does not overset the mind, fill it with daring agitations, seduce it from a just sense of the character of God, and destroy in it all the just knowledge of those principles within us, on the due regulation of which both the health and happiness of our nature depend.

Let me, therefore, request of you to consider more particularly, in the third place, that it is exclusively in the school of affliction that we learn patience and

fortitude, humility in our estimate of ourselves, and sympathetic affection towards others. There are few things which, to a well regulated mind, will appear more unreasonable than the fretfulness and impatience with which a man who is enjoying uninterrupted prosperity is so apt to look upon the least appearance of any reverse of fortune. He is the mere creature of outward circumstances, and depends on each change for both the temper of his mind and the tenor of his conduct. It is impossible that he should ever attain to independence of character, without being duly exercised in the school of affliction. Where should he learn patience without trouble to endure; or how shall he learn fortitude without trials to undergo? These virtues, like every other, require both time and opportunity to cultivate, and if called into exercise under circumstances not beyond what we are able to bear, the more vigorous will they become.

Pride is in like manner cherished by prosperity. Uninterrupted draughts of worldly prosperity are calculated to intoxicate. Perhaps the uninterrupted pleasure of our first parents was a mean of generating in their hearts those principles of pride which first brought sin into the world. The nurture of afflictions may now be indispensably requisite, in order to our hereafter attaining a permanent character of humility in a state of permanent and unchanging bliss. Afflictions strongly call upon the heart to look inward upon itself and its own desires; and, showing us how undeserving we are of a more unbroken and uninterrupted enjoyment, they are often calculated to remind us that in this world mortality is the law of our nature. Afflictions in this manner teach us humility. They have a tendency to make us think of ourselves not more highly than we ought to think, but to think of ourselves soberly.

Yet it is still more obvious, if possible, that to be ourselves exercised in the school of affliction, is the great and indispensable mean of teaching us to sympathize with others in their afflicted state. We judge of other men's condition chiefly from what we have experienced in our own. It is only from experience that we learn what either joy or sorrow is to the heart: nor are we less indebted to

experience for the judgment we are able to form of the tendency of outward things to produce either pleasure or pain. For this reason was the Saviour of the world made in all respects like his brethren, that with a just feeling of their infirmity, he might be a merciful High Priest in the house of God. If we could for a moment suppose man entirely destitute of that which we thus acquire from our experience, in what a degraded view would our nature appear? Sympathy is, to say the least of it, one of the most amiable experiences of that charity which is the bond of hearts, and a just remembrance of our own afflictions is what enables us to recall those feelings into exercise when circumstances similar to what were our own, are again presented to a view of the mind.

Considering the subject in this view, who is there—who is he among those now hearing me, that will dare to say that it is not good for him to have been afflicted? It is only to the people of God, indeed, that afflictions can be considered as a blessing, in the full extent that has now been stated; but, in whatever degree they fail to produce the same advantage to others, the deficiency must arise from their not being duly improved by them; for afflictions are often a natural means, in the first instance, of weaning us from the service of Satan, to the worship and service of God. And we hope that they have been an effectual means of teaching many the vanity of worshipping the world rather than God. If even they who have in some measure experienced the advantage of affliction, would now be spared from saying that it is good for them to have been afflicted; if even they find it difficult practically to acknowledge the goodness of their heavenly Father in such chastisements; if a natural aversion in the heart to the thought of suffering would still make you unduly deprecate his chastening rod, I would not conclude without reminding you that there is one way in which, consistently with both your interest and your duty, you may both deprecate and adopt the future chastisement of the Lord—I mean by improving more and more daily under the afflictions which you have already experienced. Afflictions may be messengers of the divine displeasure, but when their voice has been duly listened to, when the

lesson they would teach has been practically received, they are not less the messengers of salvation to our souls. Let it therefore be your first care to comply with their gracious design, and then shall the Lord turn away more speedily from his anger, and then shall you know that all things work together for good to them that truly love God. Consider

these things, and God give you grace to lay them to heart. Amen.

NOTE BY THE REPORTER.—From the height of the ceiling, and the age of the officiating clergyman, which rendered the voice not distinctly audible in the gallery where the shorthand writer sat, this discourse has not been exactly taken down as it was delivered, but very nearly so. A few of the phrases, but none of the sentences, have been supplied by the Reporter.

THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE OF JEHOVAH;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE NEW PARISH CHURCH, GREENOCK, ON THE
AFTERNOON OF THE 19TH MARCH, 1832,

By the Rev. ROBERT BURNS, D.D.,

Minister of St. George's Church, Paisley.

"He shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory."—ZECH. vi. 13.

NOTHING can be more clear, my friends, than that the temple which was built by Solomon, and the temple which was afterwards renewed and placed under the guardianship of Joshua, the son of Joseph, the High Priest, were both designed and fitted to be typical resemblances of the church of God under "Messiah the Prince." And hence it is that in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, Mount Zion, the place on which the magnificent structure was reared, whither the people of God went up from all parts of Palestine, to present themselves in the presence of their common Lord, and to engage in the various appointed services of religion, is spoken of in terms so magnificent, so elevated, and so closely connected with spiritual things, as naturally and directly to suggest to the mind of the reader a nobler economy than that of Moses; a more extended dispensation than that of the Law; and a "temple" in which the grace of God would be revealed in still more striking manifestations. "The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath selected it for his habitation: here," says he, "will I dwell, for I have desired it." "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he will appear in his glory." This temple of the spiritual church is placed under the superintendence and guardian care of him who was to "come to his temple;" and who

was to constitute "the glory" of it, and who was "to give peace," from within its precincts, to all generations of men. That illustrious person described as "the Prince," that glorious Messiah who was to spring from the stem of Jesse, is represented as building and consecrating the spiritual temple. He lays the foundations of it strong and deep amid the ruins of our fallen humanity, and he raises the superstructure to his own glory, and the glory of his Father. True believers in every age, have been permitted to contemplate the stately edifice rising to view, adorned with all the beauties of holiness, and shining with the lustre of grace; while the inhabitants of other worlds behold it beaming from afar, and reflecting the glorious attributes of its great architect, "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

While the church at large, considered as a spiritual edifice, may be thus spoken of, and described as God's temple, we may say of every individual member of the church, that he is the temple of God. Spiritual members of Christ are represented by the Apostle as "living stones;" and it is the striking characteristic of these living stones, that they not only form constituent parts of one great edifice

but that they individually exhibit in miniature the complete representation of the prominent features of the great building itself. In each, as in all of them combined, we discover the same grand lineaments of grace, and the same ornaments of holiness; and therefore it may with strict propriety be said, that Christ Jesus is the Author and Finisher of the spiritual building, inasmuch as each member of his spiritual body is by him created anew, led in the paths of righteousness, and fitted for the kingdom above. This is the view that I intend to take of the words of our text; and, by selecting the case of an individual believer, we may be able to form a still more precise and connected view of the subject, than by allowing our thoughts to spread themselves over the wide surface of the church at large.

There are two points which the language of the text brings before us:—

First, That every true believer is a temple of God; and,

Second, That the glory of building, and beautifying, and completing the temple belongs exclusively to the gracious Redeemer.

In the first place, a temple is the residence of Jehovah; and in this view every true believer is a temple of the living God. "Ye are the temples of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them." We do not say that there is any real sacredness, any spiritual or moral sanctity, possessed by one building, or by one place in this world of ours more than another; but we do say that certain times, and certain places, and certain vestments are represented in the sacred Word as consecrated to the Lord—as taken out of the ordinary range of human objects, and invested with a relative sanctity; inasmuch as they are employed for sacred ends, and inasmuch as they are detached from the ordinary employment that may be made of them at other times, and are invested with this peculiar attribute of being given up or dedicated to the Lord. It is in this way that the temple of old, and the vestments of the priests, and the vessels of the sanctuary, and the times and seasons of worship are all termed holy, and "holiness to the Lord." And although the state of things under the christian economy is greatly changed, still we may affirm of

every christian church and place sacred to religious worship, that it is "the habitation of God's-house, and the place where his honour dwells." It is indeed true, that, in one sense, God dwells every where, and "in him we live, and move, and have our being;" but while, in a general view, the Lord is every where present, and while we rejoice in this delightful truth of the omnipresence of Jehovah, there is a peculiar sense in which, of every true believer, and of him alone, it is affirmed, that God "dwelleth in him," and "he dwells in God;" "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Of all true believers under the New Testament economy, it is affirmed, that Christ "dwells in them;" that their bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost; that they are sacred to the residence of Jehovah; that they walk *with* God and *in* God; that "Christ dwells in their hearts by faith;"—and the highest, the noblest petition which apostolic fervour has addressed to the throne of grace in their behalf is—"that they may be filled with *all the fulness of God.*" In this view, every true believer is consecrated to God as a temple—the residence of Jehovah. It is, indeed, the grand, the prominent design of that gospel of the grace of God which we preach unto you, to elevate God to the throne of the heart, to set aside all usurpers, to bring back man to his sense of allegiance, to expel from the heart the images and ensigns of enmity to God, and to enthrone Jehovah in the affections, the dispositions, and the habits of men. It is in this view that Jehovah is represented as taking up his abode in every renewed man, selecting his soul, yea, even his body as his temple. Satan is compelled to retire from the supremacy; and although he may still remain in some distant corner of the field, and may still continue to carry on a kind of predatory warfare, yet he shall never be allowed to regain his hated ascendancy, for "the Lord *alone* shall be exalted in that day." The temple is his own residence, and chosen by him as the place of his abode: "Ye are the temples of God; as God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them."

In the second place, a temple is consecrated to the service, the worship, and the glory of God; and, in this sense, every true believer is a spiritual temple of the

Lord. No man possessed of the common sensibilities of human nature can tread the ruins of a venerable edifice, sacred in other times to the worship of God, without feeling the emotions of devotional melancholy. Within these goodly walls our fathers once worshipped. These aisles, now gloomy and desolate, once resounded to the voice of praise; and around that altar, now in ruins, successive generations of pious worshippers have been seen to throng, while the flame of a hallowed incense arose in silent majesty towards heaven. "Our fathers, where are they; and the prophets, do they live for ever?" With emotions somewhat akin to these, but far more tender, far more pungent than these, does the christian observer contemplate the ruins of that stately fabric once consecrated to God, once the residence of the Deity, and within whose domain the candle of the Lord once beamed with its brightest radiance. The soul of man, so vast in its powers, so comprehensive in its range of actions, so lofty even in its moral aspirations, is a temple majestic in ruins. And the grand design of Christianity is to set up that temple anew; while the most interesting view that we can take of the work of Christ in the gospel is this: to contemplate him as rebuilding, renewing, and reconsecrating that temple now in ruins, but once the residence of God, once consecrated to his glory, and employed in his spiritual service. Christian believers are represented in Scripture as renewed in the spirit of their minds, as built up spiritual houses, as consecrated in their every part to the service and glory of God. All the members of their bodies, and all the powers of their minds are spoken of as instruments of righteousness, to the glory of God. The understanding of the believer, irradiated by heavenly light, contemplates God as the God of truth; while the love of God and of truth directs it in its aim. His memory, stored with sacred principles and Scriptural sentiments and language, becomes indeed the depository of sacred treasures, to be brought forth for the service of Jehovah. Conscience, enlightened by a beam from the celestial throne, acquires a nicer sensibility, while it trembles lest the verdict which it may pronounce, and the verdict which God's word pronounces, should be adverse to each other. His affections,

disengaged from the service of sin and Satan, are consecrated to God. "The desires of his soul are towards him, and the remembrance of his name." "His delight is in the law of the Lord, after the inner man." The powers and faculties of the soul being thus consecrated, under the guidance of grace, to the service of God, the whole man becomes a temple in which sacrifices are perpetually offered to God; not the sacrifices of heathenism, stained by impurity and blood, but the sacrifices of holy desires, holy affections, and holy deeds—the "sacrifices of righteousness," accepted through Jesus the beloved; not the sacrifices of the Old Testament dispensation, the types of a nobler sacrifice, but the offering of prayer, and praise, and obedience through the merits and mediation of Christ; not the meritorious sacrifice of Christ for pardon and acceptance: that sacrifice was once offered up by the great Emanuel; and now the sacrifice which a christian believer presents, is the ascription of all to Him, "the Lamb who was slain," and who bought him with his blood. Every true believer is a temple consecrated to God, within whose hallowed walls the sacrifices of praise, and prayer, and obedience are presented to God; and thus, every true believer is a spiritual temple, sacred to God.

Lastly; a temple is the scene of divine manifestation: and in this sense also every true believer is a spiritual temple of the Lord. Shall I speak of the Holy of Holies?—Shall I speak of the divine Shechinah covering the mercy-seat, overshadowing it as the token of the celestial presence?—Shall I speak of the Urim and Thummim, the tables of the testimony, the tokens of God's favour to guilty men?—Shall I speak of these things which were the types and symbols of a spiritual economy, but on which "Ichabod" has been long since inscribed—a glory passed away? No. The Christian temple no longer enjoys these visible manifestations of the Divine presence; but it enjoys all that which these visible manifestations were designed to typify—the tokens, as they were, of divine favour, and of the residence of God among men—the symbols of God's gracious designs in regard to his church in after days, and the standard lifted up in favour of true religion amidst the world of the ungodly. It is

worthy of remark, that when the inspired writers of the Old Testament speak of God's manifestations, and of the desires of their souls to be favoured with these manifestations, it is not the external objects as presented by the Old Testament economy on which they delight to dwell. They deal not in the description of the gold and silver of the tabernacle or the temple honours, and the outward tokens of God's residence with his people. They pass from these to something infinitely more valuable, even those spiritual themes to which these led the way. They desire to see God, not as manifested externally to the eyes of sense, but as revealed to the eyes of their minds; and their language is expressive of spiritual principles and feelings.—“I beseech thee show me thy glory.—Lord, lift on me the light of thy countenance.—As the hart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.—I will go to the altar of God, even to God my exceeding joy.—When thou sayest, Seek ye my face, my heart replies, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.—O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.”—“One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.” It is not necessary to multiply examples; but I quote these passages to show that, even in these times, dark and imperfect as the dispensation was, the views of pious men were carried far beyond external symbols, and by a vigorous faith they grasped the things which these symbols were designed to indicate; and thus they set before us a representation of that spiritual temple under Messiah, the Prince, which is the scene of divine manifestation.

But we speak now more particularly of individual Christians as these temples, and as the scenes of divine manifestation. Every true believer exhibits in his own person, in his principles, in his habits, in his privileges, and in his bright hopes, a manifestation of God, a practical exemplification of the Saviour's work, a public and accredited testimony of the truth of the doctrines of Scripture, as imprinted on his mind, as brought to bear with powerful efficacy on his heart, as the

grand principles of the spiritual life in the soul of man. In this view it may be said, in the language of the wise man, that “a good man is satisfied from himself.” He finds in himself that which, like the temple of old, is the manifestation of the divine presence. He finds, in the affections of mind he has been led to cherish, in the longings of his soul after God, in the experience of comfort, joy, and peace in believing; and in the various graces and doings of the christian life, the manifestation of a power like that which created the world at first; the manifestation of a wisdom like that which planned the heavens and stretched them out as a curtain; the manifestation of a love that passeth knowledge, and of a grace that is infinite. And, in regard to every Christian, we say, when he approaches to God in the exercise of private or of social prayer, or enters the gates of Jerusalem's house, or ascends the hallowed mount, or sits down at the table which the Redeemer has spread for him, and takes into his hand the memorials of the Redeemer's love, and his soul ascends in silent but holy desire after the Redeemer's love, then God is manifested to his soul, and these divine manifestations are the glory of the temple. Sometimes, it may be, he draws near to God under the influence of doubt and fear, and God reveals himself as the God of consolation and hope. At other times he comes into the divine presence with ardent longings after God, with holy confidence in him; and if he comes in humility, and not depending on himself but on God, the Lord sends him not empty away; he reveals himself to his soul, and thus the candle of the Lord shines with brighter and brighter radiance. And thus every true believer, considered as manifesting the kindness of the Saviour, in holy communion with him, and holding faith in life and conversation, (the principles of the gospel,) becomes a candle of the Lord; and in him, rising progressively from one spiritual attainment to another, we have a spiritual representation of that glorious temple, of which, in its perfect state, it is recorded, “Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God shall be thy glory.” “I heard a voice from heaven say, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and God dwells

with men, and they are his people, and he is their God."

Thus, my friends, a temple considered as the residence of Jehovah, as sacred to the service, and worship, and glory of Jehovah, and as the scene of divine manifestation, becomes a very fair and scriptural representation of the spiritual temple of the true believer, sacred to the residence of Jehovah, consecrated to his service, and enjoying divine manifestation.

II. The second point to which our text calls us, is the glory of Christ in building, beautifying, and completing this temple. "Behold the man whose name is the *Branch*; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory."

In the first place, Christ, by his mediatorial interposition, has paved the way for the erection of the temple of God. That the God of heaven, glorious in every perfection, ruling by his power, and receiving the accumulated praises of cherubim and seraphim, should nevertheless condescend to dwell with men—that he should select our globe, impure as it is, to be the theatre of his brightest discoveries, and should condescend to take up his residence within the compass of the bodies or the souls of creatures so vile, so unrighteous, so apostate as we are—these are mysteries for which we search creation in vain to find a satisfactory explanation. The Bible, and the Bible alone gives us the key to the mystery. It is true, that once there was a time when God, in perfect consistency with his holiness and rectitude, condescended to dwell with men, and to talk with them as a man speaketh to his friend; but when Satan invaded the creation, and when man had apostatized from his Maker, a principle of enmity was introduced between them. Man, while he disliked to hear the voice of God, and while he fled from the presence of his Maker, was at the same time legally disqualified for appearing with acceptance in his gracious and holy presence. It was in this state of things, in this gloomy emergency, that the Son of the Highest, Emanuel, "the man whose name is *Branch*," did interpose—did undertake our ransom—did offer to come to suffer and to die, that through his merits and mediation a way

of access might be opened, that through his finished work pardon, and peace, and eternal salvation might be conveyed to guilty men, and that God might be just while he justified the sinner. In this view, Christ bears the glory of having paved the way for the erection of a spiritual temple in this guilty world. He removed the difficulties that stood in the way of it. He, by an all-perfect righteousness, did satisfy the law's every demand. He made it honourable. He magnified it before all worlds. He, by his atoning death, paid the price, the ransom which God's justice and God's holiness demanded. He paid the price of our salvation, and, by his precious blood, reconciles man to his Maker; and thus, with perfect consistency—thus, in complete harmony with all his attributes, and with all his rights of government, Jehovah dwells with men; Jehovah selects our guilty globe as the scene of his bright manifestations; Jehovah erects his temple in our world, and within its unholy domains, reveals himself as at once the object of worship and the source of every blessing. He dwells with men. Believers are brought into the relationship of children—of accepted children; and the spirit of adoption is bestowed on them. The privileges of adoption are imparted to every one of them; and every true believer becomes a monument to the praise and glory of His grace.

But I proceed to remark, in the second place, that while the glory of paving the way for the erection of spiritual temples belongs to Christ, the glory of building these temples by his Holy Spirit, belongs also to him. Christ, by the Holy Spirit, begins, carries forward, and completes the building of the spiritual edifice. It is the glory of the gospel dispensation that it is complete in all its parts. It reveals to us clearly, a ground of acceptance in the finished work of the Redeemer; while, by means of spiritual regeneration, it prepares the soul for the enjoyment of God. And hence it is, that while the gospel is, in one strict and obvious sense, the gospel of the grace of the Saviour; it is also in another sense not less obviously the dispensation of the Spirit. Christ ascended that he might give the Spirit, and that Holy Spirit is the grand agent in beginning, carrying forward, and completing the structure of the living temple. Under the guidance

of the Spirit of God, the sinner is led to contemplate, with new feelings and views, the great economy of the gospel. He is awakened to a sense of his own vileness; he is humbled to the dust with the conviction of those sins that have exposed him to the wrath of his Maker. He is led to hate sin, not merely because it is destructive, but because it is hateful in the sight of God, yea, "the abominable thing which his soul hates." Under the guidance of the same spirit, he is led to receive by faith the mercy of the gospel. Looking around him for a place of refuge from the coming storm, he can find none; he feels himself a solitary sinner in the presence of his great and righteous judge. Trembling for fear, and ready to sink in despair, he is conducted from the thunderings and the lightnings of Sinai, to the peaceful regions of Mount Zion; where, contemplating God as enthroned in love, he receives with satisfaction and delight, a suitable and full salvation.

Under the guidance of the same Holy Spirit, the process of sanctification is carried forward. Having been created anew unto holiness, having obtained a principle of faith, and hope, and of love implanted in his soul, he grows in spiritual attainments; he dies unto sin and lives unto righteousness. His powers are employed in the service of his Maker; he delights in the law of God after the inward man; he is a living epistle of Christ, known and read of all men; he fights the good fight; he perseveres in the way of well-doing; he adorns the doctrine of his Saviour; he bears the image of his glorious Creator and Lord before the world; he lets his lights shine clearly and consistently before men, and, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," he seeks to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." He advances in spiritual knowledge, and in all gracious attainments. His path is like the morning light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. This, in plain language, and without figure, is the manner in which the spiritual temple is begun, carried on, and completed, under the ministry of the Spirit. And thus Christ is honoured and glorified. He is honoured in them that believe; he is honoured in their glorying in his cross; he is honoured in their following his example; he is glorified in their exhibiting, though faintly, the lineaments of his

moral image; he is glorified in guiding them by his counsel; he is glorified in leading them forward step by step in the spiritual career; and thus holy temples are built to the Lord, and "the whole, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

In the third place, the glory of building the temple belongs to Christ, because he has provided those *means* by which, under the ministry of grace, the temple is built. We discern the wisdom of God in the constitution of nature, and in the arrangements of Providence; in the relation of causes to effects, and of means to ends. We discover the same analogy pervading God's spiritual kingdom, and in the government of that kingdom we find a certain connexion established between causes and effects, means and ends. It is true, the temple of the Lord was built in a manner fitted to vindicate the glory to God alone. No sound of the anvil or of the hammer was to be heard in its construction; and in the building of the spiritual temple, it often happens, that the sound of human instrumentality is not to be heard. Feeble and insufficient in itself is all human agency, and God is honoured and the Saviour is glorified by "making the weak things of the world confound the wise." Nevertheless, this is an established principle, that weak and inefficient as the instrumentality may be, there is an appointment made by God in regard to that instrumentality and those means, that must be put, and kept in requisition. While the great Master Builder is carrying forward his own work, there are subordinate instruments employed. There are ministers, and teachers, and guardians, and friends employed under the agency of the great Architect, in a manner very different, indeed, from that in which the architect himself is employed; and yet these are also engaged as humble instruments, while the grandeur of the work, and the beauty of the ascending process, vindicate the whole glory to him who is the author and finisher thereof. The means and the instrumentality are his own appointments. It is by the diligent perusal of the lively oracles of inspiration, searching in that field for hidden treasure; it

is by earnest, persevering, and experimental prayer; it is by regular and constant attendance on the sanctuary of God; it is by sitting down from time to time at the table of the Lord, and eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Christ; it is by the exercise of deep, holy meditation, self-examination, and self-employment in secret—it is by the use of these means, which Christians may furnish one to another, and one with another, when they mutually converse together on the things of God, and make the results of their united experience to bear favourably on their united progress—it is by these, and such means as these, that the spiritual building is carried forward. And the glory of prescribing these means—the glory of furnishing these means—the glory of giving the opportunity for using these means, and the glory of crowning them with success, is vindicated exclusively “to the man whose name is the Branch.”

Along with that subordinate instrumentality, to which reference has been made, it is of importance to remark, that the various dispensations of Providence are wisely overruled for the advancement of the same great scheme. The casualties that affect families and lesser societies; the revolutions that affect the nations and kingdoms of the world; the changes that mark the external history of the church; the chequered scenes which every day present to our view, the prosperity that shines on our dwellings, or the adversity that darkens all around—these and similar dispensations, arrangements, and vicissitudes, are all made to combine with other divinely-appointed means for carrying forward the gracious design; and this, under the guidance of him who is Lord of the spiritual house—of him into whose hands has been committed the government of all things—to whom all power in heaven and in earth has been given, and is in subservience to his great mediatorial sway. And as illustrating the grace and glory of it, “the man whose name is the Branch,” does, by the mingling of his grace, carry on the building; does beautify and adorn the various parts of the structure, till at length he “brings forth the topstone with shoutings of grace, grace unto it.”

This leads me to remark, in the last place, that the glory of erecting spiritual temples belongs to Christ, inasmuch as he

constantly superintends them, takes a tender interest in their concerns, sympathizes with them in all their vicissitudes, and completes the purposes of God ultimately in regard to them. “Behold I have graven thee on the palms of my hands. Thy walls are continually before me.” “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” “He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye.” “My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” The Saviour, in our desolate state, takes a tender interest in all the concerns of his flock—he watches over its individual members, he pleads their cause in the presence of his Father and their Father, his God and their God.” He presents the merits of his oblation in the presence of his Father, on the throne of majesty and grace, and this appeal pleads with a silent but resistless eloquence. While thus, in his intercessory character, the Saviour watches over the Church at large and its individual members, he condescends to watch over their minutest concerns, and to adapt himself to these concerns; he bends towards them the eye of a brother; he marks the heavings of a broken heart; he sympathizes with the sorrowful children of want and woe; he pours into the wounded spirit the balm of consolation; he is present to heal; “he guides by his counsel, and afterwards will bring them to glory:” and thus it belongs to Christ to bear the glory of building the temple. He loves to watch over the various vicissitudes that chequer the lives of individual Christians, to guide them in the paths of righteousness, to soothe their sorrows and to multiply their joys. He loves to mark the progress of the spiritual edifice, as it swells from the vale of corrupt humanity below—to preserve its fair proportions and lovely lineaments safe from the ravages of time and the assaults of marauding foes—to maintain the inscription entire. “Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, be glory and dominion for ever and ever.”

The subject we have attempted to illustrate enters deep into the christian system, and into the economy of the

christian life. It speaks abundant comfort to those who are members of Christ's body, and the subjects of his saving grace. It speaks terror and alarm to those who are "not of this building;" to those who belong to the synagogue of Satan rather than to the temple of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are two views to which I would direct your attention, very shortly, as clearly arising out of the subject we have considered, and as bearing a close connexion with our present circumstances and future prospects.

In the first place, the subject displays, in a very interesting and pleasing manner, the glory of our great Redeemer. The removal of the obstructions to the erection of the temple, the laying the foundations of the building, and the rearing of the superstructure, belong exclusively to our great and gracious Lord. His is the glory of it; his perfections, as God, are all engaged and all displayed in the erection; and his character and love as Mediator, are especially connected with the advancing process. Thine, O blessed Emanuel, is the kingdom; thine is the power; thine is the glory. On every stone of this spiritual temple thy name is inscribed in legible characters; and the charter of its privileges and hopes has been sealed by thy blood. In the histories of this world, and in the records of human triumphs, the names and the honours of the victors stand associated with garments rolled in blood, with the desolating progress of armies, and with a vast expenditure of treasure and of blood. In the records of the spiritual church of the first born, the victories of our great Emanuel are to be seen in countless multitudes of immortal souls emancipated from the enemy; in the rescue of numberless victims from spiritual slavery; in the establishment of an empire of love and grace; in the erection of thousands and millions of "spiritual temples," to the glory of the God of the temple, and the grace of the

great Redeemer. And this, christian believer, is a theme which ought ever to animate thy soul to admiration and love of the Saviour, and ought to keep him enthroned in thy heart. He, though removed in his personal appearance from thy notice, is nevertheless present in the temple. He is the light and the glory of it; and it is because he lives that thou shalt live also.

In the second place, while the subject tends thus to exalt our views of Christ, it tends also to elevate our conceptions of the christian character. There is something in the very idea of a temple that is associated with holy and sacred exercises, with holy and sacred pursuits, with holy and hallowed enjoyments. In the moral estimate of every nation, sacrilege is stamped as a crime of no common magnitude; and from the precincts of a temple have been excluded, with the consent of all, every thing that is impure, every thing that is degrading, every thing that is inconsistent with their becoming holy in character and in conduct. The thought that christian disciples are consecrated to God, that they are dwelling places of Jehovah, and that all the powers are sacred to him, that they are individually the scenes of divine manifestation: such a thought as this elevates our views of the christian character. Away, away even from the outer courts of that temple, be every unholy thought, every impure affection, every low and selfish pursuit, every mercenary and impious aim, every sensual lust, every circumstance that is at variance with the holiness of the temple. "My Father's house shall be an house of prayer for all nations; will ye take it and make it a den of thieves?" "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which ye have of God; and that ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price? Wherefore glorify God with your bodies and with your spirits which are his." Amen.

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SATURDAY, 21st APRIL, 1832.

No. 4.

SERMON by the Rev. Dr. GORDON, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN JOHNSTONE, Glasgow.

THE DANGER OF FORMAL WORSHIP;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE HIGH CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON THE AFTERNOON OF THURSDAY, 22d MARCH, 1832, BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY HIS MAJESTY TO BE OBSERVED THROUGHOUT SCOTLAND AS A NATIONAL FAST,

By the Rev. ROBERT GORDON, D. D.

"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."—ISAIAH xxix. 13, 14.

OF the Prophet Isaiah we are told by himself, that he prophesied concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. By referring, therefore, to the history of these reigns, as they are recorded in the books of Kings and Chronicles, we may form a correct estimate of the character of the age in which he lived, and of the state of religion among the people whom he addressed; and I shall at present attempt little more than a sketch of this history, believing that every reflecting man will be able to apply it, in so far as it is applicable, to our condition and circumstances.

From that history we learn that Uzziah, in whose reign Isaiah began to prophesy, was the ninth king who had reigned over Judah, subsequently to the death of Solomon, and the revolt of the ten tribes who constituted themselves into the kingdom of Israel. And of the eight kings who preceded Uzziah, four, we are told, did that which was right, and four did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord—the two classes following one another, two and two, in succession. In the reigns of the wicked kings we are informed, as might be expected, "that Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him

to jealousy with their sins which they had committed above all that their fathers had done, for they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree: and there were also Sodomites in the land, and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel." Under the other class of kings, those who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, this openly avowed rebellion against the God of heaven was partially checked; and, by the influence and example of some of them, the worship of the true God was restored to something like its original purity. Yet it appears of the very best of them, that they violated the great fundamental principle of that covenant which God had made with their fathers; for they were ever disposed to betake themselves, in seasons of difficulty and danger, to the aid of the heathen nations around them, instead of relying on the solemnly pledged protection of God—a fact which does itself show how far they degenerated from that simple dependence on the promises of God which was at once their security and glory. And of the whole of the four good kings it is said, that though their own hearts were right

with God, and though they did much to bring back the people to an outward acknowledgment of him, yet the people still sacrificed and burnt incense on the high places.

Such was the state of things before the accession of Uzziah to the throne of Judah, in whose reign Isaiah began his ministry; and although it is said of him, that on the whole he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet besides his daring to burn incense in the house of the Lord, for which he was made a leper, and continued a leper till the day of his death—besides this, it is also recorded, in the way of qualifying that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, “that the high places were not removed,” and that “the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places.” Of Jotham, too, it is said, that he “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; he did all that his father Uzziah had done. Howbeit the high places were not removed; the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places.” With respect to Ahaz, it is recorded, that “he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, for he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. Moreover, he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. He sacrificed also, and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.” And even in the reign of Hezekiah, the last and by far the best of the kings under whom Isaiah prophesied, there must have been a manifest appearance on the part of the people of Judah to depart from God. That a marvellous reformation was wrought by his influence and example is indeed true, for “he, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them,” and declared, “It is in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.” Accordingly, he called together the priests and the Levites, and they sanctified themselves, and cleansed the house of the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings in abundance, and the service of the house of the Lord was set in order. Moreover he “sent to all

Israel and Judah, and sent letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the Passover.” And although they laughed his messengers to scorn, and mocked him, yet the people of his own kingdom humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem and killed the Passover; “so there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem.” And “when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and broke the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places, and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also, and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all.” But notwithstanding this apparently universal, and, in many cases, no doubt, real reformation in the people of Judah, it is plain that they were too far from that state of simple reliance on God which constituted at once their honour and security, and by the exercise of which it was designed that they should bear testimony for God against the idolatry of the heathen. Hezekiah, himself, after having been thirteen years king of Judah, on the first occasion that his land was invaded by Sennacherib king of Assyria, hesitated to cast himself on the power of God for protection, but with fear and faint-heartedness sent to the king of Assyria, saying, “I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah, three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold. And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king’s house. At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.” It is true, that on a subsequent occasion, when the land was again invaded by the Assyrians, Hezekiah, encouraged by the assurance of Isaiah the prophet, acted a different part, throwing himself on the promised protection of God, and setting at defiance the armies of the invader. But at a still later period, when towards the close of his life, the Lord had so pro-

spered him, that he rose in honour, his heart was lifted up; and when a heathen prince sent messengers to congratulate him on his recovery from sickness, he was tempted to show "all the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not;" forgetting that his strength and glory lay not in the amount of his riches, but in confidence of the promise of his God. And that the people were all this while equally ready to forget their privileges and security, was but too obvious; for no sooner was Manasseh come to the throne, than he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them, and built altars for them within the very house of the Lord, and set up a graven image of the grove in the house where the Lord had chosen to put his name. One of his sons he sacrificed to Moloch, and he himself used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards. And, so far from finding the people unwilling to go with him, it appears that they were glad to make their escape from the restraints under which Hezekiah's recognition of the true God had brought them.

It appears, then, that the best commentary on our text, is just the history of the reigns, during which Isaiah prophesied, as it has been recorded, partly by him, and still more fully in the books to which I have referred. Whatever be the period, during the Prophet's public life, in which these words were uttered, we can be at no loss to know on what ground he charged his countrymen with delinquency. The prophecy was spoken during the reign of one of the kings of Judah, and they were at that time making something like a profession of religion, drawing near to God with their mouths, and honouring him with their lips. But we have already seen, that under Hezekiah himself, after all he did to put down idolatry and re-establish the worship of the true God, which under his predecessor seems to have been altogether abandoned, there was too good ground to say of the people of Judah what is here said of them by the prophet. The charge brought against them con-

sisted mainly in this, having withdrawn their confidence from God and placed it on some devices of their own; substituting for the worship of the true God the idolatrous worship of the heathen, whose manner they adopted, and whose aid they coveted. It is admitted, that they did draw near to God with their mouths, and that they did honour him with their lips; but it was not from any love to the worship itself; it was not from any settled idea of God's absolute sovereignty; it was not from any resolution or any secret purpose of taking his sure word of promise as their sole strength and security, be their difficulties and dangers what they might—their hearts were far removed from God—they desired not the knowledge of his ways. Though in obedience to an authorized order, in obedience to the example of a pious sovereign, or from some indefinite dread of coming judgment, they had external worship, as prescribed by law, yet their hearts were not with God; and though finding themselves on the eve of being threatened by calamity from without, such as invasion from a foreign foe, or the attack of a dangerous malady, they still had secret misgivings in committing themselves to the protection of God; though pledged to him by solemn covenant, they were disposed, like the king of Israel that we read of, to send messengers to inquire, not of God, but of Beelzebub how they should escape the impending evil. If all this was applicable to Judah, under the reign of good king Hezekiah, can any one doubt, when he sought to buy peace with the king of Assyria, that Hezekiah was driven to this measure—a measure the most impious in itself, and the most degrading to the Lord's heritage, of whom it had been promised, that the fear of them and the dread of them should be round about them; can any one doubt that he was driven to this course, by finding that his people placed more dependence upon the influence of Beelzebub, than in the power and faithfulness of God to drive him hence? It was no slight crime with which the people of Judah were actually chargeable—it was indeed a denial of God's sovereignty, although by that very sovereignty it was that they and their fathers had for seven hundred years been in possession of the land of Canaan. Though they might make an outward profession of respect for the

ordinances of God, yet the spirit by which they were actuated was essentially an atheistical spirit, inasmuch as with all the outward observance of divine ordinances, they looked for continued prosperity or deliverance from adversity, not to the wisdom of God, but to their own counsels, and the help promised to them by their idolatrous allies.

And the judgment threatened was in accordance with the nature and manifestation of their sin. They were not to be overwhelmed with irresistible calamity, in order to punish their flagrant idolatry; but they were to be left to the effect of their own devices, and their own schemes, and by these they were to be entangled. They were to work by their own skill, and in so doing, to be working their own ruin: and when all their plans were brought to their completion, the effect was to be to bring utter desolation on the land; for "behold," says the prophet, "I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent men shall be hid."

It will not be necessary to enter at any great length on the illustration of the practical lessons suggested by the subject of these remarks. Mankind, with all their varieties of character, are essentially so much the same in all ages, and the Scriptures do, on the one hand, so graphically portray the leading features of human nature, and, on the other, set forth so clearly the great unchangeable principles of the divine administration, that none who read that book with soberness and attention, and look around them on the world with ordinary observation, can fail to see that the sins of individuals or of nations there reprov'd, are, with some modifications it may be, the same sins which are still prevalent, and that, if unrepented of and unforgiven, their consequences must in the end be the same. No nation, it is true, is precisely in the same circumstances with the kingdom of Judah, for, in the case of none is deliverance wrought or judgment executed so immediately as to require those miraculous interpositions that so often took place in the history of Israel and Judah; but still the great principles of the divine government are unchangeable and eternal.

It is one of these, that sin is the reproach of any people. One end of the Jewish economy was to illustrate this principle; but we are not to be mistaken as to even divine interposition in the history of this people, for frequently their punishments happened by the operation of natural causes, under the controlling and ruling providence of God. But it were absolute atheism to maintain, that because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, by suspending the ordinary laws of nature, therefore divine agency has nothing to do with prosperity or adversity, or that these are not determined by the moral character of those who are the subjects of it. If there be among us, possessing as we do a full revelation of the will of God, a disposition to deny or overlook his supremacy as Sovereign Disposer of all events, and to trust to the wisdom of human counsels for national deliverance or prosperity, without any devout recognition of absolute dependence upon him, are we not chargeable with the very sin with which Judah of old was charged, and which was the source of all their multiplied offences? And if, along with this, there be a profession of faith—an external compliance with the ordinances of the Gospel are we not in the condition of drawing near to God with our mouths, and honouring him with our lips, while our heart is far removed from him? It cannot be denied, that this description is too applicable to us in our national capacity; that though professedly a christian people, with laws and ordinances, we are looking mainly to our own skill and resources for the advancement of our national prosperity; that whether our schemes are successful or not, we are too ready to rest satisfied with looking to natural causes, without any solemn or serious recognition of the hand of God, and that this practical infidelity characterizes no small portion of our public enterprises. It is a fact which no devout man can contemplate but with sorrow, that the appointment of this very day for humiliation and prayer, and for the confession of sin, has in various quarters been made the subject of indecent scoffing. And granting that they who have done so are fewer in number and less influential than I fear they are, the practices too common among us show that such sentiments are more general than is openly

avowed, inasmuch as such practices are altogether incompatible with an habitual acknowledgment of God as the disposer of every event, or that his blessing can alone secure public blessings or private prosperity. If the want of directly avowing the watchful providence of God, in what of prosperity or adversity befalls us, is held openly in scorn and derision; if, in forming schemes for giving permanence to the one, or working out deliverance from the other, it be plain that nothing is looked to beyond the agency of human strength; and if, in the pursuit of individual interests, practices are become very prevalent in which men cannot dare deliberately to ask God's blessing, is not our national character to this extent essentially the same with that of Judah of old? And if the principles of divine government be the same in all ages, must we not soon, in one form or other, experience the bitter fruits of sin?

We are already reaping these fruits. I allude not merely to the immediate effect of that visitation of Providence which, with appalling rapidity, has swept away thousands of our people, but to the immense extent of its operations already in the commercial interests of our country—the indefinite misery it may continue to entail, and the countless multitudes, the most industrious of our countrymen, to whom the usual channels of subsistence have been absolutely shut. And yet, what is this but an intimation of what God may do in the way of visiting upon us our sin of forgetting and forsaking him? For should He, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice, withdraw that secret influence by which he directs the thoughts of men to the accomplishment of his own objects; should he give us up to worldly power, however imposing; should he surrender the guidance of our concerns solely to the exercise of mere human talents, at the expense of the glory due to God, even yet, without the interposition of famine, or pestilence, or sword—those more immediate executioners of divine judgments—how fearful may be the result

if we are left to our own devices! how unquestionable our calamities, treasured up in that solemn declaration: "the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid!"

And what, then, is our duty as individuals? We may be able to do little in the way of bringing back men to the acknowledgment of God as Supreme Ruler among the nations; but there is a refuge to which the humblest among us may betake himself—the refuge of prayer. Our sovereign has called on us, in language which breathes a devout and humble spirit, to make confession, and to offer up supplications for him, and for ourselves, and for our country. Let us, therefore, say, in all humility of soul, with pious Nehemiah of old, "Now, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on all thy people. Howbeit, thou art just in all that is brought upon us: for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments, and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them."

And while offering this prayer and confession, let us inquire how far we have contributed to the national guilt of forgetting and disowning God, in the sentiments we have entertained in respect of our national concerns, or in the principles on which we have acted in our individual pursuits. And let us beware lest our very confession go to aggravate our sin: if it be found that we draw near to God with our mouths, and honour him with our lips, while our hearts are far removed from him. Let us beware lest it should be found that our coming towards God has been taught us by the precept of men.

God bless his word, and to his name be the praise! Amen.

THE PURPOSES WHICH THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST WAS CALCULATED TO SERVE;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN EGLINTON STREET UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, GLASGOW,
ON THE AFTERNOON OF SABBATH, 1st APRIL, 1832,

By the Rev. JOHN JOHNSTONE, A.M.

'And it came to pass, about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.'—
LUKE ix. 29—31.

THERE is no species of writing, when ably conducted, which is more amusing, and from which we may derive more instruction and information, than the histories of those men who have been justly celebrated on account of the talents which they possessed, the virtues which they displayed, and the energies which they put forth for the benefit of their country or the interests of the human race at large. Every circumstance connected with such characters becomes interesting. We mark with pleasure those various events, which led to the first development of those faculties and virtues which rendered their names illustrious; or which first called forth those energies, the successful exertion of which has imparted to them a deathless fame. All our sympathies are awakened when we behold them struggling with those difficulties which opposed their progress; and our hearts glow with the purest delight when we perceive them rising to that eminence to which they were pressing forward, and crowned with those honours which they had fairly won.

There is no history, taking it as a whole, which is more interesting, and which merits closer study, than that of Jesus of Nazareth. The incidents with which it abounds are varied, and it exhibits unto us a character in which all the sublimer excellencies are blended with those which are more soft and lovely. Our souls are melted into tenderness when we contemplate him relieving the wants of the poor, imparting joy to the sorrowful, and administering consolation and hope to the broken-hearted and the desponding. Our minds are filled with wonder and awe when we behold him in a plenitude of

his power, stilling the rage of the tempest, liberating the victims of death, and irresistibly controlling the fierce malignity of the demons of hell. In the whole course of that history there is not a single event that is not worthy of our notice, and that does not teem with instruction. There are some events, however, which are of greater importance than others, which consequently excite a deeper interest, and demand our more serious attention: and of this description, you will readily grant, is the transfiguration on the holy mount.

It is not my intention, in this discourse, to enter upon any minute explanation of the different circumstances connected with the transfiguration of Christ, but simply to direct your attention to some of those important purposes which this wonderful event was calculated to serve; and amongst those which might be specified, I shall select the following:

1st, The transfiguration and the circumstances attending it, were calculated to prepare the mind of the Saviour for meeting and encountering the sufferings which he was soon to endure.

We do much injustice to the character of the Redeemer, if we suppose that he was encased in a stoical apathy, or that his heart was so callous that he could not be moved by his own suffering, or affected by the sorrows of others. Possessed of all the feelings of humanity, purified from every thing that was selfish or sinful, his heart was imbued with a sensibility which rendered him highly susceptible. It is, in fact, this circumstance which softens down and imparts a loveliness to the loftier attributes in which he was clothed.

and which is calculated, at the same time, to give us a more just and accurate conception of the acuteness of that grief which frequently preyed on his soul. It is true, indeed, Jesus Christ was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" but innocence is not always a safeguard against sorrow. And that it was not so in the experience of the Son of Man, we have ample and melancholy proof in the groans which he uttered, in the tears which he shed, in the lines of care which deeply marked and marred his countenance.

The man of innocence not only mourns over the painful circumstances in which he may happen to be placed, but he anticipates with dread those evils which he sees are gathering and thickening around him, and threatening to overwhelm him with destruction. Such an anticipation is sometimes more oppressive than even the evil itself; for we look at the evil through a medium which magnifies it far beyond its reality. The Son of God, indeed, had an accurate prescience of every scene of wo through which he had to pass. He was intimately acquainted with the nature and extent of all his sufferings, and many a view which he took of them was most appalling and fearful. Though he had distinctly calculated the sum of these sufferings; though he felt strong in his own energies and resources; though he relied with unbending confidence on the promised aid and support of his heavenly Father; yet there were moments when his heart sunk within him, when every feeling of his nature recoiled at the prospect of his agony and death.

It was necessary that his mind should be armed with fortitude to meet those evils which he was doomed to endure; and what circumstances were better calculated to produce this effect than those which took place on the holy mount? The "decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem" formed the subject of conversation. The ignominy and the torture which were to accompany it, would not be kept out of view; that load of divine wrath, under the pressure of which he was to die, would not be passed over in silence; and we can easily suppose that the importance of that death, and the glorious effects of which it was to be productive, would not be forgotten. Moses and Elias, along with the Saviour, would doubtless speak concerning the high au-

thority, the eternal and solemn decree, by which it was ordained—the vast sum of happiness it was to bring to millions of the lost, and the guilty, and the miserable—the new and the sublime views of the divine character which it was to open up to every order of pure intelligences, and the high acclaims of praise it would call forth through the ages of eternity. The very individuals who conversed with the Saviour, and the circumstances in which they appeared, were to his mind noble and delightful evidences of the brilliant effects which were to be achieved by his death. For it was solely owing to the merits of that death that the spirit of the one had gone to bliss, and that the other, in his whole person, without tasting death, had entered the regions of immortality and glory. The glory, too, with which he himself was encircled, was calculated to elevate and fortify his mind in the prospect of his coming agonies and sorrows. Never, during the previous part of his humiliation, had such honour been conferred on the Son of God; his face shone as the brightness of the sun, and his very raiment was white as the light. This, to him, was doubtless a most refreshing foretaste of that glory on which he was to enter, when his sufferings were terminated; and the remembrance of it must have had a most beneficial influence on his mind amidst the gloom of desertion, when his soul was filled with a sense of divine wrath, and when he experienced the fearful tortures of crucifixion.

Nothing is better calculated to relieve and to cheer the generous mind, when burdened and weighed down by the anticipation of suffering and of sorrow, than the contemplation of the excellence of the cause for which these are to be endured, and the hopes of the high advantages of which they are to be productive. When these are present to the view in all their splendour and magnitude, they operate like a bright vision of bliss; and the man who steadily contemplates them, goes forth to the conflict, not only calm and unmoved, forgetting the pain of the present, but exulting and triumphing in the prospect of the future. It was the conviction of the nobleness of their cause; it was the persuasion that the divine glory was promoted, and the good of the Church advanced; it was the holy hope of the crown of life they would gain, that made

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the martyrs of our own and of other lands meet suffering, and torture, and death, with a fearlessness and a fortitude which have shed around their character a lustre which the grave has not dimmed, and which time shall not extinguish; and we have the authority of the Spirit of God when we assert, that it was the joy set before him that made the Captain of our Salvation endure the cross and despise the shame.

II. The transfiguration of Christ and the circumstances connected with it, were calculated to rectify the misconceptions which the disciples had formed of his character, and to prevent that despondency which his death had a tendency to produce.

It is truly melancholy to contemplate the fatal influence which prejudice will exert on the minds of men, and the errors into which it will lead them, both in theory and practice. When left to its unfettered operation, even though surrounded with every possible advantage, prejudice will darken our understanding, bias our modes of thinking and reasoning, and stamp with its own indelible impress, the conclusions at which we arrive. On those subjects particularly which are connected with religion, prejudice is too frequently permitted to enter and influence the mind. In too many instances, these subjects are not investigated with that candour and with that simple desire to reach the knowledge of the truth which are necessary. Theories concerning them are previously formed, and all our ingenuity is employed to bring every circumstance to bear upon and support these.

We cannot find, we apprehend, a more apt and striking illustration of these remarks than in the history of the Jewish Church. From age to age prophets and holy men were raised up among them, who were commissioned by God, and who spake as they were moved by his Spirit concerning the Messiah. They described his character, the sublime attributes in which he was to be clothed, the deliverance which he was to accomplish, and the circumstances in which he was to appear. Wrapt in vision, their imaginations kindled, their whole minds glowed with a heavenly ardour, and they threw around their descriptions of this illustrious personage all the charms of the most brilliant poetry. But though these de-

scriptions were splendid and lofty, yet they were sufficiently simple and plain to convey to the inquiring mind accurate conceptions of him who was their subject; and, doubtless, such conceptions of the Messiah were formed by many during the better and purer days of the Jewish hierarchy. As that Church, however, became corrupt and secularized, they lost sight of the true character of the Christ, and formed to themselves ideas of him very far removed from the truth.

This evil was universally prevalent when the Son of God made his appearance on earth. Every proper apprehension of his character and of the design of his coming, seems to have been banished from the minds of the Jewish people. In their own vain imaginations they had denuded "Him who was to come" of his brightest glory, and had invested him with all the paltry grandeur of a worldly prince—of a powerful, indeed, but of a temporal deliverer. They supposed that he would appear as the assertor of his country's rights—as the champion of his country's liberties—as the restorer of his country's faded glory. They expected that he would raise up and occupy the fallen and the deserted throne of David, and that by his prowess and the brilliancy of his deeds, he would elevate his country to the highest pinnacle of earthly fame and of earthly honour. It is to be ascribed to these false conceptions of his character, that Jesus of Nazareth became "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to both houses of Israel."

The Apostles of our Lord cherished the very same conceptions of the character of their master, and fondly indulged the same hopes respecting the designs which he was destined to accomplish. They imagined that the kingdom which he came to found and to govern belonged entirely to this world. They looked forward with delightful emotions to a bright era in the history of their Lord, when he was to be arrayed in all the insignia of royalty; when he was to ascend a throne, to sway a sceptre, and to number among his vassals the nobles and princes of many lands. In this scene of pomp and of pleasure they never doubted but that they themselves were to occupy elevated stations and act a very prominent part. To persons entertaining such views and cherishing such hopes the circumstances in which the

Saviour appeared, must have been most perplexing. They could not conceive why the Messiah promised to their fathers should be oppressed with poverty—why he should be the object of the foulest scorn and of the fiercest persecution. They might think, indeed, that he was only maturing his plans, and that the time was approaching when he would stand forth in his own unrivalled glory, the unopposed claimant of the Jewish throne and the heaven-anointed king of the people of God. When, however, they witnessed him apprehended; when they heard him condemned; when they beheld him treated as the vilest felon; when they saw him nailed to the accursed tree, the spell by which they had been bound would be broken, and the dream of their bliss would come to an end; they would feel all the grief, and the shame, and the despair of men whose brightest hopes had been blighted, and whose fairest prospects had been covered with darkness.

Now, the circumstances which occurred on the holy mount were calculated to rectify these false conceptions of their master's character, to prepare their minds for witnessing his suffering, and to prevent them from despondency because of his death. Moses and Elias conversed with Jesus concerning that decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. This of itself was certainly sufficient to convince the Apostles, that the deepest humiliation to which their Lord submitted was perfectly compatible with the will of God, and altogether consistent with the glorious things which had been spoken of him by Moses and the prophets. It was sufficient to teach them that this decease was absolutely necessary for accomplishing the magnificent purposes of mercy, and that it was essentially requisite for their Master to endure it before entering into his glory. The bright light of glory in which their Master and they were encircled on Tabor, might well have calmed their fears and lulled their suspicions, amidst that darkness with which they were encompassed on Calvary; and the testimony which they had heard borne to his character on the one spot, might have kept alive their hope when, on the other, they listened to the language of sorrow and dejection. For what reason had they to conclude, that the person whose countenance they had seen beaming with a

heavenly glory, and whose raiment was "white and glistening," whom God himself had proclaimed to be his "beloved Son," would be forsaken of God for ever? His character might be aspersed; his enemies might attempt to load it with the darkest infamy; they might doom him to the death of the basest slave; but could the thought be entertained for a moment, that the powerful and holy Ruler of the universe would suffer one so nearly related to him, so dearly beloved by him, to lie under an eternal eclipse? Was it not more just to conclude, that God who had "showed him great and sore troubles would quicken him again, and bring him up again from the depths of the earth, that he would increase his greatness?" Was it not more just to conclude, that he would emerge from the darkness which had surrounded him at his death, and that he would shine forth in a glory, far surpassing in brilliancy even that with which he was irradiated on the holy mount? Had the circumstances of the transfiguration been only remembered by the Apostles who witnessed them, the apprehension of the Saviour, his condemnation and crucifixion, might, it is true, have awakened in their bosoms the keenest grief; but the joy of hope would have dwelt in their hearts, and the peace in believing would have filled their minds.

III. I remark, in the third place, that the appearance of Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration furnishes us with a most powerful proof of the immortality of the soul.

The immortality of the soul may be considered as one of the fundamental truths of both natural and revealed religion. There is so much within ourselves bearing upon this doctrine, as to render the evidence of the fact altogether irresistible. Wherever man, therefore, is found to exist, even in all the wildness of savage life, totally unacquainted with a single refinement of civilization, he has a conception that there is something in his constitution widely different from the material objects with which he is surrounded, which is indestructible in its nature, and the existence of which is secured, even after his body has been mouldering into dust in the grave, or reduced to ashes on the funeral pile. It is the consciousness that there is such a principle within us that impels us to the

discharge of duty—that stimulates us to the exercise of every virtue—that brings consolation to us in the midst of sorrow, and that enables us to brave death, though surrounded with all its terrors.

Even those men who, carried away by the influence of a false philosophy, have denied and combated the peculiar doctrines of revelation; who have banished them from their creed as the unintelligible jargon of a fanatical mysticism, have still professed firmly to believe in the soul's immortality. Indeed, to deny this requires such a hardness of heart, and a mind so groveling, that they can be acquired and possessed by those alone whose impieties, and vices, and deep guilt, and dark fears, have rendered to themselves total annihilation a most desirable boon—a most valuable blessing.

This is one of those truths on which revelation is based, and which beautifies and adorns every part of its sublime and lovely structure. Accordingly, in almost every page of the inspired volume it meets our view; and in many parts of that book it is pressed upon our attention with an earnestness and a solemnity worthy of its magnitude and mighty importance. In no event, however, recorded in the Word of God, have we such a distinct, such a sensible evidence of this most interesting doctrine, as in that which occurred on the mount of transfiguration. For here were visible, even to the bodily eyes of the Apostles, men existing and actively occupied who had been removed from this earth many ages before. What evidence could be more powerfully illustrative of the fact that there is a state beyond the present, where the soul exists in full intellectual vigour and exercise.

The Most High always adapts his manifestations of the truth to the capacities of his people, or to the particular circumstances in which they are placed. In the present instance, during the time of our Saviour's ministry upon earth, the Jews were torn, not only by civil factions, but they were divided into numerous religious sects. Among the most powerful of these was the Sadducean. Though in many points the creed of this sect was to be preferred far before that of their rivals the Pharisees, yet in others their tenets were much more wild, impious, and destructive. They denied the existence of spirit, and the resurrection from the dead.

They seem, in fact, to have imbibed all the foolish and degrading doctrines of materialism.

It might be expected that the Apostles of our Lord, in the course of their ministry, would come into contact with those who held such doctrines, and would have to grapple with them in the lists of controversy; it was necessary, therefore, that their minds should be confirmed in the belief of those truths which formed the very basis, and which constituted one of the brightest ornaments of that system which they were commissioned to teach. There was nothing better calculated to produce and to confirm such a belief than the appearance of Moses and Elias on the mount; for here the Apostles beheld two persons who were once the inhabitants of our world, not only existing in another state, but, in that state, beaming in all the brightness, and shining in all the glories of immortality—clothed, too, in forms which were encircled in a lustre every way worthy of the heavenly mansions from which they had come.

IV. The circumstances connected with the transfiguration were calculated to teach us the existence of the body, and some of the properties which it would possess in a glorified state.

It is not with regard to the soul only that revelation illumines the prospects of man. We may be assured that the soul, unscathed by the stroke of death, is destined to exist in all the glory and in all the vigour of an imperishable immortality; but still we could not divest ourselves of some anxiety concerning the ultimate fate of that material form which has been so long linked to the mind by the closest tie, and through the medium of which so much knowledge, and, consequently, so much happiness have been communicated. We would have revolted at the thought that this part of our constitution, though the less noble, was doomed to remain for ever like a clod of the valley, or to undergo an eternal annihilation. And yet such must unavoidably have been our conclusions concerning it, had we not been blessed with divine Revelation. That the body, after death, should be raised up—that it should again be inspired by the principle of vitality—that it should become a prepared and an adapted habitation for the soul, now shining bright in all the beauties of spiritual perfection, are circumstances to

which we have so little, if, in fact, any thing perfectly analogous, in the whole range of natural phenomena, that to form even the most distant conception of them was far beyond the capabilities of the most powerful and expanded human intellect. Bring the most enlightened sages of ancient Greece or Rome; place them by the grave or the funeral pile; ask them if these bones can again live, if these ashes can once more be re-animated; they would smile contemptuously at the questions, and they would consider the man who could indulge the hope of such a change over being effected as labouring under the deepest mental delusion. Yet these are the very truths which revelation brings forward to our view, and which it asserts and maintains as the most incontrovertible facts.

Around these truths, it cannot be denied, there is thrown an almost impervious darkness, and beyond the mere statement of them we almost know nothing. How shall the dead be raised? and what are the exact properties of bodies when raised? are questions which involve in them difficulties which in all probability will never be solved till the resurrection itself takes place. We know of no secret inherent principle in the human body, when laid in the grave, which naturally tends to its revival, nor can we explain the process by which it shall be re-animated. Though these things be so, yet we are not at liberty to explode the whole as the "baseless fabric of a vision." Why should it seem a strange thing that God should raise the dead? Cannot that almighty Being who, by the word of his power, at first formed matter out of nothing, who by the same energy, regulated by infinite wisdom, modified and fashioned this matter into ten thousand different forms and substances—cannot He collect the dust of man, though scattered by all the winds of heaven, re-animate his lifeless body, and rebuild it a temple of perfection? Take a person who is a total stranger to our climate; place him in our country when spring has spread her beauties round; the scenery would delight him—the melody of the groves would charm his ear—the verdure of the fields would please his eye—the animation, and the activity, and the gladness which everywhere meet his view, would rejoice his heart. Winter, however, would arrive—

desolation would rule the scene—he would mourn the melancholy change. Tell him that a few months only would elapse, when all nature would revive—when his former pleasures would all be renewed, he would be disposed to call in question your veracity; he might demand proof, and the best proof you could give him would be to allow him to wait till the return of spring furnished him with the evidences of his senses concerning the fact.

In the appearance of Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration, we have a palpable proof that the human body actually exists in a future state, and that it can be rendered capable of sharing in all the bliss and purities of heaven. Elias was seen in his whole person—soul and body united. These, indeed, had never been covered by death; but the material part of his constitution had undergone a change equivalent to that which the inspired Apostle declares shall pass upon those who are alive and remain on the earth at the last day, and by which they shall be perfectly assimilated to those who shall then be awaked from the sleep, and come forth from the dark chambers of death. That change, we have reason to believe, shall render the bodies of the saints widely different from these "muddy vestures of decay which now do keep them in;" but that change shall not be so great as to destroy their identity. The form in which Moses appeared was distinguished from Elias, and each of these illustrious characters was recognised by the Apostles. They had never seen either of these individuals in the flesh, but a knowledge of their persons had in all probability been communicated to them by the immediate and miraculous agency of the Most High. From this circumstance, are we not justified in concluding that though the change produced on the glorified bodies of the saints be very great, yet there shall be so much resemblance retained of what they once were, that they shall know and be known by one another?

The body of Elias was made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Its passions and appetites were all purified; its senses were all adapted to the nature of those objects about which they were to be employed; the seeds of disease and decay had been extirpated from it; and

it had acquired all the high attributes of immortality. This body must have possessed some of the properties of spirit. Elias seems to have appeared on the scene and disappeared from it with a rapidity of movement altogether incompatible with our ideas of a material body. It was like our Lord's glorious body after his resurrection, and which, at his ascension, was conveyed away through the air, and above the visible heavens, to the regions of light and of glory, far beyond the ken of mortals.

It would, however, argue a criminal boldness to speculate on a subject, concerning which so little is said, even by the men of inspiration. To questions relating to the resurrection of the body, and the properties which it would possess when raised up again, the apostle Paul has given the following admirable reply: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural

body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (1 Cor. xv. 36—44.)

Such are the important purposes which the transfiguration and the circumstances connected with it are calculated to serve. Those disciples who witnessed this splendid scene enjoyed a singular privilege; and this high favour which was conferred upon them they doubtless rightly appreciated. Such a privilege is not now conferred on any of the disciples of the Redeemer; yet, by faith we are permitted to contemplate the Son of God, in circumstances far more exalted than even those in which he appeared on the holy mount. For we now see Jesus, who, for the suffering of death was made a little lower than the angels, that he might taste death for every man, crowned with glory and with honour. Let us, therefore, fix our thoughts upon Him who has attained a name above every name. And let this particularly be the exercise of our mind when we have the near prospect of again observing that holy ordinance by which we commemorate that "decease" which formed the subject of discourse on the mount. In fine, let us remember that there is a day rapidly advancing, when the Son of Man shall appear resplendent with glory—shining bright in his own glory, in the glory of the holy angels, and in the glory of his Father. Our eyes shall see him; and happy indeed will it be for us if, when we see him, we shall be found to bear his image. Happy will it be for us, if in that day of the Lord, we are found among the number of the redeemed, who shall be carried away to the land of beauty and of bliss, where they shall for ever behold the glory of God and of the Lamb. Amen.

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THE SIN OF OVER CAREFULNESS CONCERNING TEMPORAL
OBJECTS;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE EAST PARISH CHURCH, GREENOCK, ON THE FORE-
NOON OF THURSDAY, 15th MARCH, 1832,

By the Rev. JOHN FORBES,
Minister of the Outer High Church, Glasgow.

*"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with
thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."*—PHILIPPIANS IV. 6.

A STATE of irreligion is a state of extremes. It exhibits at different times, and under different circumstances, the most varied conditions of mind. The greatest insensibility gives place to the deepest anguish and solicitude; the excess of carelessness is succeeded by overwhelming dismay—confidence the most presumptuous passes into extreme alarm and terror which know no bounds. A striking, though by no means singular, instance of this we have in the case of Belshazzar, the impious king of Babylon. What a sudden and unexpected change did he exhibit on that eventful night, the last of his reign, when he sat down in the midst of his fellows at the great feast which he had prepared for them! He seemed at first incapable of being moved—he seemed a man who stood on a sure foundation, and who had no reason to be afraid, whatever might befall him. But it soon became manifest that this was not really the case. From the extreme of impenitence, pride, and self-sufficiency, he sunk in a moment into the deepest consternation, and the most overwhelming anguish; for, as they drank wine, and praised gods of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of iron, and of wood, and of stone, in that same hour came forth the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick, upon the plaster, over the wall of the king's palace. And the king saw, and the king's countenance changed; fear came upon him, so that the joints of his loins were loosened, and his knees smote one against another. Belshazzar knew not God. Had he been a truly religious man, this consternation might not have been upon him. It is religion alone which establishes the mind, and gives genuine tranquillity and permanent peace. The reason of this is obvious; for unless we be at peace with God, and feel that, whatever he may do or appoint, he bears a concern for our well-being, and consults our best interests, we are liable to the utmost anxiety when any thing occurs which is contrary to our desires, and that varies with our inclinations. The world is a scene of change and trials which no strength of ours can avert—which no courage of ours is adequate rightly to sustain. Afflictions, disappointment, and death are the lot of all. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Our fondest expectations are liable to be blasted, and our best laid schemes are liable to be broken. Death devours all, sparing neither age, nor sex, nor distinction. In such a state it is impossible to retain our composure and preserve a serenity of temper, unless we can trust in God as our friend, and feel that in all things his infinite wisdom and goodness are exerted in our behalf to regulate the economy of our existence, and prepare us for its various

vicissitudes. But the magnanimity and peace of religion are not always enjoyed to the extent which they ought. This appears from the text. It is an exhortation addressed to believers, to individuals who have known and loved God, to persons who have been delivered from the condemnation of sin—who have been freed from the service of Satan, and who have lived a life of faith and holiness.

In the following discourse we propose, then, to consider the reasons why the peace and comfort of religion are not more fully enjoyed than is generally the case by the people of God. This would lead us farther to consider the ground here given for humiliation and contrition; and still farther to consider the means which are to be employed in order to realize that divine peace and serenity which it is at once our duty and our happiness, under the trials of life, to cultivate and enjoy. At present, however, we confine ourselves to the first of these.

The carefulness against which believers are admonished in our text, is that spirit of excessive anxiety—that spirit of disquieting fear and oppressive sorrow which temporal evils or the prospect of them is so apt to excite in the mind, and which is contrary to that patience, resignation, and hope, which we are called to exercise towards God. The word in the original is still more expressive of this than in our common translation. The exhortation is to be understood in a qualified or modified sense. It relates obviously to temporal interests and objects. We cannot be too much concerned about our spiritual estate; we cannot be too solicitous about our duty to God, about our relation to the world to come, or about the salvation of our souls. On these subjects we stand in daily need of being exhorted to still greater care and anxiety than at any time we actually give to them. We never are, and never can be too solicitous in this our proper work—never too much devoted to it. We need to be stimulated to intenser application to it, and to more assiduous diligence and perseverance in it. It is not here we are liable to run into any extreme, provided we are directed by grace and influenced by truth. The carefulness against which we are admonished in the text, is chiefly injurious, because it prevents us from being so careful as we ought to be, in re-

gard to our spiritual condition. The text is to be regarded as of similar import with that other passage, "Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us," Heb. xii. 1. Even as to our temporal concerns there is a suitable care and attention which we are not only permitted but commanded to give them. Discretion and diligence in conducting the business and managing the affairs of life are incumbent on every individual, and the want of these is the very means by which irreligion and vice are often engendered. Indolence, irregularity, procrastination, and negligence, involve those who indulge in them in far more numerous and perplexing cares than if they conducted their affairs with promptitude, diligence, order, and prudence. When the business of life gets into disorder, when its duties are not attended to in their proper manner, this serves to keep up a most distressing and anxious spirit of carefulness, and prevents the unhappy individual who indulges such a habit from ever being able to attain to things higher and more important. The carefulness condemned in the text is a spirit of excessive anxiety about temporal things, not a becoming and necessary attention to the ordinary business of life. It is not the carefulness of Mary that is here condemned, who chose the better part, in that she washed our Saviour's feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair—but of Martha, who cared after many things about which she had no reason to be troubled. Let us consider, then, what the causes are that produce this spirit and feeling. There would be little wonder although people who are ignorant of God, and without faith in the wisdom of his providence, and who have no hope beyond the present life, should be over careful about the things of the present state; but this over carefulness is not confined to them, for it extends to those who have some—and these not unreal—pretensions to godliness. But what are the reasons that these also have need to be exhorted to lay aside an unholy carefulness about many things? whence proceeds this over-carefulness?

First, it proceeds from an undue love of created objects and blessings. It is the duty of man to bring his will, in every case, into submission to the divine

will, and to account that as good and right which God is pleased to appoint to take place. But so long as the feelings and affections of the soul remain in any degree un sanctified, there is a struggle, more or less severe, between our will and the will of God, and we are accordingly afraid lest we be thwarted in our wishes, and disappointed in our desires and expectations. If we not only acknowledge in our understandings, but feel in our hearts, that whatever God does is best to be done, we should then give up all our concerns into his hands, to dispose of us and of them according to his good pleasure. But we are naturally far more solicitous about the gratification of our own desires than the advancement of the divine glory, and hence we would have God's will subordinate to ours, instead of having our wills in subjection to his. The indulgence of such a spirit is not more characteristic of sin than it is necessarily productive of misery; for it is impossible but that God's counsel shall stand; it is impossible but that his decrees shall be countenanced, and that his way shall be established, whether we acquiesce in them or not. We cannot alter any thing which God has determined. If God has allotted a state of poverty to any, and determined that he shall walk in the humble vale of obscurity, in vain is it for him to murmur at his lot, or to struggle against it. It becomes us all to live under a deep persuasion that our desires cannot be all gratified. God distributes different situations, faculties, and portions among men. One intention of this is to display his sovereignty, and to manifest the wonders of his wisdom and goodness. Such is the extent of human selfishness, that man's desires are inflamed by this state of things, and he would arrogate to himself all the various bounties of providence which are diffused around him. He covets the riches given to this man, the wisdom belonging to that other man, the long life which is the lot of a third, the situation of honour reached by a fourth; and there is no end of the extravagance—of the sinfulness of his desires. Hence the source of an anxious carefulness; for, otherwise, man would be contented with the situation in which he is placed, and with the share of good which he has, and would desire that God would be glorified by the successful application of the talents com-

mitted to his trust. He would keep away from his mind all murmuring and discontent, and would deem it his meat and his drink to act aright in the situation in which he is placed. He would be willing to take what the bounty of Providence has allotted him, and equally willing to share in the afflictions, the troubles, and the bereavements incident to human life. He would stand to his duty, equally ready to be abased as to be exalted. He would lay his account with privations. He would study to be suitably grateful for the blessings he enjoyed, and at the same time willing to resign them to Him who has given them, whenever it might be requisite. He would look on adversity as a necessary part of the discipline of life, and would reject those faint and airy imaginations of unmingled felicity in this vale of tears, which are so far remote from man's present nature. He would say, "Shall it not be with me as with others?" and be prepared to bear all the appointed will of Heaven. He would lift up his affections from things seen and temporal, and rest them on things unseen and eternal. He would rejoice that all things that are, are subject to God's wise and merciful disposal, and exercise himself to that spirit of submission that would enable him ever to say—"Not my will, but thine, O Lord, be done." Yet how stands the case with men? Do they naturally incline thus to keep with contentment the place assigned them, giving thanks to God, and willing that he should be glorified in them, not that they should live to themselves? Oh! how many unholy wishes—how many sinful expectations are entertained without any reference to the determinations of God, and that are clung to as just and reasonable, and as if it were ungracious on the part of God to withhold the accomplishment of them. Man thinks he has a right to shape his own destiny. He sees no sin in setting himself up equal to God. He cherishes his own vain imaginations and desires concerning temporal good without reluctance or scruple. He enters on the prosecution of his own plans without ever acknowledging the divine will. "I will go," says he, "to a certain city, and stay there a year, and buy and sell and get gain." He will amass to himself riches and honours more abundant and splendid than fall to the lot of others. He will make himself a name that will be

renowned among future generations. But in all this does he acknowledge God? Does he know that he is a dependant creature? He forgets that not he but God is "the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." He forgets that it is his wisdom, his duty, and his happiness not only to ask nothing, but to desire nothing: in fine—to expect nothing but what God is willing to bestow.

A second source of that sinful carefulness forbidden in the text, proceeds from an ignorance of the salutary nature of the circumstances of life under which we are placed in the present state. It is difficult for us to bring ourselves to contemplate the unmitigated evils of life, and to lay our account with bearing them; and this is the reason why all thoughts of death are so scrupulously avoided by many, that they seem to pass upon themselves the practical delusion that they shall never die. Our anxiety and carefulness about evils become less when we are prone to think that we shall have strength to support them, and although for the present not joyous but grievous, they shall yield to us ultimate advantage. The patient becomes reconciled to submit to an operation which, in a state of sound health, he could not have endured. The prospect of having to submit to it would, in the one case, fill him with alarm; in the other case, it is to him ground of consolation.

The application of these principles to the afflictions and ills of providence is obvious. They constitute the occasion of greater fear and alarm in proportion as their true nature is unknown. If it were known that they are all needful and salutary—that they serve a most valuable end—this would remove the dread with which they are apprehended, and the anxiety with which they are regarded. Afflictions, when sanctified, form one of the best and most efficacious means which God employs for promoting the moral and spiritual improvement of his people: for, whereas the effect of prosperity is to corrupt the heart, to foster high-mindedness and ungodliness, to fill us with many sinful and corrupt dispositions—affliction, on the other hand, purifies and refines the soul—corrects our natural depravity—brings out humility, patience, and resignation—and promotes or produces virtue.

The consideration of this may well reconcile us to the prospect of having to bear affliction, more especially when we take into account that God will not allow one unnecessary evil to befall us, and will not afflict us more than we can bear. If the world were left to the direction of chance, or if it were under the superintendence of a malignant being, who sported with the sufferings of his creatures, the prospect before us might be allowed to call forth consternation; but when we know that every event is arranged by infinite wisdom and goodness—that the very hairs of our head are all numbered—and that not a sparrow falls to the ground without divine permission; and when we know that all things work together for good to them that love God—that, in every point of view, the time, and manner, and degree of affliction are wisely ordered, what ground have we not for banishing from our minds all despondency and anxious cares. We can never be placed in any circumstances but what God is pleased to place us in. We can never endure any troubles but what God is pleased to send; and we may rest assured that he will ward off from us all unnecessary troubles; and that the troubles he permits to take place will be the most sparing which are consistent with his wisdom, for he afflicteth not willingly—he hath no pleasure in the sufferings of his people—but dispenses his chastisements in the spirit of a father who delighteth in mercy.

The experiences of a salutary nature by which they have been already thus exercised, and the benefits already derived from them, should particularly deliver the people of God from a sinful anxiety about the future, so as to cause them to expect that God will deal with them in time to come as he has dealt with them in times that are past. Have you found, in your past experience, that it is good to be afflicted? Was the day of adversity more profitable to you than the day of prosperity? Have the evils you dreaded, like the dark cloud passing over the firmament, left a shower of blessings behind them, and brought in a brighter and serener day? Were you strengthened far beyond your expectations to endure your trials, and did you come forth from them more humble—more purified and fortified in grace? Surely such experi-

ence is well fitted to minister hope and peace, in regard to all the future dispensations of providence that may await you. Your duty is to anticipate that God will continue to deal with you in a like salutary manner, under all the trials that may yet befall you. It is your duty to trust that the evils which you have in prospect will, when they have actually arrived, be not only such as you will be able to bear, but at last find cause to bless God you have experienced. There is ignorance and short-sightedness in men, in that they do not know what, in any case, is best for them. If men were to be dealt with as they wish—if they were to receive what they desire—they would prove most incompetent judges of what is for their true interest and happiness. While apparent evils are often real blessings, so apparent good is, in many cases, the most pernicious curse. This should diminish undue carefulness about any thing, for that very thing you are most solicitous to obtain, might be that, which, if obtained, you would have most cause to lament. It is the sentiment of a heathen writer, that God would in no wise more effectually punish men than by giving them, to the full, the desires of their own hearts. We do not know but that far greater evils are prevented from coming upon us by our being denied what we wish. The dying man prays for life and returning health, but death may be better for him after all, removing him from a multitude of dangers, temptations, and sorrows, that would only embitter his existence. The fond parent would have his offspring preserved, and see them rising up to maturity, rather than laid in an early grave. But how little knows he whether this is for his own comfort or would be actually in behalf of his offspring! The ignorance in which we are of what is truly good for us, is a powerful incentive to resignation under the appointments of God. When we would murmur under evil which is apparent, we should think how little we know of what is really good or evil for us. We see but as through a glass darkly. Let us, then, trust to his goodness and wisdom. Let us acknowledge that in all things he does well and wisely. Though clouds and darkness surround his throne, and though his footsteps have been in the deep waters where we cannot trace them, yet mercy and truth go continually before him, and

he is righteous and holy in all his dispensations.

A third source of sinful carefulness arises from overlooking the actual insignificance and worthless nature of the objects of men. Were a proper estimate formed of the world and its objects, it would serve, in a great degree, to moderate our wishes after things so vain and perishable in their nature. In a little time, we shall follow the generations that have gone before us, and all of us, whether high or low, whether rich or poor, shall leave the world behind us, and have no more to do with any thing beneath the sun. This demonstrates the folly of an undue concern about any thing that may befall us in this transitory state: what avail the anxieties and emulations, the strifes and contentions, the zeal and carefulness with which worldly objects and pursuits once inflamed the minds of those now lying in the silent grave, where there is no wisdom, nor knowledge, nor device. Whatever that thing be, about which we are anxious, we may learn, from the state of men of other days, from the end of their labours, toils, and troubles, that we are wearying ourselves for very vanity, misplacing our affections, and exercising them to no purpose. In a little time we shall be as our fathers before us. The time is short: it remaineth that they that weep be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not. The fashion and glory of the world pass away. The avaricious man who made gold his idol, and the fine gold his confidence, leaves his substance, and knows not any more what becomes of it. The ambitious is cast down from the eminence to which he aspired, and where he wished to fix on himself the notice and admiration of the world, and is consigned to everlasting oblivion. The learned man who carried his researches into the various fields of philosophical inquiry, after learning a little, and leaving much more unknown, is at last obliged to resign his pursuits. The sensual man, after indulging in every kind of pleasure, becomes the prey of the worm, and all his means of gratification—all his sources of enjoyment—cease to contribute to his pleasure any more. And as it has been with the generation that has gone before us, so

shall it be with the generation that now exists. Within the lapse of less than a century, and of all that now exist scarcely a single one survives. The troubled scene that man excites in his emulations now, shall have passed into everlasting stillness. The eager and the sanguine who hurry on in pursuit of temporal good, shall then have reached the end of their course. Those that are now bustling here, shall have come to that shore whence there is no returning. They that are anxious and fearful now, in consequence of threatened danger, shall then have passed their appointed course of trial, and have no more any thing to dread.

How unsuitable, then, that excessive carefulness, that engrossing anxiety and overwhelming concern which are so general in a state of things speedily running to a close, and with which our connexion shall be speedily terminated. The difference is not great, whether we possess all the world has to give, or suffer all it has to inflict—whether we acquire its most lavish blessings, or sustain its severest calamities. In a short voyage, it is common for people to trouble themselves but little with the manner of the accommodation from which they are in a little time to be released. Their time is occupied in thinking of the labours they are in the way to transact, and their thoughts are directed to the end of their journey. Success or disappointment as to that, forms their great subject. And are the visitors of an eternal world to be possessed with carefulness relative to a state they are so soon to leave, without concerning themselves as to the great end of their being—their eternal destination? Are they to be possessed with those things which are temporal, and neglect those things which are eternal? Are they to occupy themselves with interests which are in a few years to come to a close, and to abandon to negligence or contempt, the infinitely momentous concerns of an eternal world? Are they to pursue the good and eschew the evil incident to this shadowy existence, with the utmost energy of soul, and to leave unheeded, unsettled, and unprepared their state of preparation for the world of retribution? Are they to give all their consideration to their body—to that feeble frame, which, in spite of every precaution,

shall sink under the burden of infirmities into the dust—and deny consideration to those immortal spirits which, as they are cared for, shall rise to everlasting life, or, as they are neglected, shall be consigned to the blackness of darkness for ever? While the Scriptures are lavish in figures to express the comparative insignificance and nothingness of the present life, they direct, with the most undivided attention and unwearied assiduity, the attention of man to spiritual things, and to the life that is to come. While they set forth the utter vanity of temporal things, speaking of them as a vain show—as a tale that is told—as a vapour which continueth not—they labour with expressions to show the infinite importance and transcendent magnitude of eternal things. And what the Scriptures state on both of these, must come home to the understanding of every individual, as most just, most true, and most wise.

Walk, then, according to the directions of an enlarged wisdom. Let it be your labour and employment to be more conversant about your never-dying souls, than about the cares of this uncertain and transitory state. It has been already said, that there is a moderate care after temporal things which is permitted and commendable. This moderate care is, however, very different from that absorbing solicitude about temporal things, which will hinder all proper preparation for things that are spiritual. In the one case, the world is used—in the other, it is abused; for, in the one case, it is kept subordinate to God, and in the other, it is placed above God. When we give our undivided attention to the world, we virtually declare that we do not believe what God has said. We prefer the pleasures of sin to the rewards of heaven, and the gratifications of this world, unsatisfactory and evanescent as they are, to the unenjoyed felicities of the paradise of God.

Having thus endeavoured to point out the sources of that unholiness which even the people of God are subject to—having shown that it proceeds from an undue attention to created things—having shown, further, that this carefulness proceeds from ignorance of the salutary nature of afflictions and trials—and finally, that it results from overlooking the

actual insignificance of human pursuits, we conclude with a short practical improvement.

In the first place, learn the value of a spirit of resignation and acquiescence to the divine will. To God belong the kingdom, the power, and the glory. It is his part to command—it is our part to obey. It is his part to appoint—it is ours to submit. Shall not God dispose of us and of our concerns as seems best? Shall we dare to say to him, What dost thou? And how unavailing is it to set ourselves in opposition to God? He is infinite in power, and who, by taking thought, can add a cubit to his stature. In vain is it to think of thwarting the divine arrangement, or to alter the divine counsel. It is your happiness, then, to bear with patience the circumstances of your lot—to consider that all things are in the hands of a wise and gracious God, and that he knows better what is good for you, than do you yourselves. Rejoice,

then, that your time and all your concerns are in his hands. Be glad that he careth for you. Commit your ways to the Lord, and be doing good, and no evil shall befall you.

In the second place, learn to seek spiritual improvement from every event that befalls you, however adverse it may be. The discipline of Providence is a moral discipline. We are placed in this life, that we may become meet for a higher and better existence. Be suitably exercised, then, by the dispensations through which you pass, and let them bring over the peaceful fruits of righteousness. When tribulation worketh experience, experience leadeth to hope—to hope that needeth not to be ashamed. Though the race be not here always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, yet can we come to the conclusion in respect of believers, that goodness and mercy shall ever follow them, and in the temple of the Lord they shall dwell for evermore.

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE ORIGINAL SECEDERS' CHAPEL, RICHMOND STREET, EDINBURGH, ON THE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY, 15TH APRIL, 1833,

By the Rev. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D.,

Author of the *Life of John Knox*, *Life of Andrew Melville*, &c. &c.

“And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.”—Mark xv. 25.

THAT is, my friends, an historical knowledge relating to the last sufferings of our blessed Lord and Saviour, of which all of us are partakers; but there is still much room for increasing even our historical and doctrinal acquaintance with this most interesting event. We need to consider whether our faith rests upon its proper ground—the testimony of God. “Who hath believed our report?” exclaimed a prophet; “Who hath believed our report?” re-echoed the Apostles of our Lord Jesus, after he had risen from the dead and gone to glory. How far do we come short in an acquaintance with the great doctrine of our Lord's death, considered in the light in which the Spirit of God hath revealed it to us as an atonement offered by him, the Great Substitute, who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows,

in respect of its efficacy in making a complete expiation for our sins; and how little experimental acquaintance have we with the subject, in respect of its renovating, its sanctifying, and its transforming energy. One of the means by which we may increase our knowledge, and, at the same time, strengthen our faith in this important doctrine, is by reading and studying the inspired history of the important transaction. God has provided richly for our instruction in this point of view, by furnishing us with a fourfold narrative of the event, very circumstantially interesting; and we may have recourse to this, under the satisfying reflection that it is the preparation of his own hand, and in the confidence that, in a believing use of it, our minds may be instructed, our consciences pacified, and our

hearts and lives made holy. We propose, on this subject, in the first place, to consider the last sufferings of our blessed Redeemer, in the relation that has been given of them in the Gospel history; and then, afterwards, we may take some view of their internal and discriminative character, particularly as it is unfolded in the apostolical commentary upon the Gospel narrative; or, as these points have been quaintly expressed, we may consider the death of Christ in the history and in the mystery.

And, first, of the history. Our Lord's sufferings were inexpressibly great and exquisitely painful. They may be said to have commenced at the very first moment he came in contact with our nature. He was born and he was reared "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" but his sorrows and his grief increased, especially as he approached the termination of his work. He suffered in every possible way, and in every possible degree. He suffered in his body and in his soul; he suffered personally, and he suffered relatively. We read of his trouble—of his travail—of the travail of his soul—of his sorrow—of his being exceeding sorrowful—of his being sorrowful, even unto death. "They pierced," says he, "my hands and my feet." This refers particularly to the death of the cross. It was impossible that pain or bodily torture could be more extensively or more agonizingly applied to a human frame, than by the mode of putting to death to which he was subjected. But then, you are to consider also the train of sorrows that preceded and accompanied the nailing to the tree. The last sufferings of our blessed Redeemer stretched over that long and lingering period that commenced in Gethsemane, and that terminated by his bowing the head on Mount Calvary. We see him falling prostrate, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood, that fell to the ground—pouring out prayers with strong cries and tears—saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."—He was betrayed into the hands of sinners—he was dragged from one judgment-seat to another—God compassed him—the wicked enclosed him in their assembly—he had no comforter—his own Father, in severity, and in holy justice, hid his face from him in the trying hour—his own disciples all forsook him and fled—the

multitude reviled him—the very mouth that had pronounced Hosannah upon him but a little before, and the malefactors, his partners in punishment, upbraided him. We know that he was an innocent, indeed the only innocent sufferer of our world; and is it not strange, my brethren, that he was the greatest sufferer that ever sighed, or groaned, or bled, or died by the vice of our world. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." (Lamentations i. 12.) "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his anger."

But then you are to consider, further, that our Lord Jesus, in his last sufferings, was covered with the deepest shame and ignominy. If we had been told that the Son of God was to come into our world, and to save us by his sufferings, we naturally would have supposed that he was to die, and if to die, that he would die in a state of glory—if he were to fall, that he was to fall in the field of war, and that, when he died, his praises would be shouted by the whole world. And this was the construction put on the predictions relating to his death in the Old Testament, by his countrymen, the Jews. But how different a lot was assigned to the Saviour of sinners. "Reproach," says he, "has broken my heart. I am a worm, and no man." Reproached of men—despised of the people—a robber and a murderer are preferred to him;—he is treated with the greatest scorn—at the very time he had been condemned to die, he was mocked, by having a purple robe put on him—a reed for a sceptre, was placed in his hand, and a crown of thorns upon his head. All that see me, laugh me to scorn—they nod—they shake the head—they shoot on the lip—they say, This man trusted in God; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. (Psalm xxii. 7, 8.) He was doomed to the punishment of the meanest slave and of the greatest malefactor:—suspended between earth and heaven, as a person separated from the creation—the scorn of devils—the abhorrence of men—an outcast from God—he hid not his face from shame and spitting—he not only endured the cross, he had to endure the shame.

But then, you have to consider farther, that he suffered under the seal of the curse. The mode of punishment by which our blessed Lord ended his sufferings was that which, by the Roman law, was confined to a slave, and by the Jewish law was held in execration. He thereby came under the long established maxim, "Cursed is he that hangeth upon a tree." This, my brethren, was more than all the obloquy that had been poured upon him by men, and indicated clearly the true cause, and the proper nature of all that he suffered. "Christ hath redeemed us," says an Apostle, "from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. iii. 13.) Then, you are to observe, in the next place, that the influence of many, and of various characters, contributed to his last sufferings. Here, above all the rest, was to be seen the supreme hand of God allotting to him the various parts of his suffering, and overruling those who had an instrumental hand in bringing it about. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him.—He made his soul an offering for sin.—He cut him off from the land of the living."—He gave a commission to the sword of justice, and invoked it to awake, against the man, his terror, and to smite him to the dust. And, had it not been for this commission, not a hand could have touched a hair of his sacred head, and not a drop of sorrow could have gained admission to his holy heart. Here we see the wonderful operation of a holy providence, in overruling events that are brought about by wicked instruments. God can, and may, and God did, so overrule, in his wonderful providence, as that the part which was good, and holy, and just, in our heavenly Father, was one of the vilest and most atrocious deeds that ever was done by man under the sun. He that was all love and holiness employed instruments which acted according to their own criminal passions. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." (Acts iv. 27.) Him being delivered by the foreknowledge and foreordained determined counsel of God, they did take, and with wicked hands have crucified and

lain. The devil and his angels had a ruse activity in bringing about the crucifixion of our Redeemer. This was the hour and the power of darkness. Now he prince of this world assailed the Prince of life, like a roaring lion, seeking to break all his bones, and expecting to make a full end of his cause. He instigated the traitor—he actuated the mind of the disciple that denied him—he pushed on Pilate, otherwise averse to the deed, to pronounce sentence of condemnation—and he urged on the rage of the rebellious multitude. The chief priests and the Jews, from their short-sighted and weak policy, were principal movers in this conspiracy. They instigated the people that demanded his death. Pilate, although forced to pronounce him innocent, yet pronounced the sentence of crucifixion, and the people in general had an active hand in the matter. They cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him: his blood be upon us and upon our children."

There are again wonderful things to be seen in the manner and circumstances of the crucifixion of Christ. We see God withdrawing and yet God supporting. We see the Redeemer sinking under his sufferings, and, at the same time, rising triumphantly above them all. We perceive him unable, bodily, to bear his cross, and yet we find him stating his faith with boldness, and refusing to be confounded. To the eyes of flesh and blood he appeared overborne, faint and exhausted, and yet at that very hour he saves a sinner from death, and plucks a brand beside him from the burning. The voice of the multitude is against him, but then the sun hides his head from the scene—the earth is thrown into convulsions—the veil of the temple is rent in twain—and the conscience of man is forced to pronounce, "Truly, truly, this was the Son of God."

I confine myself, in this discourse, to those circumstances that appear upon the narrative, without inquiring into the internal character or the mystery of his sufferings. I observe then, again, that, in the last sufferings of Christ, there was a remarkable accomplishment of the Word of God. It had been early predicted, you know, upon the very back of the fall of man, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. In this victory, he was to join in the way of submitting to have his own heel bruised

by the great enemy of God and of man. There was a remarkable exemplification of the method of our redemption, through the death of Christ, in the scene that took place on Mount Moriah, when Abraham, at the command of God, went up with the design of offering his son, and when God, interposing, arrested his arm and provided a ram, in the thicket, as a substitute. The Paschal lamb was an eminent type of our Lord Jesus Christ: it was slain in room of the first-born of Israel; and all the sacrifices under that economy pointed to the great sacrifice to be accomplished by the slaying of the Lamb of God as the victim for sin. And though even circumstantially, how strikingly is this matter exemplified in the prophecies relating to the sufferings of Christ? Seventy weeks were to be accomplished from the time of the return from the captivity, and, in the midst of the last week, we were told Messiah was to be cut off—not for himself, but in the room of, and for the people. Let me specify a few of the particulars in which the truth of God, as pledged in the prophecies, was realized in the circumstances of the crucifixion.

It was foretold in the Psalms, "He that cateth bread with me shall lift up his heel against me;" and we all know that one of his disciples betrayed him. It was predicted there should be a general conspiracy among the Jews and the Gentiles, and among persons of high and low rank, in accomplishing the death of the Messiah—and Herod and Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, the Romish soldiery, and the Jewish mob combined together in putting him to death. It was predicted, in Old Testament prophecy, "They pierced my hands and my feet;" and, you know that the mode of our Lord's death was crucifixion, by which his members were nailed—transfixed, to the tree. It was predicted, he shall be numbered with the transgressors; and they crucified two thieves along with him, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, and Jesus in the midst. It was predicted, "They parted my garments, and they cast lots for my vesture;" and how remarkably is this accomplished. We are told by the Evangelist John that the soldiers, when they had crucified him, took his raiment and divided it, to each soldier a part; but when they looked to his vesture, they saw it was without seam, woven

from the top throughout; and they said "Let us not therefore rend it, but, cast lots for it, whose it shall be." It was said in the Old Testament, "They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink;" and, that Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, "I thirst," and one ran and dipt a sponge in vinegar, and put it on a reed and gave him to drink. It was predicted in the Scripture, "A bone of him shall not be broken;" and how remarkably was this prediction carried into execution, even against, and in the face of, the chief governor. "The Jews," says the Evangelist John, "because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs." It was predicted, "They shall look upon him whom they pierced," and how remarkably was this circumstance verified; for the soldier that spared his bones, thinking it was necessary for him to perform some act, in order to ascertain the reality of his death, that he might report to his master, stretched out his lance and smote him on the side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. It was predicted that he should make his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death. The place of the sepulchre allotted to him was, no doubt, the common burial place of malefactors; but Providence ordered the matter quite otherwise, for we are told that Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, and a counsellor, who was also, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, a disciple of the Lord, went away and begged the body of Jesus and obtained it from Pilate, and having taken it down, according to the manner of the Jews, he laid it in his own tomb, where never man had been laid. So minutely and circumstantially, then, were all these circumstances predicted—of the way of the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ carried into execution; and it is in reference to this that our blessed Lord preached that sermon, short, but important, which you find in the 24th chapter

of Luke, verses, 44, 45, and 46, "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."

So much, my brethren, in relation to the history of the death and last sufferings of our glorious Redeemer. Let those things be deeply impressed upon your minds. Beware of regarding them in the mere light of history. You may be acquainted with all the historical facts relating to the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet you may obtain no interest whatever in their benefits. They may float in your understanding, without ever sinking into your hearts, or influencing your conduct. But the bare history, the minute facts of the Saviour's life are of such importance that they ought to be known. Traced in their connexion one with another, they throw a flood of light over the Bible. A person that is altogether unacquainted with them cannot be a Christian, and every true Christian should study to become more particularly acquainted with them. He should know the facts, so to speak, upon his tongue, so that he should be prepared to speak of them. And particularly those that are parents, or have the charge of young persons, should be ready to communicate them in a distinct and clear manner, and so as to reach, as far as human instruction can reach, the heart. O that the Spirit of all grace and wisdom would shine on our minds, by means of the Word—would convey these things into our souls with a peculiar and divine energy, and thus lead us on gradually till we attain to all the riches of the assurance of understanding—to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ. What is the great sum of gospel preaching, my brethren? It is just, in one word, Christ—the cross of Christ. All preaching, without this, is waste labour, on the part of the preacher; all hearing, without this, is mispent. What will it avail us that we should be acquainted with

the whole history of the world, from the commencement to the present time—that we should be able to fix on the dates of the most important events—that we are acquainted with the rise and fall of empires, provided we are strangers to the grand history of the redemption of the world. Let us be found looking back to this important period. Our minds should be continually fixed upon it. It is not necessary that we should set apart a day, whatever name we may give that day, in order that we may commemorate this event. The great design of every Lord's day—the great design of every day that has elapsed since the time that this event took place, is to make you and me think on the greatest of the works of God. Let us contrast the fact of the death of Christ with that of his burial and resurrection. Christ not only went to the crucifixion but to the grave—the cold grave, that he might consecrate and perfume, by his blessing, thy inanimate body, and that it might be capable of rising really from the dead, as he did, upon the third day.

We have delivered unto you, then, my brethren, the Gospel whereby you are saved, if you keep steadfast by the things that have been spoken—how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and how that he was buried, and how that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures. Christ crucified is now glorified—all the ignominy of the cross has been wiped off—he is now crowned with glory and honour—he sits at the right hand of God—he is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. As his death was the meritorious ground of our salvation, so his life is the efficacious security for the bestowment of it upon us.

In fine, my brethren, you will see from this subject, as far as we have proceeded, the propriety of that ordinance which is characteristically, the memorial of the Lord's death. O what a duty upon Christians, cheerfully, and with alacrity to keep this ordinance! How cheerfully did the children of Israel, when the day and month arrived, assemble together that they might keep the feast of the Passover and unleavened bread, in memory of the great deliverance that the Lord did when his angel went through the land of Egypt and smote the first-born of every

family, but saved the first-born of Israel. Christ is sacrificed for us; O let us keep the feast, as it is written. Who would not wish to throw in his mite to keep up the memory of the sufferings and death of the Lord! Who would stay from the Sacramental table that has an opportunity of going to it. And, Oh! how careful ought we to be to examine ourselves—to search for the old man, that we, as a new man, may serve the Lord with holy reverence and godly fear. The Lord bless what has been said; and to his name be the praise. Amen.

ORIGIN OF POPIISH ERRORS.

CATHOLICS often talk of the antiquity of their religion; but we think that the following dates of the original of their peculiar doctrines and practices, will show them to be too modern for a Scriptural Christian to receive them:—

	A. D.
Holy water,	120
Penance,	157
Monkery,	328
Latin Mass,	394
Extreme Unction,	558
Purgatory,	593
Invocation of Virgin Mary, and of Saints,	594
Papal Usurpation,	607
Kissing the Pope's toe,	709
Image Worship,	715
Canonization of Saints,	993
Baptism of Bells,	1000
Transubstantiation,	1000
Celibacy,	1015
Indulgences,	1190
Dispensations,	1200
The Inquisition,	1204
Confession,	1215
Elevation of the Host,	1222

—*Knights of the Hermitage.*

TO THE READER.

A mistake prevails pretty generally regarding the length of our reports. According to some, they are merely outlines or select portions of discourses. We assure our readers that they are none of those. So full and accurate are they in general, that they have struck the Reverend authors of the Sermons with surprise; and one need only compare the average number of words in a volume of sermons of ordinary length, with the average number of words in our reports, to be convinced of what we say. A Sermon, which is not of uncommon length, consists of about five thousand words; some of our reports amount to six thousand. The sermons of Dr. Wardlaw, Dr. Mitchell, Dr. Burns, and Mr. Johnstone, we may almost say, were reported verbatim—nothing added, altered, or omitted; and those of the Rev. Henry Grey and Principal Baird were pretty nearly so. The mistake, in short, arises altogether from the apparently small compass of our work; but every one may soon be undeceived, by comparing our reports with other sermons, not in the number of pages which they occupy, but in the number of words of which they consist.

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

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THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 5TH MAY, 1892.

No. 6.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. Dr. DEWAR, Glasgow.

Price 2d.

SCRIPTURAL ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE TRON CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON SATURDAY,
7th APRIL, 1892,

By the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL, A.M.,
Minister of the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh.

"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you."—LUKE xi. 9.

It is not uncommon, in insisting on the dispositions fitting for prayer, to say that we should draw near to God in the exercise of faith, of humility, of love, and of fervent desire; but it not unfrequently happens, that a believer is disposed to reply, "These are the very dispositions I want—these are the very dispositions that I stand in need of—I am mourning over my want of faith, and of love, and of abasement, and of christian desire. And is it the case, because I have not these dispositions in the lively exercise which I should wish, that I am therefore to be discouraged from going to the throne of grace?" The answer, my brethren, to this question is very obvious. Peter's words are most applicable to a child of God in such circumstances. "To whom can we go but unto thee?" It is God alone who can give us faith, and love, and humility, and every other christian grace. And, in the words of my text, I conceive we have very much encouragement at all times, and in all circumstances, to apply to him for those communications of his Spirit, by the enjoyment of which—by the experience of which—we may be blessed with the exercise and enjoyment of such spiritual graces. At the beginning of the chapter, we find the Saviour instructing his disciples respecting the blessings they want. At the second verse, we read that he said unto them, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed
Vol. I.—No. 6.

be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." Here Christ encourages us to pray for the pardon of our sins—for our deliverance from the influence of sin—for the establishment of the kingdom of Jehovah within our hearts, as well as in the world. He gives us encouragement to pray, not only for deliverance from the influence of our natural depravity, but even from the influence of temptation to sin; and then, my friends, in reference to these blessings—these spiritual blessings, the pardon of sin, deliverance from its influence, rescue from the power of temptation—in the words of my text, in the fullest and most unqualified manner, the Redeemer says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." What, therefore, I intend at this time—in a dependence on the grace and strength of God—is to endeavour to point out to you the encouragement which all who are really and truly seeking the spiritual blessings that we have now adverted to, may derive from the view given us in Scripture of God's character, that asking, they indeed shall receive—that seeking, they indeed shall find.

And, my friends, I observe to you, in
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the first place, that every barrier which may once have stood in the way of your receiving these blessings—in the way of such prayers being heard and answered, is now taken away. God is revealed to us in Scripture, as not merely merciful and gracious, but also as a just, and a righteous, and a holy God. And it is the case, that not merely the interests of justice and righteousness, but even the cause of benevolence requires that, in some way or other, God should testify his displeasure of that evil and abominable thing which we call sin. If he did not testify such displeasure—if he treated sinners in the same way as he treats those who have never deviated from the path of his testimonies—if, in no way whatsoever, he testified his displeasure at the iniquities they had done, he would in this way be holding out a temptation to those creatures of his who have never sinned at all, to venture on what they thus saw could be passed over with such impunity. And therefore, we say, the interests of benevolence, as well as justice and righteousness, require that God should testify, and in a most striking and impressive manner, the deep displeasure with which he looks upon the transgression of his law; so that had there been no such manifestation with respect to the sins of mankind—had there been no display of Jehovah's hatred of these iniquities, then there would have been a barrier in the way of our prayers being answered. But it is a part of the good news which the Gospel brings to us, that there has been a manifestation of God's displeasure of iniquity; a manifestation of this displeasure even more striking, more calculated to impress the universe with a sense of his hatred of iniquity, than if the whole race of mankind had been left eternally to perish; and on this account it is we say to you, that the barriers which once stood in the way of our repairing to God, have been removed already—that now in perfect consistency with all the perfections of his nature, with the interests of righteousness, the cause of benevolence, and the good of his creatures, we may ask and receive—may seek and may find—may knock, and have the door opened to us.

But, in the next place, it is not only true that the way to God has thus been laid open, that we have access to him,

even with confidence through faith in Christ Jesus; but it is also true, that we have each of us encouragement in going to God in the exercise of prayer for the blessings of his grace—we have all of us encouragement, I say, to make use of a very powerful, a most efficacious plea with our Maker, in seeking bestowment of these benefits. If it were the case, that, in reference to a debt which we could not pay, a third person came forward and paid it for us; you must be sensible, that we should thus have a most powerful plea in going to our creditor, and seeking a complete discharge of the obligation under which we were laid. And still more, my friends, should we feel encouragement to apply to this creditor, if the surety not only paid down the debt, but if, in his character of surety and mediator, he actually brought the individual to whom our debt was owing, under great and positive obligation. Now it is the case, with respect to that surety which is revealed to us in the Scriptures, who was wounded for our transgressions, who was bruised for our iniquities, upon whom the chastisement of our peace was laid, that with his stripes we might be healed, that he not merely has satisfied the divine justice, that he not only has repaired the injury that had by transgression been done to God's law, but that he has actually magnified that law, and made it honourable—that he has positively glorified God—nay, in his character and work as a mediator and surety, made a very rich harvest of glory. And we are each of us encouraged to plead this fact—to make mention of the Redeemer's work—to make mention of the completeness of the satisfaction he made, the glory of the obedience he rendered—to make mention of all this pleading—to hold it up before God as the ground on which we expect, not to be dealt with according to our deserving, but according to the merits of Him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification.

And, my friends, in order to place before you—in order to give you some view of the efficacy and glory of this plea, which we are encouraged to make use of before our Maker, it may be of importance that we endeavour shortly to tell you of the excellence, and completeness, and glory of that obedience which our Surety gave

to God, and the excellence and glory of which constitute the validity of that plea which we are encouraged to urge in his presence, in seeking from him the bestowment of the blessings of his grace. In the 17th chapter of this Gospel, at the 7th verse, we find the Saviour saying,—"Which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not." These words are illustrative of the feelings we are apt to cherish towards servants—towards acts of service performed by individuals standing to us in this relation. But how different, my friends, are our feelings towards our own children, and towards those acts of service which they render to us? How valuable are these services in our estimation? They are valuable in proportion to the strength and tenderness of the tie by which we feel ourselves knit to those who render them to us. He, then, who obeyed the law of God, in the room and place of his creatures—he who gave to Jehovah that obedience, which, when we ask, and seek, and knock, we may plead before him, he was God's Son—O he was his only begotten—he was his well-beloved Son—he was his elect in whom his soul delighted—he dwelt in his bosom from eternity, and respecting him, the words proceeded more than once from the excellent glory—This, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Again, a monarch is honoured by the obedience of all his subjects, whatever be the situation they may happen to occupy; but, in a peculiar manner, is he honoured by the allegiance of those placed in the higher stations of society, and when surrounded by his nobles. And when they in the midst of their own pomp and splendour, express the devotedness of their attachment, and the firmness of their allegiance, then it is that he appears to us in his glory. And so, on the same principle, God may be regarded as more honoured by the obedience of those who occupy the higher situations in the scale

of intelligence, not only on account of the loftiness of the situation, but because of the fact, that superiority of situation here is always accompanied with superiority in intellectual power, and in moral excellence. And therefore, when Jehovah is surrounded by those spirits which surpass in excellence, those angels upon whom his power has been exerted in adorning them with every moral and intellectual attraction, when they veil their faces with their wings, and their feet with their wings, and, with the deepest abasement, exclaim, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty. O how glorious must He appear, before whom beings so exalted prostrate themselves with such abasement! He, however, who obeyed the law of God upon earth in the fullest extent, who rendered to Jehovah that obedience which we may plead before him when we ask, and seek, and knock, was higher than all angels. Bright and exalted as they are, yet when brought into comparison with him, they sink into a distance that is infinite; for he is the object of their worship. Of him it has been recorded, Let all the angels of God worship him.

Upon this point, however, it is not only of importance that we attend to the dignity of Him who obeyed the law of God, in the room and place of the guilty, and to the interesting and endearing relationship in which he stood to Jehovah, but that we attend also to the obedience itself—to its vast extent—to its inconceivable glory. The first and the great commandment of the law is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Love is expressly declared in the Bible to be the fulfilling of the law: consequently, in proportion to the extent in which any person loves, in the same proportion may be said to yield either a higher degree or an inferior degree of obedience. And upon this principle, then, oh, who shall set limits to the extent in which the Saviour loved—who shall set limits to the height, and the depth, the length, and the breadth of that love, which, during every moment he spent on earth, he yielded in true faithfulness to his heavenly Father? We may rest assured of this, (and to affirm this, my friends, is to speak volumes upon this point,) that he loved even with all his heart, and all his soul, and all his strength.

This, then, we plead. Feeling the deficiency of our own love—feeling how true it is that we have never given to God that degree of affection to which he is entitled—that in all things we have come short of the glory of God—that our best services are most miserably imperfect; we may go to the throne of grace pleading this glorious, this perfect, this infinitely glorious obedience.

But it is not only true that the Redeemer yielded the love to his heavenly Father that we have now adverted to, but that his love was tried, and tried in the way in which love never was tried in any other instance. Though in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, not only was he called upon to make himself of no reputation and to assume the form of a servant—not only was he called upon to become despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, to give his back to the smiters and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair—to be buffeted—to be spit upon—to be crowned with thorns—to be extended upon the cross—but he was called upon to expose himself to the indignation of that Father in heaven towards whom his heart went out, in the way that we have now been endeavouring to describe to you, and whose indignation—whose wrath must have been terrible, just in proportion to the extent in which he loved—in proportion to the extent in which the friendship of Jehovah was known by him to be sweet. But, though called to such a trial, he did not shrink. In anticipation of it, we find him exclaiming, “Lo, I come,” “I delight to do thy will, O my God.” When in the midst of his trial, we find him declaring, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.” And, although in the anticipation of the endurance of what was implied in the hiding of his Father’s countenance, in the outpouring of the vials of his Father’s wrath, he exclaimed, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;” yet he added, without hesitation, “Not my will, but thine, be done.”

O then, my brethren, here is the plea that you may go to God with—this obedience—an obedience involving in it not only services the most exalted but services, far, far more difficult and trying

than, to other beings, ever were known. This we may carry with us to God—this we may speak of at his throne—this we may urge as the ground on which, poor and wretched as we are, we expect that, asking, we shall receive, that, seeking, we shall find, that, knocking, the door shall be opened to us.

But, in the third place, suppose that, in going to one whom I had offended, I was made aware of the fact that I had a most powerful plea to urge with him—that I had a mediator beside him, admirably qualified to plead my cause, no doubt this would be calculated to give me much encouragement, and to excite within my breast the most comforting expectations. But suppose that I were informed of more than this, that I was made aware, not only of the fact of the mediator who had undertaken the cause, but of this other fact, that he whom I had offended was himself most willing to listen, most ready to comply with my request—most willing to give me the benefits of which I stood in need, and which I was desirous of having bestowed upon me—need I tell you how much this additional intelligence would add to the vigour and the ample character of my expectations and hopes? Now, my brethren, this is the fact that we are informed of in Scripture respecting God. We have a Mediator, the glory of whose work is manifested by the lofty situation that is now assigned him, in his character of Mediator, in the heavenly world. The Lamb that has been slain is set down in the very midst of the throne. We have a plea, founded on the completeness and glory of the work of this great Mediator. But, then, besides him, the Lord Jehovah—he against whom our sins have been committed—is revealed to us as most ready to comply with the desires of those that go to him asking deliverance from this evil and abominable thing, sin—seeking that they may be saved from its consequences—entrating that they may be rescued from its power. Why, upon many grounds, do the Scriptures lead us to conclude that Jehovah is thus ready to grant such requests—to fulfil such desires. He is spoken of as merciful and gracious—he is spoken of as infinite in mercy—nay, he is spoken of as delighting in mercy. And although, my friends, even these declarations could afford us but little comfort, if there were the

barriers that, in the commencement of this discourse I was adverting to, between us and God; yet, that barrier being away, there being nothing whatsoever now to intercept the communication and manifestation of Jehovah's mercy towards us, in proportion to the extent of compassion, and loving-kindness, and forbearance, and tender mercy that have been described to us, in the same proportion have we encouragement given to us to conclude that going, as poor sinners, to be rescued from what makes us unhappy here, and what threatens to make us wretched and miserable hereafter, we shall be heard and graciously answered. But, indeed, it is not merely the mercy of God that is calculated to give us such encouragement. His righteousness—his hatred of sin is equally calculated to do so, in consequence of what Christ has been pleased to do and suffer in the room of the guilty. God's love of righteousness must make him take pleasure in promoting the interests of righteousness. God's hatred of sin must make him take pleasure in destroying sin; consequently, when we go for such purposes as this—for the destruction of sin—for principles of holiness being implanted—for the interests of righteousness being furthered within our breasts, beyond all question we apply for what a God of righteousness must take delight—delight, proportioned to the extent in which he is righteous—in accomplishing within our breasts. The man who loves natural beauty must feel peculiar pleasure when he sees a wilderness converted into a garden. The God who loves moral beauty must take delight in making the wilderness of our hearts to rejoice and to blossom like the rose. And when we go to him for the effecting of such a change as this—for the promotion of the interests of true godliness, we may rest assured that Jehovah and we, upon that point, are agreed—that we are seeking the accomplishment of that which he must take delight in effecting within us. Besides this, what he has done for the accomplishment of this object is eminently calculated to fill us with the same comfortable expectation—to fill us with the utmost confidence in his willingness to grant, to fulfil such desires. As we have observed to you, the Redeemer, in this chapter, gives this encouragement to us to cherish. When Abraham, at the com-

mand of God, went forth from his country, and his kindred, and his father's house—when he set out on his journey through the desert, not knowing whither he went—when he proceeded on that perilous journey, till he arrived at Canaan, when he took up his abode there, and in obedience to the command of God remained there—though a pilgrim and a stranger, you would unhesitatingly say, that by his obedience in all these respects, he gave most satisfactory manifestation of his readiness to do any thing to which God might call him. And still more satisfactory demonstration did he give upon this point when called upon to make the surrender of his son—his only son—his beloved son—his son in whom all the promises of God seemed centred; instead of hesitating, he rose up early in the morning, proceeded on his journey to mount Moriah, came to the place where the sacrifice was to be offered, bound his son upon the altar, gathered the sticks by which the sacrifice was to be set fire to, lifted up the knife to slay him. In this way, my friends, did Abraham, in a most remarkable manner, show that there was nothing which God required him to do which he was not most ready to do. Oh, I ask, has not Jehovah given the very same manifestation with regard to us? He spared not his Son, but gave him up to the death for us all. It pleased the Father to wound, and to bruise, and to put him to death. And thus we are warranted to reason with the Apostle—"He that spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." We, my friends, in going to the throne of grace, seeking the blessings we stand in need of, feeling the importance and value of these benefits, may take encouragement to believe that still they will not be withheld, from the consideration of what has been already given, that the way might be laid open for these very benefits being showered down upon us.

But, in the last place, God has not left us to mere inference on this point. He has actually pledged his word. He has said, in the words of my text, "Ask, and it shall be given you." He has said, "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them: I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will

open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the vallies: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." And Christ, my friends, in the chapter from which the words of my text are taken, has said, "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth;"—all directing our attention, in this way, to the influence of importunity—to the success of importunity, when the individual from whom the request is made is unwilling to comply, and leading us to draw the conclusion, how much more might importunity be successful where, instead of such unwillingness, there is the utmost readiness to give pardon and sanctifying grace. This fact is more explicitly stated in verses 11, 12, and 13—"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

We have found, then, my friends, that the way to God has been laid wide open—we find that we have a most efficacious way laid open—we have found that God, in the Scriptures, is revealed to us as most willing to give the pardon of sin, through Christ Jesus, and deliverance from the influence of sin to all seeking these spiritual benefits—we have found that his mercy must incline him to this—we have found that even his righteousness must incline him to do so—we have found that he has not left us to any mere deduction or inference, from which to draw the conclusion that he must be willing, but he has expressly stated the fact, that those who seek these blessings, through Christ, shall find them. O then, are you seeking, my

friends—are you in deed and in truth desirous of being delivered, not merely from the evil to which sin has exposed you, but of being delivered from sin itself—desirous of having it rooted out of you, and of having the holiness which God loves implanted within you? Is this your errand when you go to God's throne?—are these the benefits you seek there?—are these the blessings of which your hearts, from day to day, from hour to hour, are principally desirous? O then, fear not—be not dismayed. It is quite impossible to seek such blessings as these in vain. You may not be heard in the prayers as you may expect—you may not have the relief you anticipate given you so immediately as you could wish, but still it will be given. God's word is at stake—and, besides that word of God, we might appeal to examples—we might tell you of myriads who have gone with these supplications—we might appeal to the case of the ransomed spirits now before the throne—we may unhesitatingly say, that no one has ever applied, in deed and in truth, for sanctifying and pardoning grace, through Christ Jesus—for deliverance from sin, and rescue from sin's consequences, in vain. Go on, then, to ask, and to seek, and to knock. While you do so, cherish the expectations that the Word of God warrants—believe that you will be heard, and that, should it be the will of God that you go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, you will come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves along with you.

But, my friends, we would not only give encouragement to those asking these blessings, through Christ Jesus—seeking the good things respecting which Christ here, in the most unqualified manner, says, "Ask and it shall be given you;" but O! we would excite you to enlarged expectations—to enlarged desires, upon this head. The God you have to go to is infinite in mercy: his resources are quite boundless. The merits you have to plead, who can measure them? The plea you have to urge is not only efficacious, but it is one the extent of whose efficacy no words adequately can describe. This being the case, then—this the character of the God you have to go to—this the nature of the plea you have to urge with him, surely we may say, Open thy mouth wide, that he may come in. We may ask you not only to seek—not only to pray—

not only to cherish comfortable expectations, but to go for blessings worthy of being received, as a return for the glorious work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such encouragement Jehovah gives to you—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

From the subject we have been considering, we also learn how it is that the prayers of mere formalists and mere hypocrites are not heard. They may pray—they may perhaps pray most readily—they may use the very words which the Redeemer here taught his disciples to make use of—they may pray for deliverance from sin; but, my brethren, there is nothing farther from their hearts—there is nothing almost on which they are more determined than that such deliverance shall not be accomplished—that sin shall not be rooted out of them—that it shall still be rolled as a sweet morsel under their tongue. And, therefore, what are their prayers but a mere mockery of God?—what are they all but one continued series of solemn—of fearful mockery.—They adore God—they express adoration, but it is not God that, in reality, they adore—they confess sin, but, in the midst of confession, they are going on sinning—they pray for deliverance—they profess to wish such deliverance—but it is not true;—they desire no such deliverance—they are, on the contrary, determined to cleave to their idols. And, my friends, if any of you are deceiving yourselves in this way—thinking that your prayers will make some atonement for your sins—that the regularity of your devotions will be a

sort of compensation for the equal regularity of your perseverance in giving sin a place, and the first place, in your hearts, rest assured that it is a fearful delusion—that such prayers are sin—that they mock God—that they consist in professions that, indeed, are most inconsistent with the reality of prayer. Are there any who do not pray at all? Are there any regardless of religion? Are there any conscious that, if they have prayed, and still pray, it is such supplication as we have been adverting to—professions of desire for rescue from sin, at the same time attended with the consciousness of seeking no such thing? Dearly beloved, we beseech you now to pray. O! forget not the world where prayer is heard—*where the redeemed be*—where there is ready access to God's throne—where the heart may pour out all its complaints, and cast upon God all its burdens, and seek deliverance from all its evils. Still are you within the limits of such a privileged world. O! avail yourselves of this. Soon you will have passed that boundary that separates time from eternity. Soon you will be, if you pray not now, where we do not need to pray hereafter. Yes, we read of one prayer—a prayer for a drop of water, that the tongue might be cooled. But we do not read of even that supplication being answered. O! now, then, prostrate yourselves before the throne of grace. Ask, and seek, and knock, and now there is no spiritual blessing which you may not pray to have bestowed upon you—no evil from which you may not seek to be free. O! you may look to heaven's exercises and heaven's joys—its unending glories—its never-ending—its uninterrupted enjoyments, and you may ask that even that heaven may be yours—that you may be placed in it—and that God himself would come and mercifully prepare you for it.

THE CARE OF GOD OVER BELIEVERS,

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE MID-PARISH CHURCH, GREENOCK, ON THE FORENOON
OF SUNDAY, 18th MARCH, 1832.

By the Rev. DANIEL DEWAR, D.D.,

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"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."—LUKE xii. 32.

WITH such tenderness does our blessed Redeemer encourage his people, and the connexion shows it to have been his design primarily to raise them above the vexing cares and anxieties of the world, and to lead them to exercise an habitual trust in the kindness and in the care of their heavenly Father. This exhortation derives peculiar force and propriety from its being addressed to them by Him who feeds his flock like a shepherd, who gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom, and who gives to all of them eternal life. They are the words of Him in whom we are to trust for a deliverance from far greater evils than any of a mere temporary nature, and who has given us the most convincing proofs of his power as well as of his willingness to fulfil his promises.

I. In the first place, we observe, that the people of God are here addressed under the character of a little flock. Compared with the rest of mankind, they have hitherto been small in number. They are few in proportion to the multitude in the world who are living in sin, without God, and walking in the broad road that leads to destruction. They are as sheep among wolves, often despised and reviled; often calumniated and persecuted. That the period is coming when their numbers will be greatly increased the Word of God leads us most surely to believe. In the meantime, we have good reason for knowing that they form, in every community, the minority. The knowledge of this fact, attested by the Word of God, and confirmed by our own observation, should lead us often to inquire whether we have any reason to hope that we belong to this little flock? Do we bear their character? Do we seek, earnestly, an alliance with them? Do we prefer to suffer affliction with this small flock, the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?

They bear to Christ, the good Shepherd, the relation of a flock, and it is in this character that he addresses them in the words of the text, and bids them not to fear. They are separated from the world—from the evil that is in the world, and are brought, by his grace, into his sheep-fold, and made the objects of peculiar care, and guidance, and blessing. They all, like sheep which had gone astray—they had turned, every one to his own way, but they are now restored to Jesus, the shepherd and the bishop of souls. By nature the children of wrath and of disobedience, even as others, they would have wandered, and wandered for ever, on the mountains of sin and darkness, had not the shepherd gone forth and searched about, and, by his grace and his Spirit, brought them unto himself. "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Widely scattered as they are over the earth, they are all intimately known to the Saviour, and each, in his order, is called, by free and sovereign grace, from the power of sin unto God, and from darkness unto marvellous light. "All that the Father hath given me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." The Shepherd goes after his flock, and their pasture is provided by him, and by him alone. The food that can satisfy their souls is not to be found in this world, which rests under a curse, and brings forth thorns and thistles. They have bread given them to eat that the world knoweth not of. "I," says the Shepherd himself, "I am the bread of life. 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 of the world. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." This

heavenly food is given them while here, but the good Shepherd is conducting them to a land where there shall be no more sense of want—where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more—where he himself shall feed them and lead them to fountains of living water, while God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. They are now his peculiar charge, not only to feed but to guide. He is the leader and commander who points out the way to life and to glory. He guides them, by his counsel, through the difficulties, the snares, the temptations of the world, and he tells them how to secure peace in the midst of privation. He guides them by his own example, acting as their forerunner, showing them, in every path of obedience and of suffering, his own footsteps. He guides them by his presence, fixing the true place of their habitation, appointing them the sphere of their usefulness and the measure of their trials, as well as of their comforts—and, when perplexed as to the path of duty, he makes their way plain before them—he brings them by a way that they know not, and leads them in a path that they have not understood. He makes darkness light before them, and makes crooked things straight. He also guides them by his Spirit, enlightening their understandings in the knowledge of his truth, and inclining and enabling them to run in the way of his commandments. If any of them should stray from the fold, he searches and finds out the wanderer—he renews him to repentance—he restores his soul, and leads him again in the path of righteousness. As a shepherd, he guards, he protects his flock; for they are here exposed to many enemies, whose craft and power are but feebly represented by the subtlety of the serpent and the strength of the lion. They are as lambs among wolves, and it is only by the watchful guardianship of the Shepherd that they are preserved from being devoured. “Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out: as a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. I will feed my flock, and cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which

was lost, and bring again that which was driven away; and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick, and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.” This most beautiful description of the tender care which the good Shepherd exercises over all his sheep is more fully explained by our Lord’s own declaration: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

II. In the second place, let us attend to the exhortation which the Saviour addresses to his little flock. “Fear not:” “Fear not, little flock.” The fear of evil or of suffering is natural to man, even in a state of holiness and righteousness, but the consciousness of guilt, and the prevalence of unbelief have greatly increased its dominion, in a state of apostasy. In the unrenewed mind, as directed towards God, it is always accompanied with the feeling of aversion to his character and his services; but in the regenerate, it is the simple passion of the soul sanctified—mingled with reverence and love, and rendered a spiritual grace. In proportion as this grace is strong does it raise us above that sinful fear which is in itself the occasion of great misery. It is against the indulgence of this sinful fear that our Lord warns his little flock, and, therefore, let us just notice two or three of the causes of this fear, that we may guard against their influence.

The first of these is ignorance. We often fear, because we are imperfectly acquainted with the power and grace of the Redeemer we serve, and with the ways of his providence. We are afraid of the frown and persecution of the ungodly, because we overrate the good or the evil they can do to us. Sometimes we are afraid of the dangers, the troubles, and the trials that are before us, because we magnify them from our ignorance, and we overlook, or disbelieve, for the time, the delightful fact that all things are made to work together for good to them that love God, and that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of trial. How readily would our fears subside had we the

full view of our nearness to the glories of the invisible world—could we, like the martyr Stephen, see heaven opened for us, and Jesus, our Shepherd, standing with open arms to receive us.

But another cause of fear is unbelief. The words which our Saviour addressed to his disciples are still applicable to us—“Why are ye troubled; O ye of little faith?” It is when we have faith to realize the great things of eternity—it is when we have faith to realize the presence and protection of God that we are emboldened against the fears and dangers of the present state. Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he had endured seeing Him who is invisible, but because he knew that the Lord was with him. The apostle Paul felt all earthly affliction as light and momentary, and working out for him a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory, because he looked not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are not seen. If we have faith to realize the power and the grace of the good Shepherd we shall not be afraid in straits and difficulties, nor even though we should be called to pass, as we shall, all in our order, through the valley and shadow of death. It is thus that we shall learn to derive from the promises, the joy and power they are intended, as well as calculated, to impart. It is thus that our souls shall be in perfect peace, trusting in God, who promiseth, and will perform, all things for our good.

Another source of our sinful fear, my christian friends, and of the distress to which this fear gives rise, is an immoderate love of the things of the world. It is certainly from the influence of this that the encouraging exhortation in the text is intended to deliver us, for, if you will only read the verses preceding the text you will see that our Lord specially directs the exhortation to his disciples, in reference to the cares and anxieties connected with the things of this life. This is the greatest enemy to christian peace, to growing spirituality, and heavenly-mindedness; and many has it induced to part with Christ—many has it induced to part with salvation and eternal life. It is necessary that this fondness for the comforts of this world should be mortified—that this love of temporal things should be subdued before we can be freed from the most fruitful

source of sinful fear. Could we, my christian friends, place ourselves and all our concerns at the entire disposal of the good Shepherd, and believe that he will order all things, not merely in infinite wisdom, but in infinite goodness, we should then remain unmoved, and have constantly reigning in our hearts the peace of God. We should endeavour to possess this state of mind, not only because it is necessary to our happiness, but because it is conducive to our holiness and safety. Sinful fear is the spring of backsliding and apostasy, and has made many thousands fall in the hour of trial and temptation. It was fear that made Abraham dissemble to the reproach of religion. It was fear that afterwards drew his son into a similar snare. It was fear that overcame Peter, contrary to his own resolution and his promise. This passion, when it prevails in the soul, renders it weak, and wavering, and timid, and incapable of contending with trial; and numerous are the warnings, and exhortations, and encouragements in the Word of God in reference to it. “Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Thus saith the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not:” and mark the reason—hear the reason assigned—“For I have redeemed thee: I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” What are the enemies of which we are afraid, my christian friends? Is not the Lord on our side, and why should we fear what man can do unto us? He will not turn away from his people, to do them good. Whatever the object of your anxieties, at the present time, or the occasion of your fear, the rule of christian duty is plain—commit thy way unto the Lord—commit yourselves and all that is yours to the hand of the good Shepherd—commit thy works unto the Lord, and all thy thoughts shall be established. It was thus David found rest to his soul, when persecuted by his enemies. “If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord,

he will bring me again and show me both fit (the ark) and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee. Behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." That you may be lifted above fear, even amidst the greatest trials, and calamities, and sufferings, look much to the encouraging example of those who have trod the path of affliction before you. You see how they overcame greater trials and difficulties than you are called to endure.

Ought not you, then, to be animated to follow them, in the hope of being soon united to them in that blissful kingdom where "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." He who has given you the earnest of the inheritance will surely keep you by his mighty power, and put you in possession of all that his love and mercy have provided for you and promised you. Realize the endearing relation in which the text represents God as standing to you. He is your Father, and, as a Father, he has redeemed you. As a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. Under the conscious sense of unworthiness, you may come to him under the belief that, as your compassionate Father, he is ready to forgive you. Whatever your state of weakness, or helplessness, or want, his language is, "I will be a Father to you: I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, says the Almighty." What wonderful condescension! What grace! to receive, among the number of his children, those who have rebelled against him. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God. If we stand to God in the relation of children, will he suffer us to be overcome by any evil, or to want any real good? Will he not protect us now by his power, and, hereafter, receive us to his glory? Of his people, it is said, he "hides them in the secret of his presence, from the pride of man—he keeps them secretly in his pavilion from the strife of tongues." "He keepeth them as the apple of his eye, and hideth them under the shadow of his wings." "If you, then, being evil, know

how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him."

III. But consider, in the third place, the argument by which the exhortation of our Lord is enforced—"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." This part of our subject suggests many most delightful considerations, to a very few of which I shall at present attend. We are here taught by our Saviour, that if we truly belong to the little flock of which Christ is the Shepherd, a kingdom is already prepared for us. All the descriptions which the Scriptures give us of this kingdom, are calculated to raise our ideas of its excellence and glory. All the images which this world can afford, are employed to represent to us the honour, purity, and happiness in reserve for the people of God in that kingdom. And heaven is the place where this blessing is to be enjoyed. It is represented as his place of inexhaustible glory—as the city of the Great King—as the city whose builder and maker is God. Into this place the Saviour is now entered, and is surrounded with angels and archangels, with the spirits of just men made perfect; and there all his redeemed, or little flock, shall be assembled, when their bodies shall be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

Nor are the place and company of heaven more glorious than its services. These consist in an intimate, and constant, and happy communion with God. Free from all sorrow and imperfection, the redeemed will be made capable of enjoying that happiness. Every hope will then be realized—every desire will then be gratified: "They are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Do you ask, who are of this little flock? How can sinful creatures ever enjoy this

exalted happiness? The words of our Lord are the answer—"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." This is surely sufficient foundation for our hope—one on which we may securely rest in difficulty and in death. If it be the purpose of God to give us the kingdom—if it be the purpose of God to give us everlasting glory in his presence, (and that it is, the Volume of Divine Inspiration most clearly attests,)—if it be his purpose to give us everlasting happiness in his presence, what can prevent this purpose from receiving its accomplishment? God has not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ from eternity. He has chosen us unto salvation, through the sanctifying of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth.

To you who have a just sense of your great unworthiness and of the evil of sin, this will appear scarcely possible. How can we, you will say, who have sinned against God, who have provoked the Holy One of Israel, hope to obtain happiness so exalted, even the place of sons and daughters? To this I reply, in the words of the text—"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." He gives you the kingdom, not as the reward of your merit, but as the gift of his love; and the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He bestows it not grudgingly, but, like himself, with the greatest good-will. And as a proof and pledge of your possessing it, he has already exalted your Elder Brother, your good Shepherd, your Lord and Saviour, to its actual enjoyment. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is

even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If you feel sorrow on account of any dear friends that you may have lost by death, still you are not to sorrow like those who have no hope, but remember that it is your heavenly Father who tenderly loves you, who has done it, and that you ought to say in all circumstances, and in reference to all events, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good to him, and blessed be his name. Do your fears, on the present occasion, arise from the presence of outward calamity, or from a sense of your want of conformity to the Divine will—from an impression of your slothfulness, and your carnality, and your insensibility in spiritual things, and your sinfulness? These are indeed deep causes for humiliation; but even these do not form any ground for despondency. Look away from yourselves to Him in whom all fulness dwells, and in whom you are complete: look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith. He will give you grace to subdue sin—to strengthen you for diligently following those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. "Fear not, for I am the first and the last: I am he that loveth you, and have the keys of hell and of death. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

May God bless his word for our instruction, comfort, and edification, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

No. VII. will contain the Sermon which was preached on Sabbath evening, 20th April, by the Rev. Gavin Struthers, of Anderston, Glasgow, introductory to a Monthly Course of Sermons, addressed to Young Men, by Ministers of various Denominations.

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SATURDAY, 12th MAY, 1852.

No. 7.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES GRANT, South Leith.
SERMON by the Rev. GAVIN STRUTHERS, Glasgow.

Price 2d.

THE DUTY AND NATURE OF THE LOVE OF GOD;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN SOUTH LEITH CHURCH, ON THE FORENOON OF SABBATH,
14th APRIL, 1852,

By the Rev. JAMES GRANT.

“*We love him because he first loved us.*”—1 JOHN iv. 19.

THE love of God, as a branch of duty and a spring of action, forms a peculiar trait of revealed religion. The gods whom the heathen nations worshipped were generally represented as imperfect and sensual beings, utterly destitute of those qualities which alone can form the foundation of esteem and affection. And even the best and wisest men of ancient times, though they attained to and have expressed some very lofty views of the perfections of Deity, do not appear to have inculcated the love of a Supreme Being as a duty, or to have expected from it practical results as a principle of action. Far otherwise is it with the God of revealed religion. In the Old Testament, as God is represented in the most amiable and endearing light—as at once the greatest, the wisest, the holiest, and the best of beings—so the love of him is inculcated as a duty of primary importance. And as to the doctrine of the New Testament on the same subject, it is sufficient to instance the well known passage of Scripture, where a lawyer or interpreter of the law of Moses, tempting Jesus, and endeavouring to find matter of accusation against him, asked him, saying, “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” to which Jesus replied, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.” You must not only pay to God the homage of external worship and of external obedience, but you must love him, and that with sincerity—with ardour—with confidence. This is the first and

great commandment. It is the first in point of place, and it is chief in point of importance. It is the first principle of religion—it is the root of all religious truth.

Although the views laid down and inculcated in Scripture as to the nature of the love of God, would appear sufficiently plain and intelligible, not on any subject, perhaps, have more erroneous views been entertained, or have men differed widely in opinion, according to their natural tempers and constitutions.

In the first place, persons of a hot, sanguine temperament, of warm feelings, and lively imagination, have given erroneous views of this affection. They have obscured it, and rendered it utterly unintelligible by mysticism and affected explanation. They have represented it as implying a warmth of affection which men of more sober minds find it impracticable to attain. They have described it in a manner more suited to express the grossness of sensual passion than holy affection. They have described it as enthusiastic zeal, rather than sober-minded affection; as utterly unconnected with the understanding, and, too frequently, as not influencing the will and guiding the conduct. Hence it is that the love of God is so often regarded with prejudice and aversion, and that all pretensions to piety are often looked on as an infallible mark of a weak and enthusiastic mind. It is a natural consequence that some men, waiving one extreme, are drawn into another. But we must beware, while

rejecting the ravings of an overheated imagination, that we do not confound with these the doctrines of truth—of sober and rational religion. The love of God has been much misrepresented by men of weak and misguided minds, and made often a shelter for enthusiasm; yet, nevertheless, it has a real existence—it is required as a duty, and it is quite consistent with true religion and rational piety. It is a reasonable affection. It is founded on a knowledge of the divine perfections; and the sincerity of it is best attested by a conformity to the divine will. But still it is a feeling—still it is an affection having its seat in the heart; and there is daily and hourly need of watching over it with holy jealousy. "As the hart," says the Psalmist, "panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

To every reflecting mind it must appear that God is a natural and reasonable object of affection. There is no object around us which does not excite some kind of interest. There are moral qualities in our fellow-men which irresistibly attract our love and esteem. We cannot behold, without loving him, a fellow-being of a warm and disinterested beneficence, who lives only for the good of others, whose welfare he is willing, at the expense of any personal sacrifice, to promote. The generous friend—the devoted patriot—and the noble minded philanthropist, challenge admiration and esteem; and more especially the exercises of kindness towards ourselves, secure the tribute of affection, inspiring us with gratitude and attachment. And if we love the good and amiable qualities of our fellow-men, shaded as they are with many imperfections—shall we be cold and indifferent towards that Being who is perfectly holy and good—who is our constant and best benefactor—our earliest and most faithful friend? Do we love the shadow, and shall we not much more delight in the substance? It is considered the sign of a worthless and unfeeling mind to be unmoved by the spectacle of human virtue, and must we be chargeable with enthusiasm or hypocrisy if we profess to love Him who is the centre of perfection, and the uncreated source of every excellence? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

This injunction requires not the exercise of any unknown and mysterious principle, of a new feeling or affection. It only gives, to an already existing feeling, a new and better object. We naturally admire wisdom, and love, and goodness, and it bids us, instead of confining our views to the faint display of these attributes, as they exist in our fellow-men, to let our affections centre in him whose wisdom is infinite, and whose goodness is unbounded; and surely there is nothing compatible with this that is inconsistent with right and reasonable views—nothing charging us with weak-mindedness. It is true that neither the presence nor the operations of God are discerned by our bodily organs. We go forward, but he is not there; backward, but we cannot perceive him. But this ought not to hinder the effect of knowledge, which, independently of our senses, we possess, that he who filleth heaven and earth with his presence, is not far from any one of us—that in him we live, and move, and have our being; and, though invisible to the bodily eye, he is the all-bountiful source of all enjoyment. The presence of a friend kindles up the flame of affection, and shall we not love the Father, who is the author of every good and perfect gift—who, though we cannot discern him by the eye of sense, has yet unveiled to us the perfection of his character, and given us so many substantial proofs of his goodness? The love of God, then, as it is enjoined, is clearly a reasonable affection. It may have been misrepresented. Above all, it has been described with an air of enthusiasm unwarranted by Scripture, but still it is a real affection—it is a commanded duty—it is a rational religious sentiment, yet it excludes not feeling.

Taking it for granted, then, that you are satisfied, that there is really such a thing as a love of God, and that it is an affection which you are required, and reasonably required to exercise; let us proceed to inquire more particularly what is its nature, in what it consists, and how it is to be acquired, as well as cherished and maintained. The love of God, then, is defined as the exercise towards God, of all those affections which the contemplation of his character as a good and gracious being is fitted to excite. It implies, as its foundation, a just sense and competent knowledge of the Divine per-

fections, and excludes those views of God, which could arise only from selfish fear and superstitious dread. Hence, in heathen ages and countries, no love of God exists, because the Deity then and there is represented as arbitrary, capricious and tyrannical, and, perhaps, sporting with the miseries of his creatures. In short, he is a character more calculated to beget the dislike of sinners, than to beget their esteem. And, hence, among ourselves, those men are incapable of love towards God—who have only superstitious fears—who never contemplate him but in the earthquake and the storm, and who close their eyes on views of his love and goodness. It is true, the love of God does not necessarily exclude even the fear of the greatness and power of God, but it is excited by his goodness, and it is by contemplating the various instances of this alone, that the feeling can either be excited or strengthened.

But, then, the love of God implies a warm and ardent affection towards God. It is not the mere performance of external acts of worship and obedience—it is the devoutness of worship in the heart. It is a sense of gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon us. And let no man plead, that he is naturally of a phlegmatic disposition, and constitutionally deficient in natural feeling. One man may feel more warmly than another: but the love of God is an affection seated in the heart, and some degree of feeling, at least, is inseparable from its exercise. Who can contemplate without emotion—who so cold and phlegmatic, as simply to approve of, without also loving the character of a good and generous friend? And who then can contemplate God and his goodness as displayed in the scheme of redemption, without a warmth of heart and a glowing of affection? It is still acknowledged, that the ardour of our love of our God, will depend somewhat on our natural constitution, and that, as there are some whose feelings are at times excited, without being either sincere or permanent, so, there are others, whose feelings, though somewhat destitute of ardour, are yet sincere. Both classes should therefore have recourse to other tests than that of feeling.

Therefore, we remark, that the love of God implies the love and practice of righteousness. Scripture often speaks of

these as just one and the same thing. At times, the love of God is stated in contradistinction to the love of our neighbour; and at other times, it means worship alone, but it generally includes the whole. "And now," says Moses, "what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" "If ye love me," said Jesus, "keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and doth them, he it is that loveth me." "Who-soever," says John, "believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." And, indeed, to love God, is to love righteousness, for he himself, that writeth the law, is holy, just and good. We cannot sincerely love God, without endeavouring to please, and delighting to serve him; and we cannot, ourselves, love righteousness, without reducing it to practice. Here, then, is a test: Wherever such obedience is yielded with sincerity, there is love to God—wherever it is wanting, a profession of love is mere hypocrisy. Wicked men are accordingly said to hate God—as they who are blameless and harmless, and led by his spirit, are said to be his sons. "Whosoever," said Jesus, "shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." In short, as a tree is known by its fruit, so infallible a test does the love of righteousness afford of the love of God. God is goodness and holiness; and it is for this reason, that the love of righteousness is in truth the love of God.

But some men are so erroneous in their ideas in regard to the love of God, as to insist that it shall be what they term wholly his interest, and they have caused unnecessary anxiety and uneasiness sometimes to good men, by insisting that God must be loved purely for his own sake, and that if in the affection we cherish, we have regard to past benefits or future

bliss, our affection is purely selfish and destitute of the character of true love. But the piety described by these men, is a refined and mysterious feeling, and has no existence but in their own feverish imaginations. There can be no love of God without respect to past and future benefits. Gratitude, for the past expressions of his goodness, is the very foundation of our love, and it is stated in Scripture, "To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much;" "We love him because he first loved us." As to the hope of future bliss, it also is inseparable from this affection. God is perfectly happy, because perfectly good. The two states are inseparably connected, and it is impossible that we should love the one without thinking of the other. The Scripture accordingly declares, that we cannot come to God in the way of love or duty, without believing that he is, and will reward them that seek him. The Patriarchs of old looked, amid their trials and wanderings, for a city that had foundations. Moses had respect to a recompense of reward. We are all saved by hope, and Jesus himself, the author and finisher of our faith, endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before him.

This leads me to another question as to the love of God, how far it is compatible in the degree in which it is required to exist with fear. And on this subject much has been said, calculated to mislead, to the effect that the love of God is utterly inconsistent with any, even the least degree of that feeling. And in support of this, reference is made to the verse preceding our text, where it is said "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." But observe, in the first place, that the fear here alluded to is slavish fear, and dread of danger. Where this remains as a feeling, it is a sure proof of an unregenerate heart; and a necessary step towards the love of God, is the removal of the fear of condemnation, and the looking on God as a reconciled Father. But there is a fear of God, rather to be identified with filial reverence than slavish dread, and which so far from being inconsistent, is inseparable from love. "There is forgiveness with thee," says the Psalmist, "that thou mayest be feared." Again, let

the timorous believer consider, even with regard to the slavish fear, some remains of which may be within him, that though perfect love casteth out fear, all that the existence of this implies is, that his love is not perfect. It is true, that if sincere, it will gradually approximate perfection; but perfection of love is not here to be attained, and no man need be alarmed as to his being in a situation of acceptance with God, provided he exercise faith and repentance, though he should feel that in his obedience, he has some regard to the terrors of the Lord. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord," says the Apostle, "we persuade men." The fear of vengeance is a legitimate mean to awaken men to repentance; and genuine religion will be accepted, from whatever motive it springs, provided it be genuine.

But while we say that sincere love is not inconsistent with a certain feeling of fear, let us always bear in mind the superiority of love, at once as a test of character and spring of action. Of all the principles and affections of the human mind, it is the noblest—the purest—the best. Fear depresses, but love elevates and ennobles the mind. It is the most powerful motive to a religious life, and at the same time, the most comprehensive. It deters from sin, and invites to duty. It extends to all situations, and prompts alike to the duty we owe to God—to ourselves, and to one another. It is the first and great commandment—the first principle and duty of religion—the root and fountain of every virtue.

But an important inquiry yet remains. How is the love of God acquired? and when acquired, how is it to be maintained and cherished in the mind? It is the goodness of God which forms the foundation of our love of God, and the natural mode of cultivating this affection, is to meditate habitually and seriously on the displays of that perfection. How little do the generality of men recollect of the numberless mercies of God? How many instances of the goodness of God escape the notice even of the best and most perfect; and what a rich fund of sweet and profitable reflection do the mercies of one day, not to speak of a whole life, afford? How many and varied are the pleasures of which the senses are the inlet! What a rich source of enjoyment is provided in our intellectual and moral nature! How

gracious the ties that bind us to one another in the various relations of life! Nor will a pious man confine himself to general reflections. He will delight to dwell on special instances of kindness and love to himself. He will think of occasions on which, when laid low on a bed of sickness, or pinched with poverty, God proved his refuge and strong tower, removing his affliction, and crowning him with undeserved mercy.

But, if these beget a love to God, how does the prospect enlarge and the heart glow when we think of his unspeakable gift—when we think of his not sparing his own Son, but freely giving him up for us all? “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “Herein, indeed, is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and gave himself for us.” How rich the provision which this affords for our utmost necessities—how adequate the supply for all our wants! We are weak and fallible creatures; but God is willing and able to make all things work together for our final good. We are polluted and defiled; but God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. We are frail and fallible; but his Spirit is given to them that ask it, to lead them into all truth. We are mortal, dying creatures; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. How happy they who mingle such reflections with their enjoyment of religious feeling—who let not a day pass without increasing their love of God and of his providential goodness!

This is a habit without which no love of God and sense of religion can be maintained in the mind; but it is not all that is needful. The having our hearts inured to the love of God must form a subject of earnest and habitual prayer. Prayer is one of the natural expressions of our love of God, and tends directly to maintain and cherish that affection it is intended to express. Besides, the love of God is one of the fruits of the Spirit that is said to be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; and I need not tell any Christian that there is an appointed means of obtaining the influence of the Spirit. Seek,

that ye may find. “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” Use every means in your power to cherish the love of God. Endeavour to acquire and strengthen the affection by serious reflection on all the great things that God has done for you; by reading pious books, and searching the Scriptures of truth. Above all, cherish an entire reliance on God for the least measure of success in your endeavours, and let it be expressed by earnest, persevering, and habitual prayer. Then will the Spirit be given in such measure as will suit your necessities. Your hearts will be gradually warmed by the love of God, who says to us, “Perfect love will cast out fear.” You will be more and more enabled to look up to God with the confidence of a son.

I surely need not add, by way of applying the subject to your present circumstances, that the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper, as an expression of love to God, is fitted, by its own nature and the blessing of God, to cherish and increase that feeling whose existence it presupposes. It is the pledge of the love wherewith he loved us—it is the remembrance of the greatest boon of God to man. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John iii. 16.) Here, then, Jesus is set forth, crucified for us; and in the covenant, of which this sacrament is a seal, and in this sacrifice, of which the elements of bread and wine are symbols, we see our race relieved from the bondage of corruption, and reinstated in the freedom of the sons of God. “Herein, indeed, is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us? We will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord. We will pay our vows unto the Lord now, in the presence of all his people. But while we thus commemorate our love of God, let us pray that our love of God may be made perfect; that, while we handle the pledges of redeeming love, we may experience that degree of gratitude and affection which casteth out fear.

UNITED EXERTION;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ANDERSTON RELIEF CHAPEL, ON THE EVENING OF SABBATH,
29th APRIL, 1832, BEING INTRODUCTORY TO A MONTHLY COURSE OF SERMONS
ADDRESSED TO YOUNG MEN, BY MINISTERS OF VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS.

By the Rev. GAVIN STRUTHERS,
Minister of the Relief Chapel, Anderston, Glasgow.

"And there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched."—
1st SAMUEL x. 26.

It is characteristic of man, in all ages, to prefer the ornamental to the useful. A striking display of this vain-glorious tendency in the mind of man, we have in the conduct of ancient Israel choosing to themselves a king. Though forewarned of God that he would become like other eastern despots, and make their sons soldiers and postillions, their daughters cooks and confectioners, and take the best of their fields, and vineyards, and olive-yards, and give them to his servants, yet they were so enraptured with the pomp of royalty—a sceptre, a crown, a throne, and a court—that they could no longer brook the idea of being governed by a plain prophet like Samuel, administering cheap and impartial justice in the name of God. No; like other heathen nations around them, they must have a showy and expensive sovereign, who, in all the splendour of royalty, would place himself at the head of their armies, and conduct them to victory. They panted not for that form of government which would prove itself the most beneficial, but for that which would conduct them, though at a vast expense of blood and treasure, to military conquest.

As every nation has a right to regulate its own form of government, Jehovah, while he admonished them of their danger, at the same time yielded to their general solicitation. To curb, however, their ambitious pride, he caused the lot to fall, not upon one of their lofty princes, but upon Saul, the son of Kish. In bodily appearance he was a tall and handsome youth, but he belonged to the small tribe of Benjamin. His father was at most a respectable person, in easy circumstances, while his son had hitherto been employed in keeping his flocks and herds. When the proud warriors of Israel saw the choice

which had been made—a tall, plain, and modest youth, accustomed to a pastoral life—they turned away from him in disgust and contemptuously said, "How shall this man save us?" In their heart "they despised him, and brought him no presents." Among the thousands of Israel, however, there were a few who cheerfully acknowledged him as their elected and anointed king—who encircled his person, gave to him his sceptre, and yielded him that obedience, and tribute, and honour, to which he was now entitled. They respected the choice of God. "And Saul," it is said, "went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched."

These observations, suggested by the incidents connected with our text, may be generalized and applied to another King, of whom the kings of Israel were but types, and to another people of whom ancient Israel were but the sample. A King sits upon the holy hill of Zion, who, when he tabernacled in this world, was simple in his manners, unostentatious in his deportment, and who was familiarly known as "the friend of sinners," and not as a dweller in kings' courts. When the sons of worldly ambition saw him, they said, "there is no beauty that we should desire him." By the "sons of Belial," he is still rejected and despised, and with one consent, they exclaim, "we will not have this man to reign over us." But, there is a remnant according to the election of grace, who rally round his person, advance his standard, and who cordially approve of his holy, heavenly, and spiritual reign. The children of Zion are glad in their King. Applying our text, therefore, as a motto to the "Lord's anointed," and his faithful followers, it may be said of them, with

emphasis—"And there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched."

Accommodating this statement, without perverting it, we are naturally led to describe the subjects of Christ under a two-fold aspect.

I. THEIR PERSONAL CHARACTER. They are men whose hearts God has touched.

II. THEIR ASSOCIATED CONDITION. They are a *band* of men whose hearts God has touched.

1. An internal change has passed upon them. Their *heart* has been touched. This is an observation which strikes at the root of a very common and destructive error. Born and educated amid all the decencies of a civilized and Christian community, many amongst us are insensibly moulded into the mere form and fashion of the age. They would tremble at their perilous predicament, had they not a copy of the sacred volume which they could read, and a church in which they could worship, and a people with whom they kept "holy days;" and yet all the while they are acting from no higher principles, than what would have made them Musselmén, or Papists, or Pagans, had they been born in Turkey, Italy, or Japan. They are chaff and straw, swept along by the current, and floating upon its surface.

This is particularly the case with the young. Under the watchful eye, and the festering hand of a pious parentage, their pliant minds may have been bent to the observance of religious exercises. At their mother's knee they have knelt and acquired the habit of prayer; in their father's hand they have been tutored to the practice of attending church; while teachers have stored their minds with sacred odes and passages of Scripture, and flattering visitors have often burnt incense to the parents, by stroking the head of their children and praising their piety, and thus they have taken it for granted, that they were religious, while they were only attending to the mere external practice of piety.

Far be it from me, to discourage religious training, and to check an early profession. I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith, which was infused into the young mind of Timothy, and which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, under whom he was

brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. My aim is to guard you against resting in aught that is outward.

There must be something more than education. The heart must be renovated, it is here where the evil lodges, and here the reformation must begin. The streams must not only be led out in this and in that direction, but salt must be cast into the fountain to sweeten and purify its waters. Hence the prayer of David—"Create in me a clean heart." Hence the admonition of Paul—"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." And hence the pointed reproof of Jesus—"Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." Man is like a time-piece, which has been disordered by a fall. It is in vain to be continually burling its casement, setting its hands, and placing it in different positions, when it is the main-spring of all its movements which requires to be renovated.

If the young, therefore, are to be ranked among the people of the living God, they must follow the Lord heartily. Each must hear the God of Jacob saying unto him, "My son, give me thy heart;" while his conscience responds—

"Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it:
Seal it from thy courts above."

The consideration of the number who have started with professions as high, and characters as untainted as yours, and who have eventually become infidels, and cheats, and drunkards, should excite within you the strongest suspicions of your unfeigned sincerity.

Ah! what if your religion is merely a form, and you have never felt the renovating power of God upon the inward man. No other alternative is half so important. And as the trials and temptations of life shall yet unfold your principles and display your character, be greatly concerned that your heart be right with God. May God, of his grace, begin a good work in you, and perform it until the day of Jesus Christ!

2. The author of this internal change is God—their hearts are touched by Him. This statement also corrects another very serious mistake in regard to the production of a religious character. If there are multitudes that place religion in outward forms, while it springs from an inward change, so there are not a few who

trust to human power for its production, and not to the power of God. It is the besetting sin of fallen man, and especially of the young who have not yet proved by failure the utter weakness of man to magnify their ability, and depreciate the agency of the Holy Spirit. They imagine they have power at any given point of their sinful career, to arrest their progress, repent, believe, and be saved. Hence thousands are kept the willing slaves of sin, stilling their fears under the false delusion, that in the moment of danger they can burst their fetters and be free.

But why should they lay this flattering unction to their soul? Where is the evidence of a self-reforming power in the human heart? Can the lame man of himself rise and walk? Can the blind man of himself open his eyes and see? Can the dead man of himself cause his heart to beat, and his lungs to play? And are the maladies of the mind less paralyzing than those of the body? When the heart is stricken, the infirmity must be extreme. The Scriptures therefore proceed upon the acknowledged fact that no man can reform himself. Instead of leaving him to the dictates of his own unaided conscience, they address him with motives drawn from heaven, earth, and hell, to convince his judgment, influence his will, elevate his hopes, and alarm his fears. They display a Saviour to allure, they promise a Spirit to aid, and they invite to the exercise of prayer, as a channel prepared for the descent of the Spirit into the heart. When they call upon us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, they subjoin, by way of encouragement—"for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

It may, indeed, be humbling to the heart of self-sufficient man, to bear of human agency reduced to a mere instrumentality, in the hand of God, for the conversion either of ourselves or of others, but experience and Scripture equally attest the fact, that we are born again, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We become the sons of God, not in virtue of our natural descent, not in virtue of the natural choice of our carnal minds, not in virtue of the wishes of others. Can the dearest friends insure the conversion of their relatives? Can ministers give effi-

cacy to their ministrations? The same negative reply must be given to all such questions. Nay, whensoever man is exalted and God is forgotten, even though employing appointed means, the progress of religion is arrested, and declines speedily—"not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Alas, the heart of man is cold, and dead, and lifeless. We have within ourselves the mournful evidence of its truth. Before we can be warmed with life divine, the Spirit must touch and vivify by its sacred energies. As God of old bowed his heavens and came down, and touched the summits of the cold and rocky mountains, and they instantly smoked, so he must touch our cold and stony hearts with fire from heaven, ere a smoking flame shall be kindled which shall burn and brighten for ever. It shall consume our lusts, and by fresh communications of heavenly influence, it shall be fanned into a glow of love as warm and pure as angels feel.

"Come, vivifying Spirit, come,
And make our hearts thy constant home;
Let pure devotion's fervours rise,
Let every pious passion glow—
O let the raptures of the skies
Kindle in our cold hearts below.
Come, vivifying Spirit, come,
And make our hearts thy constant home."

3. The influence of this internal change is to make the subjects of Christ cherish warm affection, and practise dutiful obedience towards their King. It was because the hearts of this band were touched by God, that they encircled Saul as their monarch divinely chosen—that they surrounded him with their love, as well as with their shields and spears—that they shouted "God save the King." And, mingling religion with loyalty, gave their conscience to God, and their sword to their sovereign.

In a similar manner, every heart renewed by the Holy Ghost loves, and honours, and obeys the King of Zion. To the eye of sense He may be the carpenter's son, but all whose eyes are enlightened view him by faith as the Son of God. Though his cradle lies low with the beasts of the stall, yet they bring him presents, more valuable than gold and sweeter than perfumes, and humbly bow before him as Christ the Lord. They recognise him as receiving an unction from on high, and believe that an omniscient God would not have chosen one from amongst the people, unless he had been

"mighty to save." They discover him fighting their battles and conquering their foes. Sin and Satan, death and hell are driven before the might of his uncreated arm, like chaff before the wind. Seen returning from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah—glorious in his apparel, and travelling in the greatness of his strength, after he has deprived death of its sting, Satan of his victims, and hell of its prey—the Christian admires the goings of the Captain of his Salvation, and says, Should I not love, and do him honour? If David was received with the warmest hearts, and the loudest plaudits of the daughters of Israel, after he had slain the Philistine who defied the armies of the living God, shall I not cry, Hosanna to the son of David, who has triumphed over those principalities and powers who had carried their warfare to the very gate of heaven? Yes, A Christian loves Christ more than father or mother, sister or brother, because he is divine in his nature—the deliverer of his people—the bulwark of their strength—and the source of all their comforts. Under the influence of this sacred passion, he cleaves to his person, submits to his sceptre, and takes his law from his mouth. He goes where he bids, follows where he leads, and does what he enjoins. Gratitude prompts him not to live to himself, but to him that died for him and rose again; and the more difficult the service to which he is called, the more does he rejoice that he is thus honoured with an opportunity of testifying his attachment to his Saviour, and his fidelity to his cause. His flagging energies are ever and anon excited and invigorated by the animating address of Jesus—"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

II. Passing from the consideration of their personal character, let us next consider the subjects of Christ in their associated condition. They are a *band*. This suggests three ideas—union, mutual affection, and joint co-operation.

Ist, They are united. The people of Jesus are not persons of a poor misanthropic spirit, shutting themselves up in cells and cloisters, and shunning the company and conversation of their brethren. A life of solitary seclusion is enjoined by no part of revelation. Monks and hermits were the produce of an ignorant and barbarous age. What beneficial purpose

could be served by a person shutting himself up in a small solitary stone apartment, and living upon bread and water? Monastic habits, like the monasteries in which they were practised, have, deservedly, crumbled into dust.

In opposition to this selfish and seclusive spirit there is something uniting and comprehensive about the spirit of the Gospel. The sacred writers delight to represent the followers of Jesus under the figurative emblems of a flock of sheep—of a family—of an army; all of which representations embody the idea of numbers, and of numbers united by the strongest and closest ties. To associate them together, they are, by Divine authority, formed into churches, or congregations; and all these congregations are taught to regard themselves as constituting portions of the universal Church of Christ. To draw them still more closely together, all possess the same blessings, and are laid under the same obligations. They have the same Lord, the same faith, the same hopes, and the same home. They are all one in Christ Jesus.

How great, therefore, must be the sin of those who follow divisive courses, not in regard to a party which, in modern language, is all that it signifies, but in regard to the Church Universal. The old error of hermits dwelling in caves, removed from the great body of the faithful, was a trivial matter, compared to this. I envy not that schismatic his feelings, who widens breaches, magnifies little discrepancies, and builds up, between the genuine disciples of Jesus, brazen walls of separation, reaching to the skies. Whether it has arisen from a spirit of keen rivalry, or, perhaps, from better or baser motives, yet it is a lamentable fact that the disciples of Christ have agreed, as if by general consent, to rend the seamless robe asunder and dip it in blood. There is no adequate feeling abroad among the followers of the Lamb of the sin of dissension and the evils of separation. The old Corinthian cry—"I am of Paul, and I of Apollos," is going over the whole length and breadth of the land. In proportion as the different parties are coming together in point of doctrine, they are drawing themselves off with more haughty scorn from each other's company. Party spirit is gathering strength in the same

ratio that its excuse is removed—a clear evidence that it is of Satan and not of God. I lament its desolating effects among our religious institutions, though I do not plead exemptions from the jealousies and heart-burnings of the times. O when shall divisions, among brethren, cease? When shall the followers of the same Saviour look at the great leading doctrines on which they are all agreed and cease to magnify the lesser matters on which they differ? When shall Jerusalem be built, as a city which is compact together? When shall the Church be known as one grand assembly, separated into different congregations merely for the sake of convenience, and not for the purposes of faction. I would answer—When holy men seek union with as much zeal as fiery spirits have sought separation. “Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the sons of God.”

2. The subjects of Christ cherish towards each other mutual affection. The Church of Christ is united, and united by love. It is not, like a corporate body, bound together by human laws and worldly advantages. Worldly unions there are which have been formed entirely from carnal considerations. Were it not for gain, or the pleasures of the table, or, perhaps, for purposes of revenge against a third party, they would fall asunder like a bundle of rods, when the cord which bound them has been snapt in twain. Enmity to Christ made Herod and Pilate friends.

Among nominal Christians, carnal policy may also produce apparent unions. Such religious communities are always known by a fierce sectarian spirit. Influenced by worldly motives, they participate largely of a worldly temper. Affection, however, is the golden link which binds into one brotherhood all the genuine disciples of Jesus. They love the same Saviour—they are assimilated to the same image—and are engaged in the same pursuits. “Hereby,” says Jesus, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.”

It has been justly remarked, that there is something very peculiar in the love which unites the disciples of Christ. “It is not the love of consanguinity, or friendship, or interest, or general esteem. They may see many things in each other to admire, such as, an amiable temper, public spirit, tender sympathy; but Christian

love does not rest on these things, though they may increase it.* They may also see many things in each other which have a tendency to repress the warm out-goings of the heart; such as poverty, sickness, coarse manners, and a blunt untutored mind; but neither are their affections restrained by these. If they do not flow on account of the former, neither are they pent up on account of the latter. The rich and benevolent Christian looks around him for the faded cheeks and whitened locks of those whom, Sabbath after Sabbath, he is accustomed to see occupying their places in the sanctuary, and he is as much disappointed in their absence as if they were the princes of the people. The reason is, he loves all the Church because they are redeemed by the blood of Jesus and sanctified by his Spirit; and wheresoever there is most of the linaments of his Saviour there do his affections fall most ardently. Known by whatsoever name, and belonging to whatsoever denomination, he says, “These, O Father, are thy sons and daughters. Purchased they are with my Saviour’s blood, and shall I not esteem them?—renewed they are after his likeness, by the Holy Ghost, and shall I not doat upon them? They shall eat of my bread, and drink of my cup, and have a place in my bosom, because they are thine, O Divine Benefactor!” Without this pervading principle of love, Christians may have their personal excellences, but they are not united and compacted into a *band*.

3. The subjects of Christ co-operate together. When a person considers how little a single individual can possibly accomplish during his life time, and how efficient are the operations of an immense multitude, when they act upon one common object, and how much must be done before the world is enlightened and converted, he is astonished that the Christian community should have trusted so long to individual enterprise. Kings, long ago, knew how to levy soldiers, train armies, subordinate immense masses of human beings to military discipline, and bring them forward, in regular order, upon one point, for the sake of conquest. With the exception of the mad attempt of united Christendom to wrest from the Turks the

* The Rev. J. A. James.

holy sepulchre, we read of no combined enterprise, on the part of the Church, during hundreds of years, for the advancement of religion. Bible Societies and Missionary Institutions, combining simplicity of plan with nobleness of effort, are the inventions of a period comparatively late. Here, every one does a little, and all their efforts bear upon some great undertaking. Each has a department assigned him, and each has that department which is suited to his talents. One gives of his counsels; a second of his means; and a third his activities; and a fourth is, like Moses, lifting up his hand and praying down a blessing upon all. As each keeps to his own path, and there is no thwarting and crossing of each other's course, there is thus no loss of labour. Combined influence can in this manner do what individual exertion could never accomplish. Nay, there is not only a gathering of streamlets into a river, but joint co-operation has within itself a self-augmenting power. In her united exertions against ignorance, and vice, and poverty, the Church does not only lay the services of all her members under contribution; but their hands are strengthened, and their hearts are encouraged, by the enlivening glance which passes from eye to eye, and the zeal which kindles from heart to heart. Let modern institutions, charitable and religious, proclaim what has been achieved during the last thirty years, by the combined union of means, wisdom, and agency. I cast a glance over the face of the earth, and I discern companies of Missionaries in all climes, from pole to pole, supported by the annual contributions of a few friends of the Gospel. By the mutual co-operation of learning, wealth, and piety, the Bible has been put into rapid circulation in many a tongue. Tracts, like winged messengers, are flying about, not as serpents, to sting, but with pertinent counsels for every condition. Sabbath schools and city missions are penetrating into the darkest recesses of our corrupted population. Combined operations are shaking society to its very centre; and as it is a religious influence which is disturbing the slumber of ages, we have every reason to believe that the very happiest consequences will flow from these combined, sustained, and well-directed efforts. Surely there are better days yet in store for the race of men.

To those religious institutions, which are the safety of our city and the glory of our age, another has been added. It is called "The Glasgow Young Men's Society." Its plan, operations, and object, will be best learned by stating a few of its rules:—

"I. The name of the Society shall be 'The Glasgow Young Men's Society.'—II. The objects of the Society shall be to promote the religious and intellectual improvement of the young men of Glasgow, and to excite them to activity in doing good.—III. The Society shall take the Holy Scriptures as its guide, and avoid controversy and political discussion.—IV. The Members of the Society shall be young men between fourteen and thirty-five years of age, of good moral character, and not professing opinions subversive of evangelical doctrine.—V. The city and suburbs shall be divided into districts, and Associations formed in each.—VI. Each Association shall meet once every week or fortnight, for devotion, practical reading of Scripture, reading religious essays, and appropriate conversation.—VII. Each Association shall also meet once every week, or fortnight, for the diffusion of useful knowledge among its Members by essays and conversation.—VIII. That young men may be separated from vicious society, and enjoy the influence of pious example, a list of lodging and boarding houses to which the daily worship of God is maintained, and no immorality tolerated, shall be kept for reference by the Members, and young men coming to town.—IX. The Society shall endeavour to establish a Sabbath evening Lecture, for the benefit of the young men.—X. The Society shall direct its Members to such Libraries, Classes, and Lectures as shall most certainly and at least expense, promote their general improvement.—XI. The Society shall co-operate with such approved religious and benevolent Institutions, as can be most effectually benefited by its assistance."

You will, I think, agree with me that the ends proposed by this Society are highly important. The character of the coming age depends upon the piety and talents of the rising generation. Surely all young men, in whom there is found any good thing towards the Lord, and whose engagements can, by any possibility permit them, will be ready to join this "band of men, whose hearts the Lord has touched." And let no young person say he is under no obligation to give to this institution his countenance and service, because his heart is not changed. Our being had does not disannul the law of God, commanding us to be good. Our refusing obedience to Christ, as our King, does not exempt us from the obligation of dutiful service. We may learn this lesson from the incident which follows our text. But, a few of the many thousands of Israel, followed Saul, as his faithful subjects. The great majority, who were the sons of Belial, despised the king, returned to their homes, and attended to their own matters. In the course of a very few days, however, the Ammonites came up against Jabesh-Gilead and

besieged it. The city promised to capitulate, but the Ammonite would only spare the lives of the inhabitants from a general massacre on condition that they would become his slaves, and the men would submit to have the right eye thrust out, so that they could not again use the shield in war. In these perilous circumstances, the inhabitants sent messengers to Saul, imploring his aid. When they told these tidings in the ears of the people, "all the people lifted up their voices and wept. At that moment Saul came after the herd, out of the field... And the Spirit of God came upon Saul, when he heard these tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly." And he who had held his peace when the people refused him presents, now hewed a yoke of oxen in pieces and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel, by the hands of messengers, saying, "Whoso cometh not forth after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen." On hearing the stern injunction, and the heavy forfeiture which they were likely to incur, fear fell on all the people, and they came out with one consent, and flocked to his standard.

Looking round upon you, my young friends, assembled together, I tell you that you are all summoned to join the army of the Lord of Hosts. When the bloom of youth is upon your cheeks—when you are yet unhackued in the ways of vice—and when you are not yet enfeebled with old age, you are required to take your arms, to contend against every form of wickedness which is thundering at our gates, and to do something for the King of heaven. This evening I sound the trumpet to arms, throughout this part of the coast, and either by joining this band, or by some other association which you may think more convenient and useful, you must unite to beat back the assailing foe. If you have no heart for the undertaking, then I tell you that the very purpose why I address you is to beat down your objections, and to infuse into you a right spirit. In calling upon you to yield

yourselves up to the service of the Lord in early life, I am not requiring you to do aught that is painful—I am not requiring you to do aught that is profless—I am not requiring of you to sacrifice your health, or throw up your employments—I am merely requiring of you that you should make it the ruling principle of your life to serve your God in the Gospel of his Son. Is it not strange that you require to be expostulated with on this point? Why procrastinate a single hour, when the last enemy may not give you a moment's respite? My young friends, what evil will it do you? None. What good will religion bring you? It is of more worth than the whole world; "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul."

Persuaded that fathers should watch over the spiritual welfare of their children as those who must give an account, and convinced that the young heart turns from religion as an austere service, and dreads the scoff of an ungodly companion more than it heeds the call of duty, I beseech the men who are venerable for years, who are tottering upon the staff of age, and would wish that a seed should still do service to the God of Jacob, to use their paternal influences with the young, that they may be constrained to join the band whose hearts the Lord has touched, so that our city may have its little companies of praying ones meeting in every quarter, and, like verdant spots in our moral wilderness, spreading a sweet savour of religion all around the place where they assemble.

The Society has my best wishes for its prosperity and success. I commend it, in prayer, to the guardianship of him without whose blessing nothing can prosper.

"O thou, our Father, Saviour, Guide,
One true eternal God, confessed,
Whom thou hast joined let none divide;
None dare to curse whom thou hast blessed"

AMEN.

GLASGOW:—W. R. M'PHUN, PUBLISHER, 86, TRONGATE,

To whom all Communications should be addressed.

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SATURDAY, 19TH MAY, 1832.

No. 8.

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THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE PRIESTLY OFFICE ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. DAVID'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE AFTERNOON OF
SABBATH, 13TH MAY, 1832, ON THE OCCASION OF BEING INTRODUCED
TO THE PASTORAL CHARGE OF THAT CHURCH,

By the Rev. JOHN GORDON LORIMER.

—
" *And who is sufficient for these things ?*"—2d Cor. ii. 16.

It is well known that, in the wisdom and goodness of God, the communication of the divine purposes to man has not been left at random or uncertainty—that in every age there has been a standing order of men, whose special office it is, publicly and privately, to explain and enforce the revelation which God has been pleased to vouchsafe. Under the Jewish dispensation, there were priests and Levites; under the Christian dispensation, in primitive times, there were apostles; and in every subsequent age, so far as circumstances would allow, there have been men bearing a similar character. It is only in the infancy of religious sects that such a class of persons is ever dispensed with. And, indeed, the wisdom of the appointment is so manifest to reason, that it may well be supposed, on this as well as on Scriptural grounds, that such a class of men will never be wanting to the Christian church. The advantage of particular study and division of labour is felt in this as well as in every other department of knowledge. Whatever pertains to the Christian ministry—whatever pertains to an office of perpetual appointing and divine standing, must be interesting, not only to those who hold it, but to that far greater class of men who are its objects. Nothing that regards the souls of men can fail to interest alike the preacher and his people.

The particular feature of the office of the ministry to which I would direct your attention, is the difficulty with

which its due discharge is beset. This topic may be said to be, in some respects, sad and painful, but it is fitted to be useful alike to the teacher and the hearer; and there seems peculiar propriety in its consideration, under the circumstances in which we stand to each other, now that the relation of a Christian minister and congregation has been established between us. May God, of his infinite mercy, grant the teaching of his Spirit, that the word spoken may be a word at once conducive to his glory and beneficial to us. We propose considering the great difficulties attending the discharge of the Gospel ministry.

At first sight, we are led to imagine that there are no such difficulties, at least no serious ones—that however these might have been permitted to prevail before the coming of Christ, after he had come, and after the plan of redemption had been fully unfolded, all difficulties would disappear, and, to compensate for past restraints, the most unfettered freedom, and force, and prosperity, would be imparted to the office. Consulting the sentiments of men of the world and the great body of professing Christians, it would appear that there were no great difficulties connected with Christ's ministry. They imagine that the office, especially when compared with other offices, is a light and easy one. It must certainly be acknowledged that it is a very possible thing for an unfaithful man to make the Christian ministry light, and

to deprive it of all its difficulties; even as some persons may convert any other pursuit, however arduous, into one of facility and ease. Perhaps this office may be so converted more readily than any other; but, with all this, the office of the ministry is one attended with great inherent difficulties. He who succeeds in making it light, shows that he has never understood it, or that the office in reality has perished in his hands, while he retains only the outward name.

Every profession and every pursuit is stamped with its own peculiar difficulties, and there seems no reason why the office of the ministry should be an exception. From the very nature of the case, there must be a keen and persevering warfare, leading to many difficulties; and as the Christian minister stands foremost in battle, so it is to be expected that the opposition should be peculiarly directed to those who hold that office. Were all men renewed in their hearts, ministers might meet with little opposition. This, however, is not the case; and accordingly the office is one not unattended with difficulty. How amply is this representation borne out by the facts of Scripture. Neither the office of the priests and Levites, under the Old Testament, nor of the apostles and teachers, under the New Testament dispensation, is represented as easy or light;—on the contrary it is represented as full of snares and difficulties. Why, otherwise, have we so many directions and encouragements for its due discharge?—why so many prayers for those invested with it, that they be faithful? The simple circumstance, that so much of the holy Scriptures—two whole Epistles, those of Timothy and Titus—is exclusively occupied with counsels of the ministry, is, of itself, clear proof of difficulties. What a clear proof of the difficulties of the office of the ministry have we in the 11th chapter of this Epistle! The recital is almost incredible; and though Paul, being chief of the apostles, might have had a chief share of these difficulties, yet a subordinate share, it may be, in a mitigated form, belongs to all subsequent ministers. The language of our text takes for granted the same great truth. The Apostle, speaking in allusion to his office and its important concerns, asks, "Who is sufficient for these things?" thus implying that no one, of himself, is sufficient, not

the most able and accomplished; that, if any one is sufficient, it is altogether of God. So the same apostle tells us elsewhere, "Seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;" obviously intimating that were it not for the mercy afforded, he had fainted. It is remarkable that the Epistles in general begin by invoking grace and peace on those whom they address, but those of Timothy and Titus, which treat much of the ministerial office, invoke mercy in addition—"Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour;" intimating that persons so situated peculiarly need the mercy of God. And from whence can this arise but from the difficulties and dangers connected with their office?

What, then, are the great natural difficulties of the ministerial office, if I may so speak? They concern its public and private duties. One of the chief duties is the public proclamation, by preaching, of the truth and will of God. This may seem very easy; but how difficult is it to declare the whole counsel of God in its exact order, place, and connexion! How difficult is it to present all the truths of the Gospel in their precise proportion and subordination, as unfolded in the Scriptures! And then, though the natural tendency of our own minds is to run into extremes, and though we know that, in declaring the whole will of God, we must often be offending the prejudices of many of our hearers, how difficult is it to guard against errors, thoroughly to expose them, always to give them the best, the most conclusive answer, especially when the errors are so numerous, so various, and so insidious as they are in the field of revealed religion!

Then, how difficult is it to make the whole will of God a matter of continued interest to all or to many! It consists, after all, of a few great truths, which they know, and have been accustomed to hear from their infancy. We have no fresh discoveries, as in the sciences, to give interest to the Scriptures. We are restricted to the record. We are not able, nor allowed, to give it variety of our own invention. And if it is difficult to preserve the interest of the hearer's mind, how much more difficult is it to carry his conviction, and work a change in his views of conduct? Did men naturally love

God and holiness, the office of the ministry would be comparatively easy; but they hate both, and that with supreme hatred, and the great object of the Gospel is to persuade them to abandon this hatred. The Gospel declares that we are not to be satisfied but with a devout regeneration; and how difficult is it to make men carry through this change! How many difficulties must be met and overcome—what tastes implanted, and habits formed—what a change of motives, sentiments and condition, effected! It surely can be no easy matter to reason successfully against men's whole passions—to prevail on them to pluck out their right eyes and cut off their right hands—to persuade them to exchange a world which is seen, and tasted, and felt, for a world which is unseen, and in which they could not live, because its enjoyments are at variance with their principles. This is the source of the greatest difficulties, and creates among hearers a host of enemies. Their feelings, wounded and irritated by the declaration of unwelcome truths, may set them in opposition to their preacher. Were he to be unfaithful to his commission, he might escape from this; but the ease he purchased thus would be as dishonourable as injurious to his hearers.

Another difficulty connected with the public discharge of the office of the ministry, and it is a serious one, is that of preparing and apportioning divine truths to the various circumstances and conditions of the hearers. Though the truth of God be always one, yet the character and circumstances of those to whom it is addressed are immensely varied; and though the same truths belong to all, there must be a diversity in their treatment, otherwise much injury will ensue. The same treatment will never do for all men. We must make a distinction between the wise and the ignorant, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the sanguine and the gloomy, the prosperous and the afflicted, and many other classes. A general indiscriminate style would not only not meet the case of any but would do much harm; for what is one's antidote would be another's bane; what gives to one consolation might sink another into wretchedness; the punishment necessary for one would produce despair in another; what is daily bread for the advanced Christian would be unintelligible or in-

digestible to the young and the weak; so various are men's tastes, and circumstances, and situations; so differently does the same truth affect different minds, and even the same mind at different times, that it almost seems as if it were different in its nature; so difficult a matter is it to apportion truth to the special circumstances of those addressed. Hence it is said of a good steward, that he is able rightly to divide, and to give every one his meat in due season. The Apostle Paul acted on this principle, in becoming all things to all men; and our Saviour recognised it when he required of his disciples to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves; and he exemplified it when he spoke with kind persuasion to the ignorant, and to the multitudes that surrounded him, while he denounced judgment against the Scribes and the Pharisees who thwarted his labours, and made a mock of religion. But how difficult is this! How various are the classes!—how varied their circumstances!—how difficult exactly to know them, and to know what will exactly suit them! How do new classes of society, and new claims in these new classes arise!—and how difficult is it to address the various characters, and to adapt the public duty so as best to express their wants and answer their condition!

Then, as to the manner in which the office of the ministry is discharged, the difficulties are not inconsiderable. It is no easy matter to declare the sublimest, the most important truths, so plainly that all, even the most illiterate, may understand them—so forcibly, that even the most insensible may feel them—so convincingly that the most argumentative may receive them—so tastefully, that the well educated may be won by them—so seriously, that the most thoughtless may be impressed with them—so intelligibly, that the well-informed may be instructed and guided by them. It is no easy matter to attain so many different ends at one and the same moment. Hence are they so often separated, and while one is gained another is lost. Then, how great are the difficulties and discouragements of continuing in the exercise of the office of the ministry for years, and, after much labour, and encountering many difficulties, seeing little or no fruit! Other professions have generally their reward, and can reckon upon it at no great distance of time; but

it is not so with the ministry. A man may encounter difficulties, but, in place of being rewarded with pleasing returns, he may be tried with disappointment and despair. What a temptation is this to relax into indolence!

Such, my friends are a few of the more prominent difficulties which beset the office of the ministry in its public exercises; but the difficulties are not confined to these, (it would be well if it were so,) for they assail the private as well as the public exercises, and are fully stronger in the one case than in the other. How trying is it to keep up the spirit and practice of personal religion amid so many difficulties. It is true that, in some respects, the office of the ministry conduces to a man's personal religion. It saves a man from much worldly conformity—it necessarily occupies the mind with great and good objects—it harmonizes a man's business of this life for that which is to come, and so gives more time for another and a better state than the business of the world allows. But, on the other hand, it has its evils. Religion is apt to degenerate into a mere professional pursuit. Publicly and perpetually going through its forms, uttering its language, and manifesting its feelings, while the heart may not be engaged, tends to destroy the spirit of piety and harden the heart into formality. We are in danger of speaking, without feeling or thinking what we say. Then, the abridgment of time and the hurry of public business aggravate the difficulty. The very thought that personal religion may not be advancing within us, is of itself a very painful and distracted one. And then, my friends, there are difficulties involved in maintaining the character in private, and so recommending the cause of religion to others. A minister of the Gospel is assailed with peculiar temptations, and has to encounter peculiar enemies. There are many who make use of his failings as a shelter for their own delinquencies. There are others who, from mistaken friendship, place him in circumstances that expose him to temptation. And then, in the management of their domestic concerns, and in their intercourse with the world, there are many points on which it is difficult to say, at times, how a minister should act. The instances in which he may be misinterpreted, and his

motives called in question, are so many that it is an easy matter to injure the cause of religion far more than to adorn it.

But, in addition to this general difficulty, there are many of a special kind. How difficult is it to know the exact degree of conformity to the world that may be practised—to know where the line is between what is sinful and what is allowable! How difficult is it to keep the world in its proper place, and make it only the instrument of good! Then, how manifold are the difficulties involved in the private discharge of ministerial duty to the different classes and characters which it concerns! It is comparatively easy to be faithful in the pulpit, but how difficult to be faithful in private!—how difficult to be faithful to the rich, to the afflicted, and the dying!—how difficult to unfold to each class their true character!—how difficult is it to offer the merited reproof—to confess Christ before men, and vindicate his cause amid the opposition of scoffers and the silence of friends!—how difficult is it at one moment to reprove friends, at another moment to reconcile foes!—how difficult is the management of the poor!—how puzzling to know how to relieve for the present, without doing harm for the future! How difficult, again, is discipline!—what new and perplexing cases from time to time occur!—how difficult is it to know what is for edification and for the glory of God—what to take up and what to suffer to pass into oblivion—how to mingle tenderness and truth! But, O Lord, how difficult is it, amid these multifarious and ever-changing duties, to maintain a devotional spirit and heavenly affection!—how difficult is it to be called on to discharge duties in the absence of a corresponding frame of soul—to be obliged to undertake services without the necessary preparation of the heart! How painful such disqualifications, and yet none of these can be of unfrequent occurrence in the private discharge of the ministerial office.

In any circumstances, the difficulties to which I have referred must be seriously felt. Whatever be the sphere of labour, and however encouraging the aid of friends, there must still be the experience of much difficulty. The very number and variety of duties must create it. It seems unreasonable to think that any one by

nature or acquirement can be fitted easily and successfully to discharge them all. This were such a union of qualities as never met in a single case. There are times and places, also, in which ministerial duties become peculiarly important and difficult. They are more difficult, for example, in a large city than in a country village; not that human nature and the grand essentials of religion are not the same in both, but there are more difficulties to contend with, and fewer facilities in one case than in the other. In a large city, there are more public duties to perform, and much more bodily labour to undergo. New undertakings and new duties spring up from day to day. There are also, with the increased spread of knowledge, higher expectations and demands. In the meantime, the time for meeting these is abridged, the opportunities for preparation diminished, and the sources of weariness and perplexity multiplied.

And now, having seen what are the chief difficulties, I shall conclude with a few inferences by way both of instruction and encouragement. And from what has been said, we may gather the duty of men in specially making some allowance for the defects and shortcomings of those invested with the office of the ministry. This is too delicate a consideration for Christian ministers much to insist on, and it is not safe for them to rely upon it, lest it lead to listlessness or remissness. They must never slumber. But with all this, their office is attended with many peculiar and formidable difficulties; and being so situated, they must be tenderly dealt with. Were their office easy and unincumbered—as easy as many imagine—there would be no room for peculiar tenderness; they might well bear the blame of every failure. But it is not so. Their temptations are strong, their duties, both public and private, attended with many difficulties. How necessary, then, is it that, instead of being given to censure and finding fault, men should rather be kind and indulgent to them, especially in small matters. It would surely be unjust to treat those engaged in what was easy and in what was difficult alike. The difficulties of men's circumstances are always a ground for leniency in every other case, and there seems no reason for excepting the case of the priestly office.

Another inference to be drawn from the difficulties of those who share in the duties of the office of the ministry, which brings much good to those who are invested with it, is, that it is the duty of the people to lighten the difficulties of the office. It is but little that they can lighten them, but still it is their duty. After their most successful efforts in this way, the faithful minister will find enough to do. And what ought men to do in that case, but to intercede with God for him? This is the dictate of nature, of reason, and of revelation. What can we do for one beset with difficulties which we cannot remove, but pray for him? There is no feature more striking in the Apostle Paul than his anxiety to gain the prayers of his disciples and converts. We generally find that just according to the character of the shepherd, so is the character of the flock. How necessary, then, that there should be prayers that the shepherd's character be formed, and his labours directed aright.

And then, assuming that the duties are difficult, how strong are the encouragements which the word of God supplies to balance the difficulties of the Christian minister. Encouragement is needed, and it is not withheld. Many men have their difficulties, and are not encouraged: but not so with the Christian minister. The encouragement is strong. It comes from God; and all his works, whether of nature, providence, or grace, are full of compensation. It is well to know that others judge leniently and pray earnestly; but there is far more to sustain those invested with the ministerial office and beset with its difficulties. It is cheering to know that the difficulties in themselves are highly useful. They are not unmixed evil—they are not intended to vex and annoy the faithful minister, but to strengthen his grace, to elevate his character, and increase his usefulness. True religion, to show its power, must fight with difficulties, and struggle forward through a perpetual warfare. This is its lot to the believer, and must be its lot to the Christian preacher. But oh! how comfortable to know that all this is for good. And then how honourable is the office above all others! Among men, the most arduous offices are not always the most honourable. Not unfrequently, difficulty and dishonour are associated. Not so the office of the

ministry. If it is difficult, it is also full of honour. What an exalted privilege to be a fellow-worker with God! What office among men more closely resembles the employment of God—doing good, dispensing consolation, life, and happiness to men? Surely for such high honours we may be contented to bear difficulties. It is as remarkable for its value as its honours. What so important in value as the soul? and what office so valuable as that which seeks the highest glory of God, and the highest good of men in this world and also in the next? Surely such a cause as this will amply repay all the toil connected with it. We have to consider again what difficulties Christ went through in the discharge of his ministry; what snares were laid for his feet; and that he, without any personal advantage, braved them all, interceding even for his enemies. How should this make us ready to enter on the duties and grapple with the difficulties of the office! Then what promises of grace has God vouchsafed to support his servants, and to overrule for good all their difficulties. How has he promised that his Spirit should be sufficient for them and that he shall tread all their enemies under his feet! How has Christ, the Great Head of the Church, now glorified, promised that he will always be with his ministering servants, to strengthen and encourage them; and not only so, but that he will be with them from this moment to the end of time! How has he assured them of his sympathy and fellow-feeling, that though men may be harsh and severe, he will be kind and tender, and that he will make gracious allowances! How has he assured them of especial blessings on their labours! Such blessing is promised to no men belonging to other professions. And in point of fact, how have these promises been realized in the experience of indi-

vidual ministers in every age of the church! We have more than the promise; we have the actual fulfilment. How has he dissipated their fears, lightened their trials, heard their prayers, and wonderfully relieved them? How often has he blessed their difficulties to their own souls, when they were struggling with warfare, yet leaning on his Almighty arm! How often has the highest personal religion been found among men so situated! Witness the case of the Apostle Paul; so true is the Saviour's promise. And independent of every other consideration, how animating is the success itself with which God encourages his servants! And what minister is there that can value it aright! A rich return for a thousand difficulties who has not felt, when standing by the death-bed of one who has been plucked like a brand from the burning? Verily, such a sight as this is more than a reward for all past toils. Nor are the encouragements of the Christian minister measured by time. They stretch into eternity. It is cheering to know that his difficulties will not last for ever; that at the longest they are very brief; and that they will soon be over. They are part of man's probation, and will cease with that probation. And then how are the rewards of eternity promised to the faithful Christian minister! The struggle and warfare of the ministerial office here admirably fit and prepare for a higher situation above; and that honour and happiness shall be granted. The faithful servant is to receive a special welcome. His glory is compared to the light of the sun and to the stars of the firmament. He is to rest from all his difficulties, and wear the most resplendent crown; and in proportion to his difficulties will his rest be the sweeter and his glory more radiant. The more his difficulties here, the more will be his glory hereafter.

To be continued.

THE COURSE OF THE GOSPEL;

HERMON PREACHED IN NICHOLSON-STREET CHAPEL, EDINBURGH, ON SABBATH,
22d APRIL, 1832, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE SCOTTISH MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

By the Rev. HENRY BELFRAGE, D D.,
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'And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.'—Zech. xiv. 8.

Among the various evidences of the divine inspiration of the ancient prophets, there is one suggested by this chapter which claims peculiar attention. The predictions which they delivered were often directly opposed to the strongest prejudices and to the fondest hopes of their country. There have been impostors who have uttered the language of rebuke and alarm; but it was in the season of calamity, and when the general terror seemed likely to secure to them attention and influence. Smooth things are most welcome to the ear, and most frequent in the lips of the deceiver; but holy men of God delivered their warnings with fidelity and boldness, and whatever were the pangs which they felt for their country, they shunned not to declare the terrors of the Lord. These remarks are strikingly illustrated by the predictions of this chapter. The Jews were flattering themselves that the temple which they were re-building would stand to all ages, and that the ceremonies now re-established should never pass away; that the nations should crowd to its altar, as the fountain of mercy, and worship in its courts, as the threshold of heaven. In opposition to these conceits, the Prophet assures them that their holy and beautiful house should be laid in ashes; that their forms should be superseded by the rites of a simpler, yet brighter, economy; and that the waters of the sanctuary should leave the land of Judah desolate, and direct their course over the Gentile world, making truth to spring from the earth, and righteousness to bless the nations. We know that this flood will return to Palestine, not for the resurrection of the dead, but for grace to the living; bearing on its stream Messiah—not in the pomp of power, but in the beauty of holiness; and lifting its voice, not with the shout of war, but with the song of the Lamb. It is in the course of these waters over the

Gentile nations that we are especially interested; and the contemplation of it, as described in the text may excite feelings suited to the object of our present meeting, and adapted to lead us to improve the Gospel for our eternal salvation.

I. Our attention is first called to the designation here given to the Gospel—“Living waters.” In such a climate as the East, water is regarded as an element of inestimable value, and allusions to it had a peculiar charm; but even to us such figures must be pleasing, and they present the objects which they are intended to exhibit in a form both agreeable and instructive. The simplicity and the beauty of Scripture imagery interest at once the fancy and the heart.

This designation points out the purity of the Gospel. It is in the stagnant pool that weeds grow, and that noxious creatures abound, but the running stream is usually clear. And thy word, O Lord, is very pure; therefore doth thy servant love it. Holiness to the Lord is stamped on all its principles, commandments, and rites. It is a dispensation of mercy, but it gives no indulgence to the least sin. Grace is its brightest character, but that grace is the strongest impulse to holiness. It is amazing that parties, the most hostile to each other in their feelings, should unite in their opposition to the holiness of the Gospel. There are some who, in their zeal for what they call its grace, represent it as relaxing the obligations of morality, and condemn the inculcating of its duties as an attempt to add to the work which Christ has completed for the sinner's hope; and others who profess to be eager for the promotion of virtue exhibit the Gospel as more indulgent than the old dispensation to human frailty, and as requiring, not perfection, but sincerity in goodness; but the object of Christianity is to make its disciples

stand complete in all the will of God : it animates obedience by new motives, and by a more ample influence, and sets before us an example of all excellence, and states conformity to it as the whole duty and the highest attainment of man.

It points out the refreshment which it yields. As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so are good news from a far country. How sweet are its offers of pardon to the awakened conscience ! and never was there language more soothing to the heart than this, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How precious are its promises of help and peace to the afflicted and the feeble ! and how reviving is its hope of life and immortality to the mourner cleaving to the dust ! The world excites, but that excitement is momentary, and it is soon succeeded by deeper depression. False religions can have no other result on the mind and heart than languor and stupefaction, but the joy and the peace which are felt in believing are the strength and life of the spirit. The religion of Mahomet resembles the whirlwind of sand in the desert, darkening the air, overwhelming all before it, and filling the eyes, and ears, and mouth of the parched traveller with dust ; but the Gospel brings with it the peace of God, when the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none.

This designation points out also the fertility which the Gospel produces. The "flowing stream" fertilizes the district through which it passes ; and "the Gospel," saith Paul, "is come to you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." Other institutions have sought, as their object, the promotion of decorum of manners, austerity of character, or restraint from crime ; but Christianity aims at forming the love of God in the heart and conduct. It has taught piety to childhood, and heavenly-mindedness to age ; charity to the rich, and contentment to the poor ; sobriety to the vicious, and devotion to the ungodly ; wisdom to the simple, and contrition to the hardened. It forms the gentleness which blesses families, the purity which adorns churches, and the righteousness which exalteth a nation. It must be remembered that it is the Spirit of the Lord moving on

the face of these waters which imparts to them all this virtue. "It is the Spirit that quickens ; the flesh profiteth nothing ;" and to Him our prayers should rise for that divine influence by which the Word of the Lord shall have free course and be glorified—by which it shall be evinced that the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul—that the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple—that the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart—and that the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. And to such a religion shall not we cleave with purpose of heart ? Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon that cometh from the rock of the field ? or shall the cold flowing waters which flow from the hill of Zion be forgotten ? To these questions I trust our hearts are replying, as Peter did to a similar question from his Master—"Lord, to whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life."

II. Let us now attend to the place from which these waters issue. The East has been styled, "the cradle of science," and from it many sublime discoveries have been brought to the Western world ; but none of these are, in value, like the law which came out of Zion. When Christ ordered repentance and remission of sins to be preached, in his name, to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, the banks within which these living waters had flowed were broken down, and the stream began to rush over the Gentile world. How bold was the language of Paul and Barnabas to the Jews, who forbade them to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved ; "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing ye put it away from you, and judge everlasting life unworthy of you, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." There was a striking display of the wisdom of God in this arrangement, for, as Jerusalem was the place where those great facts took place, to which all the doctrines and claims of Christianity point, it was fit that it should go to the Gentiles with this high presumption in its favour, that it had been published on the spot where its Founder suffered and triumphed, without one supported charge of fraud or imposition. The connexion of the new with the old dispensation made this still more necessary, for thus the attention

of inquirers was turned to the prophecies and the rites which for ages had been preparing the way of the Lord.

But it may be said that these waters flow from Jerusalem, as it is by the Church that they are communicated. They are brought to the Church not only that they may be improved but diffused. This is our Saviour's charge—"Freely ye have received, freely give;" and such is the impulse of its spirit of charity. Amidst the regret and shame which we feel at her long neglect of this great duty, it is some consolation to think on what God hath led her to do during the last forty years. This is the greatest glory God hath shed on our country—a glory far beyond any which shines on the pages of our history, or the records of our science—a glory, marked by the pious of other lands, not with envy, but with gratitude and delight. I allude to it, not in the spirit of exultation, but to excite us to advance in the path into which God hath led us, and to be in labours for him much more abundant. During the twenty-seven years that the British and Foreign Bible Society has existed, it has circulated more than seven millions of copies of the Scriptures, at an expense of nearly two millions of pounds sterling; and it is engaged in promoting the translation, printing, or distribution of the Scriptures, or portions of them, in more than one hundred and fifty languages, or dialects. To this statement I may add the many hundreds of Missionaries sent out by the different Missionary Societies, to make God's name known in the earth, and above forty of these have been sent forth by the Society in whose behalf I now address you; and when I think that all this has been done in seasons of public depression, and during two long wars, enormous in their expenditure, grievous in their sacrifices, and often alarming in their aspect, I feel constrained to say, What hath God wrought! "If the Lord had been pleased to kill us he would not have accepted such offerings of piety and mercy at our hands, nor would he have showed us such things as these."

III. But let us mark the course of these living waters. The statement given of it in the text seems to intimate that the Gospel should bless the nations of the Eastern and of the Western world. The course of these waters hath hitherto been chiefly to the Western sea. Europe has

been blessed with them to a wonderful extent, and now they are flowing over the vast continent of America, in a stream more majestic than that of its mightiest rivers. If we look to the Eastern world, we see here and there only a scanty rill, which seems on the point of being lost in the sand: but Providence is intimating that the time to favour that region is come, in the plans which are formed, and the attempts which are making to introduce the Gospel into China, into Abyssinia, and among the different tribes and nations of the East Indies.—Most unworthy of our character, as a Christian people, was the conduct of Britain, for a long period, to India. What a striking description of that treatment is given in the words of Burke:—"Animated with all the avarice of age, and all the impetuosity of youth, Englishmen roll in, one after another—wave upon wave—and there is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless prospect of new flights of birds of passage, with appetites continually renewing for the food that is continually wasting. Other conquerors have left monuments either of state or beneficence behind them, but England has built no bridges, cut no canals, dug out no reservoirs, formed no roads, and were we to be driven out of India, nothing would remain to tell that it had been possessed, during the period of our dominion, by any thing better than the ouran-outang or the tiger." Since the period of that speech, a most happy change has been effected. Various excellent methods have been employed for improving the temporal condition of the many millions there under our sway, and different Societies have made it the sphere of Missionary labour; and, instead of producing rebellion and ruin to British power, as infidelity and worldly wisdom predicted, these preachers of the Cross are meekly and safely guiding the feet of the natives in the way of peace.

In the Carnatic, there are more than a thousand reservoirs, from which water-courses are made to refresh the fields. These are the monuments of princes who were fathers of their people—the tokens of a bounty which delighted not in deeds whose praise might reach the ear, or in memorials of vain pomp, but in operations productive of lasting utility, and of gratitude ever fresh as the stream

which calls it forth. But more noble still is their charity who have opened the wells of salvation in that parched land, at which race after race may obtain consolation under all the sorrows of time, and grace for all the felicities of eternity.

But we look for a more extensive diffusion of the Gospel in all quarters of the world. There are vast regions of our globe where millions are perishing for lack of knowledge, and on which no drops from heaven have fallen, but it shall not be always so, for "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." When we consider by whom these assurances are given—that their fulfilment is associated with his own glory, as well as the salvation of men—that these results are a part of the Mediator's reward—of the joy which was set before him—and that all power is given to him for their accomplishment in heaven and in earth, we can rejoice in hope that many shall come from the east and west, from the north and south, to honour the name, and share the grace of the Saviour of the world.

There are various circumstances which indicate that a more extensive diffusion of the Gospel will soon take place. The expeditions of travellers, which have been conducted to such extent in the present day, to enlarge our acquaintance with the aspects of our globe and with the materials of science, shall be made to serve the higher purpose of tracing out channels for the water of life. He who sends the springs into the valleys, and gives drink to every beast of the field; who waters the hills from his chambers, and satisfies the earth with the fruit of his works, will assuredly open rivers in high places, and fountains of life in the midst of the valleys, make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. The moral elements are as much at his command as those of nature, and in their operation and influence he finds his chief glory.

The missionary spirit which He has created and maintained is a token for good. With the utmost eagerness do the Egyptians expect the rising of the Nile. No sooner do they mark its waters swelling than they rejoice exceedingly, for they

know that on its overflow depends the fertility of their fields, and their supplies of water for many months; and with much more delight should we behold waters breaking out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; and much more earnestly should we labour that men may be blessed in the Redeemer, and that all nations may call him blessed. There is no man who hath felt the terrors of guilt, and obtained relief in the Redeemer's blood, but must feel the strongest compassion for those who are groaning under the power of sin; and he who gives to one perishing sinner a cup of this water, in the Saviour's name, shall in no wise lose his reward.

IV. But let us mark the continuance of the course of those living waters. Their flow shall neither be impeded by the drought of summer nor the frosts of winter. As the waters which flowed from the rock smitten by Moses, followed the Israelites during the whole of their journeys in the wilderness, so these waters shall continue to flow till the mystery of God is finished. There is not the least reason to dread the cessation of their course. Sometimes this stream has forsaken one channel, but it has sought out another; and sometimes it has been like streams which sink under ground and flow for a time in a subterranean course, but it again bursts forth, like them, and pursues its way with as much purity and strength as ever. Do you imagine that because various institutions, formed for enlightening and improving men, have passed away, that this may be the case with the Gospel? It depends for its permanence not on human policy and might, but on Christ, the wisdom of God, and the power of God. Do you fear that it may fail through the influence of infidelity? Infidel power has been swept away before it, and, whatever boasts it may utter, its schemes and its efforts shall be quenched like the fire of thorns. Do you imagine that it may be destroyed by the corruptions which mingle with it in its course? Remember from what gross corruptions it has purified itself in its progress, and that its holy energy is almighty and eternal. It has been thought that the progress of science and freedom will be fatal to it; but they will display the beauty and the influence of genuine Christianity. The approach of the traveller discovers to him that the lake is the

desert, so inviting at a distance, is a mere illusion of the senses, but his coming nearer the living stream opens to him more fully the breadth, the power, and the beauty of its course.

The effects of the Gospel on the souls of disciples are perpetual also. The knowledge it gives is everlasting light; the peace it yields is everlasting consolation; the love it inspires is a charity that never fails; and the holiness it forms is a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life. The influence of other monitors fails before the power of temptation, and other comforters have spoken in vain amidst the tumult of sorrow; but the power of the Gospel is most apparent in seasons of trial. How delightful is this view of the subject, and how happily adapted is it to reconcile the mind to all the sad vicissitudes of life. Poverty may come, but thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure. Ministers, the helpers of your joy, are not suffered to continue, by reason of death; but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. Lover and friend may be put far from you, but the living Redeemer shall bring the water of life to your hearts, and tell you that he will be your Friend for ever. The founders of other systems have wept at the thought that their name and their influence should not long survive them; but you may exult in the persuasion, that Christ's name shall endure for ever, and that his Gospel shall issue in life eternal. "Yea, he shall live:" others must die, but He is alive for evermore: "to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised." And because he lives, his genuine disciples shall live also.

In reviewing this subject, we must surely feel the warmest gratitude to God for the Gospel. Wonderful must be his love to man, who sends it where it is neither sought nor welcomed, and maintains it where it is despised and rejected. These living waters, O Lord Jesus, flow from thy throne, and to it as a throne of grace will we trace them. Let those who have believed the Gospel adorn it by a good conversation. "This I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without of-

fence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

And let those who have not yet received its message of mercy, now open their hearts to its influence. What will it avail you that the Gospel is preached to others, if that it leaves you, saying, "I found you without feeling, and I leave you without hope?" There is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone, in which the unbelieving and the impenitent shall be tormented for ever, and who can assure you that the hand of the Almighty is not now stretching forth to cast you into it? Hear the voice of mercy; and your souls shall live. "The Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and him that is athirst, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

But I am especially called on by the duty of this evening, to urge you to act under the influence of these views of the Gospel which have been presented to you, and to employ every talent which God hath committed to you, in the diffusion of that religion which can alone save from ignorance, sin, and misery; in whose Author you glory, as the way, the truth, and the life, and whose character is the delight, and whose promises are the hope of your hearts. The Redeemer is this night claiming our affectionate interest in his cause, and shall we refuse it? He will mark what we put into the treasury, and shall he see any hand turned away, or any donation unsuitable or reluctant? Our earnest prayers are ascending, that his kingdom may come, and in these intercessions shall any heart be silent? This, I trust, is the purpose which now actuates all of you. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth."

The Society, on whose behalf I address you, has special claims on your support; and I feel it incumbent on me to advert shortly to their different missions, to strengthen your interest in their favour. It has six Missionaries in Jamaica, and they are labouring there in circumstances which require our kindest sympathy. That Mission was formed to heal the broken-hearted—to lighten the chains

which we could not break asunder—to make the slaves free from the law of sin and death—and to prepare them for using wisely the privileges which might be allotted to them by the liberality of the age. An insurrection, more frightful than the hurricane, has burst forth in the seat of this Mission, and, though it has been suppressed, the sky is dark and troubled; but nothing will calm the Negro's spirit, or keep him from listening to the counsels which would hurry him to tumult and revenge, like the wisdom that comes from above, pure and peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. The slave must be emancipated; but, without being prepared for it, it would be to him a curse, not a blessing; and that preparation can only be found in the benevolent spirit, and the moral power of the Gospel.

The Scottish Missionary Society has four Missionaries in the East Indies. From India, the destroying angel has advanced to Europe, and has now reached our land, and his course can be traced in desolation, terror, and wo; but from Britain, the angel of light and mercy has taken flight to the East, with healing in his wings, and with the everlasting Gospel of grace and truth, to occupy the place of their impure fables, and their rites of blood. To give you some idea of those burdensome, degrading, and evil superstitions, I may mention, that many thousands of people are employed in carrying water from Hurdwar to Juggernaut, for the uses of that temple, whose idol is worshipped by deeds of lewdness and murder, too shocking to be detailed. I may state also, that when a sick person's life is despaired of, he is carried by his friends to the banks of their sacred river, and there exposed without the least shelter. His mouth, nose and ears, are closely stopped with the mud of the river, and vessels of water are kept pouring on him; and it is amidst the agonies of disease, and the convulsive struggles of suffocation, that the miserable Hindoo bids adieu to life. How can we think of this, without feeling the strongest impulse to make known to them that Saviour whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light; who is as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

This Society has two Missionaries in Russia, one in Kaross, and one in Astracan. The disappointment of our hopes as to

Astracan, was indeed painful; but we will stand by those who have remained at the post of duty, amidst perils, and alarms, and the sickness of hope deferred. Of the excellent man still labouring there, I would say, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee from the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou hast put thy trust." Who can tell what God may do by the remnant that is left? "The remnant of Jacob shall be among many people, as a dew from the Lord—as the shower upon the grass that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." Other Missions have been contemplated by this Society, and they require only the public aid to go forward. How desirable would be a Mission to Persia, where the British name is so high; where the influence of Mahometanism is rapidly declining; and where many tracts and portions of the Bible are in circulation.

The times are portentous, and mighty changes are on their course, and it is our duty to diffuse those religious and moral principles which can alone give peace to the world. We will most effectually secure the safety and the repose of our own country, by fulfilling the law, and extending the empire of the King of Righteousness and Prince of Peace. The pestilence is walking around us, and so quick is its work, that none of us can say but to him it may be allotted to realize the words of Job, "Now shall I sleep in the dust, and they shall seek me in the morning, but I shall not be." May God grant that at whatever hour, and in whatever form death may come to us, it may find us waiting for the appearing, and labouring in the work of Christ. How affecting were the last words of the late Bishop of Calcutta. After some affairs of devotion were closed, he said in the most solemn manner, "O thou God of all grace, who hast called us to thy eternal glory by Christ Jesus, stablish, strengthen, and settle us. Have mercy on all, that they may come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. There is no other name given among men by which they can be saved. Other foundation can no man lay—" and he spake no more. What a beautiful testimony to the spirit and the hope of the Gospel. In that spirit may we live, and in that hope may we die! "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for you all is, that you may be saved." Amen.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 26TH MAY, 1832.

No. 9.

SERMON by the Rev. Mr. M'NAUGHTON, Paisley.

SERMON by the Rev. Mr. JOHNSTON, Edinburgh.

SERMON by the Rev. J. G. LORIMER, Glasgow.

Price 2d.

THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE WORD OF GOD;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE HIGH CHURCH, PAISLEY, ON THE AFTERNOON OF
SABBATH, 26th MAY, 1832, ON THE OCCASION OF BEING INTRODUCED TO THE
PASTORAL CHARGE OF THAT PARISH.

By the Rev. Mr. M'NAUGHTON.

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."—REV. xiv. 6.

IN the preceding chapter, to which you can turn at your leisure, you will find a symbolical account of the greatness and extensiveness of the kingdom of Antichrist—a reference made to that period when the church visible should be shorn of her beauties, and shrouded in darkness; when pure and undefiled religion, instead of standing forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners, should be clouded, and darkened, and obscured; when iniquity should reign with almost undisputed dominion over every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. The present chapter opens up a more pleasing prospect, it elevates the eye of thought to the beauties of the upper sanctuary—and passes before the vision the branch of the redeemed family that reigns triumphant before the throne of the Highest, dissipating the memory of earth's ruin and sadness, by the unfolded glory of Emmanuel's land, by the revealed splendour of the Heavenly Zion, with its companies of ransomed souls eternally hymning the wisdom of redeeming love. There is something delightful in the picture thus furnished us of the Church, emerged from her wilderness state—it is like the calm and the sunshine after the tumult and the storm—like the hallowed song of peace after the unholy shoutings of war—like the freshness of reviving spring, after the chillness and gloom of winter—a blessed—a glorious mutation, the more desirable because of its appalling contrast. Our text predicts that when the gospel had sunk into the prison house of Antichrist—when he had rolled the stone of his power over the grave of the living word, and had concealed its treasures of grace from the vision of the nations; that then God in his mercy would send forth the messengers of his will, to roll away that rock and publish wide as the hundreds of this earth, the glorious everlasting truth, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself and not imputing unto men their trespasses." The instrument employed in this great work is an angel flying in the midst of heaven. The angels are the servants of God, who delight to do his will; who execute his purposes with alacrity, and hear his commands with a holy joy. They are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation. They are prepared to rejoice over a returning sinner, in the moment of his penitence. They are prepared to shield him from danger when united to Christ Jesus and prepared to lead him to glory, to the presence of his God. From the nature of their duties, and from the nature of the plans of grace, these holy beings cannot but take a deep interest in the salvation of sinful men, seeing therein the advancement of the glory of God, the upbuilding of the kingdom of Jesus, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy, and the realization and

fulfilment of what they were themselves privileged to speak of on the plains of Bethlehem, when they declared—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

Still, though we doubt not the deep interest in the salvation of sinners taken by the heavenly hosts, still we believe the instrumentality here referred to to be strictly and really human, and the angel here spoken of to be just a minister of Jesus Christ, or rather a succession—a multitude of faithful men, who, themselves understanding the truth as it is in Jesus, and deeply feeling its influence in their hearts, shall proclaim to the ends of the earth the glad tidings of salvation through the cross of Christ. There are many reasons which render it more fitting that the Gospel should be proclaimed by men rather than by angels. In proclaiming the mind and counsel of God for our redemption, there are feelings to be awakened and evils to be deplored which angels never knew. In proclaiming the blessings of salvation, through the cross of Christ, there are sympathies to be touched and energies to be called into play which angels never possessed. In announcing pardon to the repentant sinner, through the merits of the Redeemer, there are feelings of devotion to be excited that have a reference to the previous state and feelings of men, in which angels cannot share; and there are songs of gratitude to be sung, which none can sing, learn, or understand, no, not the angels of God, but the men who have been redeemed from this earth, and brought, by the power of Divine grace, to glory, and honour, and immortality; and therefore we are inclined to believe that the angels represent ministers of Christ who delight to do his will in a spiritual and heavenly manner, with gladness of heart and willingness of mind. The angel is said to fly in the midst of heaven, intimating the rapidity of the diffusion of the Gospel, and the universality of that kingdom which should yet be established in the world. The expression is used in contradistinction to what is stated in the first verse, where the company of the redeemed, the Church, is described as standing upon one hill, even Mount Zion, surrounding the Lamb who gave his own blood for their redemption. But now we are pointed to a period when the Prince of darkness should lose that sway which he held over the

world, when the empire of Christ should be co-extensive with the existence of our race. Or, perhaps, the language is used in contrast to what is stated in the preceding chapter, where the lamp of faith is depicted as glimmering amid the dens and caves of the earth, appearing but as a little speck in the moral horizon; but now the Sun of righteousness should burst forth in his beauty, and all men should rejoice in his brightness—the kingdom of Messiah should no longer be dimmed in its lustre, but should "be established on the tops of the mountains and exalted above the hills, and all nations should flock unto it, saying, come and let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob."

I will not detain you long by entering into the conjectures of commentators regarding the time when this prediction was fulfilled. Suffice it to say, that some have contended for its accomplishment in the raising up of the Waldenses, who contended zealously against the power of the papacy, and were the means, even at the expense of their own lives, of leading men to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Others perceive its fulfilment in the dawn of the Reformation, when streams, hitherto confined, became a mighty river, rolling along towards the ends of the earth. Others see its fulfilment in the establishment of Missionary and Bible Societies, by which the truth as it is in Jesus is made known to men of every kindred and tongue, being translated into all the dialects of the earth; and thus held up unto all, as the record of Divine truth able to make men wise unto salvation. With regard to which of these opinions is the most likely, we need say nothing, because any conclusion to which we might come would be comparatively immaterial, being unattended by any practical result: suffice it to know, that in our case the prediction has been already fulfilled—that the angel has taken the everlasting Gospel and published it in the midst of our streets, and in our churches—that though one instrument may be removed—though the changes to which man is liable are constantly taking place, still that Gospel will remain eternal as the Rock of ages; though one herald may be sent to another part of the vineyard to tell that God reigneth, God, in his mercy, will raise up another to take his station on the watch-towers of Zion, and proclaim his mercy; to speak to the de-

sponding that their warfare is accomplished, and to call aloud, to the unbelieving and the godless, whatever their state, their rank, or condition, "Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come, and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

Here, then, my brethren, we have set before us *our* duty and *your* duty. The one is to *proclaim* the everlasting Gospel, the other is to *hear* the everlasting Gospel. I need hardly mention what all men know, that the word Gospel just means good news, or glad tidings. It was a term made use of by the angel on the plains of Bethlehem, to quiet the spirits and to dispel the fears of the shepherds who were watching over their flocks, "Fear not, for behold I bring you the Gospel," literally, or, as it is in our version, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." And what are the glad tidings is immediately explained: "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." These are the glad tidings—that there exist a height and a depth, a breadth and a length, in the love of God, which passeth all understanding. The act of proclaiming such a Saviour is a subject of great joy to the world. It is the clearest testimony which heaven and earth could afford to the fallen as well as to the recovered state of man. It is just the voice of God himself pledging his eternal truth to the hopelessness of our former state. It is just the loud declaration, that whatever man may think of himself, and the world of each other, and whatever flattering unction they may be pleased to lay to their own souls, still that the free gift of the Saviour tells us of the wrath of God and our utter ruin; tells us, that when we had alienated ourselves from God by nature, and when we had turned a deaf ear to the voice of his commands—when every holy principle that he had implanted into our souls was displaced by principles of evil—when we had gone according to the devices of our own hearts, and despised the precepts of eternity—when, in fine, our attitude towards God was one of distrust, of enmity, and of rebellion—that then the gates of heaven were opened, and streams of mercy poured forth on this guilty race; a glad proclamation issuing forth, instructing us that all God's thoughts were

thoughts of peace and love, that he had provision for the removal of guilt, for hallowing the heart and finally elevating many sinners unto glory. This is the Gospel—this is the good news. And surely it is good news to the dying and perishing children of men, to hear that that tree of life has again been planted in this world—is fenced and guarded by the faithfulness of Divine promises, and is covered with the fruits of righteousness. This is the good news—that the grace of God is mightier far than the guiltiness of man—that the mercy of Heaven is more extensive far than the sinfulness of the creature—that the merits of Christ's death are more than sufficient to counterbalance the sins of any individual—that all iniquity, whatever its degree and character, sinks, and is lost, in Christ's atonement. When the guilty and the fallen is reclaimed from his wandering, and through the power of the Spirit is united to the Redeemer. This is the glad tidings—that through Christ Jesus the sinner may now indulge the hope of pardon, and seek and search after abiding and enduring peace, and raise his ambition to the possession of glory. This is glad tidings: and if there is no melody in that sound—if there is no sweetness in that voice to any one, it is because that creature loveth darkness more than light—it is because he is ignorant of the nature of the wrath of God—it is because he is ignorant of the character and evil of sin, and of that mercy that has appeared unto all men, bringing salvation, else his mind would overflow with joy, and gratitude, and praise towards the God of all grace. If there be any who do not feel it to be glad tidings, it is just because they are not aware of it; for it is contrary to all the analogy of nature, reason, and experience, that a blessing so momentous should be believed in without the individual's being rejoiced, and gladdened, and delighted. How does the captive heart swell at the joyous hope of promised liberty? How does his spirit walk abroad unfettered through the world, and already anticipate that period of coming delight when the balm and breeze of morning shall meet him in every walk? And shall not the sinner feel joy when there is promised an opening of the prison-doors to him that is bound—when he feels that he is lying in the dungeon of death, and way of ruin?—shall it not awake the minstrelsy of a grateful heart to hear that Christ is the

all-sufficient Saviour?—shall the man who has felt the miseries of poverty be gladdened and rejoiced at the offer of unexpected riches, that shall enable him to dwell in ease and affluence, and shall not the sinner, poor and destitute, rejoice when the boon of the unsearchable riches of Christ is held out to him? Say, shall the feelings of the man who has been long lying on a bed of sickness and disease, kindle anew with hope, and shall his heart throb anew with life when he is told of an effective remedy that shall fit and prepare him for all the duties of existence; and shall not the sinner, over whose soul the leprosy of sin has made its way, rejoice when he hears that the great physician of souls has come in the chariot of the everlasting Gospel, prepared to pour the healing balm of his own blood into the spirit, reviving those that mourn, and comforting those that are cast down? This is glad tidings, that Christ liveth for ever, healing all diseases, saying unto his people, "Return unto me, and I will redeem you:" "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else."

We have said that the Gospel is glad tidings of great joy; but it is only so to the man who receives it. There is the savour of death unto death, as well as the savour of life unto life, in the Word of God. If men's hearts are not softened, and their consciences made tender, under the preaching of that word, they must, of necessity, become hardened, and seared, and withered, and dead; and, therefore, something more is necessary than merely to attend to the sound of the Gospel. We must receive it into our hearts—it must sanctify us wholly—it must enlighten our ignorance and dispel our fears. There is a species of gladness which men sometimes confound with the gladness of receiving the Gospel—that pleasure we feel on hearing it preached—that admiration we feel at the manner in which it is enunciated—that delight we feel at the mention of the heavenly love of Christ the Saviour—or the power of the Holy Spirit—or the blessedness of the land for which he prepares us. It is just like the feeling we have on reading the description of a traveller who has come from a foreign clime, and tells us of an unclouded sky and abounding resources. This is not the delight that springs from the knowledge of the Gospel. The Gospel

is not the romantic and distant idea of other men, of other times, and of other climes; it has a personality to exist in the soul; it must be brought home to the heart, as the truth of the living God, and we must feel, not only that Christ is a great Saviour, but that we have chosen him as *our* Saviour—that we are united to him by the exercise of a living faith; because it matters not to us what is his character and power unless we ourselves are interested in them—united to him—living even ourselves members of that mystical body. So scarce, in hearing the Gospel, as to the effect it has upon you, whether it tends to separate you from sin—whether it tends to annul the power which the world has long wielded over your spirits, and make you set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; and then you shall know the good news contained in the fact that Christ is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins.

But I have omitted to notice the title,—“The Everlasting Gospel.” This epithet may be applied to the Gospel either in reference to its origin or its continuance. From all eternity, and before men or angels had sinned, or were created, God's thoughts towards men were thoughts of love. Sin introduced no new contingency into the works of God. It did not derange his plans, as it did not throw his purposes into confusion. He had contemplated its entrance into the world; and his permission formed a part of that perfect, though, to us mysterious plan upon which the government of the world is conducted. Hence we find, in the records of sacred truth, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are described as sitting in council together, devising measures for the recovery of fallen man, and deciding upon the sacrifice of Emmanuel as the only remedy for the misery of this world. All this, however, is spoken of merely in accommodation to man's weakness. Infinite wisdom and perfect knowledge need no deliberation: with Jehovah there can be no balancing of measures, no weighing of expedients, no examination of different plans; before his omniscient eye all things stand unveiled, in their truest order and fittest arrangement: and hence, when the ruin of man was contemplated, and the love to save him existed, the means, and agency, and end, were at once apparent, and Christ declared, “Lo, I come! To do thy will I

take delight." Here there is no stoppage of the Divine procedure. However incredible it may appear that God thought of us in eternity—however incredible the thought, it is still true, that the eternal living God, the everlasting Son, and uncreated Spirit, were occupied, before ages began, in our behalf, and for our benefit. How sure, then, the scheme of salvation, through the cross of Christ, finding its source in the fountain of eternal love, and perfected by the grace of the eternal God. Had this scheme been the mere device of all the combined understandings of all the minds in heaven and earth, apart from Deity—had it been the mere working of human agency, it would still have been marked by imperfection, and its success would still have been doubtful. Man could not tell all the injury he had done to the law and the justice of God; he could not tell all that was necessary to propitiate the favour of heaven, and must have sunk into hopelessness and despair.

But when the scheme emanates from the wisdom of Godhead, the message is the revealed will of one whose purposes are uncontrollable, and whose plans are unmarked by fickleness or imperfection.

This term everlasting may be also applied because of the continuance of the Gospel. It is everlasting, not only in its origin but also in its continuance. The mind of man has ever been fertile in expedients; and, from the beginning of ages, it has been occupied in devising ways in which the sinner might come before God, and bow himself before the Most High. And yet all have been found unsatisfactory and useless. Systems of idolatry have been invented, and measures of expediency have been tried, but the mind of man has still continued bereft of comfort, seeking a surer hope on which to lay hold and a broader foundation whereon to rest. That foundation and hope are alone to be found in the word of the living God. From the beginning of ages down to the end of time the Gospel has been one and the same, not subject to those thousand changes to which the schemes of men are liable, but the same glorious truth; that when man had sinned and had broken the law of his heavenly Father, then the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, and mercy should extend her wing over a fallen race, and cover them from that

ruin they had most righteously deserved. There was, indeed, a time, referred to in the preceding chapter, when the Gospel seemed to have lost this character—when men were living in total ignorance of God, and regardless of his laws. But the Gospel was still the burning and the shining light; it remained and shone the same, though the errors and delusions of men intercepted its blessed beams, and when these clouds were dispersed by the power of the heavenly Father, then the light of truth warmed the hearts of millions. And the Gospel is also everlasting because of the enduringness of its privileges. By means of it, life and immortality have been clearly brought to light; all its rewards stretch far beyond a judgment seat, and are durable as the love and lasting as the throne of God. Indeed, a scheme which originated in so much tenderness, which was wrought out at so much expense, and which discovered throughout so much glory, could not but be attended with correspondent results; and thus the wonder is not that God should have held out to us eternal promises, but that he should have so loved the world as to have given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish. Once bring your minds to believe that God has really given his Son to die, the just for the unjust, that he might reconcile us unto himself, and bring us unto God; and then the greatness of the sacrifice paid for your ransom must prepare the mind to believe that nothing else than eternal blessing could flow from mercy so extensive. Those blessings are the blessings of eternity. They shall never fade. The joy of heaven may be enlarged but never diminished, and the peace of the glorified may become greater, but it never can decrease. This is glad tidings of great joy, held out to all who will look towards Christ—held out to all who will make use of that glorious warrant to believe, and will turn their eyes from the things of the world to that Sun of Righteousness which shines into the hearts of men, and gives them knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Had there been nothing more in the Gospel than that God had sheathed for a little the sword of his righteous displeasure, this were glad tidings, because undoubted and undeserved mercy. And shall it not be far more cheering to hear that God's anger is turned away for ever

—that his wrath shall never be awakened against one or all who accede to the terms of his covenant. Had God placed man again in Eden in a state of probation, setting before him the things of life and death, and allowing him the benefit of that lesson of obedience he had just been taught in man's fall from primeval purity, this certainly had been a blessing, though doubtless that grace would again be abused and the trial issue in a second, an aggravated ruin; but that provision should be made against all the ills of iniquity, and strength afforded to walk in God's commandments, apart altogether from personal worth or merit, is indeed a message of ineffable gladness and may well elicit the exclamation: Oh! the love of God, it passeth understanding. Had God placed the sinner, like the willows by the water-courses, in heaven, and guarded him by his own power, and enabled him to perform what he had commanded, and blessed him with the light of his countenance, all this had been gladdening and delightful, though not irreversible; but the message of the Gospel is this, that God takes the sinner unto himself, he eradicates every unholy feeling, creates him anew in his own likeness, and makes him, not a servant, but a son, a king, a priest, unto himself, to live and reign with him for ever. Here is good news to you—a perishing sinner—that God's arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear. If you turn to him with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, he will smile upon you with his love, sustain you with his favour, take you to his presence, where no change for the worse can ever come nigh you, but where you may dwell for ever with the Lord, and glorify him who has loved you and washed you from your sins in his own blood.

My fellow Christians, it is the purpose of the Gospel to proclaim these glad tidings—to tell of all that God has done, and of all he will yet do, for the salvation of his creatures. "But who is sufficient for these things?" What mortal man—what human tongue can paint unto you the blessedness of heaven or the fearfulness of hell! We may plant, but it is God that can give us the increase. We may labour among you in holy things, and seek to tell you of the unsearchable riches of Christ, but nothing else than the power of the Holy Spirit can make you feel the

power of the truth; nothing else than an energy, mightier and fuller than ours, can make you to know the truth as it is in Jesus, or experience that gladness of spirit which results from believing the Gospel as the grace of God. See, therefore, that you seek and pray for that spirit to accompany the word spoken, and pray to him that you trust not in an arm of flesh, but in God himself. Unless God reigns in your own soul—unless his Spirit dwells in your souls, and forms therein Christ as the true hope of glory, it will be an evil that the sound of the Gospel is proclaimed in your hearing. We have spoken of the gladness of the sound of the Gospel, but we must tell you that there are terrors connected with the Gospel. We would be unfaithful stewards of Christ were we not to tell you that the Gospel is as everlasting, as enduring, in its threatenings as in its promises. Mark what you find in the 9th verse of this chapter, which tells you of the wicked, that they shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, without any mixture of peace and joy; and of their being tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb, and of the smoke of their torment ascending up for ever and ever before the throne of God. Doubtless this is metaphorical language, but it is not on that account the less true and awful. It just shows that there are no terms in common language that can describe the awfulness of the wrath of God; that there are no pictures in common life that can describe the fearfulness of that state in which they are plunged who despise the Gospel. Its threatenings are as certain, enduring, and lasting as are its promises. The truth of God requires that his threatenings should be unchanging. The nature of sin requires that its punishments should be infinite; and the nature of that place into which the wicked are transferred full of sin, where every hour is replete with transgression; necessarily points to the fact, that that state shall be as continuing, as eternal, as is the glory of the redeemed in the heavens. Oh! that men were wise, that they would consider this, that they would think of their latter end. The devils know it, and they tremble at the thought; but man is stout hearted and proud: man cares for none of these things; he turns a deaf ear to the promises and threatenings of God; he will neither be wiled, nor lured, nor scared

from his path of ruin, but goes on in hopelessness, and indifference, and in carelessness, till he plunge at last into the ocean of the indignation of the Infinite and Eternal One. Oh, then, that you were wise! Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment is near. Fear him, for he is awful in power, in holiness, and in wrath. Fear him, for none can come between you and his vengeance, when the sword of his justice is unsheathed. Fear him, for there is no power of escape from his all-searching eye, and the time is rapidly on the wing when thou shalt be summoned to that tribunal, before which all we must stand; and if we have not found the Gospel to be indeed the grace of God: ere then, the time has past, the summer is

ended, the harvest is over, and we never never can be saved. Fear God, and give him glory. Give him the glory of your salvation; give him the glory of believing that he is altogether sincere when he entreats you to be reconciled—when he tells you that he is a covert from the storm, and a hiding place from the tempest. Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. Cast away your idols—cast off the idols of the world, of the things of time that pass away in a moment, and worship God himself alone, that made the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and then shall you find that the Gospel is indeed tidings of great joy unto all people. May God bless his word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

THE DUTY OF OBSERVING THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER;

A SERMON, PREACHED ON THE AFTERNOON OF SABBATH, 29TH APRIL, 1832, IN THE RELIEF CHAPEL, ROXBURGH PLACE, EDINBURGH,

By the Rev. JOHN JOHNSTON.

"I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem."—Acts xviii. 21.

WHEN our Lord came to the banks of the Jordan, where John was exercising his ministry, and baptizing those that came to him, we are told that the Baptist was struck at the Saviour's appearance, and seemed disposed to decline to administer the ordinance of baptism to him. He concluded that Christ needed not a rite peculiar to sinners; but our Lord's reply satisfied the Baptist—"Suffer it to be so," said he, "for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;" that is to say, it becomes us to observe every righteous ordinance of God. The same spirit that animated the Master, directed the conduct of his disciples. Wherever we find the apostles, we see them distinguished by a sacred reverence for the rites and ordinances of religion. And if there be an instance in which this spirit was more strikingly exemplified, or any circumstance in which it was more a matter of trial to exercise it, we see it in the case of the Apostle before us. Surrounded as he was by the people of Ephesus who admired

his doctrines, and wondered at his character, and entreated to remain among them for a longer period, he still felt the preponderating influence of the obligation to observe the feast of Pentecost that was coming in Jerusalem; and, therefore, whatever might be the feelings in himself that might have prompted him to linger among them, the higher duty to which he was called, guided and directed him. "I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem." The same spirit, Christians, which marked and distinguished the Apostle on this occasion, I trust at this moment moveth in all among us. With the prospect before us of the celebration of the Lord's Supper in this house on Sabbath next, I trust every heart here present responds to the feeling of the Apostle, "I must by all means keep this feast." To strengthen and encourage this spirit, as well as to point out the advantages of the ordinance itself, let me now show you some of the considerations which, in an hour like this,

tend to confirm our resolution, and to point out the obligation to the observance of the ordinance.

In the first place, then, a Christian will say, "I must by all means keep this feast," for it is the commandment of Christ. Were it a mere conventional ordinance, were it merely one of those outward circumstances in the Christian institution which are not essential to its existence, were it merely a matter of outward convenience and accommodation, it might then be left to our own discretion whether we should observe it or not. But it is not thus that this ordinance is presented to us. It comes to us, indeed, sanctified by the remembrance of ages, during which it has been kept alive and observed in the Christian church. It comes to us, indeed, associated with the names of confessors and of martyrs who have honoured it with their presence, and consecrated it with their blood. But it comes to us with a higher authority still. That Saviour who trod the earth in our behalf, who laid down his life for our cause, and who now reigns on high to carry forward the purpose of his mediatorial undertaking, says to us, "Do this in remembrance of me." There is not any precept more explicitly laid down—there is not any commandment more authoritatively put forth, and it was put forth, too, in circumstances the most trying to which humanity can be supposed to be subject. The ministry of Christ was now drawing to its close—his enemies had formed the fell purpose of his death—Judas was already engaged in the work of treason—and the high priests and the people were thirsting for his blood. With all this present to his mind, he gives forth this solemn command, that they should do this till he come again. We cannot, then, refuse to observe this ordinance, without, at the same time, setting aside the authority of him to whom we are indebted for all that we now are or hope hereafter to enjoy. They that enter not into the purpose expressed in the text—they that form not the resolution that is here stated, are dealing with this ordinance as if it were just a matter of conventional appointment—as if it were just one of the circumstances connected with the church, which we might observe or neglect with impunity. But we cannot neglect this ordinance with impunity. Christ has said it, and all power in heaven and in earth has

been committed into his hands, and they that neglect the ordinance have therefore to ask themselves—how are they prepared to answer such a master when he comes and demands a reason why his last command—why his dying entreaty was neglected and despised? We, my brethren, entertain higher views; knowing who it was that appointed the ordinance—knowing that it was appointed by him before whom we are soon to stand, we form the purpose, "I must by all means keep this feast."

In the second place, the Christian forms this resolution, and says, "I must by all means keep this feast," that I may be the better warned of the evil of sin. And do we need this ordinance to warn us? Do we not feel in the remonstrances of conscience—in the anguish of self-reproach, that it is an evil thing to sin against God?—and when we see the mark, the visible demonstration of God's providence—do we not see that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and that he will by no means clear the guilty? Yes. But there is in this ordinance a manifestation of the evil of sin that is not to be found in any other part of the moral administration of God; for in this ordinance we commemorate that great sacrifice which the eternal Father required, in order to render the exercise of mercy to the penitent consistent with the exercise of his justice, in the moral administration of the world. Had God pardoned sin without requiring any atonement—had God pardoned sin without any demonstration, on his part, of the evil of sin—then the sinner might have concluded, that the Eternal was an unconcerned spectator of human conduct, and did not make great distinction between the evil and the good. But when, in order to the pardon of sin, God causes his own Son to become incarnate—when, in order to the pardon of sin, his own Son hangs in agony on the accursed tree, and breathes out his soul in sorrow and in shame, a demonstration is given to the moral creation of God of the evil of sin, greater than is to be found in any other part of the history of the Divine administration. When, therefore, the believer sits down at the table of the Son of God, and has his eyes turned impressively, and in the exercise of a lively faith, to the cross of Christ, his heart is smitten with a sense of the evil nature and destroying

tendency of sin, and he feels that the world is crucified unto him and he unto the world. If, indeed, my brethren, you regard sin as a trifling matter—if your hearts are indifferent to obedience or disobedience, we do not wonder that there are many absent from the table. But if you desire to have the dominion of sin overthrown in the heart—if you desire to learn to hate sin by seeing its evil nature, this will be the purpose you will form, "I must by all means keep this feast."

In the third place, the Christian forms this purpose, and says, "I must by all means keep this feast," because it is one of the appointed means of grace. There is no feeling to which the human heart is more ready to respond, or which we are more readily disposed to admit, than our need of strength greater than our own, for the varied duties, and trials, and sorrows of our nature. When we look to the duties that are required of us for filling our varied stations in life, we are ready to exclaim, Who is sufficient for all these? and when we think of the manifold sorrows to which human nature is liable, and the many wants which man is doomed to experience in his journey to his home, we are apt to say, How shall I have strength for it all? God has promised that his grace shall be sufficient for us—that his strength shall be perfect in our weakness. But while God thus promises that his grace shall find its way into the human heart—that his strength shall reach us, in order to uphold us in duty, and to fortify us for trial, yet we must wait upon him for this strength, and this grace, and this energy in the way of his appointing. When he enumerates all the blessings he will give to his people, he adds the solemn condition, "Yet for all this will I be inquired of;" (Ezek. xxvi. 37.) We are not, therefore, to expect the blessing unless we employ the means. We are not to look for strength in duty, unless we place ourselves in the circumstances in which that strength will reach us. We are not to expect that the grace of God will act irresistibly upon us, and will come into our hearts, in opposition to our will, and that we shall, without seeking or placing ourselves in the circumstances in which that grace is to be obtained, experience its sanctifying power. Think you, my brethren, that whatever be the extent, and the graciousness, and the

condescension, and the truth of the Divine promises, that these promises will be realized to us, unless we seek them in God's appointed way? And one of his appointed ways is the ordinance of the Supper; for I hold that that ordinance is something more than a mere commemoration of the death of Christ. It is one of the appointed means by which the Spirit of God meets the believer, to renew, to sanctify, to encourage, and to direct him. If, therefore, we stand away from this ordinance, we are shutting ourselves out from one of the most important, and one of the most directly appointed means of comfort and peace. If, therefore, you be indifferent about your comfort or salvation here—if you care not whether you may be fortified in duty, and strengthened in trial—if you care not whether the heart may be fenced against the distresses of time, and prepared for all the calamities of life, then, indeed, you may stand away. But, if you pant for strength in the hour of duty—if you desire to be found faithful unto death—if you would be sustained amid the trials of time, and prepared for the hour of death, this is a resolution you will take—"I must by all means keep this feast."

Farther, my brethren, I observe, that the Christian forms this resolution, and says, "I must by all means keep this feast," because it is one of the most direct means of uniting the family of God in the bonds of peace and love. Every view that we can take of the ordinance shows us how beautifully it is in union with the precept of the Gospel, that we should love one another. "A new commandment," says Christ, "give I unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. By this," says he, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one toward another." In strict, and beautiful, and delightful harmony with these precepts and sayings is that sacred ordinance which, on Sabbath, we are to observe. For at this table, as in the grave, the rich and the poor meet together. There every spark of enmity is quenched, and every ember of love is kindled into a flame. There we learn to love mankind, when we see that love which embraced the world. There we learn that it is no difficult thing to forgive an enemy, when we see Christ bleeding for his foes. There we learn that it is no difficult precept, to forgive an

injury, when we see the blood flowing for all the injuries which we did. There we find that it is no difficult thing to cultivate benevolence, when we see that love that was stronger than death. At the Lord's table we behold those flowers of affection bloom that are hereafter to be transplanted, in full blow, to adorn the paradise of God.

In the last place, may I not be permitted, in such an hour as this, to say that the Christian will put particular emphasis on one word in this text—"I must by all means keep this feast." And why does he say this emphatically of himself? Because he knows not that he shall see another. I must by all means take this opportunity of showing forth my Master's death on earth, because I know not that I shall be invited to this service again. We are all dying creatures, and we know not what a day may bring forth. But especially, my brethren, in the present day of our country, and of this city, does the lesson come home upon us all. And here, I trust, that, in making this use of the solemn dispensation of God, I am not to be charged with unmeaning alarm of that pestilence that is stalking through the land. It is neither the part of a man nor of a Christian to make light of any thing that God is doing, and I would tremble to have the spirit to smile at the alarm that any one takes in an hour like this. When the angel of destruction is hovering over our city, and is scattering the damps of death from his ruthless wings on every quarter of it, it is not the time to look to an anxious brother, and say, Why are you afraid? Afraid?—Afraid no Christian may be, for to him death is gain. But to stand prepared is the call that is now made to every one in this assembly. To say that not one here shall be arrested by the sad destroyer is more

than we dare to guess. Let each of us, then, bring the matter home seriously in his own mind, and ask himself if he be prepared. And where is the man that will not seek every means of preparation for such a solemn visitation? And what preparation like that which is before us? To die, with this sentiment in our hearts, and that love in our spirits, which we are, on Sabbath, I trust, to experience, is the very state in which a Christian wishes to pass from this world to the next. With a mind at peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, relying on the everlasting atonement, and trusting in eternal mercy—at peace with all his brethren, and glowing with the hope of immortality, is the very state in which we would wish to pass away. And where, then, is the man that will not come forward to this ordinance, where that temper and that spirit of mind will be awakened and cherished which will fortify him for the visitation of the last hour. And what though this were the last we were to celebrate here below? The next is glorious: no more to sojourn in this vale of tears, but to dwell in our Father's house, to behold our Saviour's face, and to bear a part in the song of Moses and the Lamb. O that there were such a heart in all of us, that we might fear God and keep this commandment aright: then it would be well with us and with our children for ever. Let each of us, then, my brethren, examine ourselves, as in the sight of the mind-inspecting God; and, since God is, on this moment, saying to us in the visitation that is going through the land, "Be ye also ready," let each of us say, "I must by all means keep this feast," that I may, in some measure, be fortified for the last struggle of nature, and prepared for that solemn change. Amen.

CONCLUSION OF THE REV. MR. LORIMER'S SERMON.

How great, then, appear all the difficulties, both public and private; how numerous and diversified are they with which he is beset! How did they appear to the Apostle when he asked, "Who is sufficient for these things?" We may answer this question with the same Apostle, "We know our sufficiency is of God." Let us not give way, therefore,

to fear, to depression, or to despair. Let us not sink down into inactivity, remissness or sloth. There are extraordinary efforts to be made, great and oppressive difficulties to be met; but negligence is most baneful and subversive of the great ends of the office. Let ministers lay their account with difficulty—with very great difficulty; let them not wish to escape; it

let them remember that this is no accidental property; that it springs out of the true discharge of the office—that there is need for it all—and that not one difficulty will be allowed to prevail a moment longer than is necessary; that all is intended for good; that the vastness of what is at stake may well reconcile us to the difficulty; that there is ample assistance now and encouragement hereafter. Let them pray for the Spirit, which will assist them in the faithful discharge of the ministry. If others are heard when interceding for themselves, how much more shall they be heard when interceding for others, to the honour of God.

My friends, I have thought the consideration of this subject not inappropriate to the interesting circumstances in which we stand with regard to each other. I have adverted both to the public and private duties of the ministry, and it is important that the people, as well as the minister should be aware of these, for corresponding duties are incumbent on both. Many difficulties I have learned already, from experience in the comparatively small charge which, in the providence of God, I had; and many more, I know, must be expected in the enlarged sphere of labour to which I have come in this immense city. My years and inexperience, when I think of the many excellent men who have laboured in this parish in time past, make me fear I shall come far short of your wishes and expectations in the discharge of my duties. And, what is more serious, and concerns me more, I fear I shall come short of the duties themselves, and of what I owe to God and to your souls. And why then have I come among you, thus conscious of weakness, and unpreparedness? Sometimes I almost doubt whether I should have come at all; nor was it without deliberation that I expressed my acquiescence in the invitation which I received. But, on the other hand, I know that conscious weakness is not always a proof of inability; that where there are difficulties, they should be met; that a sense of their magnitude, in reliance upon the Divine strength, is often the best means of meeting and overcoming them. And then the expressed countenance of patrons, the affectionate opinion of friends, is a test, as far as we can interpret these as indicative of the will of God and the path of

duty, that I should undertake the care of your spiritual interests. Led by these considerations, I have been bold to come among you as your minister.

And now, I need not inform you of the services you are to expect at my hand. In my former charge it was my great study and labour, publicly and privately, to preach Christ crucified as the only medium of access to God—the only way of pardon—the only source of comfort—the only motive to holiness—the only well-spring of consolation—the only foundation of the hope of eternal life—the grand and only instrument of substantial good in this world or in that which is to come. I trust that, wielding this mighty weapon, my labours have not been unattended with success. Believing the gospel of free grace to be the wisdom and power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, I shall, under the blessing of God, endeavour to pursue the same course I have hitherto followed; and I rejoice that it has been your privilege and happiness in former times to sit under its preaching and influence. It is my desire and determination to overtake as much duty, both public and private, as I am equal to, or as circumstances will allow. I do not expect, nor do you, that I should overtake all. Often duties, with the best intentions, will be overlooked; and still more frequently there may be among duties even a choice what is to be done and what is to be sacrificed. Nor will you expect that they are always to be discharged in the same spirit. Still, it will be my aim, as it is my duty, to do what I can, and in the best manner. In these circumstances, seeking to fulfil this course, I know that I need not bespeak your candour, for I am sure I shall receive it. I know you will not be forward to take offence, and that, where I err, you will exercise lenience, and make allowances. You know that harshness and sensitiveness to offences are not only unreasonable and injudicious in themselves, but form no part of the character of Christ, and not unfrequently their ground, or at least part of it, originates in the defect of the very mind which is conscious of them. On the other hand, you know that the very knowledge that he has to treat with a kind people is of much encouragement to a faithful minister, and must conduce as much to his success

as to his comfort. But I would most earnestly beg, as has been already begged, a place, and a large place, in your prayers; not that I imagine that you will be remiss in this duty, but that I am much impressed with its supreme importance. The difficulties of the ministerial office are such, that they naturally point and almost drive to prayer as their great and appointed remedy. Prayer honours God, and as God honours those who honour him, so it is the medium of success—in the absence or presence of which success is granted or withheld. The apostles were unwearied in their importunity for their fellow-converts' prayers; and if they needed strong and united prayers, how much more do we in the ministry in every age need the same? Among the people I left, not a few made their minister an object of regular and earnest intercession, and I cannot doubt but that their prayers smoothed many of the difficulties of my situation. Let me, then, earnestly beg your intercession in return for those prayers it is my duty to offer for you. This will unite our hearts in the sweetest relationship. This will draw down the richest blessings that God can bestow. I feel I need prayers more than ever, and it is in your power to assist me in the most essential manner. O be persuaded that every thing is dependent on prayer—that where there is prayer, all will go well with us—there will be peace, union, and prosperity—that where prayer is wanting there will be coldness and dejection—an insipid and unprofitable ministry—years of labour without corresponding fruit. Be assured, that it is one of the greatest secrets of ministerial success. Be steady, and earnest, and unwearied, in your entreaties for me in the various circumstances and duties in which I may be called to stand. Suit your prayers to the occasion. This is the first kindness and demands the largest gratitude; and I trust I shall ever be alive to the obligation, and anxious to repay it.

The tie, my friends, of pastor and people, has now been formed between us. Such formations are not uncommon—ministers are not unfrequently settled in charges, nor is it rare to be removed from one to another. But common as it is, the tie is a very solemn one. We, and many may forget its solemnity, and ministers may soon move forward in their ordinary course as if there was nothing peculiar: but the tie is serious indeed, and ever remains. Others begin and end with time, and are solely intended for the purposes of time. This tie, that commences in time, has its grand relation to eternity. Its end cannot be completed on earth, but it stretches to eternity; it affects the state of a man's eternity. Here we have but the first link of the chain, and it may not seem very striking, but it draws tremendous consequences along with it, and stretches even to the throne of God. What we may now forget or disregard, will come up in another day and place in solemn memorial. We are but in the infancy of our condition, and the relationship of pastor and people must appear either the savour of life or the savour of death unto us. In these solemn circumstances, how diligent, faithful, and conscientious, should we be to our respective duties! How carefully should we remember, how deeply should we feel, our awful responsibility! God forbid that our connexion should be ever disadvantageous or evil to any of us. God grant that it may be for gain, and honour, and reward, to us all; that when the chief Shepherd appears, the under shepherd may be able to give a good account, and that pastor and people may be received together into that envied and eternal country where there are no difficulties to perplex, no disagreements to sadden, no responsibilities to burden—where the tie is permanent, and as delightful as it is everlasting. And may God bless what has been said, and to his name be all the praise. Amen.

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SERMON by PROFESSOR RITCHIE, Edinburgh.
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SACRAMENTAL ADDRESS by the Rev. JOHN GEDDES, Glasgow.

LOVE TO CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED IN SOUTH LEITH CHURCH, ON 16TH APRIL, 1832.

By the Rev. DAVID RITCHIE, D.D.,

Senior Minister of St. Andrew's Church, and Professor of Logic in the University, of Edinburgh.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue in my love."—
JOHN XV. 9.

Love to God, the fountain of all excellence, is one of the most ennobling sentiments that can well animate the mind of man. It arises from the contemplation of the benignant attributes of the divine nature. It impresses the mind with a deep sense of the infinite grace, and mercy, and compassion of God—qualities, which both the works of nature and the volume of inspiration, teach us to ascribe to the great Creator and Preserver of all things. It implies a delight in reflecting on the fatherly care of God, and in tracing the innumerable marks of his goodness, both as shown to ourselves, and as appearing in the general arrangements of Providence, together with an earnest desire of his favour as the chief good on earth, and of an eternal communion with him as our portion beyond the grave; and it produces, as its natural effect, an habitual endeavour to recommend ourselves to him by a life of universal obedience to his law. Of this pleasing and ennobling sentiment, love to the Saviour is only a particular modification. It is the mingled emotion of reverence, thankfulness, and delight, which arises in the devout mind, from contemplating the unspeakable goodness of the only begotten of the Father, who took on himself human nature, for the purpose of redeeming a lost world. That this pious sentiment ought to be cherished by every sincere Christian is very obvious.

Our Saviour requires it of us, and it is the proper return we ought to render to him for his tender mercies. Let us then turn our attention to some of the peculiar grounds we have for cultivating the love of our Saviour. The consideration of this subject, may in your present circumstances, be useful for keeping up the spirit of grateful affection so justly due to him.

The quality which is naturally fitted to excite love, is goodness, or a desire to produce happiness. Wherever we contemplate this quality actively employed in diffusing blessings and wisely directed to save from suffering, and to communicate the greatest good, then the constitution of our nature impels us to view it with approbation, delight, and love. Now if we were to contemplate the original glory of our Saviour as he was in the beginning with God, and as he was God, the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and upholding all things by the word of his power, we should acknowledge, that; as in him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead, so he is entitled to be loved with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the mind. In him was goodness, pure and unbounded, directed by unerring wisdom, and supported by almighty power, diffusing blessings throughout the wide extent of creation, and making all things work together for good. But the most interesting proof of

the love unspeakable, wherewith our Saviour loved us, is the work by which he redeemed the lost world. The whole progress of this amazing work, and all the events in the life of Christ, necessary to its completion, indicate a love, pure, infinite, unbounded, and surpassing our feeble powers fully to estimate, and constrain us to exclaim, Verily, the ways of God are not as our ways, nor are his thoughts as ours. Let us attend to some of the more conspicuous manifestations of this love, as they may be learned in this great work.

No sooner had men become sinners, and liable by consequence to the wages of iniquity, than the Son of God interposed to save them. When there was none other in heaven or in earth, whose interposition could have been of any avail, he freely offered himself to be a ransom for our sins, that by suffering, the just for the unjust, he might reconcile us to God. The consideration of the utter hopelessness of our salvation, had not the Son of God become our surety, should increase our thankfulness that he became the Captain of our Salvation, that by his sufferings and death he might bring many sons to glory. The redemption of man having been fixed in the eternal counsel, the means for carrying the gracious plan into effect were gradually prepared. Prophets were commissioned to foretell the future advent of the Saviour; and while they speak of him in language suitable to him as the Son of God, they also indicate the peculiar claims he had to our gratitude and affection, by predicting the unparalleled sufferings to which he was to submit for our sakes, that thus he might be qualified to be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. They foretell that he should be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities—that he should bear our griefs and carry our sorrows—the Lord having laid upon him the iniquities of us all, that by his stripes we might be healed. When the fulness of time was come, these predictions were accomplished. The Son of God was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. The only begotten of the Father left the glory he had before the world was, and was found in fashion like a man. He who was in the beginning with God, and was God, took

upon him the form of a servant, and humbled himself to be touched with feeling of our infirmities. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. Who can contemplate this without being touched with pious thankfulness for that love of Christ which passeth knowledge! The appearance of the Son of Man on earth was not attended with those circumstances of outward splendour which catch the attention of the world. He condescended to appear in an humble condition, and dispensed with all those external circumstances which the world value. According to the Prophet's description, he had no form nor comeliness, and when he was seen, there was no beauty in him that was desired. What though the lowliness of his condition concealed his glory from the eyes of an undiscerning multitude! The angels of God rejoiced at his dignity, admired the unspeakable riches of his condescension, and contemplated with wonder the signal blessings he was about to dispense to the whole race of men, by destroying sin, the work of that apostate who dwells in the children of disobedience; by restoring the guilty and hopeless to their forfeited privileges, and consummating that amazing plan by which all who believe and obey shall be saved. Contemplating these grand effects, the angels of God praised his name, and said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The devout, also, who waited for the consummation of Zion, when they beheld the Saviour in his humble estate, and, through the lowliness of his outward condition, were enabled to discover the dignity of his character, blessed God that he had visited and redeemed his people, and rejoiced that their eyes had seen the salvation of the Lord.

In the whole of his life, the Son of Man was devoid of those external decorations which attract the attention and excite the admiration of worldly men; but to those who looked beyond the mere outward appearance, and who, with a more discerning eye, observed his actions, he showed that native dignity, and excellence, which need no adventitious circumstances to give them lustre. He had that perfect command over the operations of nature which none but the God of nature could display; and, together with this, that untainted holiness which no

mere human virtue could ever imitate, and which bore decisive evidence of his heavenly origin. And ought we not, my brethren, to love the Saviour, who, being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, for our salvation, took on himself the form of a servant—the Saviour, who, though in the humble condition he chose to assume, was despised and rejected of men, yet received the service and worship of angels—the Saviour of whom the prophets of old spoke, and whom the devout of his own day, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, contemplated with wonder and admiration—whom they acknowledged a light to lighten the Gentiles, and whose glory they beheld and admired as that of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. If we follow him through the whole of his life, we find him uniformly exhibiting perfections which entitle him to our admiration and love. He was ever meek and lowly in spirit, kind and compassionate to all who came unto him. In mercy to us, he left the bosom of his Father; and good-will towards men was the principle of all his actions. No neglect which he experienced from a blinded world—no contumely with which his benevolence was repaid by an ungenerous and infatuated people—no malice and cruelty with which he was followed, during a blameless life, by those whom he came to enlighten and to redeem, could erase from his mind the thought of saving his people from their sins, or make him drop the plan which he had formed for their eternal salvation. His love for men glowed with unabated warmth amid continued instances of the folly, perversity, and guilt of those men for whom it was exerted. Let us contemplate the reception our Saviour met with from the world. "He came to his own, but his own received him not." He veiled the celestial glory under human nature, that he might redeem from destruction a race of beings who were disobedient, and who must, in consequence of that disobedience, have, accordingly, been laid under the sentence of condemnation they had incurred. Surely it might have been expected that he who came an enemy to all sin should have met with a willing reception; yet, what an ungrateful reception did the Son of Man experience! The nations paid him no honours, nor even bestowed upon him

the offices of charity which an ordinary man would have expected. If they came to behold the heavenly stranger, it was to try to ensnare him with some captious question, or to dilate with wonder, not without some mixture of malignity, on his illustrious works; and then, with perversity, to ascribe his miracles to the power of the devil. A few only, of humble station, and of plain but good understanding, adhered to him, amid all the varieties of his eventful life. And, though his enemies were compelled to acknowledge that never man spake as he spake, nor did the works which he did, unless God were with him, yet the number was so small as to show with what aptness the prophecy applied to the Lord—"Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Yet, while he experienced so much neglect and ingratitude, his love to the fallen race of mankind suffered no diminution. Though the world knew him not, nor received his instructions, nor availed themselves of the salvation he came to offer, still he manifested towards them the compassion of a father who pities and forgives the errors of his children. He went about continually doing good; healing diseases—restoring sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf; making the lame to walk, and the dumb to sing praises to God; removing, by the light of his heavenly doctrine, the moral darkness which covered the world, and teaching mankind all that the law required; publishing glad tidings of great joy to fallen men, by showing them repentance and remission of sins, and assuring of a blessed immortality, all who believed on his name and kept his commandments. In his unwearyed endeavours to save all that came to him, he lamented the obstinacy of those who would not come that they might have life. But the regret he expresses, for their unbelief and hardness of heart, was not mingled with anger, on account of their ingratitude to him. It was the tender compassion of a father for fallen mankind, pitying their folly, and lamenting the misery to which they were bringing themselves.

But neglect, and reproach, and contumely, were not the only marks of ingratitude. By the determined foreknowledge and counsel of God, and his own voluntary determination, he was exposed

to more suffering; and it is in his last sufferings that his love to the human race shines with brightest lustre. As his hour drew nigh, he set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, and, with the perfect knowledge of the cruel indignities his enemies were to inflict upon him, he remained calm and tranquil, and anxious only to fortify the minds of his disciples against the approaching trial of their faith. Upon this he retired to the garden to pray, and, being in agony, his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And while he prayed that if it were possible this cup might pass from him, with entire resignation he adds, "Not my will, but thine be done." Judas now approached, accompanied with the band that were to apprehend him; and Jesus submitted, like a lamb, to be led to the slaughter. In the short period of his life, a period of suffering, the meek and lowly Jesus, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, is treated like the vilest of malefactors. The King of Glory, to whom all power is committed in heaven and in earth, is arrayed, in a robe of mock royalty, crowned with a crown of thorns, and, while the blood which cleansed his people from their sins fell from his sacred head, a reed is put into his hand, and he is exposed to the derision of those he came to save. He whom God appointed Judge of the quick and the dead is arraigned at the tribunal of one of his people, false witnesses are called to testify against him, the people cry out, crucify him, crucify him, and the unjust judge pronounces sentence of condemnation. He, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the God-head bodily, is led forth to the reproaches of an unfeeling multitude, and compelled to carry his cross. No sympathy is expressed for him, and, while the hearts of his infatuated persecutors are touched with no compassion, they still continue to deride.

Over these awful events, the feelings of our nature might wish to draw a veil, were it not that they exhibit an adorable manifestation of redeeming love. The meekness which would submit to these sufferings must render him unspeakably interesting and worthy of the supreme gratitude of every man who believes in his name. On our account, he endured the contradiction of sinners; and, while he bore our sins in his own body, on the cross, compassion for our fallen race

was still the predominant feeling in his mind; in comparison of which, his own sufferings seemed of little moment. "Daughters of Jerusalem," said he, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." Even his persecutors he viewed with no other emotion than that of commiseration. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Surely the contemplation of love so perfect and divine, should beget in us the warmest sentiment of reverence and gratitude towards the blessed Saviour who died for us. Herein, indeed, is love, that a man lay down his life for his friend. But our Saviour has shown, towards the human race, greater love than this, for, while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us; and not only died, but submitted to receive from us, every circumstance of cruelty and malignity which malice could devise. He submitted to these sufferings without one complaining expression. For the joy that was set before him—the joy of restoring a lost world from guilt and misery to purity and to happiness, he endured the cross and despised the shame; nor did he refuse any part of the bitter cup that his Father had given him to drink, but, having accomplished the great salvation, cried out, "It is finished."

From this period the labours of his ministry were closed. He no longer appeared as a man of sorrows, submitting to reproach, and contumely, and suffering. He appeared to his disciples only occasionally, and for a short time, for the purposes of confirming their faith, and fitting them for their apostolical office. The sacred writers inform us only of a few circumstances between his resurrection and his ascension; which, though they exhibit the Saviour in a less familiar manner than that in which he formerly appeared, show him equally worthy of our love and admiration. The things they direct our attention to, are the resurrection from the dead—the first-fruits of them that slept,—the instructions given to his disciples—his ascension into heaven, to appear in the presence of God as our intercessor—and the certainty of his future coming to judge the world in righteousness. Having finished transgression, and made an end of sin, in the once offering himself up a sacrifice for sin, and for perfecting them that are sanctified, the Son of Man was received into glory, he sat down on the

right hand of the Majesty on high, and received a name above every name: that at his name "every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." All power in heaven and earth is also given to him, and he is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Contemplating, then, the Saviour in these views of his character, surely you admit that every motive that can touch the pious with love and admiration, or the sincere Christian with thankfulness—every inducement which can lead a benevolent mind to a benefactor—and every pledge which delivereth from the wrath to come, and leads to the blessed hope of immortality, recommend to our reverence and love the Divine Being who has redeemed us from destruction, and raised us to an incorruptible inheritance. Every thing induces us to love the Saviour who has loved us and given himself for us. Let each of us, then, seriously consider whether we have been indeed touched with sacred gratitude and affection for the Saviour, whom we are bound, by so many obligations, to venerate and love. Do we reflect, with admiration and delight, on the great things he has done for us; contemplating the depth of guilt and misery from which he has rescued us, and the glory he has given us the capacity to attain? Are we grateful for his unspeakable goodness, and disposed cheerfully to give glory to his name for all the blessings of this life, and all the hopes we entertain of a better? Such sentiments, if we are faithful disciples, should be familiar to our minds. For if we are disposed to adore the perfections of God, in him we behold all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—if we admire the perfection of human virtue, in him we behold human nature, pure and spotless, animated by perfect goodness, and unceasingly employed in conferring blessings on the children of men—if we are inclined to survey with admiration, grand and interesting transactions, in the work of redemption we see the greatest and most illustrious event that ever took place in the course of divine providence. We behold the dominion of sin for ever de-

stroyed—the glad tidings of salvation published from on high, to encourage the faithful amid the troubles of this mortal life—the family of God increased to a great multitude, whom no man can number, from every kindred, and tongue, and nation, till, advancing gradually to a consummation, they rest in peace and happiness, in a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Compared with this, the most splendid of human transactions sink into obscurity. This sublime dispensation is the infinite display of Almighty God, who dwelleth in eternity, and whose counsels are too high to comprehend. Surely, then, the Saviour, on whose ministry this dispensation is established, is entitled to our highest gratitude, our supreme veneration—nor can any pious and generous mind contemplate him with the feelings of a Christian without loving Him who so highly loved us. For the dispensation of redemption through him is not any remote event, in which we have no very immediate interest. It is only in consequence of the redemption that is in Christ that this world is not under the wrath of God, that the sun rises on the evil and on the good, and the earth yields her increase to the just and the unjust. It is through Christ, and through him only, that we are permitted to assemble in the sanctuary, and offer our united homage to the Sovereign Lord. It is through him we have access to the throne of grace in our secret retirement. It is through him that the providence of Almighty God is ever watching over us for good, and the general order of human affairs wisely adapted to promote our interests in this world, and in that which is to come. Deriving these numberless blessings of unspeakable value which we behold and feel in the common course of nature, in the general arrangements of divine providence, and entertaining through him the hope of better things to come, when this mortal shall put on immortality, we should be thoughtless and foolish indeed if we did not meditate on his goodness, and study to show ourselves grateful for his favours.

Let us endeavour to impress our minds with a deep and permanent sense of his tender mercy, by frequent and serious contemplation of the great things he has done; and let us pray that God would enlighten us by his Spirit, and enable us

to comprehend with all the saints, what is the height and the depth, the length and the breadth, of the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, that, thus filled with all the fulness of God, and testifying our love of the Saviour, by keeping his commandments, we may grow up into meetness for everlasting life.

THE RECOVERY OF OUR LOST SONSHIP;

A SERMON PREACHED IN JOHN STREET RELIEF CHAPEL, GLASGOW, ON THE
AFTERNOON OF SABBATH, 27th MAY, 1832.

By the Rev. WILLIAM ANDERSON.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."—1st John iii. 2.

I COMMENCE addressing you, my hearers, from the first word of our text. Are ye conscious of being entitled to this apostolic salutation? I and other ministers of the Gospel frequently salute you as friends or brethren: but that is a small matter. Had ye lived in those days, would ye have been greeted with the appellation, *beloved*, by the apostle John? Would that fervent disciple have rejoiced over you, as persons of a kindred spirit to his own? Would his heart have warmed towards you, when he saw you bearing his Master's image, and loved you for his Master's sake? The desire of approbation is one of the strongest affections the Creator has implanted in our bosoms, and, like all other affections, is profitable, if well regulated and directed. How is it directed in your case? Would ye prefer being hailed, *beloved*, by such a one as the apostle John, to being acknowledged a friend by the greatest nobleman in the land? It is no cant, it is no extravagance, it is sober truth, if the Bible is truth, that there is an honour in the friendship of such men as were those Galilean fishermen, higher than the honour of the companionship and friendship of those who are the most exalted in the vain state and pomp of this earth. I therefore insist on the question, Are ye such persons as were called *beloved* by the apostle John, who delighted in men, only in so far as they appeared to love the Lord, and were possessed of a resemblance to him? This is a trying question. At least I feel it to be a trying one for myself. When I reflect on the holiness of the Apostle's character, and how high was the standard which he applied to the measuring of christian attainments, I somewhat shrink at the imagination of the apostolic visit. And yet, my brethren, we must stand before a greater, a holier, and more searching Judge than the apostle John. He could judge only from the external conduct, and might be imposed on by carefully acted hypocrisy. But no veil can be made so thick or drawn so closely as to hide the state of the inmost thoughts from the flaming eyes of the anointed Judge of the world. Nevertheless, my brethren, let us rally our hearts in confidence. He is a Judge full of compassion. He not only knows but has felt the frailty of our nature; and, from experience, can sympathize with our weaknesses. For although he stood out in all points sinless, yet, in all points, was he tempted as are we. It is the joy of the world that "we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and "that the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son, because he is the Son of Man." And when I review his conduct while he tabernacled on earth, in which he gave the world a specimen of the merciful manner in which he should execute his office, I somehow feel more confidence in anticipating his advent, than in imagining a visitation of the Apostle; and that He might acknowledge me a friend in my weakness, when the other might scruple to call me *beloved*. Whatever may be the case with the apostle John, I had rather be judged of the Redeemer than of many of

his severe disciples, who might learn, one would think, from the mercy they need themselves, to mitigate the censures which they pass on others. Be cautioned, my hearers. The wasp will extract poison from the sweetest rose. Wo to the man who turns the grace of God to licentiousness! and who, from this tender mercy of the Redeemer, draws an argument for the impunity with which he may deliberately proceed to the commission at least of what he considers the minor violations of the law; or for there being no need that he be *particularly* circumspect or zealous in his Christian profession. Wherever the heart is rightly ordered, at the same time that considerations of the Saviour's leniency dispel fear on account of sins that are past, do they in the same proportion increase the sense of obligation to be more diligent in his service for the future. It was the rule of Mary Magdalene that the more she was forgiven the more should she love. Although, however, I have thus stepped aside to direct your attention rather to the friendship of the Saviour than to that of his Apostle, let not the latter be disregarded. Having given ourselves to the Lord, it is our duty to give ourselves to his servants also. Be it therefore our study to conduct ourselves in such a manner that those holy and venerable men of old would have delighted in us, as brethren, had we lived in their age; yea, shall delight in us, when the dead are raised, and the living transformed and assembled, a holy harmonious company, in the Paradise of the blest.

I proceed to exercise your minds on what the inspired writer declares to be the present character and condition of the disciples of Christ. *Now are we the sons of God*, or generally, *his children*—his sons and daughters, for the word of the original comprehends both. Nor is this a hypercriticism; elsewhere, the consolations of our faith are addressed with particularity to the female sex. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." For convenience sake, however, I shall speak only of sons, it being understood that the character and condi-

tion of daughters are the same as those of their brethren.

We are the sons of God. What a glory, my friends, there is here! Men are wont to boast of their high descent; and many of them shall bear themselves haughtily under the name and banner of ancestors who were a curse to the world; and who were not ignominiously hanged on a gibbet for their robberies and murders, merely because they perpetrated them on an extensive scale. There are a few honourable and patriotic exceptions; but let the rolls of their lineage be unfolded, and it will be seen that a great proportion of what this abominable world dignifies with the name of nobility, had its origin in barbarian oppression or royal profligacy. Of this the Lord will give ample proof, when he comes to judgment, not only in the punishment of the perpetrators themselves, but of all their sons and daughters, who, instead of being ashamed of their ancestry, will presume to demand our deference, in consideration of their foul descent. Yea, he will give proof in the punishment of many more, even of all such as reverence the ungodly because they are great, and treat with neglect the pious because they are poor. Who shall say that this is arrogating too much consequence for the Christian? Being a son of God, who shall presume to match any thing earthly or carnal with the royalty of his lineage? My brethren see that ye be faithful to yourselves. Are ye nobly conscious of your character and station as children and heirs of God? Ah, I am afraid that there are many *false* ones who are slow to vindicate their claim to be regarded as royal born, because a royal birth behoves to be supported by a princely conduct!

The appellation, "a son," or "child of God," is so frequently used that there are many on whose ear it falls without producing any impression of the importance of its character. A native Hindoo was once employed in translating the Scriptures into one of the languages of India. When he came to that verse in the Gospel of John in which is said "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," he burst into tears, exclaiming, "It is too much, it is too much! it would surely be enough that we were allowed to fall down before him, and, as servants, kiss his feet." How

severely does not the conduct of this man, just newly recovered from Heathenism, improve the slowness of perception on the part of thousands, who, notwithstanding all the study of the mysteries of our salvation, in which they profess they have been engaged for years, have never yet had any emotion excited by reflection on the dignity of station to which the believers in Christ are exalted through his mediation?

All men, even the most wicked and abandoned, are, in one sense, the children of God. They are such by nature, having received from him their existence. An Apostle has confirmed the truth of the saying of the heathen poet—"We are all his offspring." There is a much nobler sense, however, in which this relation subsists, betwixt God and man. There is a moral, or spiritual, sonship, in which man bears the image of God on the affections of his heart. And although the Creator cannot but have a respect to the works of his hand, so as to feel affectionately towards man, considered only as his child by nature, yet it is only when the spiritual relationship exists that the holy God can *delight* in his creature, and, consistently with his perfections, entertain him in his house. Now, my brethren, although man was originally created with this moral image of the Godhead bright upon his soul, so as to be a son in whom his Father greatly delighted, yet, through depravity and degeneracy, has this image been lost. And can a holy God—I appeal even to sinners—permit a loathsome wicked thing to remain in his house, even although it should be one of his own sons—the creature of his power? No, my hearers, let us beware of insulting the Most High by imagining that he could suffer the wicked to dwell with him, or the workers of iniquity to stand in his presence. Accordingly, there is no need for expending on the subject any lengthened argument, either of metaphysics or Scripture. The unbeliever has the witness within his own bosom, in a bereaved, destitute, orphan conscience, that he enjoys no relation to God in the holy sonship of moral affection; that, in this respect, he is cut off, and separated, and excluded from his heavenly Parent; that he has been wofully ejected from the house of God; and that, wearied and miserable,

he wanders in a wilderness of dissatisfaction, disappointment, and sorrow, with dreadful presentiments of a still heavier doom, which it is one of the principal labours of his life to suppress, by engaging himself in business, in study, or dissipation. But the labour is vain. Like ineffectually conjured spectres, they are ever rising up to scare and terrify him, amid the most secure of his enjoyments. So that, instead of being the mirthful man which his friends may suppose him to be, his own heart knows that an hour of reflecting happiness it is never his lot to enjoy. He feels himself an outcast—an outcast from God. What can compensate for this sore grievance of the natural man? What signifies it that he find all right when he thinks of his friends, of his business, of his political schemes, and his literary or scientific studies, if he finds all wrong when he turns to think of God? and that all is thus dreadfully wrong is the afflicted experience of every thoughtful unregenerated man. The statement he cannot contradict without belying the feelings which anguish his bosom with a mystery of woe to which no other affliction can be compared. Like the fire of Vesuvius, there may be times when it burns less fiercely than at other times, but still, like Vesuvius, it is a perpetual burning. Such is the testimony of nature, as well as of Scripture, concerning the forlorn offspring of Adam—"Outcast and disowned; far from God, and ready to perish."

I have already observed, however, that although the *moral* relationship of sons of God may be lost, yet the *natural* cannot, when we are considered in the character of being the creatures of his power: and that, although in the absence of moral sonship, God can have no delight in us, yet has our natural sonship secured for us the *good-will* of the Creator. Accordingly, it was while we were yet sinners, morally defiled and deformed, that he had compassion on us, and consulted for our salvation. Observe what was necessary to this salvation: just this, my hearers, the recovery of us to the standing of spiritual sonship, so that it might be possible for him to receive us back into his house. Let us once be the sons of God in holiness of character, then does an entrance into the house of God naturally and necessarily follow; whereas,

without holiness, our happiness is impossible, for this obvious reason, that without it, we must remain excluded from that holy presence where alone is happiness to be found. Oh, be well advised of it, my hearers, that holiness of nature, a son-like conformity to God, is the one thing needful; which being gained, all other blessings shall be liberally bestowed on you. The gates of Paradise stand wide open for the admission of every holy man. We do not need that two things be done for us; first, that holiness of heart be given, and then, that heaven be forced open for our reception. No; there is no additional work of merit necessary on the part of the Redeemer for that man whom he has already regained to the sonship of God. It is the natural prerogative of the sons of God, that they be given a dwelling in his palace.

The all interesting question then, is how shall degenerate man have his heart renewed and assimilated to God, so as to delight in the righteousness in which He delights; and to abhor the sin which He abhors, altogether, to will as He wills? The Scriptural answer to this is plain and perspicuous. The Holy Ghost alone is adequate to this work. The ethics, or moral lessons of philosophers; the code of honour enforced by those who call themselves gentlemen; the civilities exemplified in what they call fashionable life; yea, the dictates of prudence are all scornfully declared to be vanity, when proposed as an agency for effecting this great revolution. And what in this is wonderful? Out of a debased world of sinful passions, to raise a beautiful world of holy affections is, humanly speaking, a work as difficult at least as it was to bring light and order out of the original chaos of this earth, which the Scripture assures us was effected by the agency of the Omnipotent Spirit. Mark it, then, my hearers, that it is by the operation of the Holy Ghost on the soul, that sinners are saved; because it is by his power that we are made such sons of God, as to be qualified for dwelling in that holy presence, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore. The apostle Paul declares this in very explicit terms: "Not by works of righteousness which we ourselves have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing

of the Holy Ghost." Or, in other words, God, in his mercy, saves us by sending us the Holy Spirit to renew the soul, and make us sons of God, formed after the image of his holiness. That once effected, the natural and necessary consequence is an admission into his house.

Mark, again, my hearers, what is the next question in order, and its interesting Scriptural solution. In what manner is the Holy Ghost bestowed for effecting this renovation of the heart? Those who do not see a renewed spirit to be any great gift—who feel towards it, that it is rather something glorifying to God than advantageous to man, cannot estimate the importance of this question; but he who has learned from the Scriptures, that a soul replenished with God-like affections, is salvation, will be all alive to its magnitude. The answer then of the Gospel is, that the regeneration is to be found in Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ alone; or *through* Jesus Christ, and through Jesus Christ alone. How few perceive the force of these phrases *in* and *through* Christ, so frequently employed by devout men! Let me explain them to you, my hearers, as far as I can. The first Adam is our natural head, in whom, being members, or through whom, having the pestilence transmitted to us from the wicked one, we have, by natural generation, a head of sin and corruption. Now, Christ is set forth as the second Adam, in whom, being constituted members of him by faith, we obtain the same life which is in Him; or *through* whom the Spirit of God is transmitted to us. What Adam is, by natural generation, to the natural man, Christ is, by the connecting of faith, to the spiritual man. Faith separates a man from the first Adam, in or through whom there is an influence of sin and death, and connects with the second Adam, in whom, or through whom, there is an influence of holiness and life. All this, however, I am afraid, will appear unintelligibly mysterious to the greater part of you. But all, I should think, will understand the following, that, in order to obtain the regenerating influences of the Spirit of God, so as to be made his sons and daughters, you must deliver yourselves up to the protection, the keeping, and guidance of the Son of God. You must cry, "Thou Son of David,

have mercy on us;" and cry it with feeling, cry it with the confidence that he is appointed of God, and the only one who is appointed of God, to dispense out to you the regenerating influence. You must come out of every other school, and enter his school, as the only one who has the Spirit of God's teaching. You must dismiss every other physician, and call Him in as the only one who has the Spirit of God's cure for your wounded souls. You must send home every other guide, and adopt him as the only one who can bestow on you the Spirit of God's escort through the wilderness. You must take his steering as the only one who can give you the pilotage of God's Spirit into the haven of a mind at rest from lust and evil passion. You must rally yourselves under his banner, as the only one who can give you the captainship of God's Spirit in the battle of holiness against impurity. Finally, you must kneel before his throne, and do Him homage, as the only one who can bestow on you the all-royal subduing influence of the Holy Ghost, to dispossess your hearts of their rebellion, and make them loyal hearts to the government of heaven. Jesus, thou Anointed of the Father, I have no one but thyself, to whom I look for the aid of the Spirit of holiness, to make me one of God's children. Thou wilt not disappoint me. Oh, that all present may deliver themselves up unreservedly to thy saving power!

This doctrine, my brethren, that it is only when a man delivers himself up to the guidance of Christ that he shall enjoy the influences of the Spirit, so as to be made a child of God, is beautifully laid down in that passage of the Epistle to Titus, part of which I have already quoted—"According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly *through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*" I do not know any other part of Scripture where the system of our faith is so regularly drawn out. So far, however, as the particular point before us is concerned, that other passage which I have already quoted, and by which the soul of the Hindoo was arrested, in astonishment at the mercy it revealed, is somewhat more express—"As many as received him, to

them gave he power to become the sons of God." Some propose to alter this translation; but I abide by it as it is here—"To them gave he power." What power? Evidently the power, the energy, the influence of the Holy Ghost, by which their hearts were transformed into hearts of the sons of God.

It is only, then, when ranged by faith under the banner of Jesus Christ, that we recover our lost sonship. The next question refers to the qualification of Christ for this work. How is it that that regenerating Spirit is dispensed to us through him, when yet it cannot be directly dispensed to us, without coming through his medium? I answer, It is because, by his suffering unto death for us, he has made atonement for our guilt. Here lay the revolted province of man; on which the only begotten of the Father was appointed of the divine mercy to raise the standard of salvation, under which sinners might rally, for the recovery of their lost sonship. But such a favour could not be bestowed on guilt except in such a way as would demonstrate the hatefulness of sin. Our great matter was to obtain a Head, in whom we might have holiness, and this is the mercy of God—to obtain a Head in whom we might have the regenerating influence, and Jesus Christ stood appointed to this station. But such a Head is a great gift of God to a sinful world; and the government of God would not permit that such a great gift should be given until the dignity of the law had been vindicated; so it was burdened on the all-merciful Redeemer, that, on his errand to save us, he might pass through the painful humiliation of a sacrificial lamb. See him, with the banner in his hand, struggling through the gulf of misery which sin has stretched between us and God; encountering death itself, in this work of mercy! And now that he has landed on our shore, and reared his banner, inviting all to come unto him and be saved, O what infatuation, that any should refuse his call, harden their hearts against it, or turn carelessly away. How can any escape who neglect this great salvation?

I have thus, very shortly, in the first place, discoursed to you of the recovery of our lost sonship; in the recovery of which lost sonship consists the salvation of man. I must defer, till another oc-

casian, the display of the privileges of men, who thus, in Jesus Christ, are constituted the sons of God. But, in the meanwhile, let me ask you this question: Are ye possessed of a regenerated spirit—a spirit from which the evil passions are ejected—a spirit replenished with the views of God, with the feelings of God—a spirit made like to God, so as to will what He wills, and abhor what He abhors? Do you see salvation in this renewed spirit? Oh, it is a great gift! Alas! how few there are who have such views of salvation! How many would be satisfied were they just rescued from the pain and curse of hell, and who have no aspiring after regenerated souls! Well, upon their own principles, where they are only seeking after a redemption from pain, and when all the view they have of the mansion of blessedness is, that it is a place where men are to cease from suffering, let me assure them that this redemption from pain, and this enjoyment of peace, they shall never obtain till they have set their hearts and their affections on a regenerated spirit—till the great cry be, O! how shall I have the evil purged out of my soul! and how shall I have it adorned with the graces of righteousness?

The reason why so many never arrive at any satisfaction in the religion of Jesus Christ, is because they do not begin with the proper object. They should begin with the cry, How shall I obtain a purified and regenerated spirit? Then the reply is, You cannot have a regenerated spirit until you are justified. There stands between you and God the barrier of your guilt, and there is no coming unto God in the great blessing of a regenerated soul, until this barrier of guilt be taken out of the way. And this leads the mind strongly to contemplate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, by which this barrier is removed, so that there is now a free

egress for the Spirit of God to come forth to renew us in our dispositions. But it is not only for Christ's sake that we obtain the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit; it is in Christ we obtain them—it is through Christ they are transmitted to us: we must rally ourselves under his banner, or, according to the forcible representation of Scripture, we must become as branches are in the vine, have the influences of the Spirit transmitted through us, as branches of Him who is the vine. How may a sinner, then, be united to Christ? By faith is this mysterious junction effected. And what is faith? It is just a man giving himself up to the keeping of God's Son, that God's Son may do all this work for him—cleanse the heart and restore it to the image which is entirely lost. Let me trust, therefore, that you will make this the subject of future self-examination. What are your views of salvation? Do you conceive that a regenerate spirit is salvation, when the gates of Paradise shall be opened that you may enter and enjoy communion with your Father? See that you seek this regenerate spirit in the scriptural way. But why speak thus? Surely there are here who have already gone to Christ, and have found this rising up of the spirit in conformity to the image of the Most High. In proportion as faith is strengthened, so is the connexion strengthened by which the Holy Spirit is dispensed to us through Christ. Let this connexion be made still more strong, that we more and more may rejoice as sons and daughters of God, in expectation of being taken home to our Father's house, and seeing him face to face. On another occasion, I may open up the happiness of that blessed time, when, as God's children, we shall be gathered together in that blessed home. Meanwhile, God bless his word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

ADDRESS,

DELIVERED IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON SABBATH, 6th APRIL, 1853, ON THE OCCASION OF OBSERVING THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER,

By the Rev. JOHN GEDDES.

COMMUNICANTS, the place you now occupy at the table of the Lord, is designed to be to you as the office of John the Baptist. Behold, not the bread and the wine, but behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Turn away your eyes from beholding vanity. Behold Christ who is the Chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, in the heaven above, in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth. There is presented to us wonder after wonder, but behold now the wonders of redeeming love. When God created the world out of nothing, he appeared in sovereign, almighty majesty. He said, and it was done—he commanded, and all things stood fast. But God has done greater things in the form of a servant, than even in the form of God. When the Son of God laid the foundations of our world—for by him were all things made—he did not speak, and it was done. But when the Son of God redeemed our world he was in the form of a servant—he was led as a lamb to the slaughter—he has done a greater thing than creating the world in redeeming it. “Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it! Shout, ye lower parts of the earth! Break forth into singing ye mountains! O forest and every green tree! for the Lord has glorified Jacob! he hath redeemed Israel!” Again and again, like John, we would say, Behold the Lamb. Rejoice that Christ is not hid from your face—yea, rejoice, that to the very weakness of your faith, he is this day presented to you by such visible signs, that you may see, and taste, and handle the good Word of Life, and know the love of Him who gave his life a ransom for many.

The Lord Jesus, the same night on which he was betrayed, took bread, and he also took the cup, as we do after his ex-

ample; but before breaking the bread or distributing the cup, we are told that he blessed God, and gave thanks. Let us also through faith in his merits and mediation, bless God and give thanks.

. Communicants, to you who believe Christ is precious, have you seen Christ with faith? Oh, then, you must have seen him also in love. Your faith must work by love. It must purify the heart: it must enable you to overcome the world. You have seen him in the form of a servant, and behold he is also in the form of God. He is the child born, and yet he is the Saviour given. He is the Lamb slain, and yet he is the light of the world. How wonderful this redemption! Jesus has through death abolished death, and him that had the power of it. He putteth this song, O communicants, into your lips, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” You are looking forward to your own deaths—Christ can enable you to say, To me to die is gain. You are remembering the death of those who have fallen asleep in Jesus: to them it is already proved, that death has been immediately everlasting days. Follow, then, all who through faith and patience, have gone to the inheritance of the saints, and when you see the Lamb in the midst of the throne, you shall need no more the exhortation, Behold the Lamb! You shall for ever dwell in his presence and his name. But now, even now, “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.” Go from the table of the Lord in peace, and may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus!

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SATURDAY, 9TH JUNE, 1892.

No. 11.

SERMON by the Rev. Mr. FINLAY, Perth.
SERMON by the Rev. Mr. MARSDEN, London.

Price 2d.

CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE ;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN GORBALS CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE AFTERNOON OF
SABBATH, 5th MAY, 1892.

By the Rev. JOHN FINLAY,
Minister of St. Paul's Church, Perth.

"Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ."—Philip. i. 27.

In these words, the Apostle exhorts the converts at Philippi to deport themselves, in all respects, agreeably to the laws by which every christian community ought to be governed; or to live in a manner suitable to the principles which they profess, the immunities they enjoy, and the hopes they entertain, as members of the Church of Christ. And like them, all belonging to the society, and blessed with the privileges, of Christians should, in evidence of the soundness of their faith, and as a fitting and necessary preparation for their being, in due time, associated with the spirits of the just made perfect, study to be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness.

If men form any wish at all upon the subject, they must desire to die the death of the righteous. At the close of life, were it left to their own choice whether heaven or hell should be the place of their eternal abode, they would, doubtless, give a decided preference to the former. Sinners, the most reckless and daring, must, in their last moments, providing they believe the record which God has given concerning a future state of rewards and punishments, tremble at the thought of a different destiny beyond the grave; and could but a few sighs and tears, a few confessions of sin, and supplications for mercy, and longings after a happy immortality, procure their salvation, none, not even the most abandoned and worthless of all the apostate race of Adam, would be consigned to perdition.

Vol. I.—No 11.

But so great and mischievous is the delusion under which multitudes labour, through the powerful and corrupting influence of the devil, the world, and the flesh, that what appears to them of the first importance, and is, in good earnest, desired by them at the all-eventful and solemn hour of death, exhibits no charms, and possesses as little power to arrest their attention, excite their ambition, and actuate their deportment throughout life. Subject to the most fatal infatuation, they prefer the present enjoyments of sense and sin to the future and ineffable bliss that is laid up in store for the righteous in heaven, and for an unsatisfying and evanescent gratification, forfeit a perfected and everlasting felicity. Sickness and disease, the usual precursors of dissolution, are alone able to affect them with a sense of their imminent danger, and impending and awful doom. They teach them a lesson against which they had before carefully and closely shut their ears—that he who would enter into life, must keep the commandments; or, if they die the death, they must live the life of the righteous; but, having now no time to reduce this important lesson to practice, they die unprepared for, and though they should hereafter solicit, we are assured that they shall be denied admission into heaven. If you would not be like the impenitent wicked, who are thus, upon leaving this world, doomed to everlasting destruction, but like the righteous, who, at death, are received up

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into glory, you must, by a dependence on divine aid, studiously guard against the commission of iniquity, and, while you confide in the perfect righteousness of Christ, for pardon and salvation, sincerely endeavour to walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. For you to live must be Christ, that for you to die may be gain. Only those whose conversation is as it becometh the Gospel of Christ, shall, on the day of reckoning and of recompence, be acknowledged by him as his faithful servants, and enter into the joy of their Lord.

Since a life of holy obedience, which is other language for a conversation becoming the Gospel, is a requisite qualification for our enjoying future blessedness, it is of the utmost importance that we possess clear and correct views of the nature and character of that obedience which we are required to yield to the law of God. If we are mistaken as to these, although we may do many things, and do them too from a sense of duty, we cannot otherwise be regarded than as unprofitable servants. God's work must not only be done, but it must be done in the way which he himself has prescribed. We must keep the commandments, not as our own inclinations and views, or the maxims and feelings of others would dictate, but according to what saith the law and the testimony of heaven—the only unerring standard of faith and manner. To render us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, our conversation must be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ. To assist you in forming a right judgment on this all-important subject, I shall endeavour by the help of the Spirit of truth, to illustrate the more essential properties of Christian obedience—those properties which distinguish it from that superficial and unavailing virtue on which the men of the world lavish their highest praises, and render it pleasing to God and profitable to ourselves.

In the first place, if your obedience is becoming the Gospel of Christ, every act of it must proceed from a correspondent christian principle or religious affection. It cannot be denied that though no such principle or affection exists in the soul, to generate and uphold sterling holiness, there may be exhibited a *specious* show

of virtue in the life. Motives purely selfish and worldly may prompt to actions, good in themselves and beneficial to society, and dissuade from others, sinful in their nature and hurtful in their tendency, even when the heart is altogether devoid of those religious principles, and feels nothing of that divine influence which actuates the genuine Christian, in the performance of similar deeds. A man may frequent the church merely because others around him are accustomed to do so, or the better to screen certain censurable parts of his character from observation and suspicion, or perhaps to subservise some sinister and sinful purpose. He may be temperate, because neither his means, nor his health, nor his situation, will admit of his being addicted to rioting and drunkenness; humane, from a constitutional tenderness of heart; charitable, from ostentation and vanity; condescending, from the pride of being thought humble; friendly, from the love of praise, or hope of reward; and just, from the dread of detection or punishment. He may curb certain passions, abstain from certain criminal gratifications, and submit to certain mortifications, not from the fear of God, but of men. All his virtue may be selfish and superficial. It may not be practised on its own account, and may have no existence in, or power over, the soul. He may act from wrong principles, and his actions, virtuous and meritorious though they seem, may be devoid of those qualities which integrity of intention and uprightness of motive can alone impart, and which stamp upon the human character its truest beauty, and communicate to it its highest excellence.

Those enriching and ornamental properties belong to the obedience of the true Christian. His good works possess substance as well as show. They are of sterling worth, being the fruit of those religious principles which the Spirit of the Lord hath implanted in his heart, to which God looketh, and according to which he either condemns or approves of the actions of men. In the graces which he cultivates, and in the virtues which he practises, he has regard to the divine commandment, acts from a sense of duty and a desire to promote the glory and obtain the approbation of God. Love and gratitude to God, and the delight that he

takes in, and the benefit he reaps from, his service, influence him in every act of religious worship, whether secret, private, or public; while, in performing the duties that he owes to his neighbour and himself, he feels deeply their importance and utility, and the full weight of the consideration, that they are enjoined by the Word of God, which he conscientiously studies to make, in all his doings, moral and religious, a light to his feet, and a lamp to his path. And, moreover, in keeping under the body, and abstaining from fleshly lusts that war against the soul, he is restrained by a principle of self-denial; and the abhorrence in which he holds every deed of impurity and unrighteousness, not forgetting that all unlawful indulgences are dishonouring to his christian profession, and injurious to his spiritual interests, and, above all, offensive to a pure and a holy God, whose grace has taught him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present and evil world.

I would here specify particularly the most efficient principle of christian obedience—one which gives being, and by its divine and diffusive influence communicates energy and effect to all the rest. I mean faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. I speak not of that faith which is imbibed by education, or, like a hereditary estate, descends, as a matter of course, from father to son, or that is generated solely by the force of truth—a faith which may be professed without contributing in the slightest degree to the moral or religious improvement of its possessor. I speak of that faith which, while it embraces the Gospel, from an enlightened conviction of its truth, cordially approves of, and implicitly confides in, the scheme of salvation that it reveals, from a consciousness of its necessity, and its wise and gracious adaptation to the circumstances of sinners—a faith produced in the mind by a clear perception of the truth, accompanied by the convincing and converting operations of the Holy Spirit, who worketh in men, to will and to do of God's good pleasure.

In the formation, and growth, and perfecting of the christian character, much

stress is laid on this divine principle, in the Sacred Scriptures. They represent it as indispensable to practical godliness. Without it no man can please God. And as there can neither be sterling piety nor sound morality where it is wanting, so it cannot exist in the soul without yielding the fruits of righteousness in the life. It worketh by love, purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world. Good works flow from it as naturally as the stream from the fountain. It diffuses itself over the whole character, and pours its sanctifying unction into every holy and virtuous deed. The just are said to live by faith. It inspires them with resignation in the day of trial, with patience in the midst of tribulation, with fortitude in the evil hour, and with strength in every time of need. It teaches them neither to be over-elated with the smiles, nor over-depressed by the frowns of fortune; and encourages them cheerfully to submit to the greatest sacrifices, and willingly to undertake the most arduous duties which God in his wisdom is pleased to require at their hands. Accordingly, we are told that, by faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac. David had fainted unless he had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; and of the Old Testament believers in general, it is said, that "through faith they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Christians are said to be sanctified by faith, and to be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. If, therefore, you are partakers of this precious faith, it will discover itself in the moral and sanctifying influence that it exerts on your walk and conversation. By works it will be made perfect, and the more perfect it is, the fewer will be the blemishes that stain, and the richer and more numerous the graces that adorn, your christian character. It will not lie dormant, like that of many professors who, though they assent to the truths of the Gospel, feel not their need of that salvation which it reveals. But, believing to the saving of your souls, you will give all diligence to add to your faith virtue, and knowledge, and temper-

ance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity; and if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly. As intimately connected with the particular which has been illustrated, I have to observe that sincerity is another essential quality of christian obedience. As, in matters of religion, dissemblers, before they can pass for persons of sterling worth, must submit to all the bodily exercise that is required of the genuine Christian, it is somewhat surprising that any such characters should be found. Being obliged, before the reputation they court can be acquired or upheld, to perform a regular course of christian duty, one would suppose that they would find it as easy, indeed more easy, and certainly more pleasant and profitable, to act a sincere than a feigned part in the profession and practice of godliness; for then would they be relieved from a constant and anxious watchfulness to escape suspicion, the perpetual fear of detection, and the pain of acting contrary to their inclinations, while at the same time they would enjoy the satisfaction arising from the approbation of a good conscience, that with simplicity and godly sincerity they have had their conversation in the world.

Yet though they cannot practise hypocrisy save at a great expense of mental tranquillity, and without acting under a constant restraint, and submitting to a great deal of what they must consider irksome drudgery, there are some who never appear in public, save in a borrowed dress, and are noisy pretenders to a sanctity of deportment to which the searcher of hearts and trier of reins knows that they have no just claim. The power of sin in their soul remains unsubdued, and their appetite for unlawful pleasures, which they freely indulge in secret, unabated. But, desirous to stand well in the opinion of the world, and finding that a good name is in many respects conducive to their secular interests, they assume the graceful garb of piety, and are rigid sticklers for, and punctilious observers of, the forms, though they are all the while strangers to the power of godliness.

It is matter of sincere regret that the nominal sometimes carries his false, farther than the true Christian does his real pro-

fession of piety and virtue. The hypocrite's pretensions are frequently louder, and his zeal more active and unwearied. When his sinister purposes are more likely to be promoted by so doing, he affects no ordinary degree of sanctity, pays every external mark of respect to the ordinances of religion, and is ambitious of being regarded a most devoted servant of the Lord. Judging from appearances, you would pronounce him to be one of the warmest friends to the cause of Gospel truth and moral reformation in the world. He declaims, with no ordinary vehemence, against the degeneracy of the times, bewails the decline of vital religion, and is ready to forward any measure that may tend to its revival at home, and its introduction abroad. For regularity and seeming seriousness in the devotions of the church and family he is surpassed by none, and he will even enter into his closet, when there is any likelihood of his being observed, for to be seen of men is the motive to which all his devotions, public and private, are to be ascribed. For ends the most unworthy, he makes a fair show in the flesh; but, alas! his heart is not right with God. To catch the public eye, like the Pharisees of old, he makes broad his phylacteries. Under the cloak of righteousness, he conceals his impieties; and behind public virtues, shelters secret vices. When unobserved, he lays aside the mask, and works iniquity with greediness. Like a whited sepulchre, he is beautiful without, but within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness. His works are in the dark, where he encourages himself in his wickedness, saying, "Who seeth me, who knoweth me?" Let him be told that God sees him and knows all his works. His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, and the thickest and most specious covering cannot conceal from him the hypocrite's true character. He understands his thoughts afar off, is acquainted with all his ways, and there is not a word on his tongue, but, lo, he knoweth it altogether. And though his sins should not find him out here, God will expose the dissembler on the day of judgment, when he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart. And wo be to the hypocrite when his secret deeds shall be disclosed—the motives of his public conduct made

known—and himself exhibited to an assembled world, without that artful disguise by which he now imposes on his fellow-men, who look only on the outward appearance. God, who looketh on the heart, shall appoint him his portion with unbelievers, in that place where are weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

Christian obedience is something very different from this external and empty parade of piety and virtue. It never comes abroad under a mask, or acts a deceitful part, or pretends to what it is not. It exhibits itself openly to the world, and is in reality what it is in appearance. It is sincere, and actually possesses those properties that hypocrisy only artfully counterfeits. I trust your obedience bears this true and valuable character—this impress of its divine and heavenly origin; that, in your intercourse with God, you are not like the ostentatious Pharisee, who, with the impious show of thanking God, made a vain display of his unsubstantial virtues before men, but like the humble Publican, who penitentially smote upon his breast, and in good earnest exclaimed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" and that in your intercourse with mankind, while you observe the forms, you live under the sanctifying power of that wisdom that is from above—that is pure and peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Indeed, if you are sincerely devoted to God, you can have no motive for dissembling. Having no crimes in which you secretly indulge to conceal, and no ends of which you ought to be ashamed to serve, you will act an honest and candid part, and be in the sight of God what you seem to be in the eyes of men. And it is this character of sincerity and truth that will impart to your obedience its christian excellence, render it acceptable to God, who delights in truth in the inward parts, and subservient to your future well-being, and prove it to be the fruit of his Spirit, who causeth the desires of your hearts to go out towards him, and the remembrance of his name.

Thirdly, christian obedience is universal. There are none, perhaps, even of the most unprincipled and profligate characters, who will admit that they are altogether de-

praved, or who will not urge some claim to virtue; and there are many whose conduct is correct in some, but as-censurable in other respects. Here we find one affecting much warmth of piety, expressing supreme love to God, the liveliest gratitude for his goodness and grace, and the most profound veneration for his word and ordinances, while his heart is devoid of brotherly love, of every kindly and benevolent feeling, and turns with hatred and malice towards his fellow-creatures. He is particularly eloquent in defamation and slander, delights in sowing discord among friends, envies the prosperity of those around him, derives happiness from the misery of others, and is, in short, under the influence of the most unamiable and malignant passions. A man, whose character is thus at variance with itself, cannot be a Christian. His neglect of the relative and social duties, renders his pretended piety unavailing in the sight of God. The respect that he pays to the first goes for nothing through the contempt which he shows for the second table of the law. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also."

There we meet with another boasting of his philanthropy, evincing the tenderest feelings of humanity, adding to his compassion many substantial deeds of beneficence, inviting the wanderer to his gate, dealing his bread to the widow and fatherless, redressing the wrongs of the injured, contributing liberally to every charitable institution, and doing good to all men as he has opportunity. When we look at, we cannot but admire, this fair side of his character. But it has another side which presents nothing save deformities, which we cannot view but with feelings of unqualified disapprobation and abhorrence. His heart is enmity to God, and not subject to his law. It is in league with the pleasures of sin, which God condemns. God is not in all his thoughts, None of his time is appropriated to devotion. He absents himself from the house, despises the ordinances, and does his own works and finds his own pleasures on the day of the Lord. He never bows the knee at a throne of grace, nor raises one

song of praise to the Giver of all good. What saith Christ of such a person? "He that loveth father or mother," son or daughter, his nearest relations, and best friends, any human being "more than me, is not worthy of me." He cannot be Christ's disciple, for while Jesus commands him to love his neighbour as himself, he also commands him to love God supremely, which is the first and great commandment.

It is nothing uncommon to hear one who is scrupulously honourable in all his secular transactions, uttering the most offensive oaths, or to find another whose soul abominates low cunning, deliberate falsehood, and every kind of circumvention and deceit, living in rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, and addicted to every species of filthy and profane conversation. Like the Pharisees who paid tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin, but neglected the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and faith—how frequently do we see persons strict in the observance of some, but neglectful of other duties; or hear them loudly denouncing one vice, while yet they habitually practise another no less deserving of execration. But in characters of this description, true religion has no place; for wherever it exists, piety and virtue in their various parts are closely and indissolubly united. "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" for he who habitually offends in one point, though he may appear blameless in other respects, is declared by God to be guilty of all. No man can faithfully serve two masters of different natures, and opposite views and interests; for either he will love the one and hate the other, or else he will cleave to the one and despise the other. He cannot serve God and Mammon.

I wish it to be understood, therefore, that if your obedience be such as becometh

(the Gospel of Christ, it must be universal, having respect to all the commandments of the Lord. To every duty you will allot its proper place and due share of attention, so that the performance of one may not interfere with the observance of another; and while you hold in particular abhorrence some sins, you will not roll others as a sweet morsel under your tongue. Love to God will not supersede benevolence to man, nor will the practice of the relative virtues compensate for the neglect of religious duties; but you will exercise yourselves to have consciences void of offence towards God and towards man. Not that you can attain to perfection, or, while you continue in a world lying in wickedness, literally walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Here you can only be sanctified in part, and much imperfection shall cleave to you, until your souls are freed from a body of sin and death, and introduced to the society of just men made perfect. But still as you progress heavenward, you will, in the strength of the Lord, endeavour to perfect holiness, regarding all the precepts of the divine law as dictated by the same wisdom, enforced by the same sanctions, and conducive to the same ends—the glory of God and your own meetness for the kingdom of heaven. Whatsoever things are true, or honest, or just, or pure, or lovely, or of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, you will think of these things, and study to practise them. Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof; but will strive to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you will shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that you may rejoice in the day of Christ, that you have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

Concluded at page 142.

CHRIST THE HOPE OF GLORY ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN JOHN STREET METHODIST CHAPEL, GLASGOW, ON THE
FORENOON OF SABBATH, 30 JUNE, 1839,

By the Rev. G. MARSDEN,
President of the Methodist Conference.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.—COLOS. i. 27, 28.

I BELIEVE you are all sufficiently acquainted with the sacred writings to recollect that St. Paul, prior to his conversion, had been one of the most determined enemies of Christianity; that he had been a blasphemer; that he had been a persecutor; that he breathed threatening and slaughter against the Christians; and, for a time, was employed in bringing them to punishment—causing them to be imprisoned, and, in some instances, by torture, endeavouring to compel them to deny their Lord and Master. But when conviction reached his heart, and when he was brought to bow at the feet of the Redeemer, he received pardon—pardon through the blood of the covenant, and became one of the most zealous and successful of ministers: wherever he went, the hand of the Lord appears to have been with him. Several of the early Christian Churches were raised up through his instrumentality; and wherever he went, he had one grand truth to proclaim to the people—Christ the Redeemer. This appears to have been the grand theme on which the Apostle loved to dwell. He often refers to it. In writing to the Corinthians, his language was, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." In writing to the Galatians, he says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." In writing to the Colossians, he says, in the passage I have read, "Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach." In preaching Christ, the Apostle proclaimed Christ as God—God over all, blessed for ever—not a God by delegation—not a God by appointment and office, but God from eternity, God omnipresent, God the creator, God the omnipotent, God the eternal, and God incarnate, God manifest in the flesh. And

how necessary it is that we should rest upon that ground! How feeble must be our endeavours to form a system to comfort the mind when we draw near eternity—when the spirit stands by the verge of an eternal, an unknown world, and when we are conscious that, in a very little time—in a day or in an hour—when a dying man is conscious that in a very few minutes, his soul will pass into that unknown eternity, and that, in whatever state it pass into that eternity, it will decide its fate for ever, either for heaven or for hell—either for an eternity of happiness, or an eternity of misery. How important it is to know that our ground is sure! How important it is not to leave it doubtful—not to have any degree of uncertainty—not to build upon a mere "perhaps all will be well," but to know, when standing on the verge of eternity, that we are on the rock that never faileth—that we have, to use the apostolic expression, "Christ in us, the hope of glory."

To that I would particularly direct your attention for a little. I think you will all recollect those passages in the sacred writings which are express on the subject of Christ dwelling in the believer. I need only just allude to them,—“I and my Father will come unto you, and we will dwell in you.” “Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.” It was the expression of the Apostle, “I live not unto myself, but Christ liveth in me.” And I recollect that it is stated of one of the primitive Christians, when he was brought to the bar of Trajan, afterwards the Roman Emperor, and when Trajan asked him, “Art thou a Christian?” he replied, “I am: I have Christ in me.” Trajan then asked

him to deny Christ.—“Deny Christ,” said he, “and sacrifice to the gods.” “What!” said the other, “shall I deny my Lord and Master? I have Christ in me.” He was then immediately ordered to be taken out, and led to martyrdom. He died a martyr at the stake. And I believe there are many of you who can take up the apostolic view, and say, We have Christ in us. However, it will be necessary to inquire, What are the Scriptural proofs of this? and I will endeavour to direct your attention to a few plain scriptural proofs, by which we may know whether we have Christ in us. And, oh, let it be a subject of serious consideration! Take care not to make a mistake here. Remember, my christian friends, that it is for eternity; and you ought to be careful that you are on a scriptural foundation. Let your heart be opened to influence from on high, and God will direct you.

If we have Christ in us, by his Spirit, it will be a spirit of adoption. St. Paul particularly mentions this,—“Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” And our Lord says, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” And the Apostle, in another passage, says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”

When God first awakens the sinner—when the Holy Spirit first enters the heart, darkness covers the soul; the soul was in a state of bondage, under the power of sin, perhaps, at the time, not fully conscious of it—when the Holy Spirit awakens the sinner, the man’s conscience is then alarmed; all his danger rushes upon his view. Supposing there be a criminal, who has been brought to the bar, found guilty, and condemned to die, and that that criminal is remanded to his dungeon, to remain there a day or two prior to his execution, and the criminal asleep in his dungeon; while asleep, the

man may be dreaming of freedom; dreaming of enjoying the company of his family; dreaming of walking in the fields, enjoying all the beauties of nature; and to him, at the time, all this appears perfectly real; he has no consciousness of any thing else but the moment he is roused from his sleep, there is the gloomy dungeon; there are the chains upon his body; there is the consciousness of guilt; and the very first thought that flashes upon his mind is, I am, then, to die. What a change in the feelings of the man, not in his state! While he was dreaming, he was still in the prison; he was still chained; he was under condemnation, in the dark and gloomy dungeon; but the moment he awakes, he awakes to all the horrors of his state. Now, so it is when God awakens the sinner. Satan endeavours to keep the sinner asleep. The pleasures of the world and sin amuse him; but when God’s Spirit enters the heart as a spirit of conviction—when that light darts into the mind, the man is roused. The Spirit gives him to feel his guilt; *the Spirit gives him* to feel that he is condemned to die; to feel his wretchedness under the curse of a broken law; to feel his bondage. How clearly does St. Paul state this in the 7th chapter of the Epistle to Romans, where he describes the state of that man—“I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” He saw himself a condemned criminal; and after stating very clearly the progress of that heavenly influence, he at length cries out, “O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me?” Like the criminal under his condemnation and bondage, he cries out, Who shall deliver me? How shall I be brought forth from my slavery and bondage? The answer is, Through Jesus Christ my Lord. This is my deliverance. So, when God’s Spirit enters the heart in a state of bondage, and removes that state of bondage and fear, and becomes a spirit of adoption; then I know I belong to Christ—then the Spirit tells me that I am born again. Oh, what a happy state is this, to have the Spirit of the Lord Jesus testifying that I am a child of God, not by a long process of reasoning, not by inferential deductions merely, but to have the Holy Spirit to give me to feel my guilt—to awaken my careless soul; then removing that guilt—taking away that

condemnation, and at once proclaiming adoption and pardon to my believing heart. I hope many of you enjoy it. I hope that you can say, you have Christ's Spirit bearing witness with yours, that you are the children of God.

And if we have Christ in us, the Spirit will be a spirit of reconciliation. Our Lord particularly mentions this: when I go I will send a Comforter unto you, and he shall abide in you, he shall dwell in you for ever, even the Spirit of truth. What a mercy that we have that Holy Spirit! I have no doubt that many of you have Christ in you. You have the common lot of mankind—you have family troubles, family disappointments, family afflictions, family bereavements—where is the family without them?—where is the family without affliction at one period or another, or without death? But in the midst of all have you not the consolation of the Spirit—do you not feel that inward consolation of the Holy Spirit dwelling in your hearts, to bear up the soul, or that you can say—I am not alone, the Lord hath not given me up to bear my trials without support: and when outward refuge fails, when an arm of flesh cannot help, when even the kind sympathy of friends cannot comfort, you have the comfort of God—the Holy Spirit is your consolation, and you feel Christ in you the hope of glory. And if Christ dwell in us, we shall have the mind of Christ. St. Paul particularly mentions this also.—My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, let the mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. What is that mind? Is it a spirit of pride? No; it is a spirit of humility. Is it a spirit of passion and anger? No; it is a spirit of gentleness—a spirit of meekness—a spirit of faith, kindness, long-suffering—a spirit of love. This is the mind of Christ. How rapidly would Christianity spread if all the professors of religion had the christian spirit,—if the husband and the wife, the master and the servant, the parent and the children, had that meek, that gentle, that calm, that patient, that resigned mind—the lovely image of the Redeemer—stamped on the soul. And I will only add, if we have Christ in us, the Spirit will be a spirit of purity, to lead on the soul to bear all the lovely stamp divine, the likeness of our Lord, till, transformed by faith, we ris-

in the lovely likeness of the Redeemer, made meet, to use the apostolic expression, to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light.

And it is Christ in us the hope of glory—what that glory is we must die to know. I believe no proper conception can be formed of future glory. God has been pleased to say a little on the subject, especially in the Revelations; and yet how little, how very little, do we know what future glory is. When our Lord appeared to St. John in the Island of Patmos, John fell at his feet, overpowered with his glory. I shall use a very plain illustration. Where is the man that can fix his eyes steadily on the sun when in his meridian brightness, for five minutes uninjured? There is no such man. The brilliancy and glory of that luminary completely overpower the sight. Now, if we cannot bear the sight of one part of the creation, a mere mass of matter, how can we bear the sight of the Creator?—how can we bear the sight of Jesus, till the body shall put off corruption and mortality, and be raised in incorruption and immortality, and the happy spirit disembodied, shall enter into glory? Our Lord said, or rather it is spoken by the sacred writer of him, "No man can see my face and live," "God whom no man hath seen, or can see." We must die to know what that glory is which the disembodied spirit can enjoy, and the body after the morning of the resurrection, can enjoy. Here we know but a little. We often speak of it negatively, and perhaps, it is our only way, that in that glory there will be no temptation. However we may be tempted on earth, temptations will never assail us there, and it is a comforting thought that the conflict here, will not be for ever. The conflict will soon be over. Oh, how soon has the conflict passed with Mr. Brydeman!* He was in the field of battle—he had fought under the banner of the Redeemer, and he had conquered; but how very soon was the conquest over. When we enter yonder, there will be no conflict—there will be no trials to endure—there will be no afflictions—the inhabitants of that city shall experience no bereavements—all shall be a lovely family, united together by the closest ties, and joined together with the heart. Here the hand

* Late Minister of John Street.

of affliction, the hand of death, separates them, but when they meet within the heavenly gates, it will be an everlasting meeting, and that glory will be enjoyed with all the redeemed—with all the heavenly company, and there we shall be with Jesus, with our Redeemer, enjoying the fulness of his love, and enjoying it for ever. Blessed hope! And if it be inquired, And how have we this hope? the Apostle tells us, Christ in you, the hope of glory. Where, then, is that scriptural testimony of Christ in us the hope of glory? The Apostle's argument is perfectly strong and clear—"because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father:" and if a son, by the argument of the Apostle, then an heir, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. Then we have the hope of glory—where Christ dwells there must be the hope of glory. Perhaps some will ask, do we not find many real Christians who have timidity and fear of death? I think we ought to distinguish upon this subject. I admit there are many very pious people, people who have much religion, who rather fear, and that fear harassing the soul relative to the bed of affliction and a dying hour. Yet if you ask them at the time, Are you not a child of God? Have you not the Holy Spirit bearing witness with your spirit that you are a child of God? The person would say, Yes, I am, but I have fear relative to my affliction and relative to my death. As far as my personal acquaintance has extended, I think I have generally found, that whatever fear and timidity there may have been in the commencement, and during the progress of the christian course, God removes it all at last. As the soul draws near to eternity, all that fear, all that timidity is taken away, and the hope of glory brightens, without a cloud, clear and uninterrupted.

And will you forsake your God? When you draw near death, will not Christ be in you the hope of glory—a rock that will never fall—a rock that will stand for ever? God grant that every member of this congregation be built upon that rock. Ah! take care and rest on that rock—the rock laid in Zion, and have Christ in you the hope of glory.

Now, observe the Apostle's manner of preaching this doctrine—warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom,

that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

"Warning every man." Some have thought that it is totally unnecessary now to warn mankind. They have said, we live in a far more enlightened age, in an age of more general instruction, and therefore there is not the same necessity to warn mankind now which there was in former days. And is there not? Have you none in Glasgow who totally neglect the salvation of their souls? Are there no drunkards, no swearers, no liars, no profligate characters, and is there not a necessity to warn them? Are there none who, though their outward conduct is fair morally, are living without God, without Christ, without scriptural hope? Is there no need to

Are there not some, who, were under gracious influence, under divine impressions, but whose goodness, like the morning cloud and the early dew, has passed away? Is there no need to warn the young lest they plunge into the follies of the world—lest their hearts become hardened and callous, and their own happy spirits should at last sink for ever? Is there no need to warn the middle-aged who are immersed in worldly care and temporal concerns, and are placing these as a barrier between them and God—who are saying, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go see it: I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I have my shop, my warehouse, my counting-house, the market, my temporal concerns, which engross the whole of my attention, and I have no time for religion? Is there no need to warn them? Is there no need to warn the aged—the grey-headed, who are tottering over the grave, and yet hoping to live, expecting yet long to be spared, but totally unprepared for another state? Is there no need to warn them? Have we not cause to warn such by the shortness of time—by the uncertainty of life—by approaching death—by the joys of heaven—and by the torments of hell? Is there no need to warn such? Yes. There are calls, and very loud calls, to warn them.

"Teaching every man,"—drawing our arguments from the sacred writings, the Book of God; not endeavouring by metaphysical subtleties to draw the people to some study that would not support them, but to lead them to Christ, and to Christ

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

"Teaching every man in all wisdom," by pointing out the steps from earth to heaven—the progress of the divine life, and endeavouring to lead the people on, higher, and higher, and higher, till they be led to an eternity of glory.

"That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." It is the grand end of the Gospel that every soul be made pure and holy, and meet for the heavenly inheritance. And the apostolic view of this, I think, seems to accord with what he says in another passage. "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ;" and in another, "That ye may be our crown of rejoicing in the great day." I have been astonished that any should ever suppose that a happy spirit—the spirit that enters glory, will not know its former christian state. Some have thought that when we enter heaven we shall not even know those who were our companions here. What! my dear friends; will a disembodied spirit know less than an embodied spirit? Will it decrease in knowledge as it draws nearer the full felicity of glory? Will not a father know his child, that shall meet him in the plains of life? Will not a mother know her daughter, that shall meet her within the gates of heaven? Will not christian friends know each other there? When David was told that his child was dead, he expressed his hope that he should, after his own death, see and know it. His consolation was, I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. But if he were not to know the child, where would have been the consolation? Besides, if a lost, damned soul in hell knew Abraham, surely a happy spirit in heaven will know them that were united with them in christian fellowship when on earth. And viewing it in that light, we may say that those who have been awakened through the instrumentality of another, as by St. Paul, will be his ground of rejoicing in that day. And O, how many will be presented in that day by St. Paul, and St. John, and St. Peter, and by some of the later Evangelists of the Lord's vineyard! I have no doubt that some of you will be presented by some minister, and with what joy will that minister welcome you at the right hand of the Redeemer! And what a glorious company will some of them have to present! But, in whatever way, I hope you will be presented there—be with that

company, be led to the redeemed through the blood of Christ, and after having heard Jesus say, "Come thou blessed of my Father," I trust your happy spirit will unite together within the heavenly gates and there enjoy, in a happy eternity, the presence of your Lord.

"Present every man perfect," for, blessed be God, not one of you need perish. You are all bought with a price. Christ redeemed you with his blood. The Holy Spirit strives in you. You have an advocate with the Father, Jesus pleading for you. The gate of mercy is open; God has not shut it against any of you; it is yet open, and I ask you this morning, will you enter? Will you enter by that gate? Will you become a part of that family, where the whole family in heaven and in earth is one? Will you become a child of that family? Will you become a daughter of it—a son? Will you have God for a Father? He is willing to become your Father—your God, and to leave you not till your happy spirit shall meet him in glory. Will you not meet him, then? Will you have Christ in you? Shall he enter? Supposing that in some obscure part of the city there was a family very poor, who were to see a carriage drive up, and, recognising the livery and coat of arms upon the carriage, were to say, why, that is the carriage of such a benevolent nobleman, who has generally employed his time in being a blessing to the poor: what would they think if they saw the carriage stop, the door opened, the nobleman step out and come to the door of this poor family and knock at it? Would they keep the door closed? I think not many minutes would elapse before the door would be opened—not many moments: they would believe he came with the message of kindness and mercy.

O, my friends, how long has Jesus been knocking at the door of your heart! How long has he stood there! I may ask some of these young people here, Has he not been standing at the door of your hearts many years? Has he not been knocking many months, and you have never yet admitted him? Why not admit him? He says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come unto him." It would be an awful thing for you to have to meet death, and Christ not to be with you. Oh, what an awful thing, to have

death at your bed-side, and you were to cry out, I see death is here, and I have no Saviour with me; I have to struggle with death without Christ. You may have Jesus; he is willing to enter your heart. Will you allow him? Let him enter, and then life eternal is yours. Only let Christ enter, and it will be heaven to your souls; a present heaven, and future glory. Will you let him enter; and will you allow him to enter this moment? He is knocking. Open. And if you came into this chapel this morning without Christ, you may return from it with Christ in your hearts—the hope of glory. I trust that will be the case with many of you; and then your future life, will be a life of happiness, and your happy spirit at last will enter the Paradise of God. Oh, grant that this be the lot of every person here present.

I do not think it necessary to preach a sermon on the nature of Missionary proceedings. I believe you are all well acquainted with the nature of that highly important concern. Perhaps you may not know the particulars of our Missionary concerns at present. We have about 220 Missionaries employed in various parts of the world. Our expenditure during last year, has been about £47,000. We occupy our old stations, without opening new fields of usefulness. There are pressing invitations from several places, where we have not now a Missionary, but where we should be glad to send one, provided we had the ability. God has raised up young men among us, who

are willing to go to any part of the world who do not count their lives dear to them, if they may be but useful. Not many months ago, several came to London to be examined, and, according to our usual plan, we asked each, Is there any particular part of the world you would prefer, that we may know your wishes, provided they can be complied with? I shall not forget the reply of one young man to the question, Is there any place to which you would wish to go, or do you offer yourself indiscriminately to any part? "I approve," said he "of one part particularly." And what is that? "Sierra Leone." The most sickly, the most deadly station we have in the world was his choice. God impressed it upon his heart, and he was aware that it was the most sickly quarter, and that more Missionaries had fallen there than in any other, yet that was his choice. Such is the case. Young men are willing to lay down their lives for the Redeemer. We have very pressing calls. We want several for South Africa, where an immense population is now opening to our view, and where Missionaries have been cordially welcomed. Missionaries may now land in security, in places where cannibalism was formerly common. We have now pressing calls among the Indians of the wilds of America. We have recently had one of the Indians over in this kingdom, who was baptized, and has become a preacher of the Gospel; and the way is open among the tribes there, and there we wish to send Missionaries.

GLASGOW:—W. R. M'PHUN, PUBLISHER, 86, TRONGATE,

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THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 16th JUNE, 1832.

No. 12.

SERMON by the Rev. Mr. GUN, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. Dr. PEDDIE, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. Mr. FINLAY, Perth.

Price!

THE FINAL JUDGMENT AND GROUND OF ACQUITTAL ;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE GAELIC CHAPEL, GREENOCK, ON THE EVENING OF
SABBATH, 18th MARCH, 1832.

By ADAM GUN, A.M., Hope Street Chapel, Glasgow.

*“What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I
answer him?”—JOB xxxi. 14.*

THE attention of the Patriarch Job, which had been, in the 29th chapter, directed to the season of his prosperity and honour, and, in the 30th chapter, to the time when his honour was turned into contempt, and his prosperity into adversity, is in our text arrested by the anticipation of a period when all the actions of his life, comprised in those two departments of his previous history, should be reckoned up in order before him; a period when the rectitude of the divine government, and the sovereignty of the Divine Legislator in dispensing good and evil, should be vindicated from the aspersions of the ignorant and the ungodly; a period when Jehovah, who may be regarded as in a state of settled rest while conducting the affairs of time, rises up to pronounce upon them sentence of annihilation.—“that there should be time no longer;” a period pregnant with the most important results, as fixing eternally the destiny of myriads of immortal spirits, and therefore demanding of each of us that solemn consideration given to it by Job, when he says, “What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?”

Let us consider, First, the *certainty* of a day of visitation and reckoning.

1. The certainty of a day of visitation is indicated by the *testimony of conscience*. Conscience is the vicegerent of the Almighty. It discriminates betwixt virtue

and vice, attaching to either their respective awards. Human nature is so constituted, as to be elicited or drawn into action by the proposal of some attainable good, or the prospect of some avoidable evil; the former begetting hope, and the pursuit of the object desired; the latter generating fear and an avoidance of the object dreaded. This is the principle upon which every code of law and every system of religious belief is ingrafted, containing a proposal of reward in the event of fulfilment, and of punishment in the case of violation. It is true that this belief in a future state of reward and punishment has been not unfrequently referred to the system of education existing in countries professedly Christian, but this is manifested to be a fallacious assumption, by advertng to the fact, that the same principle operates to a certain extent in the minds of the heathen, who have never been so disciplined. And even in regard to those who are said to be tutored into a belief of future retribution, it is obvious that their hopes and fears cannot be regarded as solely the result of such instruction, inasmuch as the adoption afterwards of an opposite system, would eradicate these impressions; and when we find, that all the efforts of wit and sophistry, of infidelity and licentiousness, have only the effect of charming the mind into a temporary stupefaction, from which it awakens to haunt and harass the indi-

vidual; must we not come to the conclusion that these are the actings of a principle interwoven with our moral constitution—a principle implanted by the Author of our being for accomplishing the most important results—a principle referred to by the Apostle, (Rom. ii. 15.) "Their consciences bearing witness, and their thoughts meanwhile accusing or excusing one another"—a principle which ought to be tenderly cherished, and whose faithful remonstrances should lead us to put to ourselves the question, "What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?"

2. The certainty of a day of visitation is confirmed by a reference to the *moral economy of man*, or the economy of God's dealings towards man. When we view the disproportionate condition of mankind in this world—vice flourishing, and the sinner "spreading himself like a green bay tree," while virtue is trampled upon, and the saint is suffering under the withering influence of poverty and persecution; we are constrained with the wise man, Eccl. ix. 1—3, to regard it as "an evil of all the things done under the sun, that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; and as the good is, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth is as he that feareth an oath." Considering how promiscuously the good things and evil things of this life are distributed, we must believe in a future state of reward and punishment, where there will be an adjustment of circumstances to the character sustained, in order that the administration of God's government may be in accordance with the conceptions we have formed of His character, as the wise and righteous Legislator, for "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Were the divine administration to terminate with this passing scene, we must conclude that Jehovah was alike indifferent to good and to bad men, seeing the ostensible distinction he makes in the bestowment of worldly good, is too insignificant to form a just criterion of his regard; or, rather, since the preponderance of temporal benefits is frequently in favour of those who fear not the Lord, the natural inference would be, that their character was most esteemed, and their practices sanctioned. We are therefore under the necessity of anticipating a period when prosperity shall be no more coupled with vice, nor adversity conjoined with virtue;

but when they who are, through Christ Jesus, the approved of God, shall be advanced to immortal glory and honour, and they who manifest an hostility to his holy character and pure administration, shall be depressed into "eternal shame and contempt." And having thus the *moral economy* of man externally, combined with the *moral sense* of man internally, in establishing the certainty of God's rising up in the day of visitation, let us, by the monitions of the "still small voice" within, and the varied aspects of the dealings of Providence around us, be constrained to put to ourselves the question, "What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?"

3. The certainty of a day of visitation, thus deducible from the testimony of conscience and of experience, is fully unfolded in the *Book of God*. What saith the Scripture? "It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment;" "then shall the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous to life eternal." From all the histories unfolded to us in Scripture, and from all the parables put upon record for our instruction, the inference is deducible, that there must be a day of visitation; all the sins we are required to avoid, and all the duties we are enjoined to perform, have a reference to the disapprobation or approval of our final Judge: all the promises of the Gospel, and all the threatenings of the law, acquire their energy and significancy from the appointment of a time when they shall be fully realized and accomplished. In a word, every statement of Scripture, whether calculated to induce hope or fear, joy or sorrow, desire or aversion, pleasure or pain, is regulated by its connexion with the question of the Patriarch, "What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?"

It is, however, unnecessary to amplify remarks on this part of the subject, as we have not so much to combat scepticism as to the existence of an appointed judgment day, as with the apathy and infatuation existing regarding its approach.

Let us therefore consider, secondly, the *ground* upon which an *answer* is to be prepared to the question in our text. Let us examine our character, that we may form some intelligent estimate whether we shall be able to abide the scrutiny of the

day of reckoning; and, in order to simplify our investigation, let us classify this christian community into four compartments, to one or other of which we individually belong.

1. There are some individuals who have no answer prepared. This is not mere conjecture. It is a fact of undoubted certainty. In the parable of the marriage supper, (Matt. xxii. 10—14.) our Saviour sets forth, not the case of a solitary individual, but a principle involved in the transactions of the great day of account. We are there informed, that "when the wedding was furnished with guests; and when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall he weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." Nothing can be more hazardous than such a position! nothing can be more important than the inquiry in our text! and yet what ignorance and folly are displayed by multitudes in entirely neglecting it. If this was a subject merely affording scope for the investigations of the speculative and curious, the neglect might be tolerated, but when our eternal weal hinges on our successful investigation and preparation against that day, must they not be regarded as beside themselves, whose time and whose talents are absorbed in the pursuit, it may be, of intellectual researches, or of temporal profits, or of earthly gratification—whose views and desires are bounded by a limited futurity—who are acting as if the things which are "seen and temporal," comprised all that was alluring to human ambition, and all that was requisite to human happiness—persons whose eager inquiry is, "What shall we eat and drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" instead of seeking to be "abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house, and to drink of the rivers of his pleasures," and to be clothed upon with Emmanuel's righteousness—whose spiritual interests are as unheeded as if they had no real belief that there is an eternity before them, or as if they judged that they had no account to render of themselves unto God. They forget

that at the great assize they cannot scape without giving an answer; that if their "mouths are stopped" they must "come in guilty before God;" and that however thoughtlessly they may now be floating along the tide of time, it will be cause of unceasing, but fruitless regret, that they had never in right earnest prepared an answer to the question before us, "What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?"

2. Another class of persons may be preparing an answer to the question in our text on a *self-righteous* principle. They plead obedience to the requirements of God's law. Of the existence and fatality of such a principle, our Saviour gives us an impressive exhibition, (Matt. vii. 21—23. and Luke xiii. 25—28.) And, my friends, the suitableness of such remonstrance can on no occasion be better appreciated than at such a season as this.* The feeling of self-righteousness, which as a root of bitterness is impregnated with our corrupt nature, is ready to be acted upon by our spiritual adversary as a stumbling block for our overthrow. In order to unfold the fallacy and presumption of any expectation founded upon such a plea, we have simply to contemplate the character of that law under which we are placed, and to bring our actions into comparison with its demands. Let us contemplate the law of God in the extent of its requirements, as taking cognizance, not only of the actions performed, and the words uttered, but also of the passing thoughts of the mind; let us contemplate the law of God in the authority of its demands, as being the enactment of that great Legislator who has a right to impose on his intelligent creatures whatever laws his wisdom sees meet, and to demand implicit obedience—let us contemplate the law of God in the spirituality of its principles, as requiring a total cessation from whatever is at variance with its spirit, and uninterrupted breathings after spiritual enjoyment—let us contemplate the law of God in the purity of its morality, as requiring a life of unvaried obedience to its every demand, unswayed by the slightest stain—let us contemplate the law of God in this its true light, and can we claim exemption from condemnation by the "Holy One and the Just," who "cannot look upon sin but

* The evening of the Communion Sabbath.

with abhorrence!" Let us select even the purest of our actions, and consider if the motive which prompted it, and the manner of its accomplishment, was devoid of imperfection; for perfection is the requirement of the law, nor can it abate its rigour or compromise its fulfilment, for "cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," for "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Do you "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and mind?" Are all your faculties in pursuit of God as all your salvation, and all your desire? As it is impossible that this law, which is "holy, just, and good," can suffer the slightest infringement in circumscribing its extent, in contaminating its purity, or in lessening its obligations, and as the irreversible decree is gone forth, "Till heaven and earth have passed away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away until all is fulfilled," it is manifest that any expectation of release from its condemning power, founded on our obedience, must be fallacious, and that on such a principle we have no satisfactory reply to the question of our text, "What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?"

3. A third class of persons are preparing their answer, as confiding in the general *uncovenanted mercy* of God. They have been awakened in some measure from their reckless inconsideration, and they have discernment sufficient to understand that there is no salvation by the abrogated covenant of works. Hearing that "God is love," they hope to be saved through his mercy. It is true, that God's memorial in all generations has been, and still is, "The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and in truth;" and that we are still permitted to address him in the interesting language of the Prophet,—“Who is a God like unto thee, who pardonest iniquity, and transgression, and sin?” But, although we dare not "limit the Holy One of Israel," he has been pleased to exercise his mercy within a limited sphere, and during a limited period. If we will not avail ourselves of the "accepted time," and if we will not seek his love through the prescribed channel, all the compassion he exercises will tend to the aggravation

of our guilt. But let us for a moment advert to the views of the divine mercy which many entertain. They have a mere vague impression, that God is merciful—a mere fitting idea, which cannot be grasped at, and which, being a phantom of the imagination, must give way before the dread realities of the judgment day. Others conceive that, as all are guilty, and deserving of punishment, when they calculate the merit of their actions by the demerit of others, and compare their virtues with the vices of those around them, they will be the objects of the divine compassion; for if it go ill with them, what will become of the multitudes who are much worse than they. While another class hope there will be a letting down of the demands of the divine law; a compromise on the part of the Law-giver; a viewing of their actions as partaking more of the character of weakness than of guilt; and the recognition of an approximation between the mercy of God and their own doings, which may be available on their behalf. Such a scheme of mercy would go at once to destroy the essentials of the divine nature. It is a scheme of mercy which cannot be distinctly defined, but which varies according to the conceptions of the individual who expects to be benefited by it. It is a scheme of mercy which may be limited or extended according as the sins are conceived to be heinous or the contrary. It is a scheme of mercy at direct variance with that revealed in the Word of God. And even should the decision of the judgment day be in favour of the individual entertaining such views, what conceivable kind of happiness could he enjoy during an eternity of fellowship with Jehovah—with that Being, whose true character, as equally just and merciful, he could never bear to realize—with that God of whom he dared not think, except when he thought of him "as altogether such an one as himself." Therefore it cannot possibly be that in such a plea there will be a satisfactory answer to the question of our text—"What, then, shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?"

4. We hope there are not a few amongst you who have taken higher ground, and are preparing their answer in reference to the *righteousness of Christ* Jesus our Lord. This is the only plea

which will bear inspection. This is the only answer which will satisfy the Judge. This is the only foundation for the exercise of mercy. In the atonement of the holy child Jesus, is the justice of God satisfied, the holiness of God uncontaminated, the truth of God vindicated, and the mercy of God in active operation. Nor is this a mode of procedure inconsistent with the plan of judicial scrutiny; the law investigates the obedience yielded by Christ as the federal representative of his people; and finding it perfect and spotless, awards to those sheltered under his righteousness all the blessings which would be consequent upon personal virtue. Whatever, therefore, may be our character and condition, we are warranted to avail ourselves of this perfected and accepted atonement, as a basis adequate to sustain us for eternity, and are encouraged practically to have recourse to it in every emergency. Do we feel ourselves to be utterly vile and worthless? here is an atonement made expressly for the very chief of sinners. Do we feel ourselves to be guilty and condemned? here we behold God's ire turned away, and a repeal of that sentence of condemnation which had consigned our souls to eternal perdition. Do we feel ourselves spiritually naked and ashamed? here may we take advantage of the spotless righteousness of Emmanuel, to replace "our own righteousness, which is as filthy rags before God." Do we feel ourselves to be polluted and corrupt? here we are directed to "a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," and to a Spirit commissioned as the sanctifier of our nature. Are we overpowered with the divine glory, and unable to "order our speech" before Jehovah? here we are introduced to an "Advocate, even Jesus Christ the Righteous," who, seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, is engaged in perpetual and prevalent intercession on behalf of his chosen ones. And now, my friends; if you have had grace given you to make choice of Jesus as your everlasting portion and chief good—to delight in him as all your joy and all your rejoicing—to confide in him as your righteousness and your strength—to cleave to him as all your salvation, and all your desire—to wait on him as your Prophet for instruction, as your

Priest for atonement, as your King for defence; and, if you are now prepared to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, then may you look forward with hope and with confidence to the termination of all your trials and conflicts, by engaging in eternal hallelujahs "Unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever," as the immediate result of the solemn transaction recognised in the query before us—"What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?"

In conclusion, let me urge you to cherish the habitual recollection of a coming judgment. Let not the uncertainty of its time shut out from your minds the certainty of its approach. Seeing that "after death cometh the judgment," it becomes us to live as dying, yet immortal, creatures. Death is no respecter of persons. There is no protection from his grasp, in the palace of the sovereign, nor in the cottage of the peasant. The helplessness of infancy, and the frailty of age, are alike indicative of his approach. The vigour of youth, and the energy of manhood, are tributary to the king of terrors. The bloom of health, and the loveliness of beauty, claim no exemption from the common destiny. And, may we not now be contracting the disease which shall hurry us away? May not the accident which shall cut us off be now hovering over us? May not the sentence which seals our doom be now issuing from the throne of the Eternal? If every vain thought, and every idle word, and every wicked act, shall be brought into judgment, should not our minds, and language, and conduct, be pervaded and controlled by the sentiment of the Patriarch. Does a temptation assail us, which it is difficult to resist? yet if we comply with it, what shall we answer? Is there a duty to be performed, of an arduous nature, yet if we neglect it, what shall we answer? Is there a trial to be endured, which is severe and protracted, yet if we repine under it, "What then shall we do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall we answer him?" May God bless his word; and to his name in Christ be the praise. Amen.

LECTURE

ON JONAH 1. 15—II. 7, DELIVERED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHAPEL BRISTO STREET, EDINBURGH,

By the Rev. JAMES PEDDIE, D.D.

AFTER the sailors had taken up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea, we should have expected to hear no more about him, unless we had been told that he had been found some time after, floating on the waters, or lying on the shore; for mankind, by the construction of their nature, are no more fitted for living under water than they are for living in the midst of fire; respiration, which cannot be performed in that element, being necessary for the circulation of the blood, the maintenance of animal heat, and the preservation of life. But Jonah, though cast into the raging sea, was not drowned. He continued to live in that new element; and his history afterwards is at once very remarkable and highly instructive. The voyage, which had so unhappy an issue, had been undertaken in opposition to the will, and prosecuted without the blessing, of God. It proceeded from the most criminal motive—from a solemn determination not to execute the message which God had committed to him, and a resolution rather to forego the enjoyment of the instituted ordinances of religion than to risk his character and life in the service of God. But God had, in great mercy, resolved not to cast Jonah off utterly. The winds and the waves, therefore, were commissioned to vindicate the injured honour of their great Ruler, by the preternatural violence with which they blew and beat upon the vessel which contained the offender. Jonah was thus marked out to his companions as the criminal whom the vengeance of God was pursuing, and was compelled to confess his guilt, to justify the divine procedure, and to pronounce his own doom. It was not, then, any of the ordinary accidents that often happen at sea that plunged Jonah in the deep. He did not fall overboard; nor was it with any murderous intention on the part of the heathen sailors that he was cast out of the ship. They did this with the greatest reluctance. It proceeded from the special providence of God, manifesting his displeasure

against the assuming, though now humbled and repentant, Prophet. And, on the other hand, it was to show, by the effects that immediately followed, the power, and, at the same time, the abundant grace of Israel's God.

The effects which immediately followed the casting of Jonah out of the ship, are of three kinds. In attending to them, we must first look to the sea, then to the sailors, and then to the Prophet.

Let us look to the sea. The change that took place in it was great and instantaneous. Oil cast into it would not have the same effect in smoothing its surface, as had the body of the Prophet, for it immediately ceased from its raging. What though an individual were thrown into the sea in a storm? what though one of the largest ships, with all on board, were swallowed up by the mighty waters? This would produce no sensible effect—the sea would rage as it had done before it had devoured them. The suddenness of the change, therefore, that took place was evidently preternatural. And how are we to account for it? There is only one voice that can say to the raging sea, "Be still;" and, on this occasion, the waters heard this voice. But before, behold the sea, under the commission of Jehovah, raged like a ravenous beast—its appetite could not be satisfied nor its fury appeased till it had obtained the body of the sinning Prophet. But as soon as he was cast into it, it had executed its commission. The anger of God was appeased, and the sea became like the placid surface of a lake. What a striking proof of the power and absolute dominion of God! What a demonstration that all nature hears his voice! And what a fearful display of the power of his anger!

Let us next turn to the sailors. The calm which immediately succeeded after Jonah was cast into the sea, was such as to impress their minds with wonder and with fear. They had never before had occasion to witness so sudden a change

from a storm to a calm; and since Jonah himself had told them that this would happen precisely as it did happen, they were compelled to admit that Jonah was a true prophet, and that Jonah's God was the God of the sea and of the dry land, and alone entitled to religious homage. One part of the dispensation was therefore gained. The heathen sailors were converted from polytheism to the adoration, the belief, and the worship of the only, the living, and the true God. And, although we hear nothing more of these men afterwards, we have reason and authority to believe, that their conversion was lasting, for it is said that "the men feared the Lord exceedingly." Formerly, their fear was the fear of personal danger—the terror of death impending over them. Now it was a fear of reverence—a religious fear; for it is immediately added, that it had this effect upon them—They sacrificed unto Jehovah sacrifices of thanksgiving, and made vows of future obedience.

Let us now turn our attention to the Prophet. The providence of God had sufficiently corrected his sinning servant. Having humbled him, God intended to take into his service Jonah, and to send him, in particular, upon that mission which he had intrusted him with when he ran away. He provided him therefore a temporary, but safe, lodging—a lodging such as had never been occupied by a living man before—a dark, and dreary, and filthy lodging, in the belly of an enormous fish; for it is said immediately after, "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." The voracity of fishes is well known—a voracity which leads them promiscuously to seize on every thing that comes in their way. And it is equally well known that some species of them are accustomed, impelled by appetite, to follow in the track of ships, especially in stormy weather, in the hope of catching any article that may drop overboard. When it is said, therefore, that the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, we are not to understand it, as some have, as meaning that he created a great fish for this express purpose, but that it is meant simply to intimate that, by a special direction of his providence, a fish of this kind was directed to be at hand, and ready to receive the Prophet

the moment that he plunged into the deep. We see, then, here a proof of the sovereign dominion of God over the creatures of his power. The monsters of the deep themselves, are ready to obey his order.

What kind of fish this was that swallowed up Jonah is not certainly known, and has been variously conjectured. It is merely stated in the passage before us, to be a great fish; but when the fish is referred to in the New Testament, it is called a whale. It is well known, however, that the original word, according to the usage of Greek writers, is not limited, like our English word *whale*, to mean one particular species, but is employed promiscuously for every kind of great fish. The more probable conjecture is, that the fish that swallowed him up was not of the whale, but of the shark kind. It is of less consequence, however, to ascertain the particular kind of fish. It is merely a matter of curiosity. It is of more consequence to advert to a difficulty that has presented itself to some minds—how Jonah could have existed for such a period in the belly of the fish without being suffocated or destroyed by the creature's stomach. It ought to be enough to us, that the Scriptures directly assert the fact; unless we are to deny their inspiration. Besides, it is to be recollected that the preservation of Jonah in such a situation was miraculous, a circumstance which those seem to have forgotten who make the objection; unless they imagine it to be so very great as to be beyond the power of God. But is any thing too hard for the Lord—for him that created the universe out of nothing, and still upholds it by the word of his power? Is there any thing more incredible, or beyond the reach of divine power to effect, in the preservation of Jonah's life in the belly of the fish, than in the other miracles which are recorded in Scripture—than, for example, the preservation of the life of Daniel in the den of lions, uninjured by these ravenous, hungry, and perhaps irritated animals. But why speak thus upon this subject, since even we ourselves lived for months before we were born without breathing, although without breathing we cannot, after we have seen the light of day, live many moments? After all our inquiry into such a subject as this, what can we

say but that such is the appointment of God himself. And shall we then dare to set limits to the Holy One of Israel, or refuse to give entire credit to what his Spirit has recorded, merely because it does not accord with the experience that we have of what God ordinarily does.

The length of time during which Jonah was shut up in his dark and dreary prison is particularly mentioned. It is said to have been for the space of three days and three nights. We are not obliged, from this expression, to conclude that Jonah resided within the whale for the entire period of three natural days, conceiving each to consist of twenty-four hours, as it sufficiently answers the Hebrew idiom if the period of his continuance included within it a part of three successive days. It is of no great moment, however, whether Jonah continued a few hours longer or shorter in the whale's belly. It is of more consequence to inquire how he was employed during the time.

And how was he employed? He was employed in religious exercises—in a manner becoming a sinful creature, for we are told in the beginning of the 2d chapter, that, "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly." I do not propose, at present, to give any commentary upon Jonah's prayer, but there are several circumstances concerning it, of a general nature, that I cannot forbear mentioning. And the first is, that it appears that during the period of his confinement in this strange abode, he not only existed, but was able to exercise his mental faculties. He was not, as it often happens to men in some kinds of disease, in a state of torpor or insensibility, but was quite alive to the horrors of his situation, and able to direct the train of his thoughts in a manner suited to the peculiar circumstances in which the providence of God had placed him. Secondly. We are not to consider what is recorded as far as the 8th verse of this chapter as precisely the very words of prayer which Jonah offered from the fish's belly. It appears rather, from a careful perusal of it, that it is merely his recollection of his feelings and exercise during this period recorded by him after he came ashore, intermingled with a resolution of gratitude, and purpose to perform his vows, for the great deliverance that had been wrought for him.

It appears again, thirdly, that Jonah was well acquainted with his Bible, and had a lively recollection of many things contained in it. For although his prayer, as here recorded, consists only of eight verses, we find in the 3d verse a quotation from the 7th verse of the 42d Psalm, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me," the last phrase of the 3d verse being in words of very little variation. And in the 5th verse we find a very evident reference to the expressions of David in the beginning of the 99th Psalm, Jonah applying to himself what David said in a figurative and metaphorical sense, as literally accomplished in his case. This suggests to us what a benefit it is under difficulties to have the mind stored with knowledge of the Bible. Observe of what use it was to Jonah, when he had no access to his Bible, and when he was separated from all pious society, to assist him in the form of his devotions. And let us know of what use it may be to us. A recollection of the words of Scripture may be a source of much comfort to us when we are stretched on a sick-bed, when we are lying in a prison, or when we are removed to a distance from all christian society. Let the words of Christ, then, dwell in us richly in all wisdom.

It appears, fourthly, from this prayer, that Jonah had derived much benefit from his affliction, terrible as it was. He was much better employed, you see, in the fish's belly, than he was on board the ship during his voyage from Joppa to Tarshish. Then he was madly running away from God—fleeing from the presence of Jehovah; but now we find him inquiring after God, and applying to him for pardoning mercy. Then he was in a state of great insensibility, but now we find that affliction had roused him to a sense of his danger and to a sense of his duty, and led him to apply to Him who alone was able to help.

We may observe, fifthly, that it is evident from this prayer, that Jonah, with all his faults, was really a pious man. After reading what is recorded in the 1st chapter, we might have doubted very much whether he had or had not in him the grace of God; but after reading the 2d chapter, we are scarcely able to doubt any more. He gives us the most explicit evidence of his piety, and shows that he fears God as his own God—as the God

that manifested himself by the symbols of his presence to his ancient church, in that holy temple of Jerusalem between the cherubim. He acknowledges the righteous hand of God in his dispensation towards himself. He supports his mind by meditation on the revealed character of God, and his works of grace recorded in the Scriptures, and from this he derives hope, and a sure confidence of deliverance.

And, finally, we see by the last words of his prayer, that he looked to God, and to God alone, for deliverance. "Salvation is of the Lord," and that indeed he considers his deliverance as the answer of his prayer.

What Jonah prayed for—what he believed God was able to work for him, he ere long experienced: for we are told in the last verse of the 2d chapter, that "the Lord spake unto the fish and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land," a token that God is the God that worketh salvation unto the ends of the earth, for "He," says the Psalmist, "that is our God, is the God of salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death," Ps. lxxviii. 20. The expression, "The Lord spake unto the fish and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land," is a form of expression that is merely intended to intimate to us, that God, whose voice all creatures hear and obey, ordered the fish to surrender Jonah, and that accordingly it disgorged him out, not in the depths of the sea, nor at a great distance from the shore, where, without another miracle, he must have perished after all, but that under the special guidance of divine providence, it was on a part of the coast so close to the land, that a man circumstanced as Jonah was, was able easily to reach it. Here, then, for the time, we leave Jonah safe on dry land, and preparing for executing that commission which formerly he declined, and we shall conclude the discourse with some practical reflections.

And, first of all, on a survey of the part of Jonah's history which we have considered, we see an illustration—a striking illustration of what is seen by sea-faring people in general. They see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep; and what a sublime view has the sacred history given us of the universal dominion of God, and of the absolute subjection of all creatures to his will. Besides, what striking evidence have we of God's dis-

pleasure of sin—of the awfulness of that wrath which pursues the sinner, and of the absolute impossibility of the sinner finding for himself any way to escape the pursuit of divine vengeance. And if there is no way of escaping the wrath which guilty creatures have deserved, how highly does it concern them to turn to Him from whom they have so deeply revolted, and to submit themselves entirely to him? It is easy with God to punish the sinner. He has a thousand ways in which he can do it. And when God pursues the sinner, where is his safety—how can he escape? Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but wo to him that striveth with his Maker. Let us then sanctify the Lord God in our hearts—let us humble ourselves before him—let us take care that we do not provoke him now by resisting his will, and refusing to take warning from the dispensations of his providence.

Let us again, in the second place, learn from this how very criminal they are that restrain prayer. It is said of the godly, that they are a generation seeking God's face. Prayer is recommended and enjoined times innumerable in the holy Scriptures. And, indeed, we are urged to prayer both by the voice of nature and by the example even of the heathen: we know that the heathen sailors prayed, each of them to his god; and to whom should we apply but unto Him who is able to hear and to help in the time of our greatest need. Let us remember, instructed by the history of Jonah, that there is no place and no time unsuitable for prayer—for mental prayer, for God is every-where present to hear, and at all times able to answer.

Let us learn, in the third place, from the success that attended Jonah's supplications, to take encouragement, whatever be the situation in which we are placed, to abound in prayer. If ever a man had reason to apprehend that God would have no regard to his prayers, we should have thought that Jonah was the man, whose sin was so aggravated, and whose obstinacy was so great. He himself appears to have been for some time deeply impressed with this, for you will find him speaking in his prayer, saying, "I am cast out of thy sight," and afterwards speaking of his soul fainting within him. But, notwithstanding of this discouragement, he cried

unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him, and sent him deliverance. And does not this tell you that there is no sinner out of hell, however deep his consciousness of guilt—no sinner, however heavy the hand of God is lying upon him, who ought to abstain from prayer as if it were to no purpose. Let us then, if we have neglected

prayer, neglect it no longer—let us, if we have ever felt the thought that it is to no purpose for us who are such great sinners, no longer encourage such a thought, but betake ourselves to the throne of grace, and touch his sceptre by faith, that so we may live. May God bless his word. Amen.

CONCLUSION OF THE REV. MR. FINLAY'S SERMON.

(From last Number.)

Fourthly. Christian obedience is uniform and constant. From the want of those qualities, the religion of many loses all its excellence and effect. Their christian character never attains to any eminence, because they do not daily and diligently apply themselves to the practice of godliness. So incessant an application to the things which belong to their peace, they would regard as being religious overmuch, a useless waste of time, and a serious interference with their secular concerns. Their religious feelings ebb and flow like the tides, and their practical Christianity is subject to periodical changes like the seasons. They think they put sufficient honour on religion, if, on certain occasions and in particular circumstances, they observe its forms and comply with its institutions. Their chief concern is about the comfort of the body, which, ere long, must be consigned to its original dust—not about the salvation of the soul, that shall never die. Let them have food and raiment, and other temporal blessings, richly to enjoy; only let them possess, with the beasts that perish, what will satisfy the brute part of their nature, and about spiritual and eternal blessings they will give themselves little trouble, and feel as little anxiety. An occasional and formal compliance with certain religious observances will quiet their conscience, and save them from the reproach of those who are more charitable than just in the opinion they form of the christian character; and for more of religion than this, they have no ambition or desire.

If we look around us, we will easily find men to whom these remarks are strictly applicable. Here is one in whose conduct scarcely a vestige of religion can be traced, or any semblance of practical piety discovered, save on the weekly return of the Sabbath. On that day,

sacred to the resurrection, and set apart to the service of Him from whom he derives his christian name and religious privileges, he ceases from the usual occupations of the week; accompanies the multitude to the house of God, and joins in the different parts of the service with becoming decency and attention. In the evening, perhaps he assembles his children and servants; puts to them a few questions on religious subjects; reads, in their hearing, a small portion of the Word of God; and offers up a formal prayer to the Lord of all. Then the season of his piety ceases; and, until the return of another Sabbath, he is free from every religious restraint, and lives in every respect like a man of the world. It is only on Sabbath that any thing christian appears in his behaviour. On other days, he breathes none of the devotion, and practises almost as little of the morality of the gospel.

Here is another who was never known to utter a pious sentiment, or perform a religious duty, save in the time of adversity and affliction; when his temporal affairs wore a gloomy aspect, or disease impaired his health and filled his mind with frightful ideas of death. Apprehensions of his mortality, the fear of dying and of judgment, compelled him to be serious, and turn his thoughts to the awfully important concerns of eternity. It was then, for the first time, he confessed and bewailed his iniquities, and resolved to forsake them, and, should he be restored to health, to lead a more holy and virtuous life. It was then he shed the first tear of contrition, formed the first serious wish about his salvation, and offered up the first earnest prayer for the divine mercy. But, oh, strange! his sentiments changed with his circumstances. Returning health dried up his tears of penitence, suppressed his pious feelings, counteracted his virtuous resolutions, and

interrupted his visits to a throne of grace. His religion ceased with the cause which produced it, or he left it behind in his sick chamber, not to be resumed until disease or adversity should again assail him, and returned to the world not less the child of the devil than before; like the dog to his vomit, or the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. His goodness proved as the morning cloud, or the early dew, that passeth away.

Very different from this is the character of the true Christian. His practical godliness does not consist of fits and starts, or depend on seasons and circumstances. His time is not divided between the work of God and the service of the devil. Pious to-day, he will not be profligate to-morrow. At all times, and on all occasions, he studies conformity to the divine will, and keeping God's commandments is his daily employment and constant delight. It matters not where he is, or what be his condition, whether he be at home or abroad; in the house of God, or prosecuting his lawful calling; whether he be in prosperity or adversity; in health or in sickness; he acts a part becoming his christian profession. Without unseasonably, or ostentatiously obtruding his religion upon others, when mixing with society, he gives no countenance to vice, and is not ashamed to defend the cause of virtue, and he has learned how to recommend holiness and truth, without casting his pearls before swine. In his general deportment, you recognise the features of one who has been born again, and beautified with the image of a pure and holy God. Wherever you meet with him, you discover in him a staunch enemy of unrighteousness, and no less steady and consistent friend of virtue and holiness. Setting the Lord always before him, he fears lest he sin against him, and has respect to his statutes continually. He never wearies in well-doing, being assured that, in due season, he shall reap if he faint not. Being a Christian from principle, and having respect to the recompence of reward, he is "steadfast, and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as he knows that his labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Lastly, Progressive improvement is another distinguishing attribute of christi-

an obedience. As in the corporeal and intellectual, so in the religious and moral man, the progress to maturity is slow and gradual. At no one intermediate stage of his christian course, from its commencement to its close, does the believer stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Corrupt principles are not eradicated, nor sinful habits renounced instantaneously. Nor do the seeds of virtue and grace as quickly shoot up, ripen into fruit, and yield an abundant harvest of righteousness. Sanctification is a work of time and growing experience. It requires persevering application, and constant diligence; and from its commencement on earth to its completion in heaven, is gradually, and by perceptible steps, going on to perfection.

Accordingly, the man who is now complete, was once but a babe in Christ. Comparatively speaking, his religious knowledge was limited, his faith weak, his affections worldly, his christian zeal cold and inactive, and his moral and spiritual attainments few and defective. But, by degrees, he acquired moral vigour, and spiritual energy. He grew in grace, and, by the sincere milk of the Word, waxed strong in the Lord. His knowledge of divine truth became more extensive and varied, his faith was increased, his affections were sublimed, his zeal for God grew more ardent and active, and his christian attainments more numerous and splendid. He advanced from grace to grace, to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Believe me, he who is satisfied with his religious acquirements, and is ambitious neither to improve his virtues nor add to their number, vainly supposing that he has reached to christian perfection, thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think, and has yet to learn the nature of gospel obedience, and enter on a religious course, which is throughout a path in which none can securely walk but the humble, and such as forget the things which are behind, and reach forth to those that are before; pressing toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The best Christian is conscious of many corruptions which require to be subdued, and many virtues which need to be improved; and, with enlargement of heart, he runs without being weary, and walks without being faint, in the righteous ways of the Lord.

Formidable obstacles may obstruct his progress, and powerful enemies may assail and annoy him; but, through Christ strengthening him, he will at length surmount every obstacle, and overcome every enemy. By their united efforts, Satan, the world, and the flesh, may at times retard his advancement towards moral perfection. But, in spite of their every exertion finally to arrest his progress in grace, he will, under a divine impulse and guidance, be triumphantly carried onward, until he has reached the end of his faith—the salvation of his soul. Like a river, small at its rise, but gradually swelled in its course by tributary streams, until it majestically rolls its mighty flood into the all-devouring deep, the characteristic attainments of the Christian, when he enters on a religious life, are, as we have seen, but very limited. As he advances heavenwards, however, they ever and anon increase, until he finishes his course, and loses his terrestrial graces in the boundless perfection of celestial glory. Or, as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day, his piety and virtue gradually rise into view, assuming greater prominence and more attractive charms, until they reach their meridian lustre in heaven, where, illumined by the brightest rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and moving through an ever serene and cloudless sky, and, having no sin to obscure his splendour, he shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, like the stars, for ever and ever, even like the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

Thus have I endeavoured to illustrate the nature and properties of christian

obedience, or a conversation to the gospel; and when we reflect on its various and important duties, and on our own weakness and imperfection, we may well ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Verily, of ourselves we can do nothing. We feel ourselves insufficient for any good word, or work; and, if left to ourselves, we could not so much as think a good thought. But our sufficiency is in God, and, through Christ strengthening us, we will be able to do all things. It is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps. He is ever liable to err, if he does not faint or grow weary; and must, save for divine succour, stumble and fall, and so come short of eternal life. But, blessed be God, he who requires us to walk in the way of his commandments, is able, and also willing, to hold up our goings, so that our footsteps may not slide. He can enable us to go from strength to strength, until we finish our course, and come and appear before him in the Zion above, where we shall be honoured to serve, and blessed to enjoy him throughout the endless ages of eternity. Let us, then, conscious of our own moral imbecility, and of God's infinite righteousness, pray frequently, and pray fervently, that God would be pleased to make his grace sufficient for us, and perfect his strength in our weakness; and that "having begun in us a good work, he would perform it unto the day of Christ." And, now, unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 23^d JUNE, 1832.

No. 13.

Celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in
St. Mary's Church, Edinburgh.

CELEBRATION

OF

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER,*

IN ST. MARY'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON SABBATH, 6TH MAY, 1832.

The Rev. HENRY GREY, A.M., MINISTER.

PRAYER BEFORE SERMON.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God! we draw near to thy throne with deepest reverence, adoring thy glorious perfections, confessing our sins, and supplicating thy gracious regard and unmerited mercy. Grant us the aids of thy grace, and the influence of thy Holy Spirit, that we may offer thee an acceptable sacrifice, and may find access, through our great Mediator, by one Spirit to the Father. O thou that hearest prayer, unto whom all flesh shall come, we, thy feeble and dependent creatures, are encouraged by thine invitations, and by all our experience of thy goodness, to renew and persevere in our application to thy abounding grace. We enter thy gates with thanksgiving and thy courts with praise; desiring one thing of the Lord, and seeking after it—that we may dwell in thy house, and may behold thy glory and thy beauty in thy sanctuary. While we enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, and prostrate ourselves before the mercy-seat, be pleased, of thine infinite love, to extend mercy to us; remember us with the favour thou bearest

to thine own; O visit us with thy salvation.

We feel, O our God, that our obligations to thee are infinite, and that thy mercies toward us can never be requited with adequate praise. We adore thee as the *Creator* of all, the Author of all life, the Father of all wisdom, the Fountain of all blessedness; whose almighty word called all things into existence, whose wisdom governs, and whose goodness sustains all. In thee we live and move and have our being; and we are bound to employ our every faculty in thy service, and for thy glory, since to thee we owe every principle of our nature and every moment of our time. What can creatures say to their Creator? Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created! We adore thee as the great *Lawgiver* and *Judge* of all; prescribing to all thine intelligent creatures their rule of duty, as well as sphere of service, exercising a constant universal superinten-

* For the sake of our English readers, we may explain, that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is, in Scotland, observed always on a Sabbath. The day's worship is commenced with singing a Psalm, in which all the congregation join. A Prayer is then offered, which is followed by a Sermon, called the "Action Sermon," and this by another Prayer,—all by the Pastor of the congregation, and all referring to the solemn services which are to follow. Another Psalm being sung, the same Clergyman delivers an Address to those who are to partake in the Sacrament; and then begins the serving of the Tables, the several steps of which will be explained as they occur.

dence in the whole progress of their probation, and finally passing upon every individual, a righteous, equitable, and irreparable sentence. Thy law, in all its precepts and in all its sanctions, is holy, just, and good; being dictated by infinite wisdom and righteousness, for the government of thy rational offspring, and not more necessary for the honour of thy divine administration than essential to the happiness of all thy moral creation. Thou art the omniscient witness of our conduct, and the supreme arbiter of our fate. Thou markest our obedience or disobedience, in thought, word, and deed; for all things are naked and open before thee: and it belongs to thee to pardon or to condemn, to save or to destroy; to lift up to heaven, or to cast down to hell. Thou art judge alone. But we rejoice that we are permitted to know and adore thee in yet another character, even as the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David. And blessed be he who came in the name of the Lord to save us. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy Father, thy mercies remind us of our sins, and all the gifts of thy goodness convict us of the guilt of our ingratitude. It was because we had destroyed ourselves that it was necessary for thee to interpose to save us. Because, as creatures, we had violated our obligations to our Creator, it was necessary for thee to assume the new and marvellous character of Redeemer. Because, as subjects of thy moral government, we had broken thy holy law, it became necessary, for accomplishing thy purposes of righteousness and love, at once to secure the authority of the law, and to provide for transgressors the blessings announced in the gospel. In remembrance of these things, we would pour out our souls in humble confession. Alas! we have departed from the very end of our being, have broken the fundamental law of our existence, by opposing thy will, by resisting thine authority, by transferring our allegiance from the Creator to the creature. We have not sought to acquaint ourselves with God, but have remained at a distance from thee, in willing ignorance, alienated in our minds and by wicked works. Though

surrounded on all hands with the evidences of thy presence and power, we have not yielded thee the tribute of genuine filial reverence and love. Though sustained every moment by thy providence, and nourished by thy bounty, we have forgotten and disregarded the giver of all good. How have we obscured and effaced that divine image in which man was originally formed! How have we resisted the righteous and equitable government of our God, and yielded ourselves to the tyranny of those sinful principles that have held us in bondage! How have we sought to reverse the order established by Jehovah, in preferring ourselves to our God; our own sinful inclinations to thy pure and holy law! By denying thee the glory due to thee alone, we have necessarily incurred thy righteous condemnation; and by separating ourselves from the source of happiness, have sunk into a fathomless abyss of disappointment, guilt, and misery.

But we bless thy name, and will for ever bless thee, that thou hast not abandoned us to ourselves, nor consigned us to despair. In infinite mercy, thou hast provided the mysterious means of our recovery and restoration. When creation could not furnish a Saviour—when no angel or archangel was equal to the task, thou didst provide one who, being in possession of independent life and blessedness, might, by the voluntary surrender of these, and the offering of a full and perfect obedience, in behalf of thy fallen creatures, secure their restoration to happiness, in perfect consistence with the authority of thy law and the honour of thy majesty. Thou hast set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare thy righteousness, for the remission of sins. All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ: for thou hast made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God by him.

May it be given to each of us now before thee to believe in his name; and let that name be to us a strong tower and rock of defence. Give us to experience that abundant consolation that is provided for those who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them. May we obtain life from his death, peace from his conflicts, healing from his wounds. Thou,

O God, who art rich in mercy, of thy great love, quicken us together with him, and raise us up together. Suffer none of us to remain in death, when the Prince of Life calls us to arise and live. Forbid that, to the violation of thy law, any of us should add the fearful guilt of neglecting so great salvation. Condescend to exert, a second time, thy creative power and might. Thou who didst command the light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of thy glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Thou, the Father of our spirits, fashion them anew in thine image. Turn us, and we shall be turned; draw us, and we will run after thee. May we feel the attractive power of thy heavenly grace; and, while the blood of Jesus speaks peace to our souls, may it be sprinkled on our consciences, to purify them from dead works, and to consecrate us as a peculiar people to the service and glory of our God.

This is the day which thou hast chosen to set apart for thyself: we will rejoice and be glad in it. This day we sanctify, not only in remembrance of the completion of the work of creation, but in commemoration of the finished work of redemption, when our Lord burst the bands of death, and angels bore the joyful testimony, "He is not here, he is risen." May we this day have experimental evidence of his resurrection, in the manifestation of his presence, and in the effusion of his Spirit. May he who, on the day of his resurrection, joined himself to the disciples going to Emmaus, and expounded to them the things concerning himself, and opened their understanding to under-

stand the Scriptures, condescend to show the same kindness to us, and, as to them, so to us may he make himself known in the breaking of bread. May he who, on the evening of that day, visited his disciples where they were assembled, and stood in the midst of them, and breathed on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," bestow on us the same heavenly influence, and fulfil his gracious assurance, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." May abundant evidence be this day given of the fulfilment of this promise, in all the gates of Zion, in all the assemblies of the saints. Wherever two or three are gathered together in thy name, be thou in the midst of them. Clothe thy priests with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in thee. May the converts of righteousness be in number like the drops of dew from the womb of the morning. And may all who know and love the Lord be edified and comforted together. While the gospel treasure is in earthen vessels, may the excellence and power appear to be of God; and may what is sown in weakness be raised in power. These our prayers we present before thee, in the name, and through the mediation, of thy Son, our Saviour; in whose comprehensive words we sum up the desires of our heart. "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

THE MORNING, OR ACTION SERMON.

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."—REV. i. 5, 6.

THERE is an essential difference in the views and feelings of unconverted men on the one hand, and of true believers on the other, in their estimate of the character of Jesus Christ. The former class are strangers to the real glory of the Son of God, and have no suitable sense of his claims on the love and submission of their

hearts. They see no beauty in him to engage their affection—no grace and truth to conciliate their confidence. They are disposed to question his right to rule over them—to undervalue the blessings he proposes to his followers, and even, in professing to regard him as their Saviour, to withhold all practical acknowledgment of

their obligation to obey him. They consider the doctrines relating to him as unintelligible or unimportant, and the precepts that require us to believe in him and to follow him, as an arbitrary and uncalled for extension of the rule of moral duty. They either openly revolt against his authority, or cherish a secret wish to be exempted from its demands. How different the sentiments of those who are taught by that Spirit whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and show them to the soul? These behold in the Son of God a glory they cannot sufficiently admire—a moral beauty they can never enough esteem. They flee to him as their refuge from the wrath to come, and embrace him as their all-satisfying portion. They are drawn by the sweet attractions of his grace, and won by infinite benefits. They breathe out their souls in ascriptions of glory to their divine benefactor, and, conscious of their inability to render him due honour, they call on the whole creation to unite in lowly homage and grateful adoration.

As the views and feelings of the unconverted differ from those of the converts of righteousness, with respect to the character of the master, so they no less widely differ with respect to the character of his servants. The Christian character has little in it to attract the admiration of the world. It is often concealed under the shade of poverty, and often associated with qualities, in the world's estimate, weak and ignoble. It is often distorted by the eye of prejudice, or misrepresented by the tongue of calumny; and even in more favourable circumstances, the features that constitute its peculiar excellence are such as the unenlightened mind cannot understand, or does not value. The humility of the believer, his self-denial, his forgiveness of injuries, his devoted attachment to the cross of Christ, his faith, his zeal, are principles unintelligible to the world, and even contemptible in its eyes. At one time it pities him as a weak enthusiast, at another it reproaches him as a designing hypocrite. But the spiritual eye discerns in his character an excellence and dignity that command admiration and esteem. In the true believer, we behold man restored to his right destination and proper office in the moral creation. We behold him restored to the love and service of his God, adorned anew with the lineaments of the divine image, exalted to a dignity more than

human, to hopes and prospects that go far beyond this limited sphere of existence—we recognise the true born child of God, the younger brother of Christ, the heir of immortal glory.

The words before us express the views of the Apostle on both the subjects to which we have adverted. He was well acquainted with the character of Christ, not from personal observation only, but from divine teaching; and he was well acquainted with the christian character. After announcing his intention of declaring the revelations communicated to him by his great Master, he bestows his benediction on the churches of Asia: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come: and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." Having in this way alluded to the Lord Jesus, his soul fired with the glorious subject, breaks out into a rapturous tribute of praise; and, associating the grace and love of Christ with the purity and dignity communicated to believers, he expresses himself in the words before us: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen." May the same Spirit that animated him breathe upon us, and enable us, not only to interpret the meaning, but to imbibe the vivifying influence of his words, while we direct our thoughts to the view here given us of the grace and benefits of the Saviour.

The Apostle, full of gratitude and love, and zealous to awaken the same principles in all the believers, adverts to some circumstances peculiarly fitted to affect the mind. He briefly refers, both to the principle that actuated our Lord in the work of redemption, and to the blessings flowing from it.

In the first place, he "*loved us.*" This is the primary and most affecting consideration. These glorious attributes of the Son of God, which centre more immediately in himself, his wisdom, his purity, his power, his perfect union with the Father, entitle him, it is true, to universal homage and everlasting dominion; but the argument before us is one that more

closely touches the heart. "He loved us"—his love commends his character, and carries with it the strongest claims on our gratitude.

It is a striking view of the Divine character, which the Apostle gives in another place: "God is love." This is his highest perfection, his supreme delight, his chosen and distinguishing characteristic. And this principle, which dwells in all its purity and perfection in the Father, dwells no less pure and perfect in the Son. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" "Christ so loved us, that he gave himself for us." This is the source of all our salvation, the hidden spring, the unexplored fountain, lost in the distant regions of eternity, whence flow all those streams of mercy that make glad the city of our God.

It were interesting to notice the many evidences of love to man that present themselves in the history of our Lord's personal ministry. Was not this the pervading, animating principle, of all his discourses, in which grace and truth ever dwelt upon his lips? Was it not love that prompted him to preach good tidings to the meek, to comfort the mourner, to invite the weary and heavy laden to come to him for rest? Was not this the principle that dictated the reproofs he addressed to sinners, his admonitions, his exhortations, his warnings, yea, his severest denunciations of wrath? Did they not all proceed from a heart penetrated with human guilt and wretchedness, and anxious by any means to save the souls of men? Was not his love apparent in the mighty works he performed, which were all expressions of goodness, no less than exertions of omnipotence? Do we not discover the same principle very tenderly expressed in his intercourse with his disciples, with whom he ever conversed as a father with his children? To his love in this view, John could bear especial testimony, for he had been blessed with a peculiar share of it, having lain in his bosom, and been intrusted with his confidence. How wonderfully did the love of Christ display itself under the pressure of his severest trials! He seemed to forget himself in his sympathy with his sorrowing disciples, and in the immediate prospect of his agony, he consecrated much time to the of instructing them, and furnishing

them with a rich store of heavenly consolation. And, my brethren, how admirable the affection, which, triumphing over the extremest bodily pain, even while he hung upon the cross, soothed the afflictions of his mother Mary, and of the disciple whom he loved, by commending them to each others' cares, and transferring his own filial office and duty to his friend! How great, likewise, the goodness that opened his ear to the prayer of the dying penitent!—how amazing the compassion that pleaded for his murderers, "Father, forgive them!" Surely in the human nature of Jesus we discover a beauty that has no parallel—a love that endured with invincible patience the constant aggressions of angry disputants and malicious cavillers—that bore with the weakness and dullness of his own disciples, that triumphed over the insulting cruelty of his inveterate and malignant foes.

But interesting as is the love of Jesus, contemplated in his human nature, we must look higher if we would understand the nature and extent of the principle referred to in our text. The Apostle has just been imploring heavenly blessings from Christ as a divine person, and he is about to unfold discoveries of majesty that can belong to no created being. It is to his love as God and Mediator that he refers—the love that induced him to undertake and to finish the work of human redemption. This is a boundless subject, of which the heights and depths are immeasurable. Who can tell how much is comprehended in the words—*He loved us!*

This, my brethren, is an *everlasting love*. If we would trace it to its origin, we must ascend beyond the era of creation, and penetrate eternity that preceded it. God, we are assured, "chose his people in Christ before the foundation of the world," and in this exertion of love, we cannot doubt that the Son of God, on whom the execution of the plan was laid, was united with the Father. In a passage which refers to the Redeemer, (Prov. viii. 23—31.) we find him saying, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth; when he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him—rejoicing in

the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." Such, you see, was his love for the human race, that he rejoiced from all eternity in the prospect of dwelling with them and blessing them. Indeed, if he had not loved us from eternity, he could not have loved us at all; for the character we have continually exhibited in time, must have awakened displeasure and disgust instead of love. Look back to the period when God alone existed in infinite blessedness and glory, before he had formed the earth and the world, or had given existence even to the angels, in that grand and awful solitude, when the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, were infinitely blessed in their own perfections and in their mutual love, his thoughts toward us were thoughts of kindness, his councils councils of peace.

Again, it is a *sovereign, spontaneous* love, springing from innate generosity. There was no merit in us to call it into action—it was not won by any moral excellence of ours, by any grateful acknowledgment, or dutiful service. No; it prevailed over the mountains of our provocations, and all the opposition of our hearts. My brethren, it was an act of condescension in God to become the Creator of angels and of men. It was an evidence of pure benevolence to continue his kindness to his creatures while they remained faithful and upright. But these are not the triumphs of his grace. He saw the misery of fallen and rebellious creatures—their vain expectations of happiness independent of himself, their fruitless attempts, their bitter disappointments, the secret remorse of a guilty conscience, the fearful anticipation of judgment to come, the gulf of wretchedness into which their increasing iniquities were carrying them, the awful everlasting condemnation and despair that are the consequences of unpardoned guilt. He saw and pitied—he loved the souls he had made—souls still accessible to his grace, and capable of being restored to his favour and image.

It is a *boundless* love. How extensive is this love in respect of the number of its objects, embracing all that the Father hath given him of every age and nation, yea, regarding with pity the whole human race, and ready to receive every returning sinner! And how tender in its feelings: unwilling to inflict a single wound, count-

ing every sigh of the broken heart, and sympathizing with every sorrow! How generous in its gifts! The good shepherd gave his life for the sheep, and, in securing their salvation, he sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied.

Once more; it is a *faithful* love. "Jesus having loved his own that were in the world, loved them to the end." And his love, now that he is in heaven, is not less constant. It is exempt from the caprice that attaches to human affection; its gifts and its calling are without repentance. It leaves not its objects till it has brought them to the full enjoyment of their God. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee."

It is this love that commends all the gifts of the Saviour. These gifts could not, indeed, have proceeded from any other source; but if they had, they would have conveyed no obligation. The love from which they spring gives them all their claims. This is the joyful possession of the believer,—this makes him rich indeed,—this secures for him whatever else is good, and is itself his choicest inheritance. Christ is better than all his gifts:—

"Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor;
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away."

Let this love affect our hearts. Meditate upon it. Cherish a sense of the obligations it imposes. Strive to grow in the knowledge of it. Bow your knees to the Father, that he may grant unto you to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.

In the second place, He "hath washed us from our sins in his own blood." The Apostle, having referred to the principle which actuated the Redeemer, proceeds to declare its effects; which, while they demonstrate the strength of the principle, bring further into view the character of its objects. To love the pure and the happy had been a cheap exertion of benevolence; but to fix his love upon the children of men was to pledge himself to offices of love which none but God could perform. It was to unite himself—to identify himself with their wretchedness, and virtually to engage to deliver them from it, and to raise them to a participa-

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

tion in his own felicity. For, if he loved them, how could he abandon them to misery, or suffer them to remain at a distance from himself?

But how great were the obstacles to be removed before man could be restored to his Maker's favour! God is just and holy, man guilty and depraved. We have violated that law which prescribes the duty of all moral agents, and supports the authority of the Most High. If that law be violated with impunity, the throne of the Eternal totters, the order of the universe is turned into confusion, and wicked men and wicked spirits pursue their plans without fear or remorse. This law condemns us, and reveals the wrath of God against our unrighteousness. But its threatenings do not vanquish the love of sin. Fallen man is actuated by principles which have a natural tendency to perpetuate and multiply his crimes and his miseries.

I do not now inquire into the origin of moral evil—a subject involving questions too difficult for us to solve; but that human nature is corrupt and depraved is a fact that must be acknowledged by all who admit the authority of Scripture or attend to the experience of life. So extensive and powerful are the principles of sin within us, that not an instance can be adduced, since the creation of the world, of a human being in whom they have not discovered themselves with the first exertions of his rational powers. The seeds of evil are sown deep in the human soil, and bring forth many a bitter fruit; the fountain is polluted, and the streams are necessarily vitiated; the heart is deceitful, and therefore the way is perverse. In spite of the restraints imposed by natural conscience, the sinful propensities of the heart continually display themselves in open transgressions; and even when these are prevented, there is a secret alienation from God, a desire to be independent of him, a love of forbidden indulgencies, which demonstrate the entire perversion of our nature, and afford a melancholy prognostic of increasing ungodliness.

But general views do not affect the mind. The Apostle speaks here in the language of self-application. He "has washed us from our sins." He had not forgotten his past sins, nor was he unconscious of his remaining infirmities. He

felt himself implicated in a moral defilement which no human power could do away. Such must be our feelings. We must be awakened to a sense of personal transgressions. How many and how aggravated these have been, it must be left to the omniscience of God and the conscience of every individual to determine. Few men have courage enough calmly to investigate, or impartially to contemplate them. O let us reflect on them with penitence—the sins of our youth, and the sins of our riper years; the sins that have attended us in all the relations of life, that have wounded the feelings of those who watched for our good, and grieved the hearts that best loved us; the sins that have wronged our fellow-creatures or violated the dictates of our own consciences; above all, the offences committed against Him whose claims are infinite and unalienable—our forgetfulness of God—our ingratitude—our contempt of the Saviour's rebukes—our neglect of his great salvation. Every day has added to their number, and every neglected conviction has aggravated their guilt. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." Is sin a light evil? Are its consequences trivial? Is its guilt easily done away? These are not the views of those who are acquainted with God, the Judge of all. He, the Holy One of Israel, holds it in utter abhorrence. Is there nothing sacred in that law which you have broken? nothing awful in the warnings and threatenings denounced against transgressors? nothing fearful in the judgments often, even in this life, inflicted on sinners? nothing terrible in the blackness of darkness to which they are hereafter consigned—in the misery of that place of torment where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched? Is there nothing venerable, and even awful, in the very means through which alone forgiveness is bestowed? Surely this consideration must affect the intelligent heart: He "has washed us from our sins in his own blood." He has indeed discharged the debt and set us free; but by a price of incalculable, infinite value.

The Word of God constantly intimates that sin is not pardoned without punishment or satisfaction. This was signified by the sin-offerings under the law, which at once proclaimed the justice of God

and illustrated the way in which mercy is exercised. To these there is an allusion in the Apostle's expression: "He hath washed us from our sins," not by the blood of inferior victims, but "by his own blood." "He bore our sins on his own body on the tree." "He made his soul an offering for sin." His sufferings formed that real and mysterious expiation which hath put away the guilt of sin. These were endured according to the Father's appointment—voluntarily endured in the nature that had sinned. And how intense and unfathomable were his sufferings, involving an overwhelming demonstration of the wrath of God against sin—of the direful effects of human rebellion! But these were sufficient; the glory of his person gave infinite worth to his sufferings, so that they rendered it consistent with the justice of God, and even conducive to his praise, to extend forgiveness to the guilty. This is that wonderful expression of love which we this day commemorate and adore. "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, an offering, and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God."

But in vain is the fountain opened if we will not wash in it; in vain is the remedy provided if we will not employ it. Strange perversion of the human heart! Our pride rejects the Saviour, and treats his invitations with contempt. His grace must overcome our reluctance, must draw us to himself, must open our hearts to receive him, must sprinkle his blood upon the conscience. But how powerful that blood when thus applied! There are no stains of guilt it cannot wash away. It washes away, never to be again remembered, sins committed before conversion, however great, various and aggravated. It washes away sins committed after conversion, though marked with the reproach of peculiar ingratitude. This is a very affecting view of the grace of Christ, which only the believer can appreciate. The convert of the truth is renewed in the spirit of his mind, and is taught to put off the old man and to put on the new. In the fervour of his first love—in the joy of his espousals, he presents himself a living sacrifice to God. But does he never prove unfaithful? Does he never forget his obligation? Does he never forsake his God, and offend his Saviour, and involve his

conscience in fresh guilt! Alas no often does. Christ has to bear with far more from his followers than any human affection could sustain. And yet that precious blood is still efficacious. Sins of backsliding were not forgotten in that sacrifice; and the believer, every day of his life, has proofs of its virtue. It makes him pure in the eyes of God. It inspires peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost. It comforts him in sorrow. It supports his hope in death. It is the very ground of his admission into heaven. "These have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne."

I request your attention only a little longer, while we briefly notice other effects of the Redeemer's love. In the third place, He "has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." The Apostle here declares, first, the dignity, and then the sanctity of the christian character. At the time when he wrote, the Apostle was a prisoner in Patmos—an exile from the habitations of civilized men; and he was addressing those who belonged to a sect that was everywhere spoken against—the objects of the world's contempt and persecution. Yet how high the honour he claims for himself and for his brethren, derived from the love of their Lord!—"He hath made us *kings* unto God and his Father." Royalty is the highest dignity known among men. Kings are placed above their fellows and regarded as entitled to universal veneration and obedience; but how mean their honours, how poor their distinctions, compared with those of the believer! A king exercises a partial external dominion over the bodies of men, continually dependent on outward circumstances, and the co-operation of others. He does not obtain any *personal* superiority, whether of a physical or of a moral kind, by virtue of his royal office. He is still a weak, perhaps a perverse man, agitated by a thousand passions, that carry him along on their current. This dignity is sometimes conferred on the basest of men, sometimes assigned to hereditary worthlessness, and it is accompanied with no charter for the possession of those virtues that alone can make it valuable. And then how soon is it taken away! When the king of terrors comes, what avail the pomp of royalty,

the adulation of flattery, or all that man calls glory upon earth! The royal honours of the believer are of a more substantial kind, approved by the all-discerning eye of God himself.

The believer may be called a king on account of the *dignity of his character*. The rest are slaves, blinded by prejudices that oppose the admission of the truth, beguiled by idle dreams, holding out a vain promise of happiness, governed by sinful principles and passions, led captive by Satan at his will. While they boast of liberty, they are the slaves of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage. But "if the Son make you free, then are ye free indeed." How glorious the liberty of the believer! His mind has been delivered from the power of prejudice by the light of the truth; his heart has been rescued from the dominion of sin, by the principles of grace and holiness: his active powers have been liberated from the chains of bad habits, and the thralldom of the world, and are engaged in the service of his God. He feels the blessed change; his soul rises in gratitude to his Father, conscious of a peace, and hope, and confidence, which the world knows not of. It is a spiritual kingdom he possesses, consisting not in territorial possessions, but in moral dominion. He repels the aggressions of temptation; he restrains and regulates principles of nature; he preserves order and harmony in the region of the soul; he keeps the body under, and brings it into subjection, and, in ruling his spirit, he is better than he that taketh a city. He serves God, and him only; for even in what he does for man, he is the servant of God. He calls no man Master upon earth; for one is his Master, who is in heaven; and he walks at liberty, because he loves God's commandments. Again, the believer may be called a king, in consideration of the amplitude of his possessions; for though he may be poor in this world, he is, in the best sense, rich. It was the remark of a heathen—"He is a king who has no wants; he is a king who has no fears." This character belongs only to the believer. In his God, he finds enough to supply all his wants, enough to allay all his fears. He has not a wish to form, while he relies on the tried kindness of his Father

The believer may be called a king, in consideration of his *union with the King of kings*. He is one with Christ, the Lord of glory. He is "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." He is a child of the Most High—of the blood-royal of heaven; his Father's love rests upon him; his Father's image is formed upon him; as a prince, he has power with God and prevails.

For the present, the glory of his character is veiled from the world; his "life is hid with Christ in God." But the time is coming when his honours shall be made manifest to all. "Ye are they," said our Lord, "that have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto me, that ye should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Then shall the royal glory of the believer be complete; his crown, a crown of glory; his robes, the robes of righteousness; his throne, the throne of God and the Lamb.

There is yet another character the Apostle ascribes to believers. He "has made us *priests unto God and his Father*." And as the former expression announces their dignity, so this declares their sanctity. And it is still an advance in their honours; for though royal pomp dazzled more the eye, yet the priestly office, having a closer intercourse with God, is still more sacred.

Now believers are priests as *consecrated to the service of God*. The Israelites were called a "nation of priests," because they were separated from the heathen and dedicated to Jehovah; and the house of Aaron, when set apart to the priesthood, were still farther separated from the Israelites themselves. So believers are separated from the world, yea, from formal professors even in the church, and consecrated to the glory of God. Their consecration is not nominal or official, but real and spiritual. They have an unction from the Holy One. And though they are not called away from common duties and occupations, yet are they taught in these to act for God. They serve him in the offices of religion, and serve him in the business of life. Placed in the same relations with others, pursuing the same employments, associating with their fellows in the market-place as well

as in the sanctuary—could you inspect their hearts and thoughts, you would find them marked by peculiar characters, and animated by motives unknown to the world.

They are priests as *admitted to intimate communion with God*. And whereas even the high priest of old could enter the holy place only once a-year, you remark the superior privilege of believers. They have access at all times into the holiest, by a new and living way. Every day they make known their desires, and unfold their wants, and express their thanksgivings. They are set apart to offer spiritual sacrifices—of prayer, of praise, of new obedience, “ordained for men in things pertaining to God,” so are they called to care for the good of others, to intercede for their brethren, to minister to them the good news of the gospel, to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.

Once more, they are priests as *having*

the Lord for their portion. For the priests had no inheritance in the land; the Lord was their inheritance. And believers have not their portion in this life; but while they receive thankfully what a bountiful providence bestows, they remember that they have no continuing city.

My brethren, how noble and glorious this character, “Kings and priests!” They resemble Melchisedec the priest of the Most High God; “who was first, king of righteousness,” as his name imports, “and afterwards king of Salem, that is, king of peace.” They resemble Christ himself, “a priest upon his throne.” “Kings and priests unto God and his Father.” It is to God, considered as the God and Father of Christ, that they are consecrated. It is this relation of the Father to the Son that gives them confidence to approach him. They draw near to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER SERMON.

BLESSED be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead! For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. As a priest, he hath offered his atoning sacrifice, and hath put away sin: and in the same sacred character he now appears in the holy of holies, making intercession for us: yea, he sits a king at the right hand of the Father, “a priest upon his throne.” We rejoice that our High Priest hath atoned; that our king hath triumphed; may we receive the atonement, may we share in the triumph, through union with him who was dead and is alive again. Planted in the likeness of his death, may we be also in the likeness of his resurrection: conformed to him in his death, may we be conformed to him in newness of life. As priests, we

come before thee, O righteous Father, with the blood of sprinkling and with the incense of prayer, presenting ourselves before thy mercy-seat in humble reliance on thy covenant; as kings exalted in the strength of the Lord, we feel secure of victory even in the midst of conflict, and glory in the Lord, and in him only. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to us, and we to the world. We know not what we shall hereafter be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, seeing him as he is. Teach us, animated by this hope, to purify ourselves even as he is pure. Hast thou not chosen us that we should be holy and without blame before thee in love? Fulfil in us all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power. Be with us now, in the solemn service that lies before us, and be with us evermore, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

FENCING OF THE TABLES.*

Upro him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

The man of God who wrote these words, so expressive of affectionate devotion, holds a very distinguished place among his fellow-men, stands conspicuous in the first rank of prophets and apostles; so that I know not whether, in the whole annals of the human race, there is any one to be found more amiable in respect of his character, or more enviable in respect of his lot. His distinctions indeed were not those which the world prizes; not illustrious descent, noble birth, ample possessions, learning, fame, victory, dominion. He was of humble parentage, of mean condition, a simple fisherman of Galilee. His distinctions were the immediate gifts of his God, the insignia of heaven's favour—spiritual in their nature, enduring in their term of existence. John was the early friend, and, it is probable, the youthful companion of Jesus. When our Lord entered on his public ministry, John was one of his first disciples, and became a faithful and constant attendant. There was a peculiar congeniality of mind between him and his great Master; and such was the favour our Lord extended to him, that he was known by the appellation of "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He accompanied him on the Holy Mount, when Moses and Elias appeared in shining garments and conversed with Jesus; he saw his transfiguration, and heard the voice from the excellent glory saying, "This is my beloved Son." When our Lord sat with the disciples at the Paschal supper, he was the favoured individual who reposed on Jesus' bosom, and proposed the question that led to our Lord's significant intimation of who should betray him. He, too, with his distinguished companions who had seen the glory of Christ on the Mount, beheld his agony in the garden when he "offered supplications and prayers, with strong cries and tears."

And in the trying hour that followed, his affection seems to have mastered his fears; for, if when the armed men first seized on Jesus, all the disciples forsook him and fled; yet John appears to have soon returned to the place where his master was. We find him, at least as some suppose, in the High Priest's house when Peter came thither, using his influence to introduce his fellow-disciple into a scene, alas! of temptation too hard for his constancy. But whether he entered the High Priest's house or not, it is certain that he stood by the cross of Jesus while our Lord hung upon it, and received from him a commission, as honourable as affecting—to be a son to Mary, and to regard her as his mother; and "from that hour," we are told, "he took her to his own home." On the news of the resurrection, he out-ran Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And on another occasion, when the disciples were in a ship, his prompt affection first recognised Jesus standing on the shore, and he said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Peter asked, "What shall this man do?" our Lord intimated that in one respect he was to be distinguished from his brethren; "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" After the ascension, he shared largely in the gifts and graces communicated by the Spirit, and was an acknowledged pillar of the Church; and his sphere of operation seems to have corresponded with his character. While Paul traversed the earth, preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, and James presided over the Jewish converts in Jerusalem, and Peter devoted himself more especially to the strangers of the circumcision scattered abroad, John seems to have made it his study and delight to foster spiritual religion wherever it was found, to vindicate the divine character and authority of his beloved Master, and to promote among his brethren communion with God, and love to one another. According to his Lord's intimation, he survived his fellows, and witnessed the coming of Christ in the destruction of Jerusalem, the overthrow of

* The discourse under this title is designed to point out the characters of such as are worthy and such as are unworthy to be admitted to sit at the tables.

the Jewish polity, and the extensive establishment of Messiah's kingdom. . And now in the closing period of a holy heavenly life, when a prisoner in Patmos, he was favoured with more glorious discoveries of Christ as the Divine Head of the Church, and more wonderful intimations of the divine purposes than had ever before been made to mortal man; in a succession of emblematical visions; referring to the things that were coming upon the earth from the time when he lived to the close of this world's history. Still, as he advanced in age and experience, he felt the more his obligations to his Saviour; and when known in all the churches by the honourable appellation of the *Elder*, he gave his children a beautiful example of ardent devoted affection; saying, in words which it becomes all believers in every age to adopt, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

For, my brethren, though it is not every believer that is a Paul in zeal, a Peter in activity, a John in heavenly mindedness, yet the christian character in its leading features is the same in all. Though modified in the expression of them by diversity of circumstances and by variety

of gifts, it is the same Spirit by which it is ever animated. Who is there belonging to Christ that feels not his heart respond to these words of the Apostle, and especially when presented with these lively emblems of the Saviour's love and sacrifice that are about to be set before us, who must not adopt them as the appropriate language of his soul? And therefore in briefly reminding you of the character and principles by which those are distinguished who are entitled to partake of this spiritual feast, I apprehend I cannot do better than analyze, for a moment, the feelings indicated in the words before us.

First, they indicate an *experimental knowledge of the love of Christ*. The Apostolic language is not that of speculation or hearsay persuasions; but that of conviction, of feeling, of profound gratitude. He speaks of a lover who has no second in generosity; and of a love that has nothing similar to it in human affection. No other love deserves the name: He hath loved us; He only hath loved us. All other love sinks into nothing when compared with this. This is divine, infinite, eternal. This love embraces the whole family of believers, and extends its considerate and compassionate care to every member of the family—the more precious to each, because it comprehends all.

(To be concluded in our next.)

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No. 14.

Celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in
St. Mary's Church, Edinburgh.
Sacramental Address by Dr. PADDIE, Edinburgh.

Price 2d.

CELEBRATION
OF
THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER,
IN ST. MARY'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON SABBATH, 6TH MAY, 1832.

The Rev. HENRY GREY, A.M., MINISTER.

FENCING OF THE TABLES.—*Continued.*

THE holy ordinance of the Supper is designed for those who have known the love of Christ experimentally; whose hearts have been touched, melted, subdued by it. That speculative knowledge which enlightens but does not warm, is of no avail. He cannot be truly known without being loved. But it is only divine teaching that communicates this knowledge, as is intimated in the prayer of St. Paul, recorded in the 8d chapter to the Ephesians, where, after all he had declared of the glory and grace of Christ, he applies to God himself to bestow the knowledge of his love. "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, that ye may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." For though the saints know something of this love, yet how much remains unknown, incomprehensible, even by the angels of heaven! My brethren, this is a matter of feeling, not of speculation. You know not this love if you do not return it. Love awakens love. And how does love show itself? In the thoughts that still revert to the beloved object; in the desires that continually go out after him; in hearty endeavours to do his will; in an instinctive and almost unconscious imitation of him. I ask, then, "What

think you of Christ? Do your thoughts naturally and affectionately revert to him? Do your desires go out after him? Is it your earnest endeavour to do his will and to keep his commandments? Where is your resemblance to the Saviour?" John himself points out the proper evidence of love in his first Epistle, 4th chapter, at the 16th verse: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

Secondly, The words indicate an experimental knowledge of the purifying efficacy of the blood of Christ. The Apostle, simple, pure, holy as his life might seem, was yet conscious in his own experience, of the defilement of sin. For though it may seem paradoxical, the more holy any one is, he is the more affected with a sense of his sins. Having higher

views of the holiness of God, he feels the more his own defilement: having larger views of the extent and spirituality of the law, he sees the more his manifold transgressions. So that the most eminent saints, are ever most ready to confess themselves the greatest sinners. For the more we examine and know ourselves, we discern the more our offences. But the blood of Christ washes away the guilt of sin, and, rescuing the soul from condemnation, imparts a pure and grateful peace; and, moreover, communicating the influence of the Holy Spirit who dwells in the believing soul, it inspires all holy and heavenly affections. Now, my brethren, we are universally involved in moral pollution, covered with numberless sins, which no tears can expunge, which no efforts can remove, which no waters of the ocean can wash away. The testimony of the Patriarch Job is emphatically true: "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." (Job ix. 20.) And again, (30th verse,) "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." There is only one remedy, and it is found in the Cross. And this holy ordinance is designed for those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. This is precisely the design of the ordinance—to set before us the great central truth of revelation, the remission of sins through the sacrifice of Christ. It exhibits the very substance of the gospel—God setting forth his Son as a propitiation through faith in his blood. You, who have come to the cross, who have looked to the Saviour as the wounded Israelites to the brazen serpent, come, renew this exercise of faith, establish your peace by simple dependence, draw life from his death, joy from his sorrows, triumph from his resurrection: "for if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

Thirdly, The words indicate *an experimental knowledge of that royal dignity to which Christ advances his people.* This may seem a high attainment. The humble believer may think it presumption to pretend to it. Yet "this honour have all

the saints:" and it is fit they should know it. The dignity is spiritual, and the sense of it is progressive. The believer is a king—because he is one with Christ, the King of Zion; for "God hath raised us up together with him, and hath made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." His conquests are already begun, for he has learned to repel temptation, to overcome the inordinate affections of the world and the flesh. His conquests, however, are not complete. In himself he is weak, and if left to himself, would soon be overthrown; but his strength is in his Lord, and when he feels himself weak then is he strong. Be not discouraged, ye who believe in Jesus—ye who, however faintly, fight under the banner of your great Captain. If you feel within you a holy, spiritual ambition, an impatient sense of the painful bondage of sin, a desire, a resolution, in a better strength than your own, to resist it—I discern in you the spirit of a prince with God, an Israelite indeed, who, by dint of prayers and supplications and tears, is sure to win the victory.

Once more, the words indicate *an experimental knowledge of that priestly sanctity which Christ confers.* And here, your access to God through Jesus Christ, your communion in spirit with him, your importunity in prayer, are at once the privilege and distinction of your character. Every believer has access continually, in point of privilege; and in the general habits of his mind, has daily access. Prayer is the breath of the new man, the instinctive dictate of the new nature. And prayer is a duty that runs parallel with our existence, a part of the duty of every hour. And how encouraging the counsel; "Ask in my name," and the assurance, "every one that asketh, receiveth."

My brethren, it becomes us to look faithfully and diligently into our hearts. Do those know the love of Christ, who seldom admit him into their thoughts? who feel the recollection of him an interruption, an annoyance, a source of alarm? How many when he calls, refuse to hearken! It is not enough to acknowledge the doctrine relating to him, to call him Son of God and Saviour of the world, and to bow at the name of Jesus. His language is, "Give me thine heart." To each of you, he says as truly as if he addressed you by name, "Lovest thou me?" See whether you can appeal to

omniscience, saying, "Thou knowest all things—thou knowest that I love thee."

Have these been washed from their sins in his blood who still remain in the pollution of sin; or, after a temporary, partial purification, are again immersed in the mire? Let conscience speak, and it must condemn them. Are those "*kings unto God and the Father,*" who still yield themselves the slaves of inordinate affections, of worldly ambition and sinful pleasures? Are those "*priests unto God,*" who are strangers to the way that leads into the holiest, who never appear before the mercy-seat, to whom all the services of spiritual worship are foreign and irksome? Oh, that men would awake to discern the state of their souls, often manifest to every eye but their own. "Some men's sins are open before hand, going before to judgment," being so

notorious as to require no proof: "and some men they follow after," inquiry and investigation being necessary to detect them. "Likewise also the good works of some are manifest before hand; and those" good works "that are not" thus manifest, yet "cannot remain hid" when duly investigated.

I invite the humble, the upright, all who love this Jesus whom we serve. But those who have not felt the attractive power of his grace, nor yielded themselves to his holy laws, are unfit to partake of the sign, seeing they possess not the thing signified.

Omniscient God! we place ourselves before thee. Give us to know ourselves; give us to know the Saviour: and may his love be so revealed, as to constrain us to love him, and to live no more to ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again!

PRAYER BEFORE DISPENSING THE ELEMENTS.

THOU high and lofty One that inhabitest eternity, whose name is Holy: thou dwellest in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and the heart of the contrite. We adore thee as the one living and true God, the great "I AM," having life in thyself, and imparting it to all that live. Thou art distinguished by a glory peculiar to thyself, and thou sharest it not with any other—high in the possession of infinite perfection, lofty in the exercise of boundless dominion. Eternity is the place of thy habitation—the palace thou hast built for thyself; and thou livest and reignest in full and perpetual possession of every part of it, meeting out, according to thy will, the days and months and years that measure the existences of created things. Thy name, thy nature, thy essence is holy, and holiness is ascribed on all thy dispensations. Thou dwellest with the holy in heaven, filling them with sacred and ineffable delights; and with the humble upon earth, to comfort the mourners in Zion, and, of thy rich bounty to give them the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ—with full pardon, with conscious peace, with

the sanctification of the Spirit and the hope of eternal glory. We praise thee for the infinite blessings provided by everlasting love: and we thank thee for those visible symbols of thy presence and favour—those seals of thy holy covenant—which, in merciful adaptation to our frail nature, thou hast given for confirming our faith and perfecting our confidence. While man still retained his integrity, thou wast pleased to plant the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God; and when, in consequence of man's transgression, he was debarred from that tree by the cherubim and flaming sword, thou wast pleased to furnish, in the rite of sacrifice, an intimation of a new way of access to it—through death to life, even through the death of an appointed substitute—a way to the attainment of eternal life. We bless thee for the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, not only in the councils of heaven, but in the services of the Church on earth. And we thank thee for all the visible tokens of thy presence and evidences of thy faithfulness—the pillar of cloud and fire that conducted the Church through the sea and through the wilderness, determining its movements and the place of its rest; the shechinah of glory that filled the house of the Lord; the fire that descended from

heaven upon the altar, to be ever cherished there; the incense that ascended from the censer; the daily burnt-offerings, with the whole service of the Levitical priesthood. And now, under the reign of Messiah, we thank and bless thee for that spiritual feast provided by our gracious Saviour, which at once commemorates the great sacrifice that has secured for us all the blessings of salvation, and conveys to the believing soul the present experimental enjoyment of them all. The cup of blessing which we consecrate, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?—Grant, heavenly Father, that it may be so to each one of us. May this cup be to us the cup of blessing: may this bread and this wine be both the seal of our union with the Saviour, and the means of refreshing and endearing communion with

him. May the Spirit of Christ be intimately present with our spirits, taking of the things that are Christ's and showing them to us. Give us to know that love which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. May that gracious Saviour who hath given himself for us, now perfect the gift by giving himself to us; and thus, enriched by his grace, may we, with the whole heart's consent give ourselves wholly to him. Establish thy covenant with us for our everlasting covenant, that thou turn not away from us, and that thou put thy fear into our hearts, that we depart not from thee. We wait for thy blessing; we thirst for thy grace, to see thy power and thy glory, as we have seen it in the sanctuary. Let the words of our mouth, and the meditation of our heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

COMMUNION SERVICE.—FIRST TABLE.

My beloved friends and fellow-communicants, you have now before you the memorial of the everlasting love of God our Father, of the infinite grace of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and of the fellowship and communion of the Eternal Spirit. You have before you the symbols and the seals of that great sacrifice which affords the most illustrious evidence of divine love, and the only foundation of human hope. Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. See the good Shepherd giving his life for the sheep. His was a voluntary sacrifice; for "no man," said he "taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself, and I take it again." Yet was it offered in accordance with the Father's will, for "this commandment," said he, "I have received of my Father." It pleased the Lord to bruise him; and by his stripes we are healed. In the ordinance before us you behold a lively representation of this great central fact, the sum and substance of all divine revelation, the foundation on which all our confidence rests and all our hopes are built. Here Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified before you. Here his blessings are exhibited, his gospel, if I

may say so, is preached to the eye as well as the ear; and all the grace, and all the benefits, comprehended in his death, are presented and made over to the faith of the believer. The place you have taken at these tables is a profession, on your part, that your faith rests on a crucified Redeemer; that you regard yourselves as not your own, but as bought with a price, and that your desire and your purpose is to glorify God with your bodies and spirits which are his. And now, as a privilege no less than a duty, I invite you, in receiving the appointed symbol and engaging in the service prescribed by your Lord, to do this in remembrance of him.

On the night on which he was betrayed, he took bread, and having given thanks, as we have endeavoured to do in his name, he brake and gave it to the disciples, as I do to you in the name of disciples, saying, "This is my body broken for you; this do in remembrance of me." This, my brethren, even Christ crucified, is the living bread that came down from heaven. Let your prayer be, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." He took also the cup and gave it to them, as I to you, saying

"This cup is the new testament in my blood, shed for many, for the remission of sins; drink ye all of it: for as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come."

Let that death be the subject of your devout contemplation; that second coming the object of your hope; and while you seal your covenant with the Lord, may your communion with him be sweet: may your fellowship be with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. . . .

(Here the minister paused for some minutes, while the communicants partook of the elements, and passed them from one to another. He then again addressed them.)

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." Mysterious love, of which we can never measure the heights and depths! love that assimilates all who feel its attraction to him from whom it flows! The world that knew not the Saviour, knows not the spirit, the character, the principles, the aims of his followers. Their life is hid with Christ in God. His spirit dwells in them, as a spirit of prayer, of humility, of purity, of love. They are strangers and pilgrims on the earth: they are citizens of heaven, from whence they look for the Saviour. Here they wander in the wilderness, and often pursue a solitary way, amid many privations, and trials, and sorrows; yet not without the pillar of fire and cloud, not without manna from heaven, and water from the rock. Happy art thou, O Israel, people saved of the Lord! May my inheritance be given me with the tribes of the Lord, who have God for their portion. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on

earth that I desire besides thee. My heart and flesh faint and fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. My brethren, while yet on your way to heaven, let your visits be frequent to the cross. It is good to be here: good, not only, with Moses and Elias on the holy mount, to converse with Jesus concerning the decease he hath accomplished at Jerusalem, but to approach the scene, to behold and see if there was any sorrow like unto his. Here, while looking on Him whom we have pierced, let us mourn over our sins that pierced him. Here let us confirm our faith in the love of Him who hath done such great things for us. Here let us strengthen ourselves when assailed of our enemies, by contemplating Him who through death overcame death, and him that had the power of it, even the devil. Here let us seek consolation in every sorrow. "There stood by the cross of Jesus," says the historian, "his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!" Thus let us stand by the cross of Jesus, and he will cast on us a look of affection, will speak in words of comfort, will commend us to each other's care, will say, Love one another. That cross is the source of all our hope, and strength, and consolation. For he who expired upon it revived, and lives for evermore. Go, then, in peace and in hope, from the table of the Lord, under the guardian care of your once crucified, but now exalted Saviour; and may he go with you, and keep you by his power unto his heavenly kingdom.*

* There were five other Table Services, at which the Communicants were addressed by Mr. Grey's assistants, who, on this occasion, were the Rev. Mr. Kennedy of Perth, the Rev. Mr. Milroy of Crailing, the Rev. Dr. Manuel, formerly of London Wall, and the Rev. James Charles, lately appointed to the Scotch Church, Calcutta.

CONCLUDING EXHORTATION.

In the commencement of this service, your attention was called to that sublime ascription of praise, in which the Apostle combines the love and grace of Christ, with the dignity and sanctity of his people. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory, and dominion, for ever, and ever." Interesting as the love of Christ is, contemplated in his human nature—in his words of grace and truth—in his works of wonder—in his tender sympathy with his disciples, we must, it was remarked, rise higher to understand the principle referred to by the Apostle. He speaks of his love as God and Mediator, an everlasting—a sovereign—a boundless love—an unchanging love. Animated by this principle, he "washed us from our sins in his blood." God does not pardon sin by a mere act of volition; expunging the debt, and setting the debtor free: nor does he pardon in consideration of the repentance of the offender. His justice, wisdom, and truth, require that it pass not unpunished. But the sacrifice of Christ, deriving infinite value from the dignity of his person, was an adequate expiation, and has made it consistent with the perfections of God, and conducive to his glory, to pardon the guilty. Moreover, he made us kings—exalted us to royal honours—to spiritual dominion, and a crown of glory; and priests, consecrating us to the service and glory of God his Father.

My brethren, are you acquainted with these things? with the love of Christ—with the blessings he bestows—with the grace that redeems—with the Spirit that sanctifies? Then you cannot fail to unite, with heart and soul, in the ascription of praise with which the words before us conclude: "To him be glory, and dominion, for ever, and ever." The sentiments and desires expressed in these words, are those which I would now awaken in your bosoms.

These words, "To him be glory for ever," express the joy which the believer feels in the glory to which Christ has already been exalted, and his long desire to see him universally glorified. "God hath raised him from the dead, and

given him glory." He who laid aside his glory for our sakes, resumed it again; and now, in heaven, his human nature is exalted to the highest honours. Yes, my brethren, that body which hungered and thirsted—which toiled and suffered fatigue—which agonized in the garden, and expired upon the cross, is now placed at the right hand of God, on the throne of glory. That soul which dictated these words of grace and truth, of wisdom and kindness that proceeded from his mouth—that soul which, while on earth, was tempted and buffeted by the powers of darkness, and grieved with the wickedness and ingratitude of men—was oppressed and almost overwhelmed with the cup of trembling which his Father required him to drink; that soul is now fully rewarded for all its travail, and is so united with the Godhead, as to be advanced above all the angelic host, for he "has a name given him above every name." Where is the believer who rejoices not in the glory thus given to the Redeemer?

But it is as God and Mediator that glory specially belongs to him: the glory of that love which suggested the redemption of men; of that wisdom that so arranged the plan, as to secure at once the integrity and honour of the divine perfections, and the full restoration of fallen sinners; of that power that overcame all obstacles; of that faithfulness that accomplishes all the annunciations of grace. Yet though extolled by angels and glorified saints, how little is his glory known upon earth! How does the enlightened soul long for the time when all shall know and adore!

It may be remarked, that this doxology, applied to our Lord, implies the true divinity of Christ; and exactly corresponds with many ascriptions of praise addressed to God the Father. Thus, in Romans xvi. 27, it is said, "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever." So again, Ephesians iii. 21, "Unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." In like manner in 1st Timothy vi. 16, the Apostle after speaking of the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, adds, "To whom be honour and power everlasting." Exactly similar

the ascription here applied to Jesus Christ. We cannot err in the way of excess, in giving glory to him, for this is declared to be the will of God—"that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." And it is said, "Let all the angels of God worship him." And here I would remark, that the spirit of faith, is invariably a spirit of devotion. You may observe that a great portion of the Holy Scriptures consists in the expression of devout feelings. The apostles and prophets thought it not enough to declare the truth—to establish it by arguments—to illustrate it by examples, but they continually cherished and expressed corresponding emotions of soul. There is nothing weak in devotional feelings, nothing enthusiastic, supposing them to be regulated by the truth. It is not intelligence only, but more eminently *devotion*, that distinguishes the exercises of the angels in heaven. These high orders, in all their gradations of "principality, and power, and might, and dominion," continually express their devout ardour in terms like these: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, unto Him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever." You who have known the love of the Saviour, cultivate devotional feelings. Let your thoughts be much occupied with the glory of Christ. Let his character and grace be frequent subjects of meditation. Let your heart muse till the fire burn within you, and your tongue utter the irrepressible sentiment—"To him be glory for ever." Again, the words—"To him be dominion for ever," are an acknowledgment of his right to reign, a profession of our personal submission to him, and an aspiration after the universal establishment of his kingdom. This kingdom was foretold by Daniel, as you see in the 7th chapter of his prophecy, 13th and 14th verses: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Accordingly Christ is exalted a Prince as well as a Saviour. Already his kingdom is estab-

lished, its foundations are laid for ever. In all ages he has had multitudes on earth to acknowledge him, and in heaven there are innumerable multitudes around the throne, ever obedient to his will. And this, my brethren, is a personal affair. If you say, "To him be dominion," you must be careful that you yourselves submit to him; otherwise your acknowledgment of his right to govern will but condemn yourselves. You must submit to the dominion of his laws, in all their extent and spirituality; they are holy, just, and good, the transcript and expression of his character. The believer sees, the excellence of them all, and while conscious that he continually falls short of their perfection, he would not have one of them altered. It is still his aim and ambition to attain to conformity to them. You must submit to the dominion of his providence; still, in all its appointments, subservient to the good of them that love him. And if, under any affliction, you "hear the rod," and turn to the Lord, neither despising his chastening, nor fainting when rebuked of him, the infliction will prove a token for good, and an evidence of a heavenly Father's regard. You must submit to the dominion of his grace, placing your entire dependence and perfect confidence in it. We lose much by a want of simplicity in trusting the grace of Christ, and following the dictates of his spirit. If that new nature which has been formed in you by the word suggest any duty, do not shrink from attempting it, and, if conscious of weakness, seek strength from on high. And let it be your prayer and endeavour, that all men may be brought to the obedience of faith. It is only in submission to the reign of righteousness that true liberty and happiness are found. In seeking to bring all under subjection to Christ, you embrace in your aim, equally the good of men, and the glory of God.

That the Apostle sought no exemption for himself from the universal obligation, to give glory and dominion to Christ, may well be inferred from his whole character, and is plainly announced in the emphatic *Amen*, by which he signifies the zealous assent of his whole soul to this ascription of praise: "To him be glory and dominion; Amen!" Be this the language of every heart; and let it express at once our joy in the present exaltation of

Christ, and our animated anticipation of still brighter manifestations of his majesty. He shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, with the holy angels—shall come to judge the world—to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe. Let every faithful heart reply—“Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” But I must not longer detain you. Bear in mind the obligations imposed by the grace of the Saviour. He hath loved you; and is it not your duty to love him? He hath washed you from your sins in his own blood, and is it not your duty, while you rely on the efficacy of that blood, to give proof of its purifying influence; and, having washed your robes in that fountain, to keep your garments white? He hath made you *kings* unto God and his Father; and will you debase yourselves, by yielding to the tyranny of the world, the flesh, and the devil? Will you not guard the dignity of the christian character, and, resisting your spiritual enemies, approve yourselves more than conquerors? He hath made you *priests* unto God: is it not your business to hold communion with your Father, to minister before him, to enter into the holiest of all, there to pour out your prayers and intercessions and thanksgivings? He hath given you hope of heavenly glory: let this hope lead you to purify yourselves even as he is pure. What words can declare the baseness of those who have no love for the Saviour, no gratitude, no purpose of heart to obey him! Let not this reproach attach to you. All of you who have this day avowed yourselves his servants, cleave to your divine Master in faith and in purity. Cherish on earth the feelings and principles and dispositions of heaven; and then, when you come to die, you will change your place only, but not your employment, and still, through all eternity, your song will be—“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

CONCLUDING PRAYER.

AND now, heavenly Father, accept of our united thanks and praise for all the goodness and all the truth which thou hast made to pass before thy servants. Truly it is good for us to draw near to God. A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. Here the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore. May what we have this day seen, and heard, and tasted, and handled, of the Word of Life, and of the love of God, remain indelibly impressed upon our memory and our heart; and may it be as good seed sown in good soil, yielding fruit to eternal life. We have this day commemorated a love that passeth knowledge: may it constrain us to love Him who hath so loved us; and may this principle make every labour in his service welcome, every burden light. We have commemorated his body broken for us, and his blood shed for the remission of sins: by that sacrifice may our peace be established, our conscience purified, our hearts enlarged in filial confidence: for “who can lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?” We have renewed our covenant engagements with the Lord; or rather, thou, O Lord, hast renewed thy gracious covenant with us, that thou mayest be to us a God, and we to thee a people: put, then, thy law into our mind, and write it on our heart; and, as thou art faithful, may we be constant in thy covenant. We have remembered the death of Christ as associated with his resurrection, with his ascension to glory, with his coming to judge the world at the last day: may we rise, with him, to newness of life, and attain strength to walk as he walked: may the mind that was in Christ be in us, and the life of Jesus be made manifest in our mortal flesh. Teach us so to abide in him that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. We have professed our union with the mystical body of Christ: may we sympathize with all our brethren, the members of the same body, as sharing both in their sorrows and in their joys. Enable us to

make worthy the vocation wherewith we are called, in all lowliness and meekness, in long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, and evincing to all that there is one body and one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

Pardon, good Lord, the iniquities and infirmities of our holy things. If any have approached the wedding feast without the wedding garment, in self-confident presumption, saying, "I am rich, and have need of nothing," in mercy interpose to undeceive them, and cause them to know and to feel that they are indeed wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. If any have drawn nigh with the lips, professing much love, while their hearts were far from thee—sitting before thee as thy people, but in truth minding only earthly things; awaken them, we pray thee, from the sleep of death; show them that a deceived heart has led them astray, so that they cannot deliver their soul, nor acknowledge that there is a lie in their right hand. O that all who have a name to live but are dead,—the form, without the power of godliness—may be aroused to a sense of their danger, and made to seek mercy while mercy may be found. If, again, any have sought thee, sorrowing, and have not found thee, be pleased to show wherefore thou hidest thy face, and heal the wounded spirit, and restore comfort to the disconsolate. And, if any have been admitted to sweet fellowship with thee, the Father of their spirits, may they feel their obligations to redeeming love, and cleave with purpose of heart to the Lord. May the whole service in which we have been engaged conduce eminently to our sanctification and salvation. May we go from this place refreshed and comforted, prepared for every duty and every trial. We pray especially for those in early life, who have this day avowed the Lord for their God. May the good Shepherd watch over them as the lambs of his flock. Preserve them from the snares and temptations to which their age, their natural temper, their circumstances may expose them. Draw their warm affections to thyself; keep them pure from the pollutions of the world. May they give the best of their days and powers to Him who is worthy of their all; and, entering early on wisdom's path,

may they run and not be weary, and walk and not faint. May many prayers ascending from the hearts of parents, united with their instructions and example, bring down thy enriching blessing, that our sons and daughters may be trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

Father of mercies, God of the spirits of all flesh, we present our humble intercession in behalf of the whole family of mankind. Extend, we beseech thee, to all, the knowledge of the truth, and the blessings of the great salvation. To those that sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, may light spring up. Be merciful to thy servants who have gone to heathen lands to preach the Gospel, and bless them—that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. And where the name of thy holy child Jesus is already named, may it be honoured and adored. Purify thy Church from all pollution of idols, from dark superstition, from fierce intolerance, from heresy and schism, from all immoral and unchristian practice. May the power of Antichrist, wherever it prevails, be diminished and destroyed; may the cry soon be heard, "Babylon is fallen?" may thy faithful witnesses put off their sackcloth and be girded with gladness; may the saints of the Most High take the kingdom, and possess it for ever. We beseech thee to bless our native land; and, while we praise thee for our manifold and most distinguished privileges, we pray thee to teach us to make a suitable improvement of them. Be propitious to our beloved King; ennoble him with heavenly wisdom, enrich him with heavenly grace; bless his government, and make it a blessing. Bless the queen, and the several branches of the royal family. Counsel our king's councillors, and teach our senators wisdom. Direct and over-rule the deliberations and decisions of both houses of Parliament, and lead to such conclusions as may eminently conduce to the glory of thy name, the good of thy Church, and the welfare, peace, and prosperity of these realms. We pray for all in authority—for our judges, our magistrates, our officers—that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty. Be favourable to our land, in all its interests: preserve and perfect what is good in our institu-

tions, repair what may be decayed, supply what may be wanting; over all the glory create a defence. Let a double portion of thy Spirit rest upon the ministers of the sanctuary; may they rightly divide the Word of Life, and be the instruments of turning many to righteousness. We specially commend to thee this congregation of fellow-worshippers. May the elders of the congregation, like the first deacons, be men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom: may he who ministers here give himself continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. May the families of which we are composed be such as call upon thy name. May parents and heads of families be faithful in commanding their children and households to keep the way of the Lord. May children be obedient, and servants dutiful. Enable us to fulfil every duty as to the Lord and not to man.—We thank thee for thy kindness to our city, in arresting the progress of pestilential disease, and

sparing when we called upon thee. Extend thy compassion to the sons and daughters of affliction; to the mourner, to the captive, to the slave—to all that are oppressed. And now, heavenly Father, dismiss us with thy blessing; meet with us graciously in the public services of this evening and of to-morrow: let great grace be upon us all. And may the doctrine of thy Word, distilling as the rain and the dew upon the mown grass, penetrate our hearts and render them fruitful in all good works, to do thy will. Now, unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

THE BLESSING

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

SACRAMENTAL ADDRESS;

DELIVERED IN DR. DICK'S CHURCH ALBION STREET, GLASGOW, ON SABBATH,
24TH JUNE, 1832.

By Dr. PEDDIE, of Edinburgh.

INTENDING communicants, the Lord has wrought for us a great redemption; and it is an object worthy of our inquiry, how hath the Lord done this great work? The ancient churches looked forward to a redemption which the Lord was to work for his people, but they did not clearly apprehend in what manner he was to accomplish it. We, however, have been informed in the New Testament, in a most distinct manner, how the Lord hath done it; for in Christ we have redemption through his blood; even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Many of God's works are works in which merely power, and wisdom, and goodness are displayed; but in this work other perfections shine, and shine with brightest splendour, with brightest radiance. The redemption of sinners could not be accomplished merely by power. By power Jehovah created the world, but more than power was

necessary to redeem it. Human agents are often employed by God to accomplish his great works; but a mere human agent never could have accomplished this work: it required that the hand accomplishing it should be Divine. Many a deliverance has been wrought by human instrumentality; but with regard to this, we are distinctly told, that we are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, nor with vain conversation, received by tradition from the fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Oh, how wonderful the way in which God has redeemed his guilty perishing people! That he might accomplish it, he chose the Son of his love; and the Son came to lay down the price of our redemption. He was not taken by surprise, when he engaged in the work. He knew from the beginning what it would cost him to effect our deliverance; and

he knew that he would not be disconcerted. He came cheerfully forward, although the work was laborious, and not only laborious, but painful. He came cheerfully forward; and when the fulness of time was come, he appeared on the wings of love, hastening to fulfil his ancient engagement, and to lay down his life a ransom for many. That he might accomplish this work, a body was prepared for him. Never would he have become an inhabitant of this world; never would he have lived a man among men; never would he have been a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, had not all this been necessary, that he might finish the work which his Father gave him to do. Oh, how great the love that induced the Father to give his only begotten Son, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life! and how great the love that induced the beloved Son of the eternal Father to give himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering of a sweet-smelling savour unto God! It was not merely necessary that he should take our nature upon him, but it was necessary that God should be glorified in our salvation—that in this nature he should be a sufferer, enduring labours, painful labours, during the course of his active life, and at length laying down his life for our deliverance. Let us contemplate the Saviour employed in working our redemption. See to what a condition he was reduced when he was born of a woman, born in a stable, and laid in a manger. See what suffering our redemption cost him, when he was persecuted, even in infancy—when he had to labour for his subsistence in the days of his youth—when he had to go from place to place, toiling by day and by night, preaching the Gospel—announcing the great salvation which he came to accomplish. Follow him till the time when Judas betrayed him—when the multitude approached him—when he was dragged to the judgment-seat of Pilate—when he was abused by the heathen soldiers, and mocked and reviled by the multitude, and when he submitted to all this without a murmur—when he bore it patiently, yea cheerfully having ever in his eye the glory that would redound to God, and the happiness that would thus be obtained for his people, by the shedding of his blood. Nothing else could have accomplished it. God could

not have been glorified in our redemption if the law had not been fulfilled—if justice had not been satisfied; and it was impossible that man should acquire in happiness what God should lose in honour. It was impossible that sinful creatures, deserving to perish, should be redeemed at the expense of any of the perfections of the divine law. The Lord Jesus is a rock. Our redemption glorified God in the highest. So angels sang, when he was born—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.” So the prophet Isaiah sang, many ages before it was accomplished—“For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.” So the Son himself declared—“I have glorified thy name on the earth—I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” Is not this redemption—wrought so wonderfully—accomplished by laying down such a price—by the offering up such a sacrifice! is not this redemption a redemption for which our souls should magnify the Lord, and all that is within us be stirred up to bless God our Saviour! Is not this a redemption that we should hail with gratitude—that we should remember to the praise of God—that we should commemorate with joy. Let us now, at his table, bear testimony to the honour of our great Redeemer, and celebrate him who died for us. For on that night in which he was betrayed, &c.

Communicants, oh, think of the beloved Saviour, and of his precious work. They are suitable subjects for meditation at his table; and thinking on them, and exercising faith, your meditation will be sweet. What joy springs to the believing soul, from thinking on the grace that was displayed by the Son of the Highest, in giving himself for us! Had he not loved us, he never would have done so. Had his love been of an ordinary kind, it would not have carried him so far. His love to us was altogether wonderful, especially when we consider the disparity between us worms of the footstool, and Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; and when we think how independent he was of us, that our redemption could add nothing to his glory, and nothing to his happiness; although our redemption was essential to our comfort through time, and our happi-

ness throughout eternity. Oh, think, then, with gratitude, with admiration, with unbounded affection and love of that Blessed Person, who for us, and for our salvation, stooped so low, and did so much, and endured such agony. Think of him. He thought on you—he thinks on you still. He has loved the world to which he came, in order to accomplish salvation for us; and he has gone to a higher world, more fitting his dignity. But in his highest elevation, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, he does not forget any one of the souls whom he has redeemed. There is not one of the most obscure of all those that believe in his name, who is overlooked by him. Although the Lord be high, he hath respect unto the lowly. From his throne he bends his ear to hear the supplication of the poor; and he is ever ready to save, and to help in the time of need. It is your privilege—it is your duty—it is your interest to apply to him in every case of need, whether it be a case of temporal need, or of spiritual need. And applying to him, you will not ask in vain; for he hears—he regards the prayer of the destitute, and he does not deceive their prayer, he will communicate according to his promise supplies of grace and strength according to the circumstances of your case. Doubt it not. "My God," said Paul, "shall supply all your need according to his riches, in glory, by Christ Jesus." Doubt it not. He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." So you may boldly say, The Lord is our help. Oh, be strong in the faith of it, and be not afraid at any sudden turn in the aspect of Divine providence. Still hope in God. Encourage yourselves in this, that he will not abandon you in the time of your need. And why? Did he not redeem you at so great a price—not to suffer you after all to perish, but to carry you forward to full enjoyment—to keep you by his mighty power, through faith unto eternal salvation. Be strong in the faith, therefore, of the Lord Jesus. Cleave to him with purpose of heart. Let no temptation of any kind—let not the attractions of the world, its honours, its wealth,

or its pleasures seduce you to be unsteady to him, or to abandon his cause. Remember that he stood by you in your extremity, and that nothing could make him turn aside his mind from the great object he had in view, to lay down his life for the redemption of his people. And why should you abandon him—why turn your back upon your best friend, and forsake your own mercy; for it is in cleaving to him, that you cleave to that which will make you happy now and for ever. Be you steadfast in your affection to him, and be active in his service. Copy his example. He was not an indolent servant to his Father, when engaged in the work of our salvation. No. He was always busy. It was his meat and his drink to do the will of his Father in heaven. Copy him in this. Be it your meat and your drink to do his will. Never consider his service a grievous burden. His yoke is easy, his burden is light. None of his commands are grievous: in keeping them there is a great reward. And while you thus study to be active for him, be not satisfied with the payments already paid, but press forward; you are far from complete conformity to the character of our blessed Lord. Aspire after greater likeness to him. He left you an example that you should follow his steps. He requires that you walk, as he also walked. Be ye therefore imitators of him as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering of a sweet smelling savour unto God. And look forward to the time when he will complete in you—the redemption he has wrought for you, when he will bring you to his heavenly kingdom, safe from all the sufferings of time, and set you down in his kingdom on high. Oh, how happy the day when this shall take place! "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Go in peace, and may the God of grace and peace go with you. Amen.

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Price 3d.

THE USE OF THE LAW :

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, GLASGOW, ON THE FORENOON OF
SABBATH, 20th DECEMBER, 1882.

By the Rev. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.,

Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh.

"The law is good, if a man use it lawfully."—1 TIM. I. 8.

It would appear from this text that there is a way in which the law may be used lawfully, or rightly, from which we infer that there is also a way in which it may be used unlawfully, or unrightly,—it may be put to a right use or to a wrong one. And there is a real distinction between this right and this wrong use of the law, which, if steadily kept in view, would be a perfect safeguard, both against the error of legality and the equally pernicious one of Antinomianism. The subject is one of great importance; for we reckon that the whole economy of the gospel is pervaded by it, nor can we think of a likelier expedient for the illustration of the evangelical system, than just to lay hold of the statement we have now announced, and then to follow it out to its legitimate application.

First, then, we use the law unlawfully when we try to make out a legal right to the kingdom of heaven. We make a wrong use of the law when we try to make out by our obedience to its precepts, a legal right to the kingdom of heaven. When this is our object, we are actuated by the presumption that we can render, by our obedience, an adequate price for that glorious inheritance; and that the value given, and the worth of our performances are equal to the value received, and to the worth of that eternal blessedness which we labour so earnestly to win. We proceed, on the imagination of a contract between God and man,—a fulfilment of the law's requisitions on the one side, and a bestowment of the law's rewards

on the other,—the one the purchase-money, the other the payment,—obedience is the allotted task—heaven is the stipulated hire. When this is the conception present to the mind, there is a going about to establish our own righteousness,—which is just going about to establish our own right to immortal happiness. As a servant who has accomplished his task can challenge from his master the covenanted recompense, so, it is affirmed by many, that after a course of virtue in this life is ended, he that has acquitted himself well may challenge from his Master in heaven that everlasting life which, under the law of "Do this and live," is held out as the reward of obedience. Now, this spirit of legality, nurtured as it is by our making a wrong use of the law, is merely the universal spirit of humanity—it is the universal spirit of our nature. They are not the Israelites only who go about to establish a righteousness of their own. The very same thing may be noticed among the religious of all ages and countries. The constant tendency is to bargain for heaven by their services; nor can they easily rid themselves of such mercantile imaginations. When they attempt the career of righteousness, it is to establish a right to win their salvation by merit; it is to constitute a claim which they shall prefer at the court of the divine Lawgiver for payment, and which payment is held in covenant in the favour of God, and in addition to these realms of bliss, eternal reign and solid unceasing jubilee waiting

the choirs and companies of the celestials. This is the constant tendency of nature. It is in fact a disposition of the heart, which keeps its ground against all the articles of orthodoxy. And long after jurisprudence has made conclusive judgment of the shortness of human virtue; yet all men recur to the old view of this virtue being a thing of desert, and of heaven being the reward which is due to it. And if it be uncertain for a man to establish a right by jurisprudence, much more so in the face of all jurisprudence. Certainly when this is the object, he is using the law unlawfully—he indeed spends his money for that which is not bread, and his labour for that which satisfieth not—wearing and wasting himself in a thing impracticable; for if there be one characteristic of the law of God more distinct than another, it is the unheeding assertion which it makes of its own authority, and in virtue of which it will stoop to no compromise with human disobedience. There may be, in some other way, acceptance for the sinner, but never by the admission of the sinner's right to the rewards of the law which he has violated. This is an assertion, which, whether in the dispensation of the Old or the New Testament, never once is receded from. Both the law and the gospel alike disown man's legal right to the rewards of eternity. If man will persist, as nature strongly inclines him in seeking to make out a title-deed to heaven by his own obedience, then that obedience must be perfect, else there is a flaw in the title-deed, which is held to be irreparable. It is thus that the law of heaven looks down upon earth in the unflinching aspect of its own inflexibility, and on man's schemes in establishing righteousness to establish a right. It becomes a question of equity, the principles of which are brought unrelentingly to bear upon him. Man, then, instead of suing from heaven, is demanding money in the attitude of a claimant for justice. Two parties are convened together, on the grounds of equity and truth; and the matter will be decided on considerations proper to these grounds, and no other. If man, on the one hand, has presumptuously lifted himself up to a claim that is above the merits of his obedience, the law will not, on the other hand, let itself down beneath the level of its own demands. Man has heated the

combat in an arena of his own choosing, and it is by the rules of that arena that his claim must be determined. He has appealed to Cæsar, and to Cæsar he must go. He has maintained his right, and by the very terms, he has committed himself to a tribunal of justice. He has cited himself before God as a lawgiver, even the God who says that he will not be mocked. It is thus, that in establishing a right by his righteousness—in making use of the law, he finds if he has committed one sin, that there is the barrier of what may be called a moral necessity in using that way which it is impossible to force. The Judge who gave the law cannot alter what he has said on the children of iniquity; and he has pronounced a curse on every one who continueth not in all the words of his law to do them: and so every sinner who goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, is either borne down by the misgivings of a conscience which only serves to haunt and paralyze him, or he lives at his ease, because living in a vain and groundless security; for one of two things must happen, either that he will sink in despair, or, what a low conception of the standard of obedience!—he, though but grovelling among the mere decencies of civil life, will aspire no farther, and yet count himself safe. There are two ways in which one may proceed who purposes to make out his right by his obedience to the law. If he have a sufficiently high conception of the standard, then he is paralyzed, and sinks into despair because of the discoveries that he is making of his exceeding distance and deficiency from that standard; and thus he is haunted at all times by a sense of his great insufficiency, and he never can attain to any thing like solid peace. But there is another way—he may bring down the law to the standard of his own obedience, and may bring his conscience and conduct into terms of very comfortable equality with one another. But this is what the Bible calls a peace which is no peace. The ruin of the soul comes out in either way of the enterprise. He is haunted and paralyzed by a sense of his deficiency, if he has an adequate conception of the purity and extent of the divine law; but if not, then, by bringing down this law to the standard of his obedience, he counts himself safe, though miserably away from the will of

and he dies with a lie in his right hand. The conversion of Paul illustrates this principle. Without the law I was dead. I went forward, on the ground of my meritorious obedience; to a safe and happy eternity; but when the law came, then I was conscious of my distance and deficiency therefrom, and I felt myself a helpless and hopeless outcast. Well, then, here lies the great peculiarity of the gospel: it pronounces on the utter insufficiency of all that man can do for establishing his right to the kingdom of heaven; and yet he must, somehow or other, be provided with a right. His own righteousness the gospel most pointedly and peremptorily refuses to entertain as of any consideration, and makes the full unqualified denial of the efficacy of human virtue, when directed to the end of substantiating, through its own merits, a title—a legal claim to the rewards of immortality. This is one end of the law, that man might obtain for himself a right to its rewards; but this end of the law man has forfeited by his own disobedience. He has forfeited the right, and he cannot establish it with all his strenuousness, and yet he would fain make the trial. It is that to which nature is constantly prompting him. This legal spirit remains unquelled by the declarations of the gospel from without, however responded to from within by the deposition of a conscience that cannot but feel the insufficiency of all our obedience. The absolute nullity of all human virtue is, in the records of evangelical dispensation, affirmed constantly, and at the same time the doctrine is as zealously preached by each zealous and orthodox minister. That righteousness of his own wherewith a man would set himself forth as a claimant for heaven, the Bible pronounces filthy rags; and nothing can exceed the terms of degradation with which it stigmatizes human righteousness, when sought like a right is founded upon it. Still there must be a right. It is not by an act of mercy alone that the gate of heaven is opened to sinners, but naturally there is, in some way or other, merit associated. It is not enough that he appear at the bar of mercy; he must have a plea that he can state at the bar of justice—not the plea of his own deservings; it is not the plea of his own deservings with which the gospel holds any terms, and

therefore a plea founded solely and exclusively on the deservings of another.

There are three ways in which a man can be conceived to obtain admittance to heaven. He may conceive the obtaining admittance on the plea of his own righteousness. Now, we say that this is frustrated by man's disobedience, and is impossible; and that if you go about with this, the effort is vain. Now, this is the first way. You can conceive a man going about to get heaven by his own righteousness.

Then there is another way. There may be a simple act of forgiveness passed, and he comes without a plea at all. Now this is not the constitution of the gospel. It is not by an act of simple mercy, but it is mercy in connexion with righteousness. He does not come unfurnished with a plea.

We stand up for the third footing, set forth by the uniform language of Scripture, and by all we learn from the New Testament, that it is a delusion that you can be admitted to heaven by a simple and gratuitous act of mercy on the part of God—you must come furnished with a plea which you can state at the throne of justice. Then the first supposition is already discarded.—It is not the plea of your own righteousness. The second also is discarded.—It is not a mere simple and gratuitous act of mercy. Then you are shut up, as it were, into the third, a plea founded solely and exclusively on the deservings of another. Now, what we conceive the very essence of the gospel, is the offer to a sinful world, of a pardon through Christ; and that every sinner is welcome to the use of it. He is told of an everlasting righteousness which another has brought in, and which he is invited, nay, commanded, to make use of. It is thus that Christ is made the end of the law for righteousness. This end of the law we had fallen short of; which we could only have achieved for ourselves by our perfect unflinching obedience. Christ therefore has achieved it for us. By his sacrifice for us, he has borne the full penalties of the law, and won its rewards; and, by the condition of the gospel, every one who believes is on this vantage ground. He is as much exempted from the vengeance of a broken law as if in his own person he had never broken it; he is as

fortid that any among you should ever be found such enemies to yourselves and to mankind at large, as to take part either with the theoretical or with the practical opponents of our faith, and be, in either case, without God, and without hope in the world. Godliness is the worshipping and serving of God according to his own command: and I design, in the following discourse, to use the word as synonymous with practical religion. My object, then, is to show you that religion is something of vast importance; and that it ought to be to every one of us a thing of practice. Let me, therefore, crave your attention, while, for this purpose, I endeavour to point out to you some of those things in which godliness is profitable.

And here, I remark to you, in the first place, that "godliness is profitable," as it tends greatly to alleviate the sorrows of life. There are few of the family of Adam who need any lengthened train of reasoning to show them that "man is born to trouble." Who, my friends, that has lived for a few brief years in this world, has not already learned that it is "a vale of tears?" Many are the afflictions that assail man while performing the pilgrimage of life. The troubles to which he is subjected on his journey are various and complicated, and are often very severe. Now, religion alone is sufficient to apply a healing balm to a bleeding heart. Religion alone gives a firm and permanent support to a sinking spirit. Godliness ministers abundant consolation to the soul in the season of adversity and trial. You have, my brethren, perhaps seen some who, in the season of affliction, have shown a stoical apathy; but this is very different from that tranquillity of mind which the gospel of Jesus Christ produces. The one is a mere insensibility of soul, which has neither Scripture nor reason for its support. The other is a holy serenity of mind that is based upon the noblest principles, and which is at once conducive to the happiness of the individual and to the glory of God. You may perhaps have seen also, individuals who are possessed of such fortitude of mind as bears them up under some of the heaviest calamities and the bitterest disappointments of life. This not unfrequently originates in, and is dependent upon, the natural vigour of the constitution—the state of the bodily health—the condition of the

animal spirits; and it has been possessed in such a degree by different individuals that they have sustained with patience some of the heaviest trials, and have shown themselves superior to some of the bitterest calamities; but this also is something totally different in its nature from the tranquillity which religion produces: for however valuable it may be, it is far, very far inferior to that holy serenity—to that composure of spirit which is produced by the Holy Ghost in the soul of the godly man. This latter is the result of faith in the providence and grace of God. It is the consequence of an unfeigned submission to him who is the sovereign disposer of all events. How very few ever can possess that fortitude of mind of which I have been speaking! There are thousands, and there are tens of thousands, who are totally disqualified for displaying it, by the natural weakness of their constitution, by the bodily infirmities under which they labour, and the natural languor of their animal spirits. Without the advantages of religion, then, the whole of this numerous class must sink under the ills of life, and become the prey of the numerous afflictions to which mankind are subjected. But the consolations of godliness are admirably adapted to all. They are amply sufficient not only to support the weakest but to comfort the most afflicted—amply sufficient not only to enable a man to bear up under the calamities of life, but to make him glory in tribulation also. The afflictions to which a child of God may be subjected while travelling through this world may indeed be many, but then, the consolations which godliness brings before his mind, and which are calculated to alleviate and support him under the ills of life, are numerous also. Is he not taught, and taught by the Holy Ghost, that God is the sovereign disposer of all things—that all his affairs are under the control and management of an infinitely wise and a good Being—even that God to whom he has committed himself and his all—that God whom he has solemnly taken as his peculiar portion, and whom he calls by the name of Father? Is not the godly man instructed by his religion, that however sharp his troubles—however severe his sorrows, they are all under the direction of one whom he calls Father, and who, by means of them, is advancing his spiritual and his eternal

in the grace and goodness of the Redeemer, he beholds the justice of God.

I trust that you see the importance here of that peculiar constitution of the gospel, by which it provides acceptance for the sinner. Were it not for the august mode of approach through a divine sacrifice and a consecrated priesthood, it would be a mere dispensation of mercy, but then the justice of God would lie prostrate, as it were, under such an economy; and the excellent skilfulness of the gospel economy lies in this, that the sinner may draw to the full of the mercy of God, but through the channel of such a mediatorial economy as the gospel has made known: that is, he, in the very act of doing it, does homage to all the acts of the Godhead. If you refuse it on this, you will receive it on no other ground. God tells us that no man cometh unto the Father but by the Son, while all who enter into his presence by the open door of his Son's mediatorship shall be saved. You will never meet with acceptance with God on the ground of his general mercy, while, on the ground of his gospel mercy, you will never miss it. Should you, in the distaste and disinclination of your spirit to the cross of Christ, keep by your original confidence—should you count only on God's goodness to sinners, while you shut your eyes on his displeasure against sin, as manifested in the death of his Son, then it remains that this displeasure must be manifested in your own death and everlasting destruction. It is the grand peculiarity of the gospel scheme, that while God has come forth in love and tenderness, he has at the same time come forth in purity. On this footing, he welcomes you, but on no other. He will not pass over your transgressions of his law but in such a way as will vindicate the law's infallible right to all your obedience. He will not lavish on you his attribute of mercy but in such a way as shall accord with all the other attributes of his nature. He will not let you off from the violation of his commandments but in such a way as will stamp indelibly the lesson of the law's sanctity. The deepest stigma is attached thus on sin, and the guilt of the sinner is done away. It is a way which God himself has found out, but if you do not conform thereto—if you will not consent to take his mercy in the shape in which

he offers it, nought remains but that you be overtaken by the wrath and displeasure of God.

This view perfectly accords with the popular expressions on this subject. "Truth and mercy met together." The effect of mercy through the channel of that peculiar economy made known to us in the New Testament is, that the mercy is in awful conjunction with the truth. And to show the mercy of God, in the remission of sins, he has sent forth his Son Jesus Christ. The true purpose is to show forth the righteousness of God in it, and that God must be just while he is the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. And thus you can harmonize the declarations of the Bible, which would have been opposed to one another, had it not been for this peculiar method of exquisite skilfulness, by which all the attributes and ways of God to men are harmonized and made one consistent whole. The Lord God is merciful and gracious, and yet he says, that he will not by any means clear the guilty. Well, then, how will you reconcile those two statements? Only by the gospel made known by Jesus Christ, and in which he demonstrates that part of his character, that he will not clear the guilty, by opening up a channel through which he can pour out his loving kindness and tender mercy to all. Be assured that there is not another scheme of pardon that will clear all the misgivings of human conscience, and give the sinner a solid satisfying peace, when he trusts in the mercy of God as made known in the gospel. Let me assure you, that there is a path of escape, and open to you from the guilt you have incurred by your disobedience to God's law. The flaming sword of Eden turns every way to prevent your entrance, and the gospel of Jesus Christ turns every way save one, but that one is a way by which every one makes good his way to the Paradise of God. So far from casting a shade over his mercy, it only heightens and enhances it the more. God's mercy has to struggle a way for the manifestation of itself, amid the conflict of all the other perfections of Deity. The mercy of God is mercy in its highest possible exhibition, for it is a mercy that had the skill which appeared impracticable to every other eye but that of infinite wisdom. It is a mercy by which God spares the guilty who had defied him—It

is a mercy by which he spared not his well-beloved Son, but endured the spectacle—that deep and mysterious agony by which the penalties of a broken law were fulfilled; and by which the problem is solved of God being just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. And now, that the mercy of God has found itself surely established on the foundation of his vindicated honour—now that the high demands of his authority and truth have all been provided for—now that the full demonstration has been given to men and angels of a sovereignty that could not be trampled on, and a jurisprudence that could not be violated—now that every hinderance has been removed, is a voice heard from the mercy-seat—the appropriate word is to recall to that house, from which they had departed, one and all of his families.

We shall now give a short practical application. This mercy of God overpays the guilt even of the most daring and stout-hearted sinner among us. Let him have even grown grey in iniquity, there is still held out to him the offer of that peace-speaking blood in which there resides specific virtue, washing it truly away. These words from the mouth of God himself, can yet be addressed to him, and any man that receives this word with gladness, or that expresses that answer with faith, according to his faith, so shall it be done to him. Come now, let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool—though they be red as crimson, they shall be whiter than the snow. There are none here whose transgressions are so vile and enormous as to be beyond the reach of the Saviour's atonement—none so sunk in indolence, or who has drunk so deeply of the spirit of this world, that he may not through him who died, the just for the unjust, draw nigh unto God; there is none in whom the load of offences is so accumulated, that he may not cast it on that foundation which God has laid in Zion. The very worst among you are free to return to him—nay, you have the word and warrant of an express invitation; and however far you have wandered from the sanctuary of his unspotted holiness, still you are within the scope of this call, Look unto me all the ends of the world, and be ye saved. But, again, remember that in very proportion to the freeness wherewith this mercy is set before

you, will be the consequent displeasure of God against those who shall be found to have rejected it. There is consolation to all who will. We do not exceed our commission when we say so. The kindness of God is still unquenched by your multiplied aggravations of his broken law, but quenched it shall be by your continued rejection of his gospel.

To conclude, let me warn you all, that no one embraces Christ truly as a Saviour that does not submit to him as master in all. This would introduce me, had I time, to the consideration of another right use of the law. I have endeavoured to state to you what a wrong use of the law is. But then a great benefit that arises from the faithful preaching of the law, is, that you are enabled, when it is set up in all the purity of its demands, to measure your own deficiencies, and thus are shut up in the faith. Another, I fear, is too much overlooked, which I would call a still more important use. They who receive Christ as their Saviour, must submit to him as their Master and Judge. Now, to submit to him in this capacity, what is it? Jesus Christ is no other than the everlasting law, which took its rise in the righteousness of the Godhead. Now, here is a legitimate use of the law, if you make use of it as the standard by which to measure your own conduct—not for the object of establishing a right, but for the object now, of bringing yourselves nearer and nearer to the standard of Christ's will and example. For, wherein consists the excellence of Christ's examples? Merely that his history, and doings, and character, exhibit as it were a living transcript of the law of God. You may take your prospects from the Old and New Testaments, or by studying the law as it were by meditating on our Saviour, and taking it from the model of his example. This is the unceasing business of every Christian. Now that you have set it aside as the right of your getting heaven, it is yours that you constantly aspire to the height of its excellence. For what is the law but a transcript upon a tablet of jurisprudence of all that worth and excellence which previously existed on the tablet of the divine character? And in doing so you are bringing yourselves as nearly as possible to the character of God; and you are, by the use of gospel expedients, to make the law your constant standard. That is the

interests! Knows he not that sanctified affliction is conducive to genuine piety, that "tribulation works patience, patience experience, and experience hope, and that hope maketh not ashamed!" Is he not taught, that God, by means of the afflictions and the ills of life to which he is subjected, is weaning his heart from the vanities of this scene; is weakening his attachment to created enjoyments; is drawing his whole soul upwards to himself; is gradually preparing him, by means of these for a better world! that the harder the labours of a godly man, the sweeter his rest at last; the more acute his sorrows on earth, the more exquisitely delightful will be the joys of heaven! What better considerations, then, could be exhibited to the mind, to sustain and comfort it in the season of trouble! What considerations better fitted to render it triumphant over all the calamities of life, than those which the religion of Christianity exhibits to the mind! And that man, my brethren, who would take from poor sufferers the comforts of religion, would prove himself the bitterest enemy of the human race.

In the second place, godliness is profitable, because it imparts sweetness to the enjoyments, and an additional relish to the pleasures of life. It is a libel on piety, my brethren, to represent it as something gloomy and morose. It is false to assert, that Christianity imposes any thing like an unnecessary restraint upon the enjoyments or the pleasures of life. It is, indeed, a common, but a very mistaken notion, a notion calculated to give a very false view of the subject, to suppose that a man must bid an eternal farewell to pleasure; that a man must bid an everlasting adieu to any thing like comfort, whenever he becomes decidedly religious. "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness." "Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." Unquestionably, every unreasonable enjoyment is uncompromisingly prohibited. Every pleasure that goes to dishonour God; every pleasure that would tend to hurt even our bodies; every pleasure that has a tendency to dissipate and carnalize the mind; every pleasure that would conceal from the view of an immortal being, or turn away his attention from the great objects of eternity, is forbidden, strictly forbidden; but I contend that they are

forbidden in mercy, in great mercy to man. But where is the pleasure which it is worthy of a rational creature to enjoy, that the religion of the Bible forbids? The spirit of all its injunctions is, Do thyself no harm. Now, my brethren, in common with all the rest of mankind, a godly man may enjoy the innocent, the rational pleasures of life. He may taste the advantages of society; he may taste the sweets, the endearing sweets of friendship; he may taste all the comforts that arise from the exercise of the conjugal, the parental, and the filial affections. Yea, more, for I now come to the speciality, there is, to the godly man, in each of these, a pleasure peculiar to himself—a pleasure which none but a pious man can ever feel. A man without religion may have his family, and he may enjoy it; a man without religion may have his friends, and find pleasure in them; a man without religion may have property, and may taste pleasures in the enjoyment of it. But, oh! what a sweetness, what an inconceivable sweetness does it impart to the mind of a pious man, when he can say, All these are the gifts of my Father; all these are the blessings of a covenant God! and when he feels his heart led to love him more intensely, and when he feels himself induced to serve more devotedly the great and glorious Giver of all his mercy—when a man can rise from the creature up to the Creator—to the source of all excellence—to the fountain of all good—there is then an additional value stamped upon all that he enjoys; he has pleasures with which a stranger cannot intermeddle: these are mine, and the Giver of them also mine; these mine as the gift of my Father's love; these mine as the earnest of the greater and better blessings he will hereafter bestow. Oh! my brethren, this imparts a sweetness to creature enjoyments, which nothing else could communicate. This gives a relish to the pleasures of life, which a Christian alone understands. Godliness is profitable then, because it adds sweetness to the enjoyment, and an additional relish to the pleasures of life.

In the third place, "Godliness," because it confers upon its possessors pleasures peculiarly its own, "is profitable." None but the man who has an experimental acquaintance with religion, can form any thing like an adequate idea of the

high and holy satisfaction which a Christian experiences, when from darkness he is brought into light; when from a state of condemnation, he passes into a state of justification. Who can conceive his joy, who finds himself translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son! or of his, who is conscious that, under the means appointed by God, and under the influences communicated from above, he is journeying heavenward; he is advancing in piety; he is gradually conforming unto the image of Christ. What must be his joy, who is conscious that he is improving in those fruits and graces of the Christian character, which are the brightest ornaments of his nature, which prove glorifying to God, beneficial to mankind, and comforting to himself! What must be the pleasure of a saint when he knows that he is "adding to his faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance godliness, to godliness patience, and to patience brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity!" There are seasons too, when the godly man is admitted to hold fellowship and communion with his God, seasons when he has a deep sense of the love of Christ towards himself, seasons when he is animated by a well-grounded hope of eternal life, and then he has a "joy that is unspeakable and full of glory." He has a "joy which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away"—a happiness that infinitely surpasses all that the men of the world experience, "when their corn, and their wine, and their oil, are increased." The holy Spirit takes up his abode in his heart, fills him by his inhabitation, "with all joy and with all peace in believing." Now, my brethren, I would ask you to compare these, the peculiar pleasures of religion, with the pleasures of the man of science; with the pleasures of the men of the world; with the happiness of the avaricious, or the profane, or the sensualist, and say, Are they not far superior? Compare, if you will, the every enjoyment which this world imparts to its most favoured votary, with the one single moment of satisfaction, which a redeemed individual has, when God says to him, "I am thy salvation;" when "the peace of God which passeth all comprehension," is thus made to fill his heart and mind, and you will find that

they are light and trifling. The happiness arising from godliness is sure, and it is abundant. It is refined, and it is satisfying. It is a happiness that corresponds to the renewed nature of the possessor, and shall be everlasting.

In the fourth place, godliness is profitable, as it disarms death of its terrors, and the grave of its gloom. It is easy, my brethren, to point to an hour when the brightest prospects of an ungodly man shall be overcast; when nothing but gloomy darkness shall spread itself over all the scene that is around him, and that is before him. Raise an ungodly man from his highest earthly enjoyment, and set him down to converse with the grave; to converse with death; to converse with judgment: let it be but for a few brief moments, and you will mar his whole enjoyment. "The way of transgressors is hard, and they mourn at the last." But, mark the godly man, and he can contemplate this season with a calm serenity of soul. If his mind is in right exercise at the moment, he can, without dismay, look forward to that hour when he shall bid an everlasting farewell to every sublunary object. The light in which he walks, continues to increase in brightness as he proceeds in his journey, and its brilliancy gradually augments, until it reaches the full splendour of a perfect day. There are seasons, too, when, like his Master upon the mount of transfiguration, he can talk, with a holy composure of mind, about the decease which he is about to accomplish; and at the very moment when he speaks of it, a ray of celestial brightness beams upon his countenance. There are instances, where the sentiments and feelings of a pious man have continued the same down to the very moment of the approach of the last enemy; aye, and even when he has been called to enter upon his conflict with the king of terrors, godliness has elevated his mind to the highest pitch of holy joy, and the consolations of piety have triumphed over the very pangs of dissolution. "O death, where is thy sting?" I admit it, my brethren, that clouds will sometimes be found hovering over the last hours of a Christian, but in general these clouds are speedily dispersed, and his last moments are bright and glorious. "Mark thou the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the latter end of that

man is peace." God, his covenant God, watches over him, and protects him during the last and the trying hour, supplies all his wants from an inexhaustible store, and conducts him to that "rest which remains for the people of God." His sun goes down,—yes, but it goes down to rise again in a more congenial land, where sin shall no more disturb, where corruption shall no more mar his exercises, and where no wave of affliction shall ever roll over him. O, my brother, my brother, thou must tread the dark valley! thou must grapple with the king of terrors! thou must enter the gates of death! and nothing will support—nothing will comfort—nothing will render thee triumphant but godliness. O, how valuable!—how inconceivably excellent is that which will retain all its freshness—all its consolation—at a moment when every other source of comfort is dried up. "Exercise thyself unto godliness."

In the fifth and last place, "godliness is profitable," for it prepares its possessor for eternal glory. It has the promise, we are told in the latter part of the verse, of the life that is to come. The influence of religion is not confined to the present transient scene. It extends to the future—to the eternal world. What think you, my brethren, is the design of all the exercises of religion in which we are now called to engage? I am afraid that there are many who never think of this question, and who never endeavour to answer it. What is the grand design of all the exercises of religion—praying, praising, reading, hearing the Word of God, and communicating? Why, just to form the saint now, to those habits of piety and of holiness that will prepare him for the joys and the exercises of eternity. Soon, very soon, the irrevocable sentence of wisdom, will be passed—"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; he that is holy, let him be holy still." Now, my brethren, I cannot too deeply impress it on your minds, that death makes no change on a man's character; but it will perfect the character that has been formed on earth. If a man has been a sinner, it will perfect this character; and he who dies the servant of sin, shall, through eternity, continue its slave; and the man who,

amid much imperfection, has been, while in this world, endeavouring to serve God, and to glorify God, will have his character finished, and will serve him in perfection on high. That character which the Holy Ghost is now forming—the spiritual and moral character, is destined to be perfected in the realms of glory; and no sooner shall the godly man take his departure from this vale of tears, than he shall be ushered into the realms of everlasting life and love—admitted to the beatific vision, and dwell for ever in the presence of God and of the Lamb. Dwell where? Dwell for ever in the presence of those very persons whom he loved supremely on earth: and his love is now made perfect. Dwell where? In the presence of those very individuals whom it was his highest glory to serve on earth; and the flame of devotion now burns brightly and steadily, and he serves, without weariness and without end, him that sits upon the throne, and the Lamb.

In illustrating to you the position in the text, I have stated that godliness is profitable, as it tends greatly to lessen the ills of life—as it tends to sweeten the enjoyments, and give additional relish to the pleasures of life—as it opens up to us sources of enjoyment peculiar to itself—because it disarms death of its terrors, and the grave of its gloom—and because it tends to prepare the possessor of it for future and eternal blessedness.

From this subject, we learn the importance—the value of religion. Compare it, my brethren, with all the systems of philosophy that have ever been formed by man, and that have been lauded so highly by their different votaries, and I am ready to admit that philosophy does enlarge the range of a man's ideas—I am ready to admit that the philosophy of this world has increased our acquaintance with the different objects of physical science. But I will tell you what no philosophy but the philosophy of the Bible ever could do. Philosophy never can inspire a man with love for the moral character of God. Philosophy never can produce a well-grounded hope of eternal life and glory. Philosophy, to use a Scriptural accommodation, may place a man on the summit of Mount Pisgah; but there, like Moses, he must die. Philosophy cannot bring him into possession of the land of promise. It is the peculiar

privilege of the religion of Jesus Christ, not only to bring life and immortality to light, but to say to man, All is yours. After, my friends, we have ascended to the very highest region that ever philosophy occupied—after we have obtained an acquaintance with all that ever philosophy discovered, there are still objects, and objects of infinite moment which lie far, far beyond our reach; and it is the Bible alone that places man on the very pinnacle of nature's Alps, and exhibits to him what "eye hath not seen, what ear hath not heard, and what it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive."

But, in fine, if religion is so excellent—is so profitable, I need scarcely, except for the purpose of excitement, remind you that it is personal religion that can alone be beneficial to any of you. Christianity has done much. Christianity has lightened the sorrows of many a sufferer. Christianity has increased the joys of many a disciple. Christianity has disarmed death of its terrors, and prepared multitudes for glory, honour, and immortality. But, oh! my brother, it will avail thee nothing, if thou art destitute of vital godliness. A man may stand upon the very highest elevation of worldly grandeur—a man may possess the most splendid and brilliant talents that ever excited the admiration, or dazzled the eye of mortals—a man may be possessed of all that wisdom which enables him to explore, and I had almost said, to explain, every mystery of nature; but if he is without religion he is a mere shadow—he is only a gilded trifle—he is only an imposing spectacle. It is personal religion alone that can inspire man with a hope blooming with immortality; it is personal religion alone that can give a man confidence and peace in a dying hour; it is personal religion alone that can prepare you for a companionship with the inhabitants of the world of life, and for the exercises of the land of glory. A personal interest in Christ;—I pause, that I may awaken your attention to the solemn truth;—all, all depends upon

this; and were it my dying testimony, I would bear it. A personal interest in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ can alone avert the wrath of God, can alone furnish you with a passport to the skies, can alone fit a man for the exercises of a blessed immortality. Oh, be concerned, then, every one of you, to have an experimental acquaintance with religion; and try, often try, therefore, if "the root of the matter is in you." I beseech you, my dear brethren, to recollect that a mere profession will avail you nothing. To bend the knee, morning and evening, before the God of heaven; to go regularly, on the first day of the week, into the sanctuary of God, under the influence of a spirit of cold formality, will that, think you, disarm the ills of life? will that, think you, support a man in the day of severe trouble? will that sustain him in a dying hour? O no! But although the form of godliness will not do this, you may rest assured that the spirit of a genuine piety will accomplish it. The professor, the mere professor of religion, may rise from his knees, and leave the house of God, with his understanding just as dark as ever, with his will just as perverse as ever, with his passions just as dominant as ever; but, O! the godly man rises from the footstool of the throne, and leaves his closet, and the house of God, like a child who has been conversing with a beloved parent, and a beam of holy satisfaction, and a smile of ineffable delight is seen upon his countenance, as on one who has been holding intercourse with God. O, then, study to have a heartfelt conviction of the importance of the truth! And this will be the means of exciting you to practical obedience. It will be the means of preserving you from many of the transgressions into which others fall. It will prove the grand test of the reality of your religious character. It will prepare you for approaching the sacramental table. It will prepare you for the scrutiny of a day of judgment. It will prepare you for dwelling for ever with the Lord.

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SATURDAY, 14TH JULY, 1892.

2. 16.

SERMON by the Rev. Dr. WELSH, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. Mr. CARSWELL, Eaglesham

THE HAPPINESS OF THE REDEEMED;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON THE EVENING
OF SABBATH, 6TH MAY, 1892.

By the Rev. DAVID WELSH, D.D.,
Professor of Church History in the University of Edinburgh.

"And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."
—Rev. xv. 3.

THE book of Revelation, my friends, more than any other part of the sacred volume, abounds in representations of the state of the redeemed in heaven. The transcendent glories of their dwelling-place, their rapturous enjoyments, and their blissful occupations are all set forth in language, which, in its grandeur and obscurity, seems as it were a sweet though broken and distant echo of those transporting strains that fill the heavenly congregations. In the passage of which our text forms a part, they that had gained the victory are represented as finding all peace and joy in singing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. The song of Moses is preserved in the 15th chapter of the book of Exodus. It was intended to celebrate the triumphant deliverance of the children of Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, by the providential interference of the Almighty—a deliverance typical of that of mankind from the thralldom of sin and Satan; and with a joy similar to that which the Israelites testified, the redeemed of the Lord ascribe all honour and glory to the providence of the Most High. The song of the Lamb is the song in honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath redeemed them with his own blood. Here, then, we have an account of those subjects that occupy the thoughts, and call forth the adoring songs of the saints above, the power, and wisdom, and mercy of the Most High, as manifested in his works of providence and of redemp-

Vol. I.—No. 16.

tion. In encompassing the altar of the Lord, we have been this day led to the remembrance of a Saviour who died and is alive again, and who liveth for evermore. We were not only called upon to contemplate the sufferings to which he was subjected, but the glory to which he is exalted; and I trust that it may not be unsuitable to the purpose for which we are assembled this evening, to consider the glories he has prepared for his people, when he comes the second time without sin unto salvation. We propose, therefore, to make some remarks on the two particulars contained in the words of our text.

First, They sing the song of Moses, the subject of which is the providence of God. We do indeed find that this great leader of the Israelites confines himself entirely, in the expression of joy, to the consideration of himself and of his countrymen. The wonderful proof he had witnessed of the greatness and goodness of the Lord, filled his heart with adoring sentiments of the divine Majesty, and we may suppose that the spirits of the just made perfect, in remembering all the Lord has done for them, will extend their thoughts to the glorious perfections of the Most High, as they are displayed in all their operations. Accordingly, we find that their song begins in the latter part of the verse before us, with a recognition of the majesty of the Lord: "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou

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King of saints." And oh! my friends, what an inexhaustible subject of contemplation is here—what a field for never-ending praise! The more that we think of God, the more is our mind overwhelmed in the boundless and unfathomable ocean of his perfections. We see only a part, a very small part of the works or ways of God, and yet even what we behold, might afford materials for an archangel's praise. What, then, must it be to those whose capacities are increased beyond our power of imagination, whose experience has been enlarged by passing through unknown states of being, who have proceeded beyond the verge of time, and seen the records of eternity and the wonders of the universe unrolled before them, and who have been actually admitted into the presence of the uncreated eternal God! We can form but a faint idea of what they know, and the glow of our emotions when excited to the intensest ardour is cold to theirs; but still as the subject is made known to us, we may, in so far as our powers enable us, direct our thoughts in a similar channel, and join, though in lower accents, in the strains of angels' song. Even in the works of creation and in the works of providence, such as we behold them, limited though our knowledge be, we see enough to inspire us with never-ceasing admiration. All nature abounds with proofs of an all-present, all-bounteous God. Every thing we behold betokens the work of his hand—the sun that rules the day, and the moon that rules the night—the seasons that are constant in their ever-varying round—the summer and winter, and seed-time and harvest, that never fail. The gracious care of God comprehends alike the great and the minute, and "his tender mercies are over all his works." He maketh the grass to spring up, and giveth to every living thing its food. Behold the lily of the field, how it grows, and it is God that giveth it its increase. A sparrow falleth not to the ground without his care, and the hairs of our head are numbered. There have also been collected, in the history of the world, multitudes of events by which God, in language more expressive, as it were, and in a louder tone, declares his presence and his providence here. For example, it has been observed, that when iniquity has proceeded to an excess, so as to be intolerably grievous to all those who

come within its influence, however stable it may appear, in a manner sudden and unexpected, and by means which to human judgment would seem to be inadequate, it is brought to nought. In less conspicuous circumstances, also, the providence of God is not less observable in suffering the wicked for a time to prosper, and then, again, even without any visible or extraordinary means, bringing them down to destruction. In like manner, it has been remarked that even in this world, the righteous have often received a great recompense of reward. In their greatest trials, they have often met with unexpected deliverance. In the midst of many sorrows, signal providence has brought to them great encouragements. Even in this world, what appears their greatest calamity has often proved their greatest benefit. There are many cases on record, which all have an opportunity of observing; but in addition to these, every Christian has, in his own experience, which may be known only to himself, or to those with whom he is more immediately connected, a multitude of proofs that there is nothing that is not ordered by the Most High. Are there not among you, my friends, some who have seen the hand of the Almighty obviously exercised in regard to you—to whom have befallen events, which you can ascribe to nothing but this, that the Almighty, in his general arrangements, has had respect to the particular situation of every individual, so that you have felt and testified that verily this is the doing of the Lord? When, for example, you have lifted up your voice in prayer to God, have you never, in the comfort that has been diffused over your soul, or in the strength that has been increased to you in proportion to the multitude of your trying duties, or in your deliverance from all your troubles, experienced the all-gracious care of God? Yes, my friends, the Lord is near to all that call upon him. If you seek him, you will assuredly find him. If you commit your ways to him, he will bring to pass what will be for your real good. And if you wish to have the personal proof of his providence, you have only to come to him in the way of his appointment, and you will find that verily his power is over all the earth.

It is obvious that this train of reflection might be followed out almost indefinitely, but our time will not allow us to dwell

longer on this part of our subject. Before concluding, however, this head of the discourse, we would express our trust that there are not a few among you who would join on earth in the song sung in heaven; who in contemplating the dealings of the Almighty in regard to you—the way in which he has led you—the blessings he has bestowed upon you, feel your hearts burning within you, and exclaim, "Great art thou, O Lord God Almighty!" And if you can already join in this song, with what increased rapture of adoration will you join in it when you find yourselves in the number of those who sing it before the throne! When Moses first sang his song on earth, he was only delivered from one of his enemies—he had only escaped the perils by water, and the wilderness was still before him; but yet he sang unto the Lord, and called on the Most High. The wilderness of this world, my friends, is still before you; but if you put your confidence in Him who has brought you up thus far, he will never leave you nor forsake you, till he bring you to the promised land. And O, my friends, great as the reasons are for gratitude to God for all that he has already done to you, what is all you can feel here to the joy that then will take possession of your souls, and attune your hearts to sing! If in the midst of the battle, you put your trust in the Great Captain of your salvation, and rejoice in his name, what must be your delight when you at last join in the shouts of victory! If when passing through the Red Sea of trial, your heart does not truly faint though the billows roll on every side, and death and destruction be around you, what must it be to have your feet fixed on the further shore, to stand secure on solid land at last, where you can look back in safety on all the perils through which you have come—where you may see, indeed, not merely Pharaoh and all his mighty host going down like lead in the mighty waters, but where you may see sin, and Satan, and death going down in the dark depths of that dread abyss of which your soul was once in jeopardy, but which you shall escape for ever. O to reach that tranquil haven where the tempest rages no more! O to stand upon those blissful shores, the abodes of never-ending felicity, where the brethren that have gone before us are ready to welcome

us—where the Star of Bethlehem, that was our destined guide on earth, shines for ever above the mansions where the Saviour dwells! Sorrow and sadness never enter there. The very remembrance of past trials would be blotted out, were it not to heighten the sense of present security, and all the sorrows that now grieve us, all the doubts that perplex, and the difficulties that alarm us, will be remembered only to heighten the rapture with which we will unite in singing the song of Moses, the servant of God.

II. In the second place they sing the song of the Lamb, the subject of which is the grace of God. When thinking of the saints above as unceasingly employed in celebrating the praise of the Most High, the idea of weariness may perhaps present itself to the minds of some. In heaven, however, there can be no weariness or fatigue. These are states peculiar to our imperfect existence. They are experienced when we are employed in lengthened exertion, and are owing to the imperfection of our powers, which are soon worn out. It is our love of variety or change that makes us feel a tedium in any one long-continued uniformity of occupation. But in heaven none of these causes can have any place. The employment is the most delightful of which our nature is susceptible. It is gratitude, and love, and joy expressing themselves in a triumphant song. There all imperfection is at an end—the necessity of repose is no longer experienced; and though the Word is ever essentially the same, it presents ever-varying occupation for all the diversity of our powers. When the prophet was permitted, in holy vision, to behold the throne of God, he tells us that above it stood the seraphim, each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly; and one cried unto the other and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory—which strikingly shows how the most rapturous expression of devotion may be conjoined with the humblest feelings of veneration, the most ardent execution of active service, and a ready waiting to do yet further what may be required. Indeed, as we cannot suppose that the number of our powers will be diminished in an improved state of existence, and as nothing is bestowed or

the creatures of God in vain, we may be assured that there will be ample and appropriate scope for the exercise of them all. There will, however, be this difference between the enjoyment of the saints in bliss and those who are in this world, that, when here, even the most devout are prone to forget what is their chief end, but in heaven every bliss is enjoyed, and every service is done immediately, and directly in reference to the glory of God.

They sing the song of the Lamb. That this is the subject of the angels' songs, and that it is in honour of Christ that they sing it, is of itself sufficient to show that their occupation can never terminate, and can never die; for here is a subject that affords material for never-ending meditation—which, when we understand it, opens up purer, and wider, and more wondrous prospects, any one of which may lead to holier and more joyful adoration. In contemplating the works of Providence, we have been disposed to think that the mind would rest satisfied with the contemplation of the display there made, of the works and wonders of the Almighty; and so it might, were it not for the work of grace which opens up a view of the divine character, which leads us not to forget the providential dealings of the Most High, but to connect them, as subordinate to something greater. In the works of creation and providence, we see marks of wisdom, power, and goodness, which we cannot comprehend, because they are infinite in extent, but still they are such as the mind readily assents to, and to which it bows in submission; but in the grace of God, who sent his own Son to die for a guilty world, there is that which we could never have anticipated—a view of the divine character altogether new, and transcendently more glorious than what we elsewhere witness, or could have conceived. Here is an example of lovingkindness we never could have asked for, never could have hoped for, never even could have thought of. Here is such a measure of perfection as we perceive at once the inadequacy of our understandings to estimate, the coldness of our hearts to feel. And what can we say more, than that the height and the depth, the breadth and the length of the love of God, in Christ Jesus, passeth understanding? That a being, infinite in power and goodness, should delight in com-

municating existence, and in making the existence delightful, is a truth that claims our assent, and calls forth our adoration. That those who continue to do his good pleasure should seek, and seeking, should receive whatever is for their good from their beneficent Creator, is what appears to follow from the perfections of his nature. We may go farther, and say, that, in the case of one who had transgressed against him, he might if it were consistent with the stability of his government, be expected to take compassion, and forgive. But, were this impossible, could it ever have been supposed that, in order to extend pardon, his own Son should be offered up in sacrifice? There is no son who, if he were to ask his father for bread, would expect to receive a stone; but what son is there who, in any circumstances, could hope, even from the most affectionate of earthly parents, a gift, in any respect, or in any degree, corresponding to the unspeakable gift of God? The very idea of a gift so inestimably precious could have its origin only in that infinite love that would bear to bestow it. When, in the counsels of eternity, the state of man ruined by sin, was taken into consideration, there was not one among created beings who could devise any means of relief. "And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me." Of all the events that have taken place in the annals of eternity we can conceive none that are to be compared with this, that he who made the world died for it—that he who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, humbled himself to the death.

"In heaven itself can such indulgence dwell?
And was the ransom paid? it was; and paid
(What can exalt the bounty more?) for you.
The sun beheld it—No, the shocking scene
Drove back his chariot: midnight veiled his face;
Not such as this; not such as nature makes;
A midnight nature shuddered to behold;
A midnight new! a dread eclipse (without
Opposing spheres,) from her Creator's frown!
Sun! didst thou fly thy Maker's pain? or start
At that enormous load of human guilt
Which bow'd his blessed head; o'erwhelm'd his
cross;
Made groan the centre.
Oh what a groan was there! a groan not his.
He seized our dreadful right; the load sustained,
And heaved the mountain from a guilty world."

O, my friends, every other subject sinks into utter insignificance when com-

pared with this, and all other subjects or events are of importance only as they are connected with it. The cross of Christ is an object of such unconquerable brightness that it spreads a glory around it to all the nations of the earth, all the corners of the universe, all the generations of time, and all the ages of eternity. If we take a right view of its glory, we shall see it, contemplated in its wide-spreading influence, attracting the regards of time, past, and present, and to come—of heaven, earth, and hell; we shall see it the object of the deepest adoration of creatures, and the perfect admiration of the infinite Creator. The greatest actions and events that ever happened fill with their splendour but a moment of time, and a point of space. The splendour of this object fills immensity and eternity! Yes, my friends, this is a subject that communicates a glory to all others according as they have relation to it. It is the stay and hope, the joy and rejoicing of men. Angels desire to look into it; and, with reverence be it spoken, it is the most glorious manifestation of the infinite perfections of God. It sheds a lustre on all the works of creation and providence. Without it, something would be felt as still imperfect, as still wanting, and the song of Moses would be deprived of all its spirit of harmony, if not sung along with the song of the Lamb.

In every aspect, the mission of Christ into the world is equally interesting, whether we conceive it in its origin, or pursue it through all the system of those wondrous means apparently unconnected, but all subservient to its accomplishment; or view it in individual manifestation, when the Word of God was seen on earth, and his glory was beheld of men—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father; or whether we trace it still farther in the effect produced on the world in general, or in the still greater effects yet to be produced; or consider it in its final condition when the end cometh. When Christ has reigned till he has put all his enemies under his feet, and when all things are subdued unto him, then shall he Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him. In all these points of view, it is a matter for serious and devout meditation. Even here in this imperfect scene, if viewed aright, it affords consolation and good hope, and

it is only when thus viewed that we will feel how abundant are the grounds for complying with the exhortation of the Apostle, "Rejoice evermore." But O, my friends, what is all that can be experienced on earth when compared with that which is to commence in heaven—when hope is to rise into vision, and vision into glory—when perfect love is to cast out every fear, and when the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world shall be for ever in the midst of his people, and make them kings and priests unto God, to reign with him for evermore. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And, oh, think you that it is possible that they who shall have received such blessings, can ever weary in showing forth the praises of Him to whom they owe their all? For of all the joys of heaven itself, will not this be the greatest, that their great and triumphant occupation can never be interrupted, and never have any end? The song of the Lamb is ever varying, yet ever the same; ever advancing, and yet never arriving near to a termination. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever." There cannot be a remembrance of the past—there cannot be a thought of the future, that will not heighten this song of praise. Were we once guilty? And will not this increase our gratitude to him who has bought us with the price of his own blood? Was our life on earth mingled with many sorrows? And will not these add to our gratitude to him who has wiped every tear from our eyes? The blissful sight of God smiling upon us—the presence of our gracious Saviour—the sight of the holy angels, and of just men made perfect, in all this there is indeed a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. On earth there is nothing perfect, nothing complete. Our purest joys are mingled with many sorrows. There are few whose faith has arrived at that degree of strength, that it is not mixed with some remaining doubt—few whose hopes are not saddened with some rising fears, and none who have the power of indwelling sin wholly destroyed. The enemies of our soul are still numerous and powerful, and though our resolution

may be strong, the conflict may be severe. And besides, there are sorrows to which we are born as the sparks fly upward. There are toils and griefs that beset us all in the way of our pilgrimage, and even they who keep the promised land most steadily in view, still feel that the path that leads to it is a path that leads through a vale of tears. But, my friends, these things are to have their end. After this mortal toil, there is a rest prepared for the people of God. We are pilgrims and strangers on earth, but if we faint not by the way, or turn not back, we will at last arrive at the heavenly home. Here we have the battle to fight, but victory awaits us there. Here we have the race to run, but there we shall gain the ground. Here we have to sow with tears, but there is a harvest-home of joy. Whatever may befall us here, we may but little regard it if we be followers of that which is good: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." The years of his life speedily come to an end, and blessed be God, the powers of sin and of Satan reach no farther. You may surely endure the ills of time without repining, when there is an eternity of happiness before you. Among the trials of this life, let this consideration support you. Amid the temptations of spiritual adversaries, let this preserve you. We are told that when the children of Israel were led away captive, they sat down by the rivers of Babylon and wept when they remembered Zion. We have also been led away captive by sin and death, but, blessed be God, our Saviour has led captivity captive, and conquered all our enemies. Though therefore in a distant, we are not in a strange land, and we may join therefore in singing one of the songs of Zion—yea, we may sing the Lord's song in this land. And though some tears may fall in the midst of our mirth, and though notes of sadness may mingle in the song, it may cheer the hearts of the righteous to know that in Zion they will soon be singing it, where they are removed for ever from the fear of captivity—where they are placed beyond the reach of those who carried them away and wasted them—and where without fear, and without remorse, and without imperfection, they can join the whole heavenly host in that song, of which

here they have only some imperfect accents which they often lifted up solitarily and in affliction, but which, when on high, will be the joy and rejoicing of their soul, even the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. Yes, my friends, the sorrows of earth are to be succeeded by the joys of heaven, and they that fall asleep in Jesus are to be awakened by the triumphant strains of the heavenly company. They themselves shall join in the universal song. The grace of God is its subject—the glory of God is its end, and it is in honour of Jesus Christ that they will unite—that Saviour whom they even feel to be worthy of still more love. The praises of the heavenly host they feel not adequate to his deserving, and this feeling may be supposed to leave something wanting in the joys of heaven. But they also know that what is imperfect in its measure, may be perfect in its continuance.

We cannot conclude without addressing ourselves to those who are deferring opportunities respecting the blessed ordinance which we have this day been celebrating. You know not of what a happiness you deprive yourselves, you know not what misery you are storing up against the day of wrath. When Christ comes every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him. But they will see him, not as a friend, but as an enemy who is to pronounce against them the sentence of condemnation. And though they shall hear the strains of the blessed, it will be only as the door shut to their exclusion. Let these considerations lead you to repent, and to turn to the Lord, and to seek that he may have mercy upon you. I trust that there are many of you who contemplate with delight the occupation of the spirits of just men made perfect, and who this day resolve that you will drink of the fruit of the vine in his kingdom above. Let it not be forgotten, however, that the surest, the only means for the accomplishment of these desires, is to continue steadfast in the faith, and in the observance of all the duties to which that faith leads. You ought ever to look to heaven, but not to the end that you may forget your station here; but on the contrary, that you may acquire steadfastness to act as that situation requires. This is the time of labour—the time of rest comes afterwards; and the

great advantage in looking forward to that rest, is to cheer, and support, and animate your hopes, and lead you in all diligence to add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge. To those who have tasted of the pleasures of the world to come, then, we would address the exhortation, Continue steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Do you delight in the exercises of devotion, and mourn that the period of them is so brief? and do you experience difficulty in maintaining a spiritual frame of mind, amid the occupations of this world?—put your trust in God, who will not quench the smoking flax, nor break

the bruised reed. Make your case known to God himself, and pray that he may fulfil within you all the good pleasure of his goodness, in the work of faith with power; and amid the interruptions of this world, and amid the still sadder interruptions that arise from the coldness and deadness of your own hearts, do what thy hand findeth to do, and let your hopes be animated by the prospect of that blessed period, when you will meet with no interruption from without, and feel no weariness from within, and be for ever employed, and delight to be employed, in singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. Amen, and may God bless his word.

THE LOVE OF GOD TO MAN;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, DUKE STREET, GLASGOW, ON THE EVENING OF SATURDAY, 23^d JUNE 1832,

By the Rev. WILLIAM CARSWELL, Eaglesham.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—JOHN iii. 16.

OF all the various aspects in which the character of God can be contemplated by us, there is none so sweet and delightfully attractive as this, that God is love. We are awed and overwhelmed by the contemplation of God's majesty and power. We are filled with veneration and solemnity when we consider his holiness and his justice. Our admiration is excited when we survey the depth and the infinitude of his wisdom. But the contemplation of his love has something in it that is sweet and cheering to the soul of man, and that sheds a benign and hallowed radiance over all his other attributes. In contemplating the character of God, as a God of love, there is one consideration which tends to bring this attribute to the heart of man with deep and delightful emphasis; and it is this, that man has himself been made the prominent and distinguished object of it. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us." The human family seems, from the beginning, to have been regarded by Jehovah with deep and delightful interest. In our primeval state of innocence, there were to be seen many strong and striking tokens of that deep

and heartfelt interest with which Jehovah regarded the human family. The high and exalted place originally assigned us in the scale of creation—the glorious image of Jehovah, according to which we were at first formed—the many and exalted privileges to which we were then admitted—and the sweet and blissful intercourse which then subsisted between heaven and earth, all bear testimony to the fact, that man, though far removed by earthly residence from the place where God's honour dwells, was yet the child of his warmest affections, and the destined object of his special love. Hence the language of astonishment uttered by the Psalmist on this subject. "When I consider thy heavens," says he "the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." But it is not in our primeval dignity and original glory that we are furnished with

the brightest and most resplendent manifestations of Jehovah's love to man. It was after our apostasy that the exceeding riches of the love of God towards us appeared. It is in the arrangements and transactions of a three-one God, in covenant for the recovery of our guilty family, that we behold the height and the depth, the breadth and the length of the divine affection. The parent who fondly cherishes and provides for his obedient offspring, and who labours with unwearied effort to promote their happiness and comfort, gives clear and convincing proof of the strength of that affection with which his children are regarded by him. But it is the waywardness of the prodigal that puts the bowels of a parent's tenderness to the test, and that brings the ardour of his affection to its full and utmost stretch. Even so it is with God. To create us like himself, holy, and happy, and immortal; to endow us with capacities capable of knowing and of enjoying him; to look upon us with complacency, and to admit us to the enjoyment of his sweet celestial intercourse; all this was highly honouring to man, the creature of God's hand, and the worm of his footstool. But the subsequent history of our family is resplendent with events which display the love of God to tenfold more advantage, and which hold it up to the wonder and admiration of a whole intelligent universe. To devise a scheme of mercy exactly suited to the circumstances of our fallen guilty family—to repair the ruins of the fall, and to raise us from that misery and wretchedness into which, by our apostasy, we had plunged ourselves—to extend his favour unto those who had revolted from his authority, and transgressed his holy law—to redeem a race of rebels, who had opposed his richest goodness, and wantonly provoked his Majesty, and refused to hearken to his voice; this displays a strength and an ardour of affection which many waters could not quench, nor floods of opposition drown. Herein "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." There is just one grand topic contained in this verse to which I propose, in the sequel, to call your attention, and that is, the love of God to man. The bosom of the Evangelist was filled with the most glowing impression of the divine

love, and he is solicitous to produce a similar impression on the minds of those around him; and you will notice, that it is not the simple truth, the bare fact that God has loved our family, that the Evangelist here presents to our contemplation: it is the *exceeding riches* of God's love to man that he wishes pointedly to exhibit. As God is a God of love—as love is a necessary and an essential attribute of his character, so he must of necessity bear a good-will to all his rational offspring. That man, therefore, should have shared the divine benevolence and regard, along with God's other creatures, is not what the Evangelist wondered at; but that God should have so loved the world—that God should have loved the world to such an extent—that our family should have been made the objects of such transcendent affection—that we should have been raised to such a pre-eminence above all God's other creatures, by being made the objects of such a transcendent display of divine regard; this was what the Evangelist was so amazed at; this is what may well fill the minds of men and of angels, in time and through eternity, with wonder and with astonishment. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We propose, then, in the sequel, to call your attention to the exceeding riches of the love of God to man. And, in illustrating the love of God, there are four considerations suggested by the language of the text, to which we, in a few words, would call your attention. First, there is the *high character and dignity* of him who has made our family the objects of his affection: "God so loved the world." There is, secondly, the *exceeding meanness and worthlessness* of those whom the Almighty is here said to have loved—"the world"—*the world lying in wickedness*. There is, thirdly, the *infinite value of that gift* which his love prompted him to confer upon us: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." And there is, lastly, the *glorious and the exalted felicity* to which, in consequence of Jehovah's love, we have the prospect of being raised: "God gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

First, the exceeding riches of the love of God to man will appear when we consider the high character and exalted dignity of him who is here represented as having set his affections upon us. We generally form our estimate of any person's attachment to us from the place he occupies in society, above or below ourselves. On the esteem of those who are beneath us we set comparatively little value. We look upon it as mattering little whether we enjoy their favour or their frown. All their offices of kindness are regarded by us with indifference, all their efforts in our behalf are overlooked, and soon forgotten; for those who stand precisely on the same level, to notice one another, and exert themselves for each other's happiness, excites but little admiration. We are prepared for such procedure on the ordinary principles of humanity; but when we see the rich interfering in behalf of the poor,—when we see the prince elevating the beggar from the dunghill, and setting him among princes, even among the nobles of the land,—when we behold those who are high in rank, and who are amply crowned with worldly honours, exerting themselves in behalf of those whose character and circumstances are far beneath their own, we are instantly filled with wonder and amazement at such procedure, and we fail not to extol the kindness and condescension which an individual thus displays. Now, my friends, let us apply this principle to the love of God to man, and in a moment we will see how powerfully it tells in favour of its transcendence. Let us think of the high and exalted character of Him who is here represented as having set his affection on the human family, and we will see what ground there is to wonder that ever one so high should have condescended to stoop and notice those who stood so far beneath him. Who is He that is here said to have set his love upon man? What is his name, or his Son's name? If thou canst, tell. Is he not the greatest, and the wisest, and the best of all beings—one who is higher than the kings of the earth—to whom there is none in heaven that shall be compared, and none among the sons of the mighty below that is at all equal? Yes, my friends, he is none other than the uncreated and the eternal Jehovah—he who sits upon the throne of the universe—he

who sways the sceptre of underived and uncontrolled dominion, and to whom the earth and the fulness thereof unalienably belong. Had it been only one of the creatures of the Almighty who had formed an attachment for another; had it even been one of the angels before God's throne that had condescended to stoop, to notice, and regard us, the inhabitants of God's footstool, the surprise in that case would have been less, the love to man then had been comprehended, we would have been able to have formed something like an adequate conception of it. But that ever the bowels of Jehovah's tenderness should have yearned over men—that ever the Creator of the ends of the earth should have concerned himself about the welfare of his apostate offspring—that he who is altogether independent of his creatures, who was infinitely happy in himself before the foundations of this earth were laid, and whose felicity would have been unaffected although the whole created universe had been swept back again into non-existence—that a being so inconceivably exalted and supreme should have condescended to notice—to set his heart upon the worms of his footstool, may well excite the wonder, and call forth the intensest admiration of a whole intelligent universe. Will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth?—He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain—He who is infinitely exalted above all blessing and praise, and before whom the angels, when they approach, are obliged to veil their faces with their wings, and to prostrate themselves in the dust. Yes, my friends, although he is the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity and the praises thereof, he has condescended to look down upon us, in our low and lost estate, and to exert himself for our eternal well-being. And does not this proclaim aloud the exceeding riches of his love, the exceeding riches of his grace! Assuredly there was nothing about us that could induce the Almighty thus to think of us, and to set his affections upon us. No! It is entirely resolvable into that unparalleled tenderness and love which reigns in the bosom of the Eternal.

And, my friends, as the high dignity and character of Jehovah make it matter of wonder and surprise that ever he should have set his affections upon us, so this

very same consideration, the dignity of Jehovah's character, stamps a value upon his affection, and makes it an object of desire far above that of any other being in the universe. Of all the other beings in the universe, there is none whose love is one ten-thousandth part so desirable as the love of God. His love is like himself. It is infinite and divine: eternal in its origin, it is everlasting in its duration. Unchanging in its exercises, it is inconceivable in degree. It is the love of a being who has all power in heaven and in earth, and which is able to enrich the objects of it with every needed communication. Oh, how little does human affection for the most part avail! how uncertain its continuance! how fleeting and unsatisfactory the gratification which it yields! from worldly ills it cannot screen us. To our spiritual and our higher joys it does not minister. The cares of a troubled life it helps us not to bear, nor softens the hard pillow of affliction in a departing hour. A shadowy bliss is only what it imparts—an imaginary happiness is the all which it has to bestow. But the affection, the lovingkindness of the Lord, is no such vain enjoyment or transitory portion. It is a shield of perpetual protection around us, the never-failing source of consolation within us, the pledge of much after and exalted blessing. It overrules for good the past and the present, and secures us against the future; it sanctifies prosperity; it disarms adversity; it sweetens life; it unstings death; and it brightens up our prospects in the world to come. In thy favour is life, and thy lovingkindness is better than life. If God be for us, who can be against us? He is the Lord that dwells on high; and if we are the objects of the affection of such a glorious and exalted personage, then we may rest assured that what concerneth us he will make perfect, and that neither death nor life shall ever be able to separate us from his love.

Second, the riches of the love of God will appear when we consider the exceeding meanness and worthlessness of those on whom he is here represented as having set his affection. The character and circumstances of those on whom we set our affection must evidently be taken into account, in forming our estimate of the strength of affection which we display. To love our friends is but natural—to

feel kind towards our benefactors is but just and fair—to relieve the oppressed is humane; but to love our enemies—to do good to those that hate us and despitefully use us, is something more than human, is celestial, is divine. When the object of our affection is peculiarly amiable and engaging—when the individual beloved is characterized by qualities that are powerfully calculated to win our hearts and to excite and fix our esteem, we do not wonder at his enjoying that affection to which he is so well entitled. But when our affection is fixed on some unworthy and forbidding object—when the individual beloved is characterized by qualities that were calculated to quench and counteract our affection—when this affection continues still to operate in the midst of circumstances that would have warranted the withholding of it; nay, that seemed even to necessitate the withdrawal of it, we are instantly filled with wonder and astonishment at the strength of attachment and good-will which is thus displayed. Now, this is precisely the state of matters in regard of God and of man. Think of the exceeding meanness, and worthlessness, and vileness of those on whom the Almighty has set his love, and you cannot fail to be filled with a deep and overwhelming impression of the strength of Jehovah's attachment. Was it upon those who were deserving of such treatment at God's hand, that he set his heart?—was it on his pure and obedient offspring who have never in one single instance displeased him or disobeyed his law?—were there any recommendatory qualities about us to excite Jehovah's attachment or his high esteem? No, my friends. There was, every thing the reverse. There was a hatred, and malignity, and rebellion; an impurity, deeply rooted, and unceasingly cherished. The Evangelist tells us that it was "the world" that God so loved, and this, in Scripture, is a form of expression that is associated with almost every thing that is bad. "The world." It was not the world as it originally existed, in its state of innocence and purity, but the world, as debased and degraded by the fall. It is true that the world universally has not been made the object of God's divine affection. It is only on a certain portion of our family that God has set his love. The men of the world

are regarded by Jehovah with displeasure, with detestation. It is only his own peculiar people on whom he has set his heart. But then, my friends, let us recollect, that it is not because the saints were better than other men that God has loved them. On the contrary, we know that they were originally formed out of the very same corrupt lump of clay of which wicked men are formed, and differed not from their ungodly brethren, in respect of every corrupt and debasing principle and propensity. It is not, therefore, on the men of the world at large that God has set his love, but upon those whom he is prepared and determined to save. And the love of God to them appears as illustriously conspicuous as though it had fixed upon the vilest sinner now in the place of woe; for the best of the saints of God were originally as vile, and as filthy, and as polluted as the vilest miscreant now in Tophet. The Lord looked down from heaven to see if there was any among the children of men that did understand and seek God, and the sweeping declaration is, They have all gone out of the way;—they have altogether become filthy;—there is none of them righteous, no, not so much as one. See, then, how rich and exuberant must have been that affection which prompted the Almighty to set his heart upon us, the guilty, and polluted, and depraved creatures of his footstool. We deserve to have been set up as eternal monuments of his displeasure. He might have glorified his power and his justice in consigning us to the blackness of eternal darkness. By a single word of his mouth, he could have blotted out our name for ever from under heaven, and consigned us to eternal woe, and peopled anew our earth with a purer and a better race. But where, in that case, would have been the riches of Jehovah's love, and mercy, and grace? My friends, it is because our God is a God of love that we, his guilty apostate offspring have not long ago been consumed. Are we not at this moment living witnesses of the long-suffering mercy, and love, and forbearance, of our God? for had we got what we deserve, we would have been at this moment expiating our guilt in the place of endless woe. O, how different the ways of God from the ways of men! If a man offend his enemy, will he let him go safely away? But God found us when we

were enemies, when we were rebels, and even then he set his heart upon us—even then his time was a time of love. Among men, while prosperity shines upon us, we readily find friends sufficient; but, let the dark hour of adversity come, and they generally turn their backs upon us, and leave us to our own resources. But it was not so with God. It was in the day of our distress, it was in the hour of our calamity, that God thought upon us, and set his love upon us; and that, too, when we were neither desiring nor deserving his divine interference. Behold, what manner of love is this, then, which the Father bestoweth upon us! Well may we exclaim, O, the height, the depth, the breadth, and the length of the love of God! for it passeth knowledge.

Thirdly, the exceeding riches of the love of God to man appear conspicuous when we look to the infinite value of that heavenly gift which he has conferred upon us. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." We may safely form our estimate of any person's attachment to us, from the sacrifices which he is prepared to make in our behalf. The man who will do nothing for one whom he pretends to love, gives assuredly but little evidence of attachment. The man who will do any thing—yea, who will submit to part with every thing for the object of his love, shows a bosom overflowing with deep and unconquerable regard. Now, my friends, the Evangelist tells us, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." O, how many things would not a parent part with rather than a son—an only and well-beloved son! You remember what a proof it was of Abraham's love to God, when, at the divine command, he was prepared to part with Isaac. You remember how loath Jacob was to part with his beloved Benjamin. You remember how reluctant David was to part with Absalom, even the rebellious Absalom. "Deal gently," said he to Joab, "with the lad for my sake." And, when he heard of his death, he went up to the chamber over the gate, and when he went, he wept, and said, "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Think, then, my friends, of the infinite and independent Jehovah—think of the King, eternal, immortal, and invisible, giving up

his own Son—his only Son—his well-beloved Son—causing him to pour out his soul unto the death, that we might thus enjoy everlasting life! O how dear to God must have been his only Son!—dearer than any other being in the universe; yea, dearer than all the other beings in the universe put together! Angels are styled the sons of God, and so are believers; but Christ is God's only Son, his only begotten Son, his well-beloved Son. He is his Son in a sense in which no other being in the universe can be so styled. Think, then, of the affection, the deep and inconceivable attachment that must have existed between this Father and this Son; and yet such was God's compassion and love to our guilty family, that he gave up this only Son. He spared him not. He gave him up unto the death for us all. He made his soul to be an offering for sin. Think, my friends, of the depths of humiliation and abasement, and the intensity of suffering to which, on our account, God's only and well-beloved Son was subjected by his heavenly Father. It was a night ever to be remembered by him and by the universe, which Christ spent alone in Gethsemane, just before the hand of violence was lifted up against him, when he experienced the hiding of his Father's countenance, and had the vials of divine wrath poured out into his soul. O, who can tell what sorrow must have passed on Christ's heart ere the bloody sweat was forced through all the pores of his body, and a prayer for deliverance, accompanied with strong cries and tears, was presented to him who is able to save! "Awake, my soul," &c., was the divine sentence which had gone forth against God's eternal Son. And who can stand before the indignation of the Lord; who can abide the fierceness of his wrath? Christ trod the wine-press of Almighty God. It pleased the Lord to bruise him, to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin. God spared him not, but freely gave him up to the death for us all. It was not possible that sinners could be redeemed in any other way; and such was God's affection towards us, that rather than that we should perish eternally, he laid his hand upon his only-begotten and well-beloved Son.

We might farther have illustrated the exceeding riches of the love of God to man, from the consideration of the glo-

rious and exalted felicity to which, throughout eternity, he has given us the prospect of being raised. But on this we do not insist as your time is gone.

From this subject, then, you see the obligation under which we are laid to love that God who has done so great things for us. "We love him," says the Apostle—we ought to love him, "because he first loved us." O, my friends, let us meditate frequently on the love of God to man! Let our souls dwell with intensity on this delightful theme, until we feel a corresponding glow of affection to the Most High kindled in our hearts. Let us try to return God love for love. Let us try to love him, from the consideration that he has so loved us that he gave his only-begotten and well-beloved Son for us. And if God has so loved us as to give his only-begotten Son to be a propitiation for our sins, let us see that we do not reject Him who has thus come in God's great name to save us. Let us see that we do not despise and reject the greatest and best gift of Jehovah's love. Let us remember that there is not another name given under heaven, or among men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus. There is a deep-rooted propensity in fallen man to look for salvation to some other quarter than God's eternal Son. How many are there who are building their hopes of salvation on the general uncovenanted mercy of God, instead of looking to God's dear Son! How many are there who are trusting in penitences and confessions! How many are there who are building their hopes on works of righteousness which they themselves have done; while God tells us he sent his Son to seek and save those that are lost, and that there is not another name whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus. Let us flee to him whom God has raised up and appointed to be a hiding-place from the storm, and a covert from the tempest. Let us accept of God's gift to men. And let us beware that we do not say to him, thy gifts be to thyself: depart from us, for we will have none of you. Let us embrace the Son of God. Let us kiss the Son; for if once his wrath begin to burn but a little, blessed are only they who have their hope fixed on him. God bless his word; and to his name be the praise. Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 21st JULY, 1832.

17. | SERMON by the Rev. Principal MACFARLAN, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN M'GILCHRIST, Edinburgh.

THE PROFANATION OF THE SABBATH ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE TRON CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE EVENING OF
SABBATH, 3d JUNE, 1832,

By the Very Rev. DUNCAN MACFARLAN, D.D.,
Principal of the University, and Minister of the Inner High Church, Glasgow.

"Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths."—
EZEKIEL xxii. 8.

THESE words form part of a catalogue of the sins of Jerusalem, for which the prophet threatens them with the wrath and the judgment of God. Perhaps there is not a mark of general disregard of God more distinct, or a symptom of his judgments more alarming, than a prevailing disrespect for holy things, and profanation of the Sabbath. I think we may assume, that the commandments of God are of perpetual obligation—that he who has said, Thou shalt have no other God before me, thou shalt not worship an idol, and thou shalt not take my name in vain, has also said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, six days thou shalt labour and do all thy work, but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work." It is needless to take up time in proving a truth, I think universally acknowledged by all who pretend to call themselves Christians, and it were equally idle to prove that there is no commandment more frequently, more daringly, more openly neglected and despised. It may be of some use to all of us, that we turn the subject in our minds, and consider how the Sabbath ought to be sanctified—how it may be profaned, and above all, what its profanation actually amounts to. To these three topics, it is now proposed, in humble dependence on divine assistance, very shortly to call your attention.

The Sabbath, we find, was originally intended to commemorate the work of creation. The reason why it is command-

Vol. I.—No. 17.

ed is, that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the seas and all that in them is, wherefore the Lord rested on the Sabbath day and hallowed it. It was renewed in its obligations, when Moses led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt into the wilderness, and it was then more especially called "the Sabbath of the Lord thy God," to distinguish it from all the festivals of idols and false gods. From the time of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, it has been observed not precisely on the same day in the ordinary calculation of the week, but on every seventh day, to commemorate, in addition, the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Now, as it is thus set apart for purposes strictly and exclusively religious, its observance implies strict abstinence from all ordinary occupations and employments. In it, said God, thou shalt not do any work. The spirit of the gospel, the example of our Saviour, the institutions of society, of self-defence, of self-preservation, prevent us from interpreting this commandment with Jewish or Pharisaical strictness. There was a strictness added to the command under the law—a strictness which prohibited occupations, even the most necessary, during the time they were in the wilderness; but these additions are obviously ceremonial, and were rendered necessary by the circumstances of the times. The command is a moral precept of the highest importance, and though we do not very often regard it in the

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strictness with which the Jews understood it, so as not to lift a hand in our own defence against an enemy, not to perform any act, the most necessary or the most merciful, yet, on the other hand, we regard it as restraining from all ordinary occupations, from the pursuit of that industry which is not only lawful, but a duty on every other day. We are not only permitted to devote the remainder of the week to our ordinary employment, but the words amount to an express command, "Six days thou shalt labour and do all thy work." But the command is also as express, that "on the seventh day thou shalt not do any work." A sacred rest, a holy respite from labour on that day, is the first and most conspicuous branch of the duty of sanctifying the Sabbath. But to this it is necessary that we add abstinence, not only from labour, but also from amusement. A sour and gloomy refusal to answer the most innocent questions, an aversion to every possible indulgence, has been testified by some, with a strictness more than Pharisaical, and such have been told, and well told, that they seem to worship the Sabbath, rather than the God of the Sabbath. But another extreme, far more common and prevalent in many nations calling themselves Christian, and indulged in by many classes of society, is that of devoting every part of that day not occupied in the house of God, to mere amusement and relaxation, and the enjoyment of the most trifling pastimes. Now, than this we can consider nothing more inconsistent with the solemnity of the Sabbath. For what purpose is it instituted? It is the Sabbath of the Lord our God. It is a day above all others, in which we are bound to hold communion with him, in which our relation to God ought to be particularly present to the mind, and if we think of him as he is, the eternal and all-seeing God—if we have the fear of God before our eyes—if we do not absolutely despise him, the thought of him must be a serious thought—one striking the soul with awe—one enforcing composure—one quite inconsistent in its form or tendency with any thing light, gay, frivolous, or amusing. Hence, if we would observe the Sabbath aright, it will be necessary that idle amusements, as well as important occupations be intermitted; that our thoughts be solemnized before that God whom no mortal eye can behold.

But private acts of devotion are also essential branches of the observance of the Sabbath. No day ought to pass without the thought of God being present to the mind. No day ought to pass without calling ourselves seriously to address to God our humble tribute of thanksgiving and supplication. But such exercises more peculiarly become the Sabbath. It is then we ought to address ourselves to God without distraction. It is then our thoughts ought to be more especially withdrawn from other objects, and to be fixed and concentrated on him who is ever present with us, and to whom our secret thoughts are known. It is then we are peculiarly called on to enter our closet, to shut our door, and pray to our Father who seeth in secret. It is then we are peculiarly called, in domestic life, as a family, as a domestic circle, enjoying common privileges, and bound to common duties to take counsel together, and address ourselves to our Father and the Maker of us all, and pour forth to him our tribute of thanksgiving, and our imploring for mercy.

But besides this, the public worship of God is a most important branch of the duty of the Sabbath. Of all the institutions by which the thoughtlessness and worldly-mindedness of men are corrected, by which a knowledge of divine truth is kept up, by which we are kept from forgetting that there is a God, or a Saviour, or a world to come, the most powerful instrument is public worship. It is a duty to meet together, that with one mouth we may glorify God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a privilege precious and invaluable, that we have access to his house of prayer, and have the means and opportunities of joining in his worship. It is of outward blessings the greatest—that without interruption, discouragement or human interference, we are permitted to assemble ourselves together in the sanctuary, and pour out our hearts in social worship unto God; that we are invited to meet together with those with whom we agree in form of worship and principles of faith, to pour out our hearts to God, to adore, to praise, to give thanks to him, to implore his forgiveness, and confess our sins before him, mingling our prayers and intercessions together, and familiarizing ourselves to the truths, the promises, the precepts of the Scriptures.

Now, in order thus to observe the Sabbath, let us remember, that something

like preparation is necessary—that we should timeously withdraw ourselves from those occupations which engross the thoughts, and unfit us for divine worship. It is a melancholy preparation for the ordinance of the Sabbath, that the preceding evening should be spent in folly, in excess, and in intemperance, or in the hurried and anxious completion of some labour too long delayed. Would we worship God aright, and honour all his Sabbaths, we should endeavour timeously to withdraw our thoughts from ordinary employments—we should endeavour anxiously to complete in due time whatever may exercise too powerful an influence over the feelings and affections, and carefully to abstain from all society, all amusements, all indulgences, that weaken our minds, and disturb the current of our thoughts, and bring us, by their recollection, to an indifference as to religion. It is incumbent upon us, that we habitually avoid those occupations and employments which prove a snare to us—which may interfere with the rest of the Sabbath—which may unnecessarily detain us from the house of God, and that we select those as our employments, our pursuits, our habitual occupations, which shall give us time both for the enjoying of God, and the making the rest of the Sabbath sanctified to holy purposes. And in domestic life, it is more peculiarly incumbent on those on whom their fellow-mortals are any way dependent—that they impress on them a reverence for the Lord's day—that they associate with it every thing engaging—that they make it to the young, not a weariness, not a period of irksomeness, but a season of instruction, and that they countenance it so as that it may be remembered by them with delight.

I have thus very shortly recapitulated some of the prominent features in the right observance of the Lord's day, chiefly that, being conversant with them, we may be warned the more distinctly and explicitly against the contrary sins, despising God's holy things, and profaning his Sabbaths. This profanation may be summed up in a few particulars. It consists, in the first place, in unnecessary labour on the Lord's day. I say unnecessary, and I wish it to be understood in a strong and extended sense. We are apt to multiply extravagantly the occupations which we conceive to be necessary. We think it necessary to take journeys, and necessary to do what our

neighbours do, and necessary to keep our pursuits on a footing with the pursuits of our neighbours, and to make ourselves acquainted with those things which they know, because it is merely convenient to do so, because it enables us to compete with them on an equal footing in the pursuits and business of life. Now, this is multiplying cases of necessity, vainly and presumptuously. No labour should be held necessary, which cannot be postponed or delayed without the most serious injury. No labour ought to be accounted necessary, which is merely convenient or profitable. No labour is to be accounted necessary the object of which is not to avert some grievous calamity, or to make some large addition to the welfare of those about us. To make that day a day of labour, a day in which we are to make profit, by facilitating any unnecessary intercourse on the part of others—to make it a day, distinguished alone by the securing of a door, or the shutting of a window from any day of the week, is a profanation the most deliberate and the most selfish.

But, in the second place, the Sabbath is profaned, very often profaned, by idleness and neglect of God's worship. This is perhaps, a still more common and prevailing profanation. How many hours are spent in idle amusement, in dozing, and, in fact, doing nothing—in poring over books of idle amusement, or without observation of their contents. How many are spent in idle strolling and wandering from place to place—in sauntering without any distinct object, or any benefit obtained. How many in idle and sometimes sinful conversation—in the indulgence of empty curiosity—in the indulgence of a disposition to talk and communicate, nay, to spread malignant insinuations, and to circulate mischievous reports to the prejudice and injury of our fellow mortals. What trifling excuses do men set up for absence from the worshipping of God. How many are there, who, for any or for no excuse, prefer remaining at home to mixing with their fellow-Christians, and uniting their hearts and voices in praise and prayer to their Maker. How many are there, in short, who count themselves Christians, and yet, very generally, forsake the sacred privilege and duty to which they are called, of assembling themselves together before him who is the father and Maker of them all. Let us only think how much we have

neglected our duty, or disregarded our privilege; and let us be assured, that in doing so, we have been profaning God's Sabbaths, and taking it upon us to observe them in a manner of our own.

A still more grievous, and no less common profanation of the Sabbath, consists in sinful excesses. That which is a sin at any time, is certainly not less so, if committed on the Lord's day, and it has, in addition, this aggravation, that it involves the guilt of two sins. The blasphemy that may be spoken, the lie that may be told, the drunkenness into which an individual may fall, is altogether the guilt of that sin, and superadded to that guilt—the guilt of profaning the holy Sabbath. The sin is double on that day, and yet, my brethren, are sinners restrained by this consideration? Is not the commencement of that holy day, disturbed and desecrated weekly in our ears, by scenes of tumult, of disorder, of excess, of painful degradation, of vile intoxication, in a state unknown at any other time. Is it not selected by many as a period for wasting their time, their substance, and their health in tippling? And do we not often on that very day, witness innumerable instances of low degradation, the most wretched exhibitions of intemperance that are to be seen at any period. I would not offend your ears. I would not, in this place, go over the disgusting and revolting catalogue of crimes, well known to be perpetrated on that day, without scruple and hesitation; nay, for which, as affording us more convenient opportunity, it is often selected and set apart. It is for us to consider whether these things are our doings, or whether we are not partakers in such things; whether we have not ourselves permitted such offences, and if we have not contributed to them in others, by withholding from them our stern disapprobation, or treating them with a smile, as only laughing or amusing; or by persisting in those occupations and those employments by which we are called to minister to the sins of others, and afford facility and accommodation to their excesses in all their violence.

And, farther, we may well be said to profane the Lord's holy Sabbath when we encourage it in others: when parents neglect their children and masters their servants—when those who have influence and authority employ it in weakening the obligations of duty with respect to the

Sabbath. Surely such persons are profaning the Sabbath if they will allow those whom they have employed to hold the same place in their estimation, while they profane the Sabbath, that they would do if they kept it sacred. If they set, in their own persons, an example of levity, and carelessness, and contempt for sacred observances, they are at least indirectly accessory to its profanation.

If, then, the Sabbath is thus profaned—commonly profaned by ordinary labour—by neglect of God's worship—by sinful excess, and by neglect of those restraints, and counsels, and examples which should be preserved—if these things are common, I would only, in the second place, entreat you to consider whereunto it amounts.

It would seem as if of all sins this were the least heinous, that of all the commandments of God this were the one which may be broken with least scruple or blame. It would seem a small matter to neglect or profane it, and therefore I would very shortly call on you to think a little on what is the real amount of the sin. First, it amounts to practical atheism—to a denial that God is the creator and governor of the world. I have already said that it was first instituted in commemoration of God making the heavens and the earth. He has himself told us expressly that he rested from his labours on the seventh day, and sanctified it as a Sabbath to himself. In every nation where a God is acknowledged—in every part of the earth where the least tendency to religion, however obscured and imperfect, is observed, some fixed portion of time, and generally a seventh, has been set apart for the service of God. Wherever, though obscured by the mists of superstition and error, God was named, and his government acknowledged, some portion of time has been uniformly set apart for his religious service. He who neglects, therefore, to do this—he who does not set apart some portion of his time to religious duties—he who has no sabbath, no day of rest from his ordinary pursuits, no interruption of his ordinary labours, no solemn acknowledgment of God at set times, virtually denies God, and does all in his power to make others deny him, and to banish from the world the knowledge of God, and to reduce mankind to live and feel as if there was no God. It amounts to a denial of his being—his creation of all things—his government of the world—his being the

rewarder and punisher of men, according to their deeds.

But, in the second place, the neglect or the profanation of the Sabbath implies idolatry. It is putting the eternal God, in our estimation, on a level with all the false gods and dumb idols which have been acknowledged throughout the world. The original institution of the Sabbath was for the purpose of keeping up the knowledge of God the creator. The republication of it on Mount Sinai to Moses, was for the keeping up the knowledge of the one living and true God, as distinguished from all dumb idols. Melancholy it is to contemplate the extent of superstition throughout the world, to think of the false gods whom mankind multiplied to themselves in every age and corner of the earth; and of the shocking rites, the deeds of atrocious cruelty or of abandoned licentiousness, by which these false gods were honoured. Even the Israelites, the chosen people of God, made a molten calf and said—*This be thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.* Idolatry in all its various forms, the worship of the beasts of the field, the worship of stocks and stones, of the heavenly bodies, of dumb idols made by men's hands, has polluted the religious feelings and observances of men in every period of the world. One great object of the Sabbath was to keep man from worshipping idols, and to preserve the knowledge of the one living and true God. "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage;" and the commandment to make no idol or no similitude is followed up by this, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." He, then, who breaks this commandment, he who does not keep it holy, is giving direct encouragement to idolatry, is teaching men to forget the one living and true God, the maker of heaven and earth, and encouraging them to multiply for themselves false gods, numerous as are the stars of heaven, or the sand on the sea shore. Every tendency to idolatry, every disposition to set up something else as an object of worship in place of God, every corruption introduced into his worship will be found more or less connected with the profanation of the Sabbath. There is, therefore, in addition to atheism, the sin of idolatry in profaning God's Sabbath. But there is more—there is the guilt of infidelity, of denying the Lord Jesus, of despising the Gospel. Why do we meet

on the first day of the week? We meet one day in seven to commemorate God's creation, and to keep in our minds our dependance on the one living and true God: but we meet on this particular day, because on that day Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Now, this event is one, the importance of which cannot be stated too strongly. It is the pivot, so to speak, on which the faith of every Christian turns. If Christ be not risen, then is your faith vain, says an apostle, and our preaching is also vain. If Christ be not risen, ye are yet in your sins. If Christ be not risen, he was not the promised Messiah. If Christ be not risen, he was not the Holy One of God. If Christ be not risen, you have no reason to trust in his satisfaction and atonement, as accepted by God. If Christ be not risen, you have no ground of hope hereafter, no rational ground on which to anticipate another and a better world. The holy, high, and important truth to be established beyond dispute, is this truth—that Christ is risen. Now, it is to keep alive an impression of this truth—it is to keep Christians ever mindful of its certainty and importance—it is that we may never doubt that Christ is risen, that we meet on this day, to call on God through him. It is that our faith in this most important event may be undisturbed—that we may be exalted beyond doubt and distraction, in regard to a matter of such unspeakable importance—it is that the effect of Christ's resurrection, in establishing our faith in him as our prophet, priest, king, deliverer, and God, may be unmoved, that we have been called on to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, and to be regular in the worship of God on that day. If you will not listen to that call—if you will not remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy—if you will not be regular in your attendance on the worship of God, you are allowing the resurrection of God to be forgotten—you are saying it is of no great consequence for men to believe whether Christ rose from the dead; and, along with that, contributing to a forgetfulness of that glorious and everlasting gospel which I have endeavoured to show, as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, depends on that resurrection. Think, then, my brethren, if you should ever be tempted to profane the Sabbath, if you should ever indulge the vain imagination that you may lightly and without blame dispense with

its benefits, think of the resurrection of Christ, and be assured that it is virtually denying the Lord that bought you, and it is saying that Christ is not risen—and, consequently that all that is said of our resurrection from the dead may not be true.

Fourthly, It is cruel, cruel beyond expression to the bodies and souls of your brethren, to profane the Sabbath of the Lord. That institution, even if it were but a human institution, would be the wisest and most merciful that ever was appointed. It affords rest to those inferior animals which the power and sagacity of man have tamed and made subservient to many important duties. It is a rest from the crushing labour, the exhausting toil which the great body of mankind are compelled to endure in order to earn their daily bread. It is a respite to the mind, a refreshment to the thoughts, devoted as they must be to our occupations during a long portion of our time, but which expand to more noble objects, which rise to the contemplation of heaven and eternity. It is the means of our being united together as brethren, of our being brought into the house of God, where young and old, rich and poor, the learned and the ignorant, and all, of whatever name and description, come as children of the same God, partakers of the same nature, heirs of the same hope, approach in love to unite and pay their tribute of thanksgiving and joy to the God of love and peace. In short, time would fail were I to attempt enumerating the hundredth part of the blessings which the Sabbath confers on the bodies and souls of men. And he who profanes that Sabbath, who neglects its duties, who holds them light, is depriving, as far as lies in his power, the beasts of the field and his fellow-mortals, the poor and industrious of his countrymen and fellow-citizens, the ignorant, the uninformed, the active—all who ought to be endeared to him—of the most precious respite, the most necessary abatement of the condition of labour and fatigue, of that which sweetens their existence, which prolongs their lives, which harmonizes their spirits, which unites them by a bond of brotherhood not easy to be dissolved. His crime is beyond what words can express; he would, by a measure at once selfish and cruel, tear away from the poor man the rest of the Sabbath; he would tear away from his family the habits of sobriety and temperance connected with

its observance; he would tear from Christians the source of their purest enjoyment, and deprive them of what is a means, under the blessing of God, of connecting them with the joys of eternity.

I may observe, that the profanation of the Sabbath implies a most unreasonable contempt of human laws. Wherever Christianity is prevalent—wherever it has been recognised as a national religion, the observance of the Sabbath has formed a part of those safeguards by which it has been maintained. The laws of man, founded upon those of God, prohibit that any gross immorality should be tolerated on that day; they fence it round with certain penalties, and do so wisely; not that man should compel his fellow men to be religious—not that it is in the power of law to make men give an acceptable worship to God, who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth—but because the law protects those who fear God, in the exercise of their religion. It is our duty to wait in God's house of prayer—it is our duty and our desire to keep the Sabbath from polluting it, and we desire to do so without interruption—without disturbance—without being prevented from thus waiting on our God. Now, we cannot do this if the intemperate are allowed to interrupt us in our worship—if the profane are allowed to scoff at us, if those engaged in the same employments with ourselves, are permitted to add a seventh part to their portion of industry, and cut us off from the regular returns of our industry. The law protects them, by preventing those whom conscience would not prevent from interfering with, and interrupting their brethren in keeping the Sabbath holy. It protects them by preventing such from annoying them in the exercise of their devotions. The laws, then, for these, are wise and equitable. They are given for the protection of the pious.

Lastly, the profaning of the Sabbath implies a total disregard of all domestic duties—of all those duties which arise from the relation of parents and children, of husbands and wives, of brothers and sisters, masters and servants, neighbours and friends. These constitute the greatest proportion of the duties which, under God, we have to perform, and in the fulfilment of them, we find at once our purest enjoyment, as well as the fulfilment of most sacred obligations. But, alas! what kind of parent is he who profanes the Sabbath,

and consequently, both teaches and allows his children to do the same, and run in all the wickedness which follows. What kind of husband is he who squanders his hard won earnings in intemperance and licentiousness, and allows his family to perish? What kind of master is he who will neither observe the Sabbath himself, nor indulge his servant with an opportunity of resting from his labour, and waiting on God on that day? What kind of neighbour is he who interrupts and disturbs by noise, by the pursuit of ordinary employment, or by excess, those engaged in family or in social worship. All the ties of domestic life are involved in our observance of the Lord's day, and are violated by the profanation of the Sabbath.

You will not, I think, depart hence with the impression that such admonitions as I have now attempted to offer, are unnecessary or out of place. You will not, I think, dispute that the Sabbath is sadly neglected—dismally profaned in all these ways, and many more. And you will not, I flatter myself, disregard the word of admonition, or be impatient while I warn you in kindness and love, against lending yourselves more or less to this profanation. It is one of the signs of the

times, of the most awful and appalling character, that this seems to increase daily—to become more and more prominent—to interfere more and more with our honoured national character, to sap the very foundation of religious and domestic happiness and social intercourse—and expose us to the judgment of the Almighty. Let us then be warned against contributing to such a sin—let us beware of giving encouragement to the profanation of the Sabbath, of increasing this evil, which, like a wasting pestilence, is spreading over our land, and is doing execution a thousand times more dreadful than any battle, destroying its tens of thousands of immortal souls. Let us, in the place in which God has been pleased to order our lot, compose ourselves to the sacred observance of that appointed time. Let us remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Let us recommend its observance by precept and example to others, and above all, implore him who alone can, to enable us to observe it not in form—not in the absence of gross abuse, but in spirit and in truth as humble believers in an exalted Redeemer, and expectants of that day when he will call us to account. May God bless what has been said, and to his name be the glory world without end. Amen.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, GORDON-STREET,
GLASGOW, ON THE EVENING OF SABBATH, 24th JUNE, 1832.

By the Rev. JOHN M'GILCHRIST,

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Ought not Christ to enter into his glory?—LUKE xxiv. 26.

By glory in general, my friends, we mean that perfection of excellence, which, according to its kind, commands the admiration, or challenges the worship of intelligent creatures. Of glory, there are evidently three orders—the glory of sense, and which is closely connected with the senses; the glory of the mind; and the glory of holiness. The grandeur and magnificence of princes, the renown of conquerors and heroes, the wealth, honours, lordly mansions, and splendid retinue that make up the patrimony of the great, belong to the first description of glory. By the glory of intellect, I mean that empire which

great minds have established over human thought, that sublime elevation to which their bloodless conquests have raised them, and the immortal renown which by these they have acquired. Alexander the Great may be considered as a fit example of the former, or of the glory of sense. Sir Isaac Newton is an appropriate example of the latter, or of the glory of mind. There is, lastly, the glory of holiness. This is the empire of saints. This is the order in which they are great and illustrious—a glory essentially different in its nature, and superior in its kind to both the former; infinitely more imperceptible to mere intel-

lectual men, than their greatness in its turn is to that of the mere children of sense. I need not tell you, that the most illustrious pattern of this glory was Jesus Christ. Without worldly splendour, without distinction of scientific discovery—he came in his order, that of holiness—he publishes no inventions—he wears no crown; but was himself “humble, patient, holy in the sight of God, terrible to wicked spirits, and free from sin.” And with what mighty splendour—with what prodigious magnificence does he come forth before the eyes of the heart, the optics of true wisdom. Now, my friends, be it remarked, that on his glory, Jesus never entered. In his divine nature, holiness strictly—essentially belonged to him. From unbeginning ages, he dwelt in the fulness of its splendour, nay, he never entered upon it as Mediator. From his conception and birth it was necessarily his own, and from his cradle to his cross, he shone in the splendour of his holiness, without a cloud, without eclipse, and without spot. To the carnal eye, he had indeed no glory, but to the eye of God and holy beings, the glory of his holiness shone as brightly during the period of his humble and afflicted life, as it did when he reposed in the bosom of his Father—as it does now, when he is seated in the midst of the throne. His humble condition, his obscurity and poverty, the neglect, the reproach, the persecution which he suffered from men, were in no degree incompatible with his peculiar glory: so far from eclipsing, they added to its splendour. When in this and other similar passages, then, it is said that Christ entered into his glory, it is not the glory of his holiness that is meant. This co-existed with his being as God and Mediator. Of this it was impossible he could divest himself. To the eye of the carnal world his glory was imperceptible, but from the eye of God and holy beings, it never was, and never could be veiled. On this the terrestrial scene of his humiliation and suffering, it shone in clouded splendour, but even on human beings it began to break forth in all its dazzling, and in all its captivating splendour, as they were able to bear it. We beheld, say they, his glory, the glory as of the only begotten, full of grace and truth.

Having made these preliminary remarks, we proceed to inquire, shortly, what is the glory on which Christ entered on the ter-

mination of his sufferings. Secondly, what were some of those seasons or occasions when it may be said more especially that Christ entered into his glory, and lastly, to advert to one or two principles on which it may be shown that it was necessary that Christ should enter into his glory.

First, we are then to inquire what is the glory on which Christ entered on the termination of his sufferings. By the glory of Christ we are here to understand that state of exaltation that stands opposed in every point of view to that state of humiliation to which he submitted from his conception to his burial. In other words, the glory which he veiled during his residence on earth, together with that vast accession of glory to which he was entitled, and to which he has been exalted as an approved and accepted Mediator between God and man.

First, then, the glory on which Christ entered on the termination of his sufferings, was the glory he possessed from eternity as the Son of God, and the second person of the Trinity. This consisted in his being in the form of God, in his thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, in his being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, in his perfect equality with the Father in all the attributes of his nature, and in his dominion and authority, in the equal claim he preferred to the universal homage and worship of beings, and in that ineffable glory he enjoyed in the bosom of his Father, in which from eternity he reposed. This is the glory of which he emptied himself, when he tabernacled among us—when he took on him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man; and this glory he re-assumed on the termination of his suffering. Hence the memorable prayer he presented on the eve of his agony—“Glorify thou me with that glory which I had with thee before the world was,” was soon granted to the full, for having submitted to the suffering of death, this suffering no sooner terminated, than he was crowned with glory and honour. But, while this is included in the glory here spoken of, what is chiefly adverted to is, that, in the second division, the glory to which Christ is entitled, and to which he is exalted as the approved and accepted Mediator between God and man. This we might have viewed in the various elements of which it consists. But your

time is short, and therefore, I sum up in the two following statements.—Christ as Mediator, is exalted to the possession of universal authority, is raised to the possession of universal dominion, and has been declared to be worthy of supreme worship and homage. The dominion of this earth has been given to Christ. It was the scene of his obedience and suffering. It was the scene of those conflicts with the powers and principalities of darkness, on which he rested his claims of superiority as Mediator. It was the scene of those temptations and trials—of that church which is his beauty and his fulness—and there was peculiar propriety, therefore, in subjecting this earth to the dominion of the Saviour. Accordingly, he no sooner terminated his sufferings, than he began to establish his pure and spiritual kingdom in this world—a kingdom which is at this moment rapidly spreading its boundaries, and will be speedily commensurate with the wide earth. Yes, he is the Son of man whom Daniel saw in vision, coming in the clouds of heaven, to whom was given dominion, a glory and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages, should serve him whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, that shall never pass away. This is the kingdom which the God of heaven shall set up, which shall break in pieces all other kingdoms, which shall stand for ever, which was prefigured by the emblematic image of a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, that itself became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. Yes, the time is coming when all people, nations, and languages, shall not only be subjected to the authority of Christ, but willingly own his dominion; and when the sceptre of his power and mercy shall be visibly extended over the whole world. This is one element of the glory of Christ on which he has partly entered, and will more fully enter. But the dominion of the Saviour is not confined to this world, but extends over the universe, through all its orbs, through all its orders of intelligent beings. All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand, God hath put all things under his feet, and hence, says the apostle, he is Lord of all. And this supposes supreme authority; and with this, as I remarked, he has also been invested. To the throne of the eternal glory and majesty he has been exalted.

Having purged us of our sins, he is set down at the right hand of the majesty on high; having humbled himself and become obedient to death, even the death of the cross. God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at his name every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord.

But I remark, farther, that Christ, as Mediator, has been declared by God worthy of supreme worship and homage. It is the command of God that all men should honour the Son, ever as they honour the Father; nay, that the loftiest intelligences should reverence and adore him. Hence, when he brought his first begotten into the world, he says, Let all the angels of God worship him. And verily, on this glory, Christ has already entered. Thousands and tens of thousands of redeemed men on earth, though imperfect, are lifting up their souls, day by day, to him as the object of their supreme love, and countless thousands of perfected spirits in glory, are perpetually singing that song for ever charming and ever new—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." And angels of glory join their hymn of praise. "I saw," said Isaiah, "the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims, each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Such, my friends, is the glory on which Christ entered, and is not this state of exaltation indeed glory? What glory in this world is equal to his, of the increase of whose government as king and head of his church there is no end? And what glory in the world to come is equal to his, who is set down on the throne—angels, and authorities, and powers, being subject to him as the one supreme object of worship and homage.

I now go on to the second division of the subject, to notice some of the times, seasons, and occasions, when it may be said in a more especial manner that Christ entered into his glory. Taking, my friends, the Holy Scriptures for our guide, there are three seasons when it may be said more particularly, that Christ entered into his

glory—his resurrection, his ascension, and his second advent, or his advent to judgment. First, Christ entered into his glory when he rose from the dead. That the resurrection of Christ is regarded as the commencement of the glory with which his sufferings were to be followed, is too obvious to require proof. We find Paul saying in the synagogue of Thessalonica, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead to the commencement of his glory; words that may be considered a commentary on the words before us. The grave, my friends, which was the last scene of the Saviour's humiliation, was the first silent witness of his glory. When the third day was come, the soul of Jesus returned from paradise, and re-entered his holy habitation, which, by his divine power, he did re-animate, healing all its wounds with the exception of those of his hands, feet, and side, which he reserved as proofs of his victory, and arguments of his passion. And having comforted the souls of the fathers, who had gone to paradise, through faith in Messiah to come, so now he saw time to bring comfort to his disconsolate disciples, to make full demonstrations of his divinity, to instruct them in matters of his kingdom, and prepare them for the reception of the Holy Ghost. And in every aspect and light in which we can view it, is not his resurrection truly glorious? To the eye of sense there is much that is grand and stupendous. Having marked the place where they had laid him, the groundless jealousy of the Jews solicited and obtained a military guard to watch the body. At the close of the second day after the burial, this guard was stationed at the sepulchre—the silent hours of night, the season of stillness and repose, had passed away without any deviation from the ordinary course of nature. At this hour no voice was heard—no foot had obtruded on the sacred solemnity of the scene; already the full orbed moon was standing on the verge of the horizon, shedding her pale light, and casting a dim and shadowy reflection on the shields and helmets of the soldiers; already the heralds of dawn were tinging the eastern sky, and the summits of Judah's mountains. Hitherto the guards were lying stretched around the sepulchre in careless security, as yet there was no proof of any thing miraculous—as yet there was no symptom of nature struggling to be delivered; the face of nature, like the bosom

of sleeping infancy, was calm and tranquil, with no other movement, but such as indicated that the silent progress of her beneficent operation was going on, when, sudden as the twinkling of an eye, the scene was changed, and, with the quickness of lightning's flash, the angel shed his radiant presence around, like a mighty meteor illuminating the surrounding scene, and revealing the distant bulwarks of the holy city; and ere they recovered from their consternation, the solid earth began to reel from beneath them to and fro, like a drunken man—its firm foundation seemed to loosen and to be moved, and the frame of nature to be sinking into ruin. Was not this a scene truly grand and stupendous! Such was the material glory, that men proverbial for courage, and reckless of life, which was indeed the character of Roman soldiers, trembled and became as dead men. But this was but the prelude to the introduction of what was to follow. During the concussion of the elements, or immediately after they had subsided, that glorious being whose countenance was like lightning, rolled back the stone, and removed the other barriers that opposed the egress of the Prince of life.

But here a veil of silence is thrown over the resurrection: no mortal eye—no angelic eye was permitted to look on the interesting event—the union of soul and body. We are disposed to think, with a French writer, that there is something prodigiously grand in the resurrection not seen. It is not an object of sense, and is clearly perceptible to the mind, and to the mind only when spiritually enlightened. We could not, by the eye of flesh have seen that divine and illustrious conqueror setting his foot, by the act of his resurrection, on the neck of sin and death, of hell and the grave—throwing his adamantine chains of eternal subjection and control around those powers and principalities of darkness, with whom, on the theatre of the world, he had maintained so long a conflict. His resurrection proclaimed to the universe the destruction of sin, the completion of his triumph in his people's redemption. It furnished an exhaustless source of delight to his Father, and of joy to the pure benignity of angels. These are things connected with the resurrection of Christ that impart to it all its peculiar glory—a glory which is the object of the mind, and not of the eye. He had no sooner bowed his blessed head,

and stepped forth from the lowly sepulchre in which he lay, than he bade an eternal farewell to his humiliation, and hailed the commencement of his glory. He stood before the universe the acknowledged destroyer of sin, the grand conqueror of Satan, and the Sovereign Lord of all, with nothing now before him but the eternal fruition of that joy for which he endured the cross and despised the shame.

But I remark, farther, that Christ entered into his glory, in an especial manner, when he ascended to heaven. After his resurrection, Christ was in the condition of a conqueror, to whom a triumph had been awarded, but not yet enjoyed; he had won the diadem, which was not yet, however, set upon his head. The throne of majesty awaited his arrival. The ministers of the white robe of the eternal palace stood waiting in joyous expectation to do his will: nor was that throne long unoccupied, nor his will long delayed. After a few short weeks, during which he delayed for his people the consummation of his glory, he prepared to return to the bosom of his Father, and take possession of the promised reward. And having fixed the time and place of his departure, he conducted his disciples to the Mount of Olives, a scene associated in their minds, and in his own, with the most memorable transactions of his life. There, in the view of the scene of his retirement, and of his devotion, and of the bloody city which had rejected and murdered him, he stood, prepared to wing his ascending flight to the place not made with hands; and while addressing a few brief exhortations to his followers, the angelic squadrons that were to form his retinue, were preparing, in fairest order, to follow their sovereign Lord, and to strike up a louder and bolder anthem than when they appeared on the plains of Bethlehém to celebrate the commencement of what he had now gloriously completed. He breathed on his followers his parting blessing, and rose, in his own and in his Father's power, till those heavens which should contain him till the final restitution of all things, concealed him from their sight. And I ask you, my hearers, oh! if the spirits of just men made perfect, and the angels only were allowed to behold the wondrous scene—to behold the glory of Christ at that hour, when, divinely fair, he passed through the veil of the eternal sanctuary, when the gates of the celestial, the

eternal palace were thrown open to receive him—who but they who are spiritually enlightened can form a conception of his glory when the perfect host of heaven raised the loud acclaim of welcome that greeted his entrance into glory—when ten thousand struck their golden harps to louder notes of triumph—and when shouts of victory, louder than seven thunders, rang through the eternal mansions of the sky.

I remark, finally, that Christ, in an especial manner, enters into his glory at his future advent, or the advent to judgment. God judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to his Son. He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by that man Christ Jesus, whom he hath raised from the dead.

There is one remarkable difference between the future advent of Christ and both the events to which I have just referred, so far as his glory is concerned. While his resurrection and ascension, as Mediator, secured all the honour and glory which his faithful followers among men and angels could confer upon him, neither of these events procured any honour from his enemies. But when he shall come in the clouds of heaven—when he shall be revealed in flaming fire—he will not only be honoured and admired by his saints, admired in them that believe, but honoured in his enemies, and derive bright and immortal renown from their destruction. There is something inexpressibly magnificent in the thought that God in our nature shall judge the world, as a man like ourselves—will occupy the great white throne—that at his voice the heavens and the earth shall flee away, till there is found no place for them, and small and great shall stand before him for judgment. But it is no more strange than true; for the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and before him shall be gathered together all nations, and he shall separate them as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. How unutterably resplendent will the glory of Christ then appear, when the host of heaven are hastening, in profoundest submission, to execute every intimation of his will; when, seated on the throne of universal judgment, innumerable multitudes of men and angels are arraigned at his bar, with their eternal destiny at his disposal; when, clothed in all his bright and official honours as Mediator, how far and lovely will he

appear to angels and saints, how fearful and awful to devils and lost souls!

I proceed to the last division of the subject—to advert to one or two principles in which it will be shown that it was necessary that Christ should enter into his glory. If you look at the context, you will see that the design of the Saviour is to convince the disciples, that notwithstanding their prejudices against a suffering Messiah, it was absolutely necessary Messiah should suffer, when he came, and submit to the very sufferings he himself endured.

The first principle I would establish is, that it was necessary that he should enter into his glory by the law of divine equity. All of you who know the Scriptures are aware that the arrangement of this redeeming love included an agreement between

God and his Son, by which God engaged to confer on him the glory it was our object to explain in the first division of the discourse. If, then, glory and honour were secured to Christ by the terms of the covenant, then, in fulfilling this condition it became his Father, by the law of his justice and equity, to confer upon him his reward. Accordingly we find the Father saying, "Because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered among transgressors, and bare the sins of many, therefore will I divide with him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." Having offered the sacrifice for sin, he sat down at the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

To be continued in next Number.

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No. 18.	SERMON by the Rev. JOHN M'GILCHRIST, Edinburgh. SERMON by the Rev. Dr. DICK, Glasgow. LECTURE by the Rev. DAVID MARR, Edinburgh.	Price 2d.
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THE GLORY OF CHRIST;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. JOHN M'GILCHRIST—Concluded.

I REMARK, second, that it was necessary for Christ to enter into his glory by the law of divine truth. You are aware that the Old Testament scriptures abound with descriptions of the future glory of Christ, so numerous and striking, that the nation of the Jews was entirely engrossed by them, to the neglect of those that foretold his sufferings. If those sufferings, foretold then by the law of veracity, were endured, he is bound to confer on the Saviour his promised reward. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe what the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have entered into his glory." See then the grounds on which Christ rests his claim as King and Mediator. Ought he not to enter into his glory and kingdom? We may challenge heaven, earth, and hell to allege one cause why he should not enter into his glory. Where is the condition in the eternal covenant he has not fulfilled? Where is the engagement he has not implemented? Where is the requirement in his Father's will with which he has not complied? Where is the work which he has not performed? Where are the pangs he was appointed to endure from which he turned away? Where is the ingredient in the cup of his sufferings which he did not drink? We repeat the challenge:—Let heaven, earth, or hell, allege one plea why he should not enter into his glory! Ask his eternal Father, who declared him to be his Son

and accepted Mediator, by raising him from the dead, and with perfect majesty he will say,—“Ought he not to enter into his glory!” Ask his saints—ask the holy angels and they will answer in one harmonious shout, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” And ask his people, who serve him day and night in his temple, and with one burst of rapturous joy they will exclaim,—“Bring forth the fairest diadem, and crown him Lord of all!” And carry your appeal, if you like, to the regions of the damned, and the devils shall fret for rage at His power, who has bruised their head; yet dare not the fiercest of damned spirits or lost souls allege one cause why Christ should not enter into his glory.

In closing the discourse, my friends,—Has Christ entered into his glory—and such glory? What a source of pure and permanent consolation is this to his humble followers! And after all their contempt, obscurity, and neglect, how great their dignity! how lofty their glory! Allied, very closely allied to them was the King of glory, the God of angels and of men, the Prince of the kings of the earth. Amid all their outward calamities and inward affections, how vastly superior their privileges above other men's.

Has Christ entered into his glory, and are his people inseparably united to him?

Surely, ground there is here to maintain them under the heaviest calamities, and solace them under the bitterest afflictions! Is it not delightful to reflect on his universal authority and government, when we reflect that no event can befall the world, the country, the church, a family, or one's own person, that is not ordered by him in wisdom and goodness. And how delightful to reflect on his omnipotent power, when we are made to feel and tremble at the authority of our spiritual foes! Surely, his might and majesty are such, that the fiercest of damned spirits are forced to bend before him the unwilling knee! He is able to conduct us to victory, to enable us to wrestle, not with flesh and blood merely, but with principalities and powers. United to him, his people will be superior to their power; and, animated by his example, shall swallow up death in victory.

Secondly. Was it necessary that Christ should enter into his glory? It is absolutely necessary; and on the same principles that you enter into your own glory—every one in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, and they that are in Christ at his coming. Christ not only stipulated for his own glory, but for the glory of all who should believe in his name. Be assured, that the truth and faithfulness, nay, the equity and justice of God are pledged, that when He who is the life of his people shall appear, you shall also appear with him in his glory; that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, you shall have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. It is indeed true, that your title to heaven is the gift of sovereign mercy, but it has become your own on the principles of divine equity and faithfulness.

Finally. Has Christ entered into his glory? How tremendous the thought to those who refuse to submit to his authority, and bow to his administration. Have you never considered what is to become of you with this omnipotent Saviour as your adversary; how you are to abide the day of his coming? Have you never felt in your hearts any dread of this omnipotent Saviour? Have his arrows never been within you? Have his terrors

never set themselves in array against you? You must either be more or less than human, or your heart must be harder than the nether millstone, if you have not felt misgivings at appearing before this Saviour. But what are these foretastes of his power and his wrath compared with what is coming? If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, how shalt thou contend with the horse-men? If, in the land of peace, they have wearied thee, what shalt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? If the sinner with his conscience awakened to a sense of guilt, has felt it so dreadful to indulge the thought of the powers of the Saviour, and the prospect which it points out to him, and if from these prospects he makes such haste to escape, how shall he abide the arrows of his quiver—the sword of his vengeance? There is no middle course. We must either receive the unsearchable riches of his grace, or be subjected to his fierce indignation and consuming wrath. "These mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them forth and slay them before me." The Saviour has taken his seat on the great white throne. The sceptre of his mercy is yet stretched out. The sword of his vengeance yet slumbers. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." But, my hearers, the day of mercy is permitted to close, if the door of the heart remains obstinately shut against the Saviour. What must be the doom of such an individual! The inspired penman cannot express it—"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." David pauses: he cannot fill up the sentence: he is unable to utter or conceive the consequences, even when his anger is kindled *but for a little*; and after a most eloquent though abrupt pause, he adds—"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

God bless his word, and to his name be praise. Amen.

RECONCILIATION TO GOD ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, ALBION STREET,
GLASGOW, ON THE FORENOON OF SABBATH, 24TH JUNE, 1832.

By the Rev. JOHN DICK, D.D.,

Professor of Divinity to the United Associate Synod.

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.—2 Cor. v. 19.

ALL things in creation are of God, who existed before every other being, and by his omnipotent word made the heavens and the earth out of nothing. All things are of God, in the dispensations of providence; for he who created the universe sustains it by his power, and governs it by his wisdom. There is a necessary and continual dependence of creatures upon him, and while they act according to mechanical laws, or obey the instincts and the reason with which they are endowed, he so directs and controls their movements, that they accomplish his designs. All things are of God in the economy of grace; and it is this idea, as appears from the context, to which the Apostle calls our attention: "All things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation," viz. that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. In illustrating the words chosen for the text, I shall speak of the Author of reconciliation, of the reconciliation itself, of the agent by whom it was effected, of its extent, and of its blessed fruit.

In the first place, the Author of reconciliation is God. When this term is used absolutely, we understand it to signify that great Being who is above all other beings, eternal, unchangeable, and omnipotent; and when we say that any thing was done by him, we mean that it was not done by any of his creatures acting independently of him, but was exclusively the result of his own will and operation. If we peruse the Scriptures with attention, we shall discover, that although it is the fundamental doctrine of the law and of the Gospel that there is only one God, yet this term is applied to more persons than one, and in particular that our Lord Jesus Christ is called God, not in a metaphorical sense, but with such attributions we demonstrate that he is truly and pro-

perly divine. It appears, however, in the scheme of reconciliation, that he is distinguished from God, and that, while the latter is the author of the scheme, he is the (subordinate) agent by whom it is executed. How may we account for such language, which is not peculiar to the text, but occurs in many other passages of Scripture, in which the Father receives the appellation of God, while our Saviour is called Jesus—the name which was given at his birth by the direction of an angel—or Christ, which is merely a title of office? It has been accounted for in different ways. Some contend that there is a foundation for this distinction in nature, or that Jesus Christ is not the true God, although he is sometimes called so in a figurative sense, but a man who performed godlike works, or a created being of a higher order, who came down to dwell for a season upon earth. Some say that the Father alone is spoken of as God, because he is God of himself, while Jesus Christ is God of the Father. They think that the divine nature was communicated by the first person of the Trinity to the second, and it is on this ground they suppose that he is denominated the Son, and is said to have been begotten. They hold, that while both possess the same divine nature, and are equally God, there is a priority, a supremacy belonging to the Father, in reference to which he receives the designation of God in distinction from the Son and the Spirit. These are high matters. It is dangerous to speculate on a mysterious subject, and in admitting a subordination of persons in the Trinity, we may seem to destroy their equality. The reason of the appropriation, on many occasions, of the name of God to the Father, is to be sought, not in any internal relation of the Son to the Father, but in his assumption of our nature. At his incarnation he did not cease

to be God, but he became what he was not before—a man, and consequently a creature. As a divine person, he was equal to the Father, having life and all perfection in himself. As a man, he was inferior to him. Being in the form of God, and counting it no robbery to be equal with God, he emptied himself, having taken upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man. The emptying of himself, for this is the literal translation of the words, does not imply that he laid aside his divine perfections, or divested himself of them, for this were impossible, but that he united himself to a nature to which these perfections did not belong, and by his connexion with which they were in a great measure concealed while he sojourned in our world. As in his human nature, he was inferior to his Father, so he was subordinate to him in office, for he not only took the form but the actual condition of a servant—came not to do his own will, but the will of another, and was in all things obedient to him.

You now perceive for what reason the Father is frequently spoken of as if he alone were God—as if to him alone this character pertained, and is called God in distinction from the Son. As a man, the Son was his creature and his servant. In the economy of redemption, the Father sustains the majesty of the Godhead, upholds its authority, demands the satisfaction due to its justice for sin, and dispenses its mercy to our fallen race. The Son as the representative, the substitute of the guilty, receives commands, yields obedience, endures suffering, and submits to death. He is still God, but God under a veil. The Father is God arrayed in all the glory of the Sovereign of heaven and earth. The Father exercises the power of the Godhead, and sends the Son; the Son executes his orders. The author of reconciliation then is God, *i. e.* the Father.

II. Let us proceed, in the second place, to speak of the reconciliation itself. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. To reconcile two parties is to restore peace between them, by removing the cause of their alienation and hostility. That men are by nature the enemies of God, the Scriptures expressly declare, and our own conduct abundantly testifies. They have renounced his authority; they daily trample upon his laws; they enter-

tain dislike to him on account of his holiness; they regard him with sentiments of suspicion and fear, on the ground of his justice. This enmity is subdued by the revelation of his grace—by the promise of pardon, which melts the heart of the sinner, and persuades him to return with contrition and confession to the path of obedience. According to some, this is the only reconciliation which is necessary, for God is a God of love, and if we repent of our sins, and forsake them, like the father of the prodigal son, he will come forth to meet us, and embrace us in his arms. In this system there is no place for the atonement of Christ, and nothing is wanting to the re-establishment of peace, but our willingness to return to our duty. God is said to reconcile the world to himself, because he has used the means of reconciliation, having sent his Son as a messenger of peace, and appointed his servants to proclaim the good news of salvation to the penitent sinner. Thus “we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” But although this might at first view seem to be the natural meaning of the words, closer attention to them and the general doctrine of Scripture, will convince us that something more is intended. The Apostle, indeed, has explained his own meaning, by adding—“not imputing their trespasses unto them;” thus showing them in what reconciliation consists. God reconciles us to himself when he ceases to be angry with us for our violations of his law, and receives us into favour. Lest, however, we should think that he is reconciled to us, because we are first reconciled to him, that he pardons our sins because we have repented of them, and that he reinstates us in his favour because we have submitted to his authority, the Apostle, in the last verse of the chapter, proceeds to point out the plan by which this great and happy change has been effected—“He hath made him to be sin who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Not to anticipate what will be more properly said under the next particular, I observe that, from these words, God appears to reconcile the world to himself, by removing the obstacles which his justice presented to the exercise of his mercy, by interposing the propitiatory

sacrifice of his Son, to open the way for the acts of his grace. It has been objected, that although we are said to be reconciled to God, he is never said to be reconciled to us. But the objection is frivolous, because, if we have not the very words, we have the idea expressed by them, as often as we are said to be pardoned, which implies that God was previously angry, but is now pacified, as often as the death of Christ is declared to be a sacrifice of atonement for sin, prefigured by the atonements which were offered under the law, to save the Israelites from the penalty of transgression. For what is the design of an atonement, but to make the object of worship propitious, and procure the return of those blessings to which we had forfeited every claim by our disobedience. It may be thought that to represent God as reconciled to us, is to attribute a change to him similar to the change which takes place in our minds when we begin to regard with sentiments of benevolence and complacency, a person who was formerly the object of our hatred. But the immutability of God does not consist in always regarding his creatures with the same affection, whatever changes may take place in their character and conduct. It does not require that he should continue to love a creature whom he once loved, although that creature has become ungrateful and rebellious, or that he should continue to hate a creature whom he once hated, although that creature has turned from the evil of his ways. It does not require that he should retain his displeasure and his purpose to punish against an offender, although by himself, or another authorized to act in his name, that has been done which has given full satisfaction for his offence. The immutability of God requires exactly the reverse—that he should be displeased when sin is committed, and pleased when satisfaction is made for it. This shows that his love and hatred are not capricious like ours; that there is always a reason for them; and that, whatever changes take place in us, he remains the same in his moral attributes—the God of holiness and truth. His reconciliation of us unto himself is so far from implying that he has ceased to be what he was, and become what he was not, that it is the result of a scheme, the professed intention of which was to maintain the consistency of his character, and

to illustrate the harmony of all his perfections.

Let us now, in the third place, attend to the agent by whom the reconciliation has been effected. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Some have supposed that the words "God in Christ" refer to the incarnation, and have explained them as signifying God united to Christ, as if it had been the design of the Apostle to remind us of the mysterious constitution of our Saviour's person. But their mistake is evident, for we have already seen that God is the Father, and we know that it was not the first person of the Trinity who assumed our nature, but the second. God was with Christ in the work of our redemption, but, in the sense supposed, he was not in him. Those who are acquainted with the peculiar style of the New Testament in the original, need not to be informed that the preposition *in* bears a variety of senses, and is sometimes used as an equivalent to *by*. Thus we read that Jesus was led up *in* the Spirit to the wilderness, *i. e.* *by* the Spirit: that God spake to the Fathers *in* the prophets, *i. e.* *by* the prophets: that the world is judged *in* the saints, *i. e.* *by* the saints. The proper rendering of this phrase is, that God was *by* Christ reconciling the world to himself. The same subject is introduced in the preceding verse, and the Apostle there explains himself by employing a different preposition. "All things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself *by* Jesus Christ." The agent, then, in the scheme of reconciliation was our Redeemer, and some things which we have already said will enable you to understand the nature of his office. He came and preached peace to them that were afar off and to them that were nigh; but that his office did not consist exclusively in making proposals of peace, and in persuading men to assent to them, is evident from the explanation which the Apostle has given of the matter. He hath reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to himself, in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and now in Christ Jesus ye who sometime were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For the performance of this arduous and important undertaking, he was qualified by his incarnation. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent 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 sons." The incarnation was a necessary step towards the execution of a plan, the design of which was to bring together two parties of different natures, and in rank infinitely unequal, who had no common ground on which they might meet in amicable intercourse. This obstacle to peace he removed by being born of a woman. He united both natures in himself, and while he had a fellow-feeling for fallen man, who is his kinsman and his brother, he was worthy to draw near to God, and to be favourably received, because he was himself divine, and was actuated by ardent zeal for the rights and glories of the Godhead. He only who was both God and man was qualified to negotiate peace between heaven and earth. When God made a covenant with the Israelites at Sinai, there were burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and the blood of the victims was sprinkled both upon the book of the law and upon the people, to signify that there could be no league between heaven and earth, no friendship between God and man, but on the foundation of sacrifice. Hence we perceive what our Redeemer had to undergo when he came to make a new, and better, and more lasting covenant. Having been made under the law, he had to fulfil its demands. It was necessary that he should conform in all things to its precepts, so just, so good, so holy; and that when he had fulfilled the term and measure of his services, without flaw or defect—when not only his malignant and watchful enemies could not convict him of sin, but heaven itself had testified its entire approbation of his purity, his obedience must have possessed an intrinsic worth which might have entitled him, and all who pertained to him, to the highest reward. But his work was not yet done. Peace could not be restored by this expedient alone. Those whom the first Adam represented, while he stood in paradise, were innocent, but those whom the second Adam represented, were guilty. They had all offended their Creator, and fallen under his displeasure. What then would the obedience even of Jesus, infinitely meritorious as it was, have availed them, if nothing had been done to expiate their sins—if the right of the law to punish them had remained—if

the hand-writing of ordinances, which was against them, had not been taken out of the way! It was not by an arbitrary decree that death was made the wages of sin. The sentence was founded in justice, and justice therefore required that it should be executed, unless its claim were otherwise satisfied. The sufferings of the Messiah, therefore, hold a prominent place in the prophetic description of his humiliation; and what the prophets foretold and the law prefigured, was realized when he appeared. He made reconciliation for the sins of his people, as the ancient priests did in a figure by their oblations. He appeased the anger of God, *i. e.* he made it consistent with his truth and justice to forgive transgressors, by giving plenary satisfaction for all their offences, and it will not seem incredible that the death of Christ should have effected this great, this wonderful change, if it is considered that he endured it voluntarily for the glory of his Father, and that it was infinitely more valuable in itself, than the sacrifice of the whole creation would have been. The sufferer was the Lord of glory.

Let us now, in the next place, consider the extent of the reconciliation. God was by Christ reconciling the world unto himself. This word occurs in other passages. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Some understand it in its utmost latitude, and affirm that the death of Christ was a true and proper atonement for the whole human race without exception, although they admit that many will derive no benefit from it. Others contend that the term "the world" here signifies the world of the elect; but this is an expression which occurs in no passage of Scripture. We read often of the elect, but never of the world of the elect, and indeed, the phrase seems to be a conjunction of incompatible terms, the one universal, and the other particular—the one denoting the whole, and the other only a part. The two following remarks will perhaps throw light upon the language of Scripture:—In the first place, as the world signifies the inhabitants of the world, the text may be understood to teach us that God has re-

conciled to himself by Jesus Christ, not angels, but men. We should remember that our earth was not the only place in which there was room for a scheme of reconciliation. There was another region of the universe inhabited by intelligent creatures, who had rebelled against their Creator, and fallen under his displeasure. We have no reason to think that he could not have made proposals of peace to them, and employed the proper means of restoring them to favour. Why he has preferred us to them, he has not revealed, and it would be as presumptuous as it is vain to attempt to discover the secret. But we know that against them eternal war is proclaimed, while to us the Most High has sent his Son as the messenger of his mercy. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, i. e. the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage; for verily he took not on him the nature of angels," or, as the word might be rendered, he did not lay hold of angels to help them, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. In the mission of Jesus Christ, what the Scripture calls the philanthropy of God our Saviour, the love of God to man, his rational creatures, appeared.

But, in the second place, the text may be understood to teach that God reconciles to himself, by Jesus Christ, sinners throughout the whole world, without distinction of kindred and nation. This is certainly the meaning of a passage formerly quoted; "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." It is John the Apostle, who speaks, a descendant of Abraham. He is the propitiation, not exclusively for the sins of ~~us~~ who belong to the Jewish nation, so long distinguished by peculiar privileges, but for the sins of men of every tribe and family. Accordingly, in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is called the Saviour of the world. And in the old Testament he is described as the desire of all nations; as the light of the Gentiles; as the salvation of God to the ends of the earth. His death did not take place in the temple, the appointed place of atonement for the Jews, but without the gates of the city, to signify, that its salutary in-

fluence would extend beyond the limits of Judea. There is now, according to the words of the Apostles, peace upon earth and good-will towards men. The Gospel has been preached in many nations, and ere long will be preached to more, that the good tidings may be heard from the rising to the setting of the sun; but the extent of the reconciliation will not be known till the present dispensation has come to an end. Then there will appear before the throne a great multitude, which no man can number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, clothed in white robes, holding palms in their hands, and singing salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb.

In the last place, let us consider the blessed fruit of this reconciliation which is expressed by "not imputing to men their trespasses." This is the act of God as a Judge, it being his prerogative, in this character, to call his intelligent creatures to account for their conduct, in reference to the law under which he has placed them. As those whom he is reconciling to himself are sinners, he could not consistently with truth and justice pronounce them to be innocent; nor could we, without blasphemy, attribute such a procedure to him. He knows all that they have done. Their sins are ever before the eye of his omniscience, and he must, therefore, hold them, considered in themselves, to be worthy of punishment. Yet our text says that he does not impute their trespasses to them; and the meaning evidently is, that he does not proceed against them on the ground of their trespasses--that, sitting as Judge, he does not pronounce a sentence of condemnation upon them. Guilt signifies the obligation under which their transgressions laid them to suffer the penalty of the law. In consequence of the scheme of reconciliation, believers are released from this obligation; and hence, while it is true that they are sinners, it is also true that they are not guilty. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he then that condemneth?" The same doctrine is taught in other passages, which say that God blots out the iniquities of men as a cloud, and their transgressions as a thick cloud, that he casts them behind his back, and casts them into the depths of the sea; that he will remember them no more, Shall we then say that mercy triumphs

over justice? Is the honour of the divine law neglected, or are the rights of the divine government sacrificed? No; God is just when he justifies the sinner; for he pardons him from respect to the great atonement in which he smelled a sweet savour of rest. It was so precious in his sight, and was offered with such zeal for his glory, that it reconciled him for ever to the sinner, although not to his sin.

The reconciliation on the part of God is fully effected. Nothing farther is necessary to remove the grounds of his displeasure. No other sacrifice is required, as if there were some defect in the sacrifice of Christ. We are by nature the enemies of God, and cannot expect, while we continue in this state, to derive any advantage from the dispensations of grace. There must be a mutual reconciliation. As God is appeased to us, so we must be well affected to God; and it is with this view that he has committed to his servants the ministry of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ Jesus, be ye reconciled to God. The preachers of the Gospel are ambassadors sent by the King of Heaven to call upon his rebellious subjects to return to their allegiance, and to encourage them by a promise of pardon. And how should we discharge this important duty of our office? We beseech you, not for *our own* sakes, and still less for the sake of *God*, who is independent and all-sufficient, but for *your*

own sakes, we beseech you to be reconciled to God. Let every man who hears the message of peace consider that he is deeply concerned, and that upon the cordial reception of it his everlasting well-being depends. Let the terrors of the Lord rouse you to flee from the wrath to come, and let the promises of the Gospel encourage you, for they proclaim peace, and secure it to those who believe. Being justified by faith, you shall have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by him have access into that grace wherein believers stand, and rejoice, and hope in the glory of God. But there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked; there remaineth to unbelievers, those who persist in unbelief, no more sacrifice for sin but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to devour the adversaries of God. "Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin." His blessedness is to be estimated by the evil from which he is delivered, and the good of which he is put in possession. He is delivered from the wrath of God, of which it is sufficient to say "It is a fearful thing;" and is put in possession of all the privileges and blessings of the righteous. This blessedness belongs by covenant to those who receive the reconciliation; and it is sealed in the holy Supper; for Christ says of the bread—"This is my body, broken for you;" and of the wine—"This is my blood, shed for you, for the remission of sins."

ON THE MIRACULOUS CURE OF THE LEPROSY;

LECTURE ON LUKE v. 12-15. DELIVERED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, LOTHIAN ROAD, EDINBURGH, ON THE EVENING OF SABBATH, 25th MARCH, 1832.

By the Rev. DAVID MARR.

Among the numerous and very striking peculiarities of the Jewish dispensation which have excited the sneer of the infidel, the wonder and admiration of the Christian, and the astonishment of all, none seems more remarkable than the law of leprosy. Who can contemplate the almighty Creator of heaven and earth condescending to give various minute and, to us, at first sight, unmeaning directions

concerning this disease, such as we find in the 13th and 14th chapters of Leviticus, without exclaiming—"What great mystery must lie hid under these apparent absurdities?" We have, in the passage before us, an opportunity of discussing that question, for we have the Great Physician himself treating it. Whether we consider the violent disease of the body, or the moral guilt of the soul which it was in-

tended to represent, we have this physician in the very act of putting forth his healing power, before which misery, and death, and disease, and sin were quickly dispelled. This miracle is recorded both by Mark and Luke, as having been wrought when on a tour through Galilee. But Mark relates one, the circumstances of which are similar, although it appears to have been wrought at a different period of our Lord's history. When we consider the antiquity of the sacred Writings, how they refer to manners and customs foreign to our own, we wonder that they are so very interesting and intelligible that even a child can understand them, and that the Bible is a book that comes home to every man's own circumstances and heart. But, while we have here a striking proof of the wisdom and divine grace which moved the sacred writers, we must not forget that the Holy Spirit of Inspiration designed this book to be the constant text from which discourses should be delivered by those who devoted their lives to the study of its sacred pages, and that much, therefore, is left to be unfolded by diligent research. Many a passage may appear to the casual reader of little importance; but when attended to by others, by the prayerful and diligent student, a flood of light is often poured out upon it.

Let us consider the nature of this peculiar affliction called leprosy. It was a cutaneous disease, although it did not operate altogether on the skin. The interior of the system is so deeply affected with it, that it is called by the Arabs by a name which signifies "the lion's breath," because of the offensive breath peculiar to the lion and the leper; but its most formidable influence is exerted on the outward surface. The Oriental leprosy is represented as so loathsome a disease and so infectious as to taint the garments of the leper, and the house in which he lived. The Hebrew word signifies "a stroke," as if the person was smitten from heaven; but the Greek word signifies "whiteness." Hence the Hebrews speak of a leprosy white as snow, for their bodies were covered over with white scales. Herodotus tells us that it was common among the Persians, and that he had seen several whose faces had the appearance of hoar-frost. It has been concluded, and not without reason, that the leprosy

of the Jews was a peculiar disease, and that they were smitten by God as an immediate judgment for some great sin. And Josephus, the Jewish historian, speaks of it as altogether incurable except by the interposition of Heaven. It is worthy of remark that the great majority of the cases in Scripture, are instances directly from the hand of God, as an immediate judgment inflicted for the punishment of great and aggravated sin. Miriam reproached her brother Moses, and the anger of the Lord was kindled, and the glory departed from the tabernacle, and behold Miriam became leprous. Because Gehazi told lies to his master Elisha, the man of God, he was struck with this disease and went out from his presence as white as snow. Because king Uzziah presumed to offer incense in the tabernacle of God, he was struck with this awful malady, and the leprosy arose in his forehead.

The treatment of this disease prescribed in the law, appears severe and rigorous. As soon as any person was suspected of it, he was immediately examined by the priests and shut up, if diseased, for seven days, remote from every human being—for no one would come near him till he was again inspected. And if at the end of seven days, the symptoms increased he had to return to his doleful solitude for seven days more. And if at the end of another week, he was found to have the disease, the law pronounced him unclean—a leprous man: the plague is in his forehead. And as to the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his brow made bare, and his upper lip covered, and he shall cry out, "Unclean! unclean! All the days wherein the plague shall be on him, he shall be defiled. He is unclean, he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be." Behold the camp of Israel with its pillar of cloud by day and its pillar of fire by night, significant emblems of a present Deity—every man enjoying the sweet circle of his own friends: but behold, beyond the camp, far remote from the dwellings of Israel, a little shed or booth, constructed not for the inferior animals, as from its appearance you might suppose, but for diseased man; for, behold, there comes out of it a wandering and solitary individual, mourning over his melancholy condition, his upper lip covered, while, in the language of the law, he cries out, "Un-

clean! unclean!" This was to show that his very breath was pestilential. And we see from the cases recorded in the Scriptures that this treatment was as strictly observed by the Israelites as the law of quarantine in our own country, when pestilential diseases invade the land. Even king Uzziah was not exempted from the law. He was separated from society, and excluded from his throne, and he was a leper till the day of his death and dwelt in a separate house. And when Miriam, the sister of Moses and of Aaron, was struck with it, she was shut up for seven days, and the children of Israel journeyed not till she returned to the camp.

Thus lepers were excluded from society. The Jewish Rabbins tell us, that if a leper entered a house, that house and every article in it became unclean. If a leper stood under a tree, and any person passed under that tree, he became unclean. But as these doctors of the law rendered it partly more severe than God himself did, so in one case, they rendered it more lax, for they allowed a leprous person to attend the synagogue, provided he made a room for himself, ten cubits high and four broad, and came in first and went out last. It appeared from this that the leprous man was considered rather as a criminal than sympathized with as a sick person.

There is something very remarkable in the Word of God regarding its cure. All other maladies were left entirely to the ordinary means of the physician. We have no inspired prescriptions regarding consumptions, fevers, dropsy, palsy, or any other of the ordinary diseases to which the human frame is liable; but this is taken out of the hands of the physician, and made an affair of religion alone. No external or internal application of medicine was prescribed. The leper was to be looked upon by the priest, and pronounced whole or diseased. It was the opinion of the Jews, that all human means were totally unavailing, and that nothing but the hand that smote could accomplish the cure. And, perhaps, at that period there was no knowledge of any remedy that could effect a cure; and accordingly we know that the cure came immediately from the hand of God. The priests were commanded to look on, to stand and see what God would do. When the person had submitted to the regimen prescribed by law, if, on presenting himself to the

priest, he was found cured, very curious ceremonies were then prescribed, as you find in the 13th and 14th chapters of the book of Leviticus.

But, my brethren, we must ere this time have been convinced that something more in all this was meant than mere bodily disease. Even the Jews, extremely prone as they were to rest on external rites, saw something more intended here; for they speak of the leper as a sign or type of the sinner; and on this account, say they, it was not by medicine but by sacrifice that the leprosy was put away. Behold in this disease, therefore, the infinite evil and defiling nature of sin; how loathsome, deep, and incurable it is by any human power—how widely spreading and infectious. The bodies of the lepers, their garments, and even their houses, all tainted with this disease—their bodies excluded from the touch of every other—their garments to be burned—and their houses to be pulled down; all this cries aloud how deeply rooted in our nature is the great disease of sin—how it defiles every thing—how it excludes the soul from communion with God and from communion with the redeemed—how it dooms the body to the great and infected house that must be pulled down; "for," says the Apostle, "if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." In the cure prescribed by law, we behold the Saviour exhibited to our faith. Christ is the priest to whom we must flee, and not to any physician, for the cure of this disease; for no medicine but the virtue of his divine sacrifice can effectually take away this leprosy. The two birds employed in this disease were figurative of sacrifice. The bird slain represented the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which atonement is made for our sin, and the live bird let loose into the open field was intended to show that as Christ died for our sin, so he rose again for our justification, and procures for the church, and sheds upon it the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Hence pleads the Psalmist, "Wash me and I shall be clean; sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be whiter than the snow."

But let us contemplate the miraculous healing power of the Saviour. He who gives these minute directions concerning this disease, ordained that the leper should meet Christ, in order that his omnipotence

should be displayed in that free grace which had been specially reserved for the Almighty Physician. The application of this leper to Christ, is very affecting. When he saw Jesus, "he fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." Christ had been on a tour through Galilee, where he had shown himself the all-sufficient Physician; and now he is addressed as one who can heal if he pleases. St. Mark tells us, This man kneeled down, and exclaimed, If thou wilt thou canst make me clean. What a display of faith! He was convinced that Christ could do whatever he pleased. Are we convinced of this? Verily, it is right that all power in heaven and on earth is given to our Saviour. Delightful thought, that there is one who can do what he pleases, and that he is our Saviour! This poor man supposed that all Christ's omnipotence was mercy. How terrible would it be if some beings had power to do what they pleased, and we depended upon them—for who would then be safe? But this man considered it a very animating encouragement that Christ could do whatever he pleased. Let us therefore kneel before him—let us fall on our knees, and appeal to his compassion, and lean on the omnipotence of his arm, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean."

His bowels of compassion were moved within him. Our compassion is frequently barren. It is either not exerted, or we want power to afford relief. But Christ's is ever active, ever fruitful, efficient, and omnipotent. It brought him from heaven to earth for our salvation, and many a scene he witnessed in this vale of tears. When he came out of the house, he beheld the multitudes that were assembled to see and hear him, and it is said he had compassion on them, for they were as sheep without a shepherd. By a miracle he fed their bodies, and by his Word he fed their immortal and never-dying souls; for is it possible that the white scurf of the leper's skin, or the corpse-like appearance of the whole frame, would move the compassion of the Saviour's heart, and that he would have no pity on the more precious and more exquisitely sensitive spirit? When we were by this disease of sin excluded from the favour of God—when we were excluded from the fellowship of heaven, the highest bliss of immortal souls on

earth, and from the true heaven of the blessed above, then he restored us to this favour: "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Behold another circumstance in the cure of this leprous man. "And he put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will be thou clean: and immediately the leprosy departed from him." No common person durst touch a leper; but Jesus Christ, though made under the law, was in his own nature and dignity beyond the law, and if the priests were not hurt by examining the leper, so neither was Christ rendered unclean by this touch which expelled the foul disease from this man. Surely we may say with the Egyptians of old, "This is the finger of God." Here we see in a moment, my brethren, a disease the most loathsome, no longer infectious; and the skin from being white as snow, become fresh, so to speak, as that of a little child. Behold this great power of the Saviour then, by a single touch expelling the disease. This divine touch might heal thee, O leprous soul; for as soon as we are united to the Lord Jesus Christ by a true and a living faith, then all the defilement of sin is changed for a holy, a new, and a divine nature. A holy virtue must flow from the Saviour who touches the soul, to render it like him, holy, and harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners. This holy touch admits us into the favour of God, restores us into fellowship with the blessed, and fits us to live with God. How would this man's heart be filled with joy! Gratitude would leave his bosom, and praise and thanksgiving dwell on his lips to his great benefactor. He would scarcely know himself again. That which had rendered life a burden, is in a moment instantly exchanged, and gives place to the bloom and vigour of health and strength. "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good!" Thou doest all things well!

It may seem strange why Christ said, "See thou tell no man, but go show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." But from what has been said, we see in some measure the reason of this, for this was an affair which belonged entirely to the priests. The priests had full charge of this matter, and

as Christ honoured the law, so he sent the cleansed leper to them, that they might pronounce whether he was effectually cured, and that the man might show his gratitude to the Fountain of all good, by presenting those gifts and sacrifices which the law demanded. The priests were beginning to be jealous of Christ, and hostile to his fame. If it had been generally known that Christ had cured one whom heaven had smitten with this melancholy disease, would they not have been tempted to daily with their consciences, and deny the cure? It was therefore mercy to them to be saved from the temptation to this crime, and it was due to the Saviour that he should have the honour of his own miracle—that this miracle should be recorded in his name, and that the honour of the cure should be ascribed to him alone. As the man was not restricted to any particular priest, it is probable he performed what was commanded him immediately, and sounded the fame of the Saviour through all the country. As soon as the priests acknowledged the cure, he could not deny the honour due to his great deliverer. Accordingly, we are told by St. Mark, that his fame spread so, that he durst not enter into their cities, but remained in a desert place, and they came to him from every quarter.

We are all tainted with this infinitely awful disease. This is too certain to admit of a doubt. The question is, Have we been healed by this Sovereign Physician, or are we still under the dominion of this fatal distemper? How many considerations should induce us to examine this question? If we had any suspicion that our bodies were tainted with the typical disease, how deeply interested would we be to ascertain whether it was the case, and to have the symptoms removed? And is the question less worthy of our anxious regard, when it relates to the immortal soul? Is not the soul surpassing the body by infinite degrees? Does it not far surpass in value this clay tenement in which it dwells;—for what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul—or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? what can be more curious and interesting

in its mechanism than the human eye, but how far is it surpassed by the understanding—the eye of the mind? Even the irrational tribe may surpass us in the bodily organ. The eagle can gaze in the sun with a steadiness that would strike us blind. The hawk can discover its prey where we can see nothing, and can dart upon it from an immense height with unerring aim. But the eye of the rational soul, can travel in far distant regions, and understand the works of God, and contemplate the mighty power by which numerous worlds are held together in one vast harmonious system. And thus we can leave the irrational tribes infinitely behind us. It is the immortal soul by which we are thus exalted. This soul may be ruined and lost to all eternity. Let us, therefore, think whether we have within this soul the elements of ruin, and of that infinitely awful disease, the leprosy of sin. How would we mourn if our bodies were struck with leprosy? How would we grieve over their whiteness and corpse-like appearance? And do we not shudder at the thought of appearing in the presence of God, whose eye sees the soul all covered with sin? For this is his language, that we are dead in trespasses and sin. How awful the calamity were we excluded from the city, and obliged to dwell in a solitary booth or shed, far remote from human habitation shut out from husband, and wife, and parent, and child, and there to dwell alone? Would not this calamity seem almost insupportable, and even render death itself desirable. But how inconceivably more dreadful and alarming, to be shut out from the society of God and of Christ, and the communion of saints, and to be doomed to live eternally with devils and damned spirits. Yet this is the prospect of those who are under the dominion of sin; for God has expressly declared, that he will have no fellowship with them, that he can have no part with them, unless they are sanctified. What great reason, then, have we, seeing all are naturally tainted with sin, to humble ourselves before God,—to cover our mouths, and cry out, "Unclean! unclean!" and to come to the Saviour, saying, "Lord if thou wilt thou canst make me clean."

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 4th AUGUST, 1832.

No. 19.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. ALEX. M'NAUGHTON, Milngavie.

Price 2d.

GOD'S HATRED OF SIN;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THURSDAY,
5th APRIL, 1832.

By the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL, A. M.,

Minister of the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh.

"For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity."—PSALM V. 4, 5.

Fools, we are told, mock at righteousness. There are many who do not venture to mock at it to whom it still appears a very dreadful attribute, and even of those who have been led to turn from their evil ways, and to learn righteous thoughts, and to pray to God to have mercy upon them, we aver, without fear of contradiction, that their impressions of sin are exceedingly inadequate, and that there is nothing with regard to them and their spiritual improvement and growth in grace, of more importance than that these impressions should be deepened and their sense of the evil, and bitterness, and enormity of sin, in God's estimation, increased. At this time, therefore, I propose, my friends, in a dependence on the grace and strength of God, and trusting that the subject may be made instrumental in the furtherance of those objects for which we have this day met together, in the first place, to direct your thoughts to some of the grounds of that displeasure which God cherishes towards sin, and in the next place, to some of the manifestations of the existence and the extent of that hatred of iniquity which God habitually cherishes.

On the first of these points, I observe to you, that the justice of God must lead him to view with displeasure that evil and abominable thing. To the service which God requires of us, the love which he calls upon us habitually to render unto him, he is unquestionably entitled. He is entitled

to it on a great variety of grounds. Being supremely excellent—being infinitely worthy of the worship of his creatures, on account of those perfections by which he is characterized—he is, on this ground, entitled to our love—to the love of all of us. Then again, being our Maker, having implanted within us those affections by which our breasts are actuated, and being indebted to him for our preservation and the exercise and enjoyment of our powers, and faculties, and affections, he is, on this ground, entitled to the throne in that heart which he himself has made, and to the fruit of which he, as Creator, has an unquestionable and inalienable right. Besides this, God is the author of all the bounties which we enjoy; and in return for this kindness, he is entitled to our love and to our service; and it is the case too, my friends, that in loving God, and in loving him supremely, there is a happiness to be experienced far more sweet and satisfying than is to be derived from any other exercise of the affections that are implanted in our nature. The love, then—the service which God requires of us is love and obedience, which he is entitled to receive. It is due from every one of us to the God who made us—to the God who continually preserves us, who is the author of all the blessings which we are privileged to enjoy. Consequently, to withhold this service to which he has a right, is to act unjustly towards him; and

precisely in proportion to the extent in which Jehovah is righteous—in proportion to the extent in which he loves that which is just—in proportion to the extent in which he must ever look with displeasure on what is unjust, in the same proportion must sin, that evil and abominable thing which deprives him of his due, be hateful and vile in his sight.

But again, not only the justice of God, but his benevolence also, must ever lead him to regard sin with abhorrence. His love to his creatures—his desire that they should be happy and free from every kind of wretchedness, leads him to abhor that sin which is the cause of their misery. There are some who are disposed to cherish the idea that if God were infinitely benevolent, he would allow them to do exactly as they pleased; he would leave them to follow the bent of their own depraved inclinations. But, my brethren, we have only to think of what sin is, and we have only for a moment to think what sin unquestionably and inevitably leads to, to be sensible that God's kindness, as well as justice, must lead him to regard it with displeasure. What is sin but a soul going away from its Maker—a soul departing from the source and centre of all happiness—from the great fountain of living waters, and hewing out for itself broken cisterns that can hold no water. What is the line of conduct pursued by every transgressor, but that, my brethren, which is described in the parable of the prodigal who left his father's house—who left the provision of that house, and went into a far country, where there was famine, where he soon found himself in want, and would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat? Is this what sin is? Does it consist in the departure of the soul in this manner, from what alone could satisfy the soul's desires after truth? Does it not only consist in the departure of the soul from this supreme source of joy, but in its wandering away to streams of happiness that can never satisfy, but that soon, very, very soon, indeed, must actually be dried up? And does God love sinners? Does he desire their happiness? Does he desire to free them from misery? Oh, with what displeasure must he look on that evil and abominable thing which thus separates his creatures from himself, and which in separating them from him, severs them from their true enjoyment—

severs them from their satisfying portion—their everlasting peace.

But again, as the great Lawgiver of the universe, God must look with displeasure, with deep displeasure on sin. Jehovah has given forth a law—he has called on his creatures to yield obedience to that law—he has pronounced it to be holy, and just, and good. His honour then, as law-giver, must be very intimately connected with the way in which these creatures whom he has called into existence, and to whom he has given this law for their obedience and reverence, attend to the precepts he has enjoined. When we seek to yield obedience to God's law—when we seek to conform ourselves to his just and holy purposes—when we seek to enter fully into the sentiment expressed by the Psalmist, when he declared "The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver,"—when we show that, like the Redeemer, our meat and our drink is to do the will of Him that sent us here, then by such conduct, we proclaim to every one around us, how highly we regard the precepts of the Almighty—how gladly we accord with what he himself has declared, that his law is holy, just, and good. But when we act otherwise—when we deviate from this law, still more when we dare to act in direct opposition to it, then, by every such act, we may be regarded as lifting up our testimony against that law which God has given us; we may be regarded as proclaiming, by our actions, how highly we esteem it—how greatly we prefer the path of foolishness to that righteous path in which the God that made us and rules in heaven and earth, calls on us to follow.

Further, God as the author of all our mercies—God as the author of our bounties, must look with displeasure—with very deep displeasure on the workers of iniquity. He is the author, my friends, of all our mercies. He is the giver of every good, and of every perfect gift. Oh, how great then is the debt and obligation under which we are laid to him by this load of providential bounty! How regularly have our wants been supplied since we first drew the breath of life! How great and unnumbered the blessings showered down upon us! How great the sum of happiness we have ever been permitted to taste! How true is it that there has never been a moment of our lives in which the God who

made us has not been doing something for us! Now there is no principle in the Divine mind to which we can correctly affix the appellation of gratitude, because it is impossible that the great God of Heaven, the Lord of the Universe, to whom every thing belongs, can be brought under any obligation. But then, at the same time, we find him declaring that even a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, can in no wise lose its reward. And, my brethren, I would use that language. If God is not even to allow a cup of cold water given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, to pass without reward, what are the sentiments which that God must feel towards his creatures, when they are every day and every hour receiving blessings, stretching forth their hands to these bounties that he gives, but continuing all the while to disregard the great author of these blessings? I beseech you to think of the displeasure with which he must look on that evil thing which leads to such ingratitude for these blessings he heaps upon those, even those who are utterly undeserving of them.

In the last place, God must look with displeasure on sin, because it is opposed to all those great schemes, all those grand undertakings, which we read in the Scriptures, of Jehovah having imparted. Creation, his work of creation, is one of these. And what was God's object in the work of creation? We are informed of it very briefly, and most accurately, in our excellent church catechism. The chief end of man—the great object for which man was made—is, that he might glorify God and enjoy him for ever. Consequently, my brethren, when we seek to glorify, and serve, and enjoy him—when we seek to walk in the way of his testimonies, and to cleave to him as the portion of our souls, then we do what we can to further, to promote God's great object in creating us—in creating mankind around us—in creating angels—in forming the world—in forming the heavens. But when we act otherwise—when we do not seek to glorify God—when we do not seek to serve him—when, instead of seeking to enjoy God, we prefer the vain madness of this poor world, then we do what we can to defeat the object of God in creating us—in calling us into existence, and the universe around us. "

Providence is another scheme of God.

This is another undertaking which the Lord Jehovah has been pleased to impart. In the course of his Providence he is pleased to visit us sometimes with good, sometimes with evil—to make events sometimes befall us that are distressing—to make events also of a prosperous nature befall us at other times. And, my brethren, his object in this is distinctly stated to us in the Scriptures. His goodness, the Bible tells us, is to lead us to repentance; and as to afflictions, we are as expressly told that these are sent to us that we may be made contemplers of God's holiness. When we seek that our sorrows should have the effect of weaning our affections from this present world, and fixing them on the country where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain,"—and when we seek that prosperity should make an increase in gratitude to God who is the author of every prosperous circumstance, then we are instrumental in furthering the object that God has in view in his Providence. But when we act otherwise—when we receive the gift, but forget the giver—and, still more, when we receive the gift and allow even God's bounty to be instrumental in weaning away the thoughts and affections from him—when in the midst of trial, we continue hardened and indifferent and thoughtless, we do what we can to defeat the object that God has in view in the dispensations of his Providence.

But there is another undertaking in which we read of the great Jehovah. He is the God of creation—he is the God of Providence; but he is also the God of bliss, and of salvation. Knowing well, as we do, that we are the workmanship of his hands, that fed as we are by his bounty, we have yet forgot him and gone astray from him, his thoughts towards us were thoughts of kindness. He so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. He devised the scheme by which miserable sinners might be rescued from all the consequences to which their iniquities had exposed them—by which they might have sin rooted out of their hearts—by which they might be raised even to that heaven, against which, by their iniquities, they had rebelled. But who would believe that mankind would set themselves in opposition to God even in this, instead of gladly wel-

coming him for his loving kindness—instead of according with God in the great objects he had in view in sending his Son into this world to suffer and to die. O my brethren, how awful that mankind around us, that we ourselves here also have, by our transgressions, been guilty of opposing God! For what purpose did Christ come? Christ came to redeem us from all iniquity—to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works: consequently the man who does not seek to be purified from his sins—who does not seek to be made zealous of good works—still more, the man who is determined that sin shall continue to have dominion over him—that he will continue to roll it as a sweet morsel under his tongue—sets himself in decided opposition to his Maker in the great scheme of redemption.

But, second, has Jehovah left us merely to infer this hatred which he cherishes towards sin? If it be true that these are the sentiments—that these are the feelings with which he regards it, surely he must in some way or other have given manifestation of this sentiment and feeling. Is this the case? Can we bring direct and positive manifestation of the fact of the displeasure with which God looks upon the wicked? Yes, my brethren, we find very many such manifestations. The loftiest created beings of whom we can form an idea are the angels; and highly elevated is the situation which they occupy in the scale of creation, and splendid the gifts must be which at creation were bestowed upon them. They are revealed to us as the ornaments even of Jehovah's throne. In one of the most sublime descriptions that are given us of God's glory and his greatness, we read, Above it "stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." Among these beings, however, thus distinguished at their creation by every immortal and intellectual attraction—into the midst of that race of glorious intelligence sin once made its appearance. Myriads after this transgressed—and no sooner did they sin, than at once they were stript of their beauty—no sooner did they sin, than the stream of kindness which previously had never ceased to flow to them from the throne of God, was stopp'd—no sooner did they sin, than sentence of condemnation upon them was pronounced

—no sooner did they sin, than that sentence was carried into execution. They fell from their lofty eminence, and are preserved in chains and darkness till the judgment of the great day.

This, then, is one striking manifestation which God has given us of the sentiment, the feeling by which he is actuated in reference to sin. But it is by no means the only one. We do not need to travel to the race of angels for manifestations. We do not need to go beyond the range of our own world. We do not need to go beyond the race of which we are the sons. Our first parents were formed after God's own image, and so long as they retained their innocence, they were happy—they were surrounded with every source of enjoyment—they were placed in a garden, where not merely their wants were most luxuriantly supplied, but where blessings were heaped upon them during all the moments of their happy existence. And besides all that, the Lord God himself walked in the garden, and condescended to hold fellowship and communion with the creatures he had made. But they sinned—they ate of the forbidden tree—they were guilty of disobedience, and as the consequence of that one sin, Eden's bliss and Eden's beauty were for ever taken from them. They were sent forth into the wide world, and sentence of death was pronounced upon them, and but for the interposition of the Saviour, the consequences of sin would have been experienced in a far more tremendous manner than they actually were.

And, my friends, many events have taken place since then illustrative of the same thing. There has been the destruction of Sodom—there has been the destruction of the whole world by the flood—there were plagues brought upon Egypt—there was the captivity into which God permitted his own people to go—there was the destruction of Jerusalem, where, by judgments of the most appalling character, God's hatred of sin was evinced.

But is it only in looking back to what is past, that we can find such manifestations? Oh, there is another kind of manifestation still. Have we never ourselves beheld it? Has there nothing taken place around us, showing that God cannot look on iniquity without abhorrence? He has not left himself without a witness even to our own observation. We do see

around us, much that proclaims God's abhorrence of iniquity, in language the most affecting. Have you ever seen the cold bitter blasts of adversity beating upon any of your fellow-creatures? Have you ever witnessed disease? Have you ever witnessed death? Then you have beheld the manifestations of God's hatred of sin. Every sorrow—every bereavement—every calamity that is here, these are intimations of what are the sentiments of God respecting their great and only cause. Think, then, my friends, of such manifestations as in the course of providence you are called to witness. And there are judgments abroad in the earth. There are judgments, not abroad in the earth merely, but judgments at our doors, and in the midst of us. I pray and entreat you to make this improvement of these manifestations—seek to have your sense of sin deepened in abasement, on account of it, in the sight of God.

But oh, my friends, these are not the most striking manifestations that are to be made in reference to our race. This is what takes place even in this world, in which we dwell—this is what is at the door, within the limits of a portion of God's creation, where the proclamation of kindness has been extended. Oh, then, what will those sinners' consciousness be in that place where the Lord has forgotten to be gracious? There are many views given us in Scripture of the suddenness, the fearful character of the manifestations of God's hatred of sin, but on these it is impossible we can at present enter. I shall call your attention simply to one. In one portion of Scripture—in one parable spoken by the Redeemer, the sorrows endured in the place of darkness are described, and the only prayer we ever read of as ascending from the regions of the lost—from the regions of the damned, is recorded too in that parable. It was this prayer—Father, send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in the water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. Even that prayer was not heard.

Have we then exhausted the subject? Is there any other manifestation God has given of his sentiments and feelings upon this head? Yes, my friends, and one even more horrible than those yet stated. Hitherto, in speaking of the endurance of the consequences of sin, it has been the case of transgressors, those who personally

provoked Jehovah's displeasure; to which we have called your attention. But oh, there was One who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners—one who not only obeyed the law, but magnified it and made it honourable; but who yet suffered—suffered most intensely—suffered most agonizingly because of sin—because he was the surety for sinners—because sin was cast upon him by implication. Yes, he was pure—he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. And not only was he pure, but he was God's Son—he was his only begotten—he was his beloved Son. But then it pleased the Father to bruise him, and to put him to grief. His grief was so great, that he exclaimed, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and the sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down upon earth.

Here, then, is a manifestation of God's hatred of sin, such, my friends, as ought to fill us with the very deepest fear—such as ought to humble us in the dust, when we think of being chargeable with it—such as ought, if properly viewed, to drive us all to the blood of sprinkling, and words of humble prayer for the influence of that Spirit which can deliver us from the power of this evil thing which the Lord hateth.

Oh, then, my friends, I conclude with earnestly beseeching you that you will seek to have part with your God in your views and sentiments with regard to sin. Oh, bring to God, your maker, the grounds on which we have dwelt. Think of the way in which he has manifested his hatred of sin. Do think again of the judgments which in various ages of the world, have come against it. Do look abroad upon the consequences of sin now. Do think again of what it is that has kindled hell's flames, and bound together the links of its everlasting chains, and gathered the blackness of thick darkness, and made the bolts of its prison doors of a character that they cannot be unloosened. And think again of that exclamation—My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Rest not on stout-heartedness, but seek this day, this moment, to ponder deeply and scrutinizingly on what is your real state with regard to this evil and abominable thing. Sinners you are. There is no man against whom the charge of having returned upon this evil thing may not be made. But

does it still rest on you? Are you still carrying it about with you in God's sight? Are you this day defiling his laws? Oh, what a condition for a mortal soul to continue in! I beseech you do not neglect your great salvation. You may carry all your iniquities with you into eternity before God, and should you do so, what will be the consequence? Would the God who spared not even his own Son, on such a supposition spare you? Come, then, now

to the blood of sprinkling. Seek the forgiveness of your manifold transgressions. Behold the lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. Seek to throw yourselves on him, and "though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The Lord create in you a clean heart—the Lord renew a right spirit within you. Oh, let this be your supplication. Amen.

THE OPENING PROSPECTS OF THE CHURCH ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, COLLEGE-STREET, EDINBURGH,
7TH MAY, 1832, AT THE OPENING OF THE RELIEF SYNOD,

By the Rev. ALEXANDER M'NAUGHTON,

Milngavie.

"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me."—1 Cor. xvi. 9.

THE present period is one which the Church of Christ regards as full of hope. In relation to it, she adopts the language of the noble-minded and zealous apostle, and by the same tokens which animate her hopes, she feels herself summoned to her duties, and urged to augmented energy in the prosecution of them.

It is difficult, in relation to any existing period, to take a just and comprehensive view of the moral aspects of society, and of the circumstances and duties of the Church, as affected by these. The prominent signs of the times, it may not be difficult to discern; but what this cloud on the horizon, or that streak of serene sky may portend, it may be more difficult to divine. We attempt not these difficulties. Duty is at all times incumbent, and usually plain to the humble inquirer. If at any time, an opening for the extension of the knowledge and influence of the gospel, presents itself, or may by any practicable effort be commanded, the call of duty is clear; and oh! considering the immortal interests involved, how urgent. It is one of the favourable signs of the present times, that the attention of all denominations among us, is very much turned to this important object. Each is endeavouring to enlarge the sphere of its exertions, and to bring these more perfectly to bear upon the population within its reach; and providence is inviting such exertions, by opening

a great and effectual door. Allow me, then, to call your attention, Reverend Fathers and brethren,

I. To the opening prospects of the Christian Church.

II. To the duty devolving upon us, with relation to these.

I. *The opening prospects of the Church.*

In some points of view, as regards the Church's prospects, our times stand in favourable contrast with those of the apostles. In other respects we have a similar conflict to maintain. Let us revert to primitive times. When the apostles received their commission, and went forth preaching the word, they found everywhere many adversaries opposing—nowhere an open door for the dissemination of the gospel, unless where the Old Testament revelation had prepared some to look for consolation in Israel. The diversity of character and condition among Jews and Gentiles only presented a diversity of obstacles. Christianity did not then come recommended to the heathen, as being the religion of the wisest and mightiest of the nations—as having been long tried in practice—as being already, in relation to its divine origin, a question long settled among the wise and the good, by an ample examination of its evidences, as having already subdued many of the mightiest minds to the obedience of faith, and as

being confirmed and illustrated through a long succession of ages, by the fulfilment of prophecy, and by the holy lives, and labours, and sufferings of faithful confessors and martyrs. It did not meet, in those to whom it was addressed, minds turning towards the light, and ready to embrace it—souls ready to take from the truth the stamp of holiness, and to yield an unqualified submission to the righteousness and will of God. The obnoxious doctrine of the cross presented itself on the front of the gospel testimony, drawing after it a train of doctrines exciting the aversion of the carnal heart. In every mind, there was a consolidated mass of error to be overthrown—in every heart, the power of selfish interests, depraved passions, and enslaving habits to be overcome, and upon every imagination there was bound the spell of enchanting delusion, thrown over it by imposing forms striking the senses, or by the fictions of lofty genius. What a revolution behoved to be effected in an individual mind, ere the views of the gospel became its views; and the feelings it inspired, the sentiments of the heart; and its principles, the secret springs of action in the soul; and its dictates, the rule of the life. Miracles formed a species of evidence calculated to force the barriers of prejudice, and compel conviction; but the state of views in heathen, and even in many Jewish minds, was such, as exceedingly to disqualify them for appreciating that species of evidence, and as for the internal evidence of the gospel, how imperfectly could that be discerned by minds which put darkness for light, and light for darkness—evil for good, and good for evil. Even after conviction was compelled by overpowering evidence, there might remain to be produced, that spiritual change which disposes the soul to the love and obedience of the truth. The persecution to which the profession of the gospel was exposed, was far from being the chief obstacle its progress had to encounter. Only a wonderful effusion of the Holy Ghost can account for Christianity having been extensively embraced, and having become suddenly the religion of vast multitudes in many nations.

It belongs to church history to tell what corrupting influences have, through a long series of ages, blended with those of Christianity, impeded its extension, and impaired its efficacy; and whence it is,

that at this day, the yet too narrow openings for its diffusion, are impeded by so many difficulties.

The opening prospects of the Church present themselves to the contemplation of the Christian pastor in the following points of view:—

1. As regards his individual sphere of ministration. We conduct our ministrations in a different state of society from that in which the first teachers went forth every where preaching the word. We enter into the labours of our Fathers who have gone before us, and into those of the faithful ministers and confessors of former times; and in some respects into those even of the apostles themselves. We have a comparatively favourable state of things made ready to our hand. We have all the advantage of a nominal Christianity, and a nominal protestantism. Christianity has in its favour all the advantage of a decided public opinion. Its ministers and friends address by the living voice, and by writing, an enlightened and cultivated people, whose views Christianity has moulded, whose manners Christianity has formed, and with whose early habits attendance upon Christian ordinances has been incorporated. We minister in churches of the saints, in the fellowship of which are associated multitudes who have long been rooted and built up in Christ, are adorning the gospel by their lives, and are disposed in every way to be helpers of the truth. As far as external opportunity is concerned, we have thus a great and effectual door opened; but of these the number is still very great, whose hearts are not yet opened of the Lord. Among these must be reckoned many who are giving attendance on the means of grace. As far as regards this class, the Christian pastor has peculiar advantages. He has gained their ear and their understanding, he has a witness for the truth in their consciences, he has some interest in their hearts. The kingdom of God is come nigh to them, and they seem not far from entering it. It will not be easy for the Christian pastor so to discharge his duty towards them, as to be clear from their blood if they perish. Yet it must not be forgotten by themselves, nor by their minister, that they are in a perishing condition. Though exalted to heaven, they may yet be thrust down to hell. The carnal mind is in all enmity against God, and unless the heart be changed by a

thorough conversion, there prevails in it a reigning opposition, however disguised or modified to that unqualified submission to the righteousness and will of God, without which there cannot be peace with him.

There is another class from whom we are more widely separated—a multitude who are either living alienated from all the means of grace, or satisfied with another gospel than the gospel of Christ. Among those, and especially the former, are many hardened in apostasy—trees twice dead plucked up by the roots—persons under the malediction of long abused means of grace, of a rejected gospel, profaned Sabbaths and sacraments, and of despite done to the spirit of grace. Yet even of those who seem to rank in this class, may one here and there be plucked as a brand from the burning. But all who are withdrawn from ordinances, are not in the same hardened and hopeless condition. Let an application of means adapted to their state be, by every winning and solemn method, brought to bear upon their souls, and a great and effectual door may be opened, even as regards them.

The moral and intellectual state of many of this class is such, that we have few points of contact with them; between them and us, there exist few channels of communication; barriers of a moral nature separate us and them, more difficult to be passed, in many cases, than those which separate us from the heathen themselves. Yet of these stones can God raise up children to Abraham. What a rich reward of Christian exertion is obtained, if but a few of these can be raised to union with Christ, and all its blessed privileges, and transformed by the renewing of their minds, so as to adorn the gospel by Christian intelligence and piety. When salvation comes to the soul of one such individual, it comes to his house, its blessings may descend in his family, and through him a medium of communication be opened for imparting them to others around. It is an awakening thought that of each of these, our fellow-immortals, the soul is as precious, his capacity for moral agency, and for happiness or misery as vast, his account as solemn, his eternity as enduring as of any, and the riches of divine grace will not be less magnified in his salvation. It is a work of much delicacy, and severely trying to Christian wisdom, patience, and zeal, to open an entrance among these

for the gospel message. There has prevailed among the divided denominations of Christians towards each other, and also among the class whose recovery we seek towards us all, a state of unfriendly and jealous feeling, preventing the Christian pastor, even though he had the time and strength requisite, from going forth among them with the same freedom and the same promise of success as the Christian teacher of primitive, or the missionary of modern times among the heathen. Methods which steer clear of this unfavourable feeling, or tend to abate and obviate it, are now being more tried than formerly; an improved state of sentiments as regards the condition of the irreligious, and efforts for reclaiming them, is prevailing; the concern of serious Christians on their behalf, is more awakened; a deeper interest is excited on behalf of the religious education of their children; and these objects are becoming more incorporated with ministerial exertion. But one man cannot do the work of many. As an overseer, the pastor is to call forth the efforts of Christians in their several relations, and in the intercourse of life. Each Christian has a relative circle in which he moves, or over which he presides, a social circle in which he has influence. Let all gifts be more and more cultivated, and sanctified to the Lord. Let every sanctified endowment be employed in the service of God, in its proper sphere, domestic or social. Let every prudent subsidiary means be employed. What individual efforts cannot effect, union in effort may accomplish. There is much of the light and warmth of piety in some portions of society: let there be more free communication opened for its diffusion. Religion is diffusive. Let Christians remember they must communicate, as well as enjoy it. Right views as to this matter, fervent prayers, prudent endeavours on the part of serious Christians, for the revival and diffusion of vital religion, are means of opening wider to Christian pastors the door of exertion and success.

It is chiefly through the body of genuine Christian professors, that the Christian pastor must seek to operate upon others. Their revival will be to others as life from the dead. This is the order of things set forth in Scripture. "God be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth." The Christian pastor

must therefore take heed to all the flock. Here must his exertions be concentrated. The efficiency of his exertions, as these may be made to bear upon society around, will depend mainly on their efficiency in his more peculiar circle. Each church is a golden candlestick, exhibiting a light in a dark world. He must supply the oil, and trim the lamp. Each is a society, constituted by divine appointment, for the purpose of holding up the truth in a united testimony—declaring the divine glory in a joint worship—exhibiting the power of divine truth and grace, in a united holy example—promoting the mutual love of its members, and their reciprocal endeavours to advance one another's edification and comfort, and for employing their combined energies for the advancement of their cause. In proportion as the illumination, warmth, and power of vital piety prevails among them, will they be fitted to influence society around.

2. As regards our country.—Never was our country more thoroughly pervaded by Christian institutions; never could it boast more numerous or more highly illuminated Christian minds, ardently devoted to pious effort; yet there appears reason to think that there have been periods when it was more thoroughly pervaded by the light and power of the gospel, and when it contained less of ignorance and debasement. Amidst augmented means of intellectual, moral, and religious improvement, we behold many among the different classes in society, placing themselves out of the scope, and resisting the influence of these. When we search for the causes, we find reason to deplore, the demoralizing effects of long continued wars, together with the effects of great and sudden vicissitudes of commercial prosperity and depression; unfavourable arrangements in the manufacturing departments of labour; the inordinate engrossment of the popular mind, with the passing schemes of party politics; the influence acquired over it, from this and other causes, by irreligious men; the spreading of the spirit of infidelity, as a gangrene, even tainting with levity, and corrupting from the simplicity that is in Christ, many professors of religion. Christianity in its native vigour is, under God, fully adequate to meet every exigency in the moral condition of man. We must

revert, therefore, to causes affecting either the mode or the efficacy of its administration.

The pastoral neglect of numbers now gone to their account, has had its unhappy share of influence. In an awful sense, their works are following them. Paul alludes to causes which may render the cross of Christ, even when preached, of none effect. Why is the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit withheld from the ministrations of Churches, sound in their creed? Divine influence must rest on ourselves, that it may accompany our ministrations. We are fitted to convey the riches of gospel blessings to others, as we are enriched by them ourselves. There is not only a spirit, but a mode adapted for success. There may be a substitution of theorizing on the operations of gospel truth, for the direct and pointed application of it. There may be deficiency in laying open, and applying the law for the purposes of conviction, or in exhibiting the cross of Christ, so as to melt the heart, and subdue it to the obedience of the truth, or in setting forth the offices and work of the spirit, that he may be duly honoured and sought; or in presenting in a discriminating manner, the characteristics of a regenerated nature, so as to draw a marked line between living after the flesh and living after the spirit, or in point of a charitable, zealous, and devotional spirit, or of fidelity in reproving prevailing evils, or inciting Christians to every department of duty and exertion. The more perfectly the mind of Christ is expressed in the ministrations of the word, the more conducive will these be to stamp something of the mind of Christ upon the souls of men.

Another cause has been the substitution, over a large portion of our country, of another gospel for the gospel of Christ. In not a few places, generations have been, from this cause, consigned to error and irreligion. A virtual heathenism has there been sheltered under a Christian name, from the intrusion of the preacher of the truth as it is in Jesus. The diffusion and influence of Scriptural truth, through the various channels opening more and more for its communication, will remove both classes of obstacles. Its growing light, falling on the most active and influential Christian minds, and awakening them to Christian effort, will diffuse

itself through them more and more, animate society with a new spirit, and mould its form. Christ's kingdom is not of this world. The business of the Christian ministry is not with the politics of this world. The ministry, however, acts a most influential part in the dispensations of providence, as well as in the economy of grace, in promoting social arrangements favourable to its grand object, as well as in effecting that object itself. It thus hastens on the consummation represented in the symbols of prophecy, by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, smiting the image, and rendering it as the chaff of the summer thrashing-floor. The hopes of the enemies of Christianity, who look on it as a creature of the state, may at the present moment be high. But let her once be emancipated, and her unfettered energies will soon crush infidelity. Her pure light, set forth in unadorned simplicity, shall attract the suffrages of all. The contest between the true gospel, and all that an apostle would term another gospel, shall be awakened to great energy. It will become more a practical contest. The population of every district will be aroused to inquire, decide, and choose. The common people will again hear Christ's true gospel gladly. Energies and resources hitherto latent, will be called forth. The efficacy of the gospel to transform and bless society, as well as renew and save individuals, will be displayed. We hope we see in the events of providence, signs of the approach of the period of predicted success in the church—the rising of that spirit to which success is promised, with the steady advancement of means preparing for it. At any rate, our enlarging facilities call upon us to pray for, expect, and attempt greater things.

3. As respects the world.—God is affording to his church enlarged facilities for the high and holy enterprise of extending the kingdom of his Son, by the rise and advancement of an order of changes, in a great degree peculiar to our times. Among these may be mentioned, the transference of the empire of the ocean and foreign dominion, and the possession of vast foreign colonies into the hand of the great protestant power, of those, particularly, among whose Christian subjects there exists the largest measure of ability and zeal for diffusing the Gospel—

the extension of commerce generally, and of that of these states in particular to every shore—the rapid advancement of knowledge and science in those branches, particularly, bearing most directly on the improvement of the moral and physical condition of man—improvements in the modes of education, and in the arts connected with the diffusion of knowledge—the progressive increase in point of numbers, diversified qualification, and success, of writers of talent, whose powers are employed in inculcating upon the public mind, the peculiar doctrines and principles of the gospel, in works imbued with its spirit—the increasing efforts of Christian men, who have a voice in public legislation, to promote Christian objects—the advancement of that powerful and united Christian sentiment, relative to the extension of the gospel, in which the organization and extending operations of so many societies labouring for that object have originated, and its deepening hold upon the public mind, together with the promise of still greater facilities being opened for the extension of Christian exertions at home and abroad. To these may be added, the breaking in of light, and the awakening of the human mind, in an unwonted manner, in Popish, and even Mahomedan and pagan countries, through intercourse with enlightened nations—the breaking up from this cause of ancient prejudices, preparing men's minds for a new order of things.

It has been remarked, we think with truth, that every form of religious opinion is, through the diffusion of knowledge, gradually declining from its hold on the human mind at large, with the exception of genuine Christianity, which is rising to undivided ascendancy. Infidelity in its ultimate effect, is only clearing the world of systems of error, or of corruptions which have been blended with the truth. Its assaults against whatever professes to be a refuge for the soul, can destroy only what is false; and, providing none itself, it shuts up the soul when trial comes, as come it will, and serves to turn it to him whose voice says, Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Political changes are advancing with those of a moral nature, and aiding them. We behold the shaking of nations, and the breaking up of the frame of society in those countries, especially under whose

existing policy the Church of Christ has been oppressed and persecuted. The Christian church amidst all this, is rising more and more to a position where, by union in faithful testimony, in purity of fellowship and active exertion, she will command a high moral dominion, influencing all the powers which govern society, and thus bringing the kingdoms of this world under the empire of her great head. The hand of God likewise manifested in dispensations of peculiar mercy and judgment, is calling back men's attention to the concerns in which they have to do with himself as a sovereign and a Judge, and with a world to come, inspiring a religious awe and solemn concern into many hearts, to which all classes had been too much strangers. From these and similar causes, there prevail in the Church of Christ, awakened expectations of great approaching changes—introducing the period when all nations shall come and see God's glory. When we view the entire aspect of things, we see awful and portentous tokens. The worldly politician, and the student of prophecy alike concur in looking forward with awful apprehension to times of trouble among the nations, such as have never been. But be these what they may, in that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah,—“We have a strong city, salvation shall God appoint for walls and for bulwarks.”

II. *Our duty as regards the present time.*
 —1. Ministers of the gospel ought, by the cultivation of eminent personal piety, to be prepared to improve the opening prospects. What if we are not prepared? Opportunities of success are lost privileges, if we have not that spirit which God will bless with success; and oh, what responsibility attaches to such privileges! What a responsibility was that of Moses, when he was directed to set up the brazen serpent, and call the Israelites to look and live. To be successful in our work, our ministrations must possess the unction of the spirit of grace. In the sacred writings, we find the expression of the holy graces of the inspired writers, combined with the utterance of the truths revealed to them, and to this distinguishing feature, much of their living power upon the heart is owing. What is there in the Christian ministry that can be done with efficacy, without the exercise of the Christian graces. In study we need the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with our spirits. This is the unction which teaches all things. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. In the mat-

ter and manner of what we bring forward, the cast will be given from our frame of spirit, our motives and our end. The truth must be spoken in love. In our example, the light of grace must shine. In our intercourse, affection and sympathy must blend with zeal. The tone and manner of every thing, are that which produce the impression, and through the sympathies of the human heart, tend to awaken the proper emotion in other souls. We are not only to deal with men through the medium of reason and conscience, but aim to move them through the sympathies of the heart. These sympathies must circulate from heart to heart in Christian society, but the movement will become languid, if from our hearts, no impulse emanate. If we break the circulation of these, the effect will be like a paralysis in the bodily frame. Revivals of religion have been promoted by an improvement of this principle in dependence on that Spirit who alone quickens the soul. Who is sufficient for these things? Divine influence is promised: faith obtains it. If in prayer we have power with God and prevail, we shall prevail also with man.

How awfully solemn the prospect of answering to the great Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, the Friend and Judge of souls, for immortal souls, committed to our oversight, and who must be either eternally saved or eternally lost, and that not without our instrumentality, and consequently responsibility. For the sake of the souls under our charge—of the Church—of our country—of the world—of the present generation—of future generations—of the glory of God—of the honour of Christ—and for our own soul's sake, let us cultivate eminent piety.

2. The church must improve her favourable prospects by combining augmented effort with fervent prayer.

When a great door and effectual is opened, it is of the Lord. It is the Lord who opens the heart. His grace operates through institutions and means of his own appointing, and through instruments of his own preparing. The appropriate agency must be employed. The divine influence must animate and give it efficacy. To accomplish greater things, the church must be awakened to increasing exertion and prayer. Is it too much to hope that she shall? In civil society the public mind can be aroused to zeal and combined exertion for some temporal object which once excited no concern. May not a still

augmenting interest be awakened in relation to the object of that petition, Thy kingdom come? May not the public spirit and zeal now expended on objects of a temporal nature be directed to this, under a deepening conviction of the infinite importance of a right moral and religious, beyond even a proper political, state of human society? May we not hope that the world, wearied in the greatness of its way, and disappointed in inferior objects, will seek rest in the kingdom of the Son of God? At least may we not hope that the spiritual church, augmented in faith and energy, and more perfectly united, will be moved by the dispensations of God's providence—the voice of his word and the might of his grace, and move the world?

3. That a door of greater success may be opened to us who are now assembled, we must take a public-spirited interest in all that concerns our own efficiency and religious prosperity.

We trust we hear the Great Head of the Church saying to us, as associated in the labours and privileges of his kingdom, "Behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it, for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." Let the character of the Philadelphian church be increasingly that of ours, and we have the promise of success. In an associated Christian body, the prevalence of eminent piety is essential to distinguished usefulness.

And now let us be encouraged by the prospects opening before us. There are still many adversaries, Ancient idolatry, Mahomedanism, Popery, infidelity, and surrounding irreligion stand in threaten-

ing attitude, with frowning aspect, summoning up their remaining strength for stout determined opposition. We need not be dismayed for our cause. Martyrs and faithful confessors, during ages of darkness and persecution, have been animated in labouring and suffering by the visions of prophecy, and ought not we, as the time draws nigh? Our business however, is not so much with generals as particulars; with surveying the plan of Providence, as labouring at our post. We are to preach Christ, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. The eternal destinies of immortal souls, who look to us for instruction, is involved in our fidelity. We and they are in the high road to eternity. Oh, let us strive to lead them to Christ and to glory! Precious in God's sight are the objects of his redeeming love—his renewing grace—his Fatherly affection—his Spirit's guidance—the guardianship of his providence—the care of angels, the heirs of glory. Christ is saying to us concerning them, Feed my sheep, feed my lambs; and of others around—"Bring these wanderers back to my fold." There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

Christian Friends, you are called into the fellowship of God's Son by the gospel, and to be our fellow helpers unto his kingdom. Labour much with your pastors in the Lord. Pray much for them and for all the flock. Seek the good and the peace of Zion. They shall prosper that love Zion. Adorn, by holiness, your holy profession. In a little we pass into a world where, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

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SATURDAY, 11TH AUGUST, 1832.

No. 20

SERMON by the Rev. Dr. CHALMERS, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT M'QUEEN, Glasgow.

Price 2s

THE USE OF THE LAW ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE EVENING OF
SABBATH, 26TH DECEMBER, 1830,

By the Rev. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.,

Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh.

"The law is good, if a man use it lawfully."—1 TIM. i. 8.

WE have, in another place, endeavoured to expound at least half of this lesson—the wrong use that may be made of the law when we seek to establish a right to its rewards, and the right use that may be made of the law when, convinced of sin, we seek for refuge and acceptance only in the righteousness of Christ. But there is another right use to be made of the law, which I want to make the lesson of this evening, even that of most assiduously conforming our behaviour to its requirements—to qualify ourselves for the enjoyment of that heaven which Christ has purchased for us. When we try to purchase heaven by our obedience to the law, we use the law unlawfully; when we try to prepare ourselves for that heaven purchased for us by another, even by him who has brought in everlasting righteousness, and who alone could give an adequate price for that glorious inheritance, then it is that we use the law lawfully; and the necessity of so using it, I mean to make the subject of the present discourse.

Observe, then, of the law of God, that it has another and distinct object from that of holding out a method by which men acquire a right to its promised rewards, even that of holding out a method by which they acquire a rightness of character for the exercise of its fruits. The legal right is one thing; the moral rightness which obedience

confers is another. For the former object the law must now become useless, and having fallen short of perfect obedience in ourselves, we must now found our whole right only in the righteousness of Christ. For the latter object, the law still contains all the use and all the importance which it ever had. It is that tablet on which are inscribed the virtues of the Godhead; and we, by copying these into the tablet of our own character, are restored to the likeness of God. We utterly mistake the design and economy of that gospel, if we think that while the first function of the law has been superseded under the New Testament dispensation, the second has been superseded also. Obedience for a legal right is every where denounced as a presumptuous enterprise; obedience for a personal righteousness is every where said to be an enterprise, the prosecution of which forms the main business of every disciple, and the full achievement of which is the prize of his high calling. For the one end, the law has altogether lost its efficacy; and we, in order to substantiate its claim, must seek to be justified only by the righteousness of Christ. For the other end, the law retains its office as an exemplar of all virtue, and when empowered by strength from on high to follow its dictates, we must seek to be sanctified by its bidden authority, and bidden uprightness in our own characters. Under

the economy of works, human virtue is said to be the price of heaven, but its power is lost, and lost irrevocably, by ceasing to be perfect. But human virtue is still the indispensable preparation for heaven; that is, having, for the sanctuary above, to struggle with all the imperfection of our carnal nature below, we must, by a life of prayer and pains-taking, make way through the frailties and temptations of our sinful state in time, to a meetness for the sinless inheritance which is beyond it. To be meet in law, we must be invested with faith through the righteousness of Christ; to be meet in character, we must be invested with the graces of our own personal righteousness.

Let me now, then, expound more particularly the uses to which our observance of the law may be turned, in giving us not a right to heaven, but the indispensable character without which heaven never will be entered by us. If, after having laid hold of the righteousness of Christ, as your alone meritorious plea for the kingdom of heaven, you look to the law as in fact a transcript of the image of the Godhead, and by your assiduous keeping of this law, endeavour more and more to become like to God in Christ, this is the legitimate and proper use of the law, and by making this use, you use it lawfully. You must not discard the law as being a thing that has no place in the system of the Gospel. The great end of the Gospel is to work in you a life and law of God; and by impressing the traits of that law on your character, to make you more and more like the Lawgiver, and fit you for his companionship. Therefore, although you discard the law in one capacity, that is not to say that you are to discard it altogether; for there remains this other capacity—the law is that to which you must conform yourselves, in order to render you meet for the inheritance of the saints. The society of heaven will be a congenial society—there will be a family likeness reigning through all its members, or, in other words, you must be like unto the spirits of just men made perfect; you must be like the angels; you must be like God himself, or you are altogether unmeet for admittance there. And, therefore, I say, though you cannot by the law purchase heaven as your right, you, through its medium, prepare yourselves for the enjoyment of this heaven; you acquire that family likeness which renders you fit for your admittance there. And be assured, that without this you never

will obtain entrance. We see, then, that though this obedience of ours to the law of God never can make out for us a judicial right for heaven, yet that this obedience, and this alone makes out our personal meetness for heaven. We can separate, in idea, the judicial from the personal meetness for heaven; and while we lay an entire stress on the former, we also count the latter indispensable. Now, what helps us to do this, is the arbitrary connexion which obtains between a punishment and a crime in civil society. A violent temper is its own punishment, and the misery which it inflicts may be regarded as the necessary effect of the temper itself; but it may farther urge a man under its power to the commission of an assault upon his neighbour, for which, by the law of the country, he shall be put into confinement. Being thus detached from society, he is certainly restrained from a similar act against another; and when sent back from imprisonment, the fear of its recurrence may prevent him from committing a similar outrage again. The object of peace and protection to the community is gained by this proceeding, but nothing is done by it to modify the man's temper—something perhaps to repress the outgoings of mischief, but nothing to purify or dry up its source. The man may still continue to foster in his soul the miseries of fierce internal war; so that if the civil punishment were remitted, and if he obtained a full discharge of the penalties of the law, there are other penalties formed by nature from the mere infirmities of his character, from which the law can give him no deliverance whatever. It cannot save him from the misery of his own restless and ungovernable temper—from the wretchedness of being driven and pursued, and agonized by the fury and disorder of his own passions, after releasing him from every legal chastisement, after it has pronounced upon him in such a way that in the eye of the law he is a righteous person—after it has snatched him from the hand of its own executioner, there may be the vengeance of an executioner within. In fact, there is distress which the law lays on, but there is a natural and necessary distress by law which will prevail so long as the character remains, arising from the heat and violence of an anger which the strength of the law can never extinguish—from the conflict and fermentation of passions which breed within the

man's own heart—from the affronted, proud, unquelled resentment, ready to burst forth in fancied provocation from his fellow men; this unhappy criminal, set free from all the penalties of the law, still feels a punishment heavier than he can bear.

I trust you see the relation of this to our present subject. One part of the law of God is, that we should be forbearing and forgiving one with another. The circumstance which leads us to transgress that law is just the natural heat and violence of our temper. Suppose a man set out on the enterprise of seeking to establish a right to heaven by his obedience to the law, then it is his duty to restrain all the outbursts of a furious temper; but he sees he never can succeed in making out the right by his obedience to the law, and, transgressing in one particular, he has failed in all. Now, some thinking that they have discarded the law, in as far as its power to obtain for them a right to heaven is concerned, and that, in discarding it, they have gone to Christ, are apt to think they are quit of the law altogether. But we say they are not; because there still remains another end—another important capacity in which they are still to use the law, even after they have united themselves to Christ. What is this capacity? and of what use is the law after this step has been taken? Here is the use of the law. All that you have gotten by your faith in Christ is a right to the kingdom of heaven. But the kingdom of heaven is peace, and righteousness, and joy. The kingdom of heaven is within you, and the essential joy of heaven is that joy which springs from the exercise of good, and kind, and virtuous affections. You have obtained a right of entering heaven, and a release from the punishment of hell. But if the temper which prompted you to those transgressions of the law still remains within you, then the essential misery of hell remains within you. You are still exposed to all the misery that is incurred by the exercise of furious and malignant passions. You must have a rightness of character—you must get quit of all those immoral, vile, and wretched things which by nature adhere to you, and your salvation is begun here by a gradual process of deliverance from the wickedness of your hearts and
and which, perfected, renders you

meet for the inheritance of the saints; so that this use of the law is an indispensable thing, although the law has failed, or rather you have failed, in making out your right to heaven by your obedience to its precepts.

I have endeavoured to illustrate this by showing you the distinction between what is arbitrary and natural in the punishments which await certain kinds of wickedness in this life; but we have every reason to believe in an arbitrary and a natural misery in the punishments of hell. There is no natural connexion between moral guilt and the application of intense heat to the material part of our constitution. Now it is the heat, the flame, the fire and brimstone, the everlasting burnings, which chiefly appal the fancy and increase the fears of the inner man, when he thinks of the place of condemnation. Now it is true, that by a bare act of justification he may be delivered from all that is gross and carnal in these torments, the fire may cease to burn and the body to be agonized; but if the character remains, the misery that it entails on the moral constitution will also remain. A mere deed of acquittal will never work out a deliverance from this misery. An arrangement has been made known to us in the gospel, by which God has dissolved the alliance between love and enjoyment on the one hand, and hatred and wretchedness on the other. It has made no change on the character or tendency of what is right and wrong. The economy made known to us in the New Testament has no more broken up the association between benevolence and pleasure, and malignity and pain, in a man's heart, than broken up the connexion between the sight of beauty and emotions of pleasure, and the sight of deformity and emotions of disgust. If a believer could be delivered from the fear of hell, and were to remain in character and effect, just what he was, a portion of the misery of hell would still adhere to him. His mind, in respect of all these painful sensations, may be as unrelenting as ever. All this hell may still be attached to his person without mitigation. Let disdain, meeting with equal disdain, and hatred, exchanging its mutual coldness, of one unregenerate being to another; and remorse, and suspicion, and envy, and discontent, rankle in the hearts of crea-

tures that vie in hostility towards God, and each other; if this were permitted, their bodies are enough to make a hell out of any habitation of assembled criminals, from the sharpest infliction of the worm that dieth not, and the fiercest material of fire that is not quenched. The man that has this unsanctified feeling in his heart, carries hell about with him. In respect of the material ingredients of torture, it is conceivable that he may be saved by being justified; but in respect of the moral ingredients, to be saved he must be sanctified.

Therefore we see that though the law is of no use, it is just by obeying this law that you make out your sanctification, and the one is just as indispensable as the other. The thing I want is, that you will not put asunder what God has joined. Although the law is of no use to justification, it is just as essential to your enjoyment of heaven as your justification is. It is not enough, then, to obtain a mere translation from what is locally hell to what is locally heaven. The misery of hell consists in the sufferings which, by the unrepealed law, are attached to vicious propensities; and a great part of the happiness of heaven consists in enjoyments which, by the same law, are attached to kind, good, and holy affections; so that to have the full advantage of an inheritance among the saints, there must be a meekness of character. On that truth I stand, and I crave your attention for a little longer to the first of these statements: and however painful the imagery that is associated with such a contemplation, the importance of the lesson must be held as our apology. We are not to overlook the penal character of these sufferings which are endured in the prison-house of the damned; and we have every reason to believe that intense bodily pain forms one ingredient of their bitter and ever-enduring agony. But there are other ingredients; and to prove how these are fitted to bring a heavy load, we ask you to conceive of the horrors of an ill regulated dungeon, where the wretched inmates are restrained only by the terrors of discipline from acts of violence upon each other. Let corporal punishments be withdrawn; still their enormities, working on their hearts, may beget such a mental wretchedness as may make it the most expressive way of ex-

pressing this scene of confinement on earth, to call it a hell. Well, then, in this jail although there is no bodily pain, there is the wretchedness of a hell—mutual rage and mutual revenge, revenge unsatiated, or venting itself in ferocity—the prayer of bacchanalian levity mingling with all that is unhallowed—desire, passion raising a tempest in the soul before its gratification, or leaving after it the bitterness of remorse. There may be the unbridled selfishness of beings, each clamouring for his own object, and united only in one career of daring against heaven's law—stamp immortality on these creatures that have a hell within them; and though you open the prison doors and set them loose from confinement, each would carry with him his own portion of hell. Travel with them from one end of the world to another, yet they would not escape from what is mainly hell. Even transport their persons into what is locally heaven, they would still continue to be hunted by the substantial wretchedness of hell. These are ills from which they cannot be saved by a mere act of transference from one abode to another. There must be an act of transformation from one character to another. Or, if faith is to save them, they must be sanctified by faith; and if it is not by the law that they are to obtain their right of entering into heaven, most assuredly it is by their obedience to the law that they have obtained that heaven shall be to them a place of enjoyment, for without it heaven itself would be turned into a hell.

And without going for illustration to the outcasts of exile and imprisonment, the very same thing may be exemplified in the bosom of families. It is not necessary that pain be inflicted on bodies by acts of violence, in order to make it a wretched family. It is enough that pain be made to rankle within every heart; from the elements of suspicion, hatred, and disgust, an abode of enjoyment may be turned into an abode of the intensest misery. The first ingredient of the place of torment may breed and break out in the dwelling places of the unregenerate in this world, so as that if the element of fire were altogether extinguished in the future arrangement of nature and providence; yet God has other elements which he can wield to the eternal wretchedness of those who disobey him—he has other

agents than that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Our own passions will be to us the ministers of heaviest condemnation; and to save from these, there must be a meetness impressed on our characters; for it is not enough that we have that which the law cannot give us, even a right to the kingdom of heaven; but, on the other hand, we must, in addition to this, have that which the law alone gives us, even that meetness of character without which we are altogether unqualified for heaven's exercises and heaven's joys.

Having thus endeavoured to make palpable to you that the hell of the New Testament consists mainly in the wretchedness which attaches naturally and necessarily to character, let me touch on the opposite and more pleasing side of the picture—the heaven of the New Testament, as consisting mainly in the happiness which attaches, naturally and necessarily, to character. I have no idea of a man carrying in life with him the security that he is a justified person, and at the same time being a bad member of society, making his whole family miserable. If he perseveringly and presumptuously go on with his disobedience to the law, that man is not in the way of salvation at all. Were it real, the first doing of faith in Christ would be to work love in his heart. It would show itself in all sorts of ways in the walk and conversation. People are apt to think that heaven is a place of great splendour and spaciousness, and that there is music going on there, and the exhibition of all goodness; that it is a most delicious and most regaling place, and suited to all the physical wants of our nature. But the main happiness of heaven is just the happiness that springs from righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And though you have the right of entering there, if you have not these things, you have no heaven at all. If your life has in it the character of hell, taking you out of one place and putting you into another will not make you happy. The kingdom of God is not in you. Heaven is more a thing of character than of local condition; so that your heaven may begin now; and the great thing is your having heaven's purity—heaven's love for the brethren.

Well, then, this is one sample of how much happier a thing heaven is than hell;

because heaven is the abode of love—hell is the abode of misery. It is a mere contradiction in terms to speak of salvation without a virtuous and good character, because the very essence of your salvation is that character. It begins here, and you perfect it hereafter. I want you to understand that the salvation of the gospel mainly and essentially is moral salvation; and that heaven consists essentially in the happiness that attaches to the exercise and reciprocation of right moral feeling and conduct, one to another.

It were of incalculable use, were we to be familiarized with this view. Were men led to pursue an enlightened notion of the real character of heaven's enjoyments on the one side, and of hell's sufferings on the other, it would lead them to perceive what was actually meant by the term salvation. People often speak of salvation without meaning. If they understood the precise import of this term, they would see Antinomianism with such a right understanding of salvation, as would in fact make Antinomianism become a contradiction in terms. It would appear the same absurdity, as a heaven of splendour given as a reward to a man that is blind. Conceive a man blind and heaven promised to him, and this heaven to consist in the beauty and splendour of its sights, what is that to a man that is blind? Just so; heaven to a man who continues wicked, is equally absurd as a heaven of sights as a reward to a man who is blind, or a heaven of melody to a man who is deaf, or a heaven of philosophy as a reward to a man who has no power to comprehend the true simplicity of its principles. We have only to think of the character of the heaven of the New Testament, that it is the land of uprightness; and then to reflect how utterly vain it is to hold up this as a reward to a man whose heart was still occupied with the love of sin, or who remained a slave to those lusts which war against the soul. To enjoy a brilliant and picturesque heaven, a man must be endowed with a seeing eye; to enjoy a musical heaven, he must be endowed with a hearing ear; to enjoy an intellectual heaven, he must be endowed with a clear and able understanding; and to enjoy the actual heaven of the New Testament, into which all who are meet on earth are soon to be transported, he must be endowed

with a moral heart. So that the very essence of salvation shall consist in the personal salvation by which man is rendered capable of being a happy and congenial inmate of heaven. It shall consist in restoring to him the character he had lost, by the possession of which, and by renewal of which, through the power of the second Adam, he was capable then, and will again be, of the communion of God and of enjoyment the most pure and exalted, in the presence of a good, and righteous, and holy God. It consists in endowing him with what may be called a spiritual relish, and conferring on him the faculty of spiritual perception, and making his character concord with that of God. And this is what is called in the Bible renewing him in knowledge after the image of him who created him; and it is this change and temper of soul by which alone a soul becomes suited to a celestial element—it is this regeneration by which it is made capable of breathing with comfort and rapture in an atmosphere of holiness. This is the change which begins on earth; and thus it is that the kingdom of God shall be set up on earth. The establishment of that kingdom is a personal operation, going on in the hearts and characters of people here below. The man the object of it is born again, and from being an alien, a sinner, he becomes an aspiring saint: he breathes in a new element of godliness; and it is only by his breathing this element, that heaven can be a blessing, a reward, or an enjoyment. In a word, the salvation by Christ Jesus consists in being restored to the perfection of his moral and spiritual nature, and thus made fit for the converse of those who cease not day and night in glorifying Him who is the fountain of all spiritual excellence, unto whom heaven is a paradise, not because of groves, rivers, and palaces, but because of glories, adorations, and its holy services.

This might be made obvious to you, in the lessons of your own experience with man—the connexion between the character and the happiness of man. It is evidently verified in human life, and I should like to have your own experience to depone to the truth of what I am saying. If you live in a neighbourhood where all is civil, cordial, and kind, do you not see that there is a great deal of happiness there? Independent of all kindness to

you, do you not see that there is something in feeling kindly to one another? You must be sensible how much enjoyment it is. Well, when carried up to heaven, all people are loving one another as themselves. Conceive how much happier a neighbourhood is when all are well affected towards one another, to what it is when there is discord, jealousy, envy, and backbiting. This gives you a symbol of the difference that there is between heaven and hell, and it makes for my argument, which is, that although the law be set aside in as far as a right, you must not set it aside altogether, but it is just by obedience that you work yourselves up to the right character. There is a heaven without and another within you, and the whole effect of justification is to give a heaven without you. But, then, you will not be happy with a heaven without you, unless there was within you the character of heaven, the affection and good feeling of heaven. I appeal to your own experience, if even in the most abject abodes of poverty, let but kindness operate, and there will arise a moral sunshine, wherein all the families may rejoice. We understand not human love and good will but apart from all justice, and from all that ministers in this world, we can see, how, out of a moral economy alone, by mind acting on mind, there are materials enough out of which an Elysium might be formed; and as good-will and its corresponding affections oftentimes are multiplied on earth, in that proportion will we be assimilated in its joys to the paradise that is above.

Now it is equally true of the bad affections, that they have power to make you miserable. It is not necessary that one, under the principle of injustice, should entail on you a very heavy loss to make you wretched. Simply to have to do with unjust and dishonest people makes you wretched, independent of all loss—the very circumstance of breathing the air that they breathe, or of having to do with them at all, gives a misery which is mainly, I think, the wretchedness of hell; therefore we have the counterpart of the good affections of our nature in the wrong affections of our nature: and by adverting to these we can illustrate still farther the distinction between moral and physical. If there is an essential delight in the interchange of good feelings, there is an essential misery in the interchange of bad

ones, and that apart altogether from the extreme harm experienced under the operation of them, just as in gratitude there is a joy independent of the gift that may have passed between them; so, in the reciprocal working of misery and anger, there is wretchedness distinct from any loss of property or physical pain inflicted on the person. There is uneasiness in both cases, but you must be conscious that the two kinds of mental uneasiness are totally adverse the one to the other, and that the moral smart is far the more pungent and intolerable. It is thus with an injury which, in respect of the person who offends, may transport the man out of all comfort for hours together;—he could have borne without a pang a far heavier deprivation from the hand of accident or misfortune, but from fraud or malevolence he cannot bear it. In a word—there are moral elements, purely by their own operation of acting and reacting, which can either minister to the utmost complacency of heart, or corrode that heart; there are virtues which of themselves, and separate from all consequences, are sweet to the taste of the inner man; and vices which of themselves, and separate from all consequences, have in them the bitterness of gall and worm-wood.

Hell, without the help of sensible torments, can be formed from these materials. The true aspect of cruelty, without its inflictions—the very gall of hatred—the very presence of treachery—the very juxtaposition of beings in whose bosoms you know there dwell all that is base and unfriendly, these and these alone are materials enough to constitute a dreadful Pandemonium. To be shut up in this were enough of itself to give man the anguish of the worm that dieth not, and to feel in all its fierceness the fire that is not quenched.

I sincerely hope that I have made out to your satisfaction that the law's character is most indispensable. I suppose that you have accepted of Jesus; that you are perfectly convinced that he took our nature and suffered in our stead; well, suppose all this, and now that you can look forward to heaven as your own, the proper and absolute distinction is, that you set out in the work of perfect holiness, you set the law aside as a right—you just revert to that very law again and for the purpose

of giving you a heavenly mind. Christ's employment is two-fold; he is employed at this moment, we know not how, in preparing a place for us. But thus he says, When I go, I shall send the Comforter. And what is the employment which Jesus Christ is discharging by means of this spirit on earth? On this we can speak more pointedly? He is employed in heaven in preparing a place for us; but his Spirit is sent down to earth in order to prepare us for the place; and without that preparation, we and the place will never come into contact with each other. Without holiness no man shall see God.

I have adverted to the spiritual character of hell, and have affirmed that the wretchedness of that place of torment is mainly composed of spiritual elements, and I shall just conclude with one reference more to the spiritual character of heaven—and I can assure you that this is a happiness you will not reach unless you are made holy, and spiritual, and moral men; because the happiness which is there is mainly composed of spiritual and moral elements. It lies in the exercise and play of pleasurable affections—in the possession of a heart now thoroughly emancipated from all its idolatries, and which has attained to that which is most worthy of love. The song of gladness will truly in you be elevated there, and it will be the jubilee of spirits that is heard there, and the clear ethereal element of holiness will be what is breathed there, and a moral Paradise will be there, where the serenities of joy will be the gradual and uniform tenor of the soul. And how can there be any other way to such a habitation than the way of progressive holiness here? What other education can fit us for such an eternity as this but the education of virtue? If heaven above would recoil from all contact with the pollutions of the world below, then surely we who are aspiring towards that heaven, should deny ourselves all ungodliness and worldly lusts. The way of the disciple here should be as distinct from that of a child of this world as the places are in which they are to spend their eternity; and if it be through the way of sin that the one reaches his abode of death and condemnation, so truly must the other keep in the way of holiness ere he reach the abode of life everlasting. Amen.

THE UNCHANGEABLE NATURE OF THE LOVE OF GOD TO MAN;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, DUKE-STREET, ON
SABBATH, 1st JULY, 1832.

By the Rev. ROBERT MUTER.

“*He will rest in his love.*”—ZEPH. iii. 17.

It is one of the most amiable and comprehensive characters of God, that he is love. He is not only lovely and loving, but pure unmixed love itself. Love is the reigning excellency of his nature, and all his other attributes in certain aspects of them, are but various modifications of his love. Now, to exhibit this love in its origin, and operation, and effects, is one of the grand and gracious designs of the blessed Bible. It—this love—has numerous objects. Among these, his own divine perfection is the chief—for he doubtless supremely delights in the infinitude of his own excellence, and in the brightness of his own glory. But this is a theme so sublime, that we are scarcely able to form any conception of it. One thing, however, appears certain, that in the love which God bears to himself, in that love which the three persons in the one Jehovah possess and exercise towards each other, there must be an infinite and glorious peculiarity. Next to himself, we are taught to believe that a number taken from two classes of his own rational creatures, are distinguished as the objects of his love. I mean elect angels, and elect men. The former were elected, that in distinction from apostate spirits, they might be kept from falling, and everlastingly confirmed in their state of purity and bliss; and the latter were elected that they might be delivered out of that state of guilt and wretchedness into which they had been brought by the apostasy of the first man. Now, it is of God's special love to this latter class of beings—I mean his love to his church and people, as chosen to salvation in Christ the son of his love, that our prophet speaks, in the words of our present reading. “*He will rest in his love.*” Endless are the views in which God's love is exhibited in the Bible—none of them, however, is more delightfully expressive than that to which the text invites our attention. In the word “*rest,*” as here applied, there is something peculiarly significant, for under it, there are couched the ideas of divine con-

temptment, and of the constancy and duration of divine love. And, indeed, Christian friends, we shall not carry along with us the value of this delightful interesting word, “*rest,*” unless we *associate* in our views that divine satisfaction which God takes in the love which he bears to his people, with the immutability and perpetuity of that love. A distinct or separate consideration of these three views of divine love, is not our present intention: we would rather exhibit their combination as exemplified in certain other aspects of this love now to be specified. Here, then, the question will be, In what of his love does God rest in the explained sense? To this we have a fourfold answer to return, *viz.*, he will rest in the *principle* of his love—he will rest in the *objects* of his love—he will rest in the *degree* of his love—and he will rest in the *effects* of his love.

I. First of all, then, we observe, that God will rest in the *principle* of his love. This position is so plain, as almost to refuse illustration, and so undeniable as to preclude, as one would suppose, every possible doubt or objection. It cannot be gaisayed for a single moment without making the absurd supposition, that God may be something at one time, which he is not at another time; or, which is the same idea that there may be something in God just now, which at some future period of his existence, may cease to be in him—a thought this, my Christian brethren, as absurd in reason, as it is impious in religion—a thought in direct contradiction to God's own revelation, in which he invariably contrasts his own sameness and immutability with all that is shifting and departing, and in which, besides calling himself the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, long after these patriarchs had retired from this mortal scene, he expressly declares—“*I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*” It is as impossible that *this love* in itself, or in the essence of it, can ever be any thing different

from what it is, or hath been, as it is that *God himself* can ever be any thing different from what he is now, or hath been from eternity. This love enters into his nature—it is an attribute of his nature—it is in fact himself—for “God is love.” Till therefore it be proved to us that the nature of God is mutable, or that some portion of it may shift and pass away, we must contend that his love in the essence of it, and as it exists *in himself*, is unchanging and ever during. If from everlasting to everlasting he is God, then from everlasting to everlasting he is the God of love. Human affection, however ardent or sincere, is not only liable to change, and to suffer diminution, but may entirely cease to be. Yea, the love of a saint may expire; nay, the love of an angel, or of an archangel may give up the ghost, or be turned into hatred; but God’s love in itself, is ever and unalterably the same; like *himself*; “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;” like himself, “the Father of lights, without variableness or shadow of turning.” Thus it appears, that God rests, or as you have it in the margin, is silent, in the principle of his love. And how mightily does it redound to the honour of God, and the consolation of believers, that his love to them, in the very essence of it, is “everlasting kindness,” and that, in this reference, he saith to every one of them—“I have loved thee with an everlasting love.”

II. I observe that God will rest in the *objects* of his love. In all time coming, yea, to all perpetuity, these will be the same, identically the same, whom it selected, and settled itself upon from the beginning. A thousand things may contribute to change the objects of human affection, but none of these things can effect any change in the objects of divine love. They cannot, and will not be changed through any inadvertence or mistake; for he who telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them by their own names, not only knoweth *how many* he has chosen, but knows also every *individual* object of his choice. “I know whom I have chosen;” and again it is written, “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are his.” There will be no voluntary transference of divine love from one object, or one class of objects to another. As God will not diminish the

original number, so he will not exchange the original objects of his love, for an equal number of new ones; nor will he in anger or in disgust, or for any imaginable reason, exclude some individuals from his gracious regard, and replace them by others. That be far from God. Such capriciousness would be infinitely unworthy of the unchangeability of the divine nature. In God’s external conduct, there may indeed be diversity, great diversity, even in reference to his own children. For example, sometimes he may commend, and sometimes he may rebuke; at one time he may bestow, and at another he may withhold. Now he smiles, and anon he frowns; and yet after all, his love never changes its original objects. May an earthly parent correct his children, and yet love them; yea may he do it from a principle of love? And when our heavenly Father correcteth his sons and daughters, shall it be said or imagined that his love is withdrawn, or that he has changed the objects of it? No such thing. Hence, after the severest and longest corrections, he saith, “Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not take from them.” With perfect exactitude God will adhere to the same number, and to the very same individuals on whom his love originally pitched. To mark out this divine exactitude, their names are exhibited to us, as “graven on the palms of his hands;” yea, these names are said to be written in heaven, and to be found in the Lamb’s book of life, which book, as you know, is just to be regarded as a copy of the book of the divine decrees. With respect to the objects of his love, as with respect to every thing else, “God is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.” Who or what can exclude his chosen tribes from a place in his heart? Who or what can blot out their names from the book of life, in which they are said to be written, or efface them from the palms of his hands on which they are said to be engraved? But it is needless to insist on all its original objects, and on each of them individually; this love shall be carried to a full effect in due season. Yea, ere long, and that without the exception of one, all of them shall be in that place where he designs, and where they through grace desire they should be, even in his own immediate and glorious

presence as the God of light and of love. Blessed hope, a hope for which believers are looking forward in delightful anticipation. Nay, a hope, in the ultimate realization of which, by the saints, the divine persons themselves will take an ineffable interest. Having at the day of their manifestation, gathered them from every region and age, while conscious that of all confided to him *none* is lost, or even *absent*; and with an eye rolling ardently over them as if one by one—with what exaltation will their Redeemer in the face of an assembled universe, and looking up to his great Father, say, "Behold I and the children which thou hast given me." And it is not for you or for me to express in words, the satisfaction of the eternal Father, when he beholds all the objects of that love in which he delights, stationed on the right hand of the throne, and about to enter into, and fill up, without leaving a single vacancy, all those mansions and resting-places, made ready for them in *that house* not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

III. In the third place, I observe, that he will rest in the *degree* of his love. My meaning here is, that as God's love always has been, so it will always continue to be, of the same extent and dimensions. Human love may vary at different times, and as influenced by different circumstances, but divine love does not thus rise and fall—does not thus ebb and flow. God loves not his people more or less at one time than another. As his love originally, in its being and extent, depended on nothing without himself, so, my Christian friends, it neither receives an increase, nor suffers a diminution by external circumstances. With respect to the measure of it, this love is unaffected even by the greatest changes in the spiritual condition of those who are the objects of it. Great is the change which is effected upon them when they are brought from a condemned into a justified state—from a state of spiritual death into a state of spiritual life—yet this love is unaffected by it. It was as great before as it is after this change. In proof of this sentiment, however strange it may appear, I might say that God vouchsafed as great, if not greater gifts, of his love to them before their conversion, than he confers upon them after it. Only think of the gift of his own dear and eternal Son. Is not this, I ask you,

the most astonishing demonstration, the most unspeakable gift of his love? "God commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And oh! can he give more to commend it in time or through eternity? But is it really so that there is no alteration, or rather no augmentation of the love of God to its object, in the interesting hour, when he calls them from a state of nature into a state of grace, and from fellowship with sin and Satan, into communion with his saints—with his angels—with his glorious self? There is, I confess, a change in respect of *manifestation*; and then, too, what may be termed *judicial displeasure* is turned away; but there is no change in the heart of God, or in the degree of his love. No: for all is just the bringing forth of the decree, just the filling up of the eternal resolves of his love. He loved them, and chose them to this salvation in Christ, before all worlds; and therefore his love of benevolence is no greater to them in the hour of their effectual vocation in time, than it was when from eternity, and by his own predestinating act, he set them apart for himself. And this is so with respect to the whole number of the persons, without a single exception. It is the same superlative love which he bears to them all. Hence Paul, speaking of himself and fellow-believers, calls this—"The great love wherewith he loved us." "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ." Indeed, my Christian brethren, it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of any difference of the degree of this love in itself, towards those objects in whose behalf God entered into the same everlasting covenant, for whose sake he gave the same infinite ransom, and for whom he is now preparing the very same heaven. In fine, as the measure of this love increases not, so neither is it ever to diminish. It is ever, ever the same. But who, oh, who can tell the measure of it! From eternity God loved his people infinitely. In time, he loves them infinitely, and to all eternity he will love them infinitely. But this is a measure of love—or rather a love without measure; this is a measure of love to which any thing like justice can never be done by the most

expressive words that ever flowed from human lips, or by the most exalted conceptions that were ever formed by the most vigorous human mind. It is, if you allow me the use of the word, *dimensionless* love—for it has a height without a summit, a depth without a bottom, a breadth without a boundary, a length without a termination. "O the height and the depth, the breadth and the length of the love of God, it passeth knowledge!" And being thus immeasurable, it is also matchless love. Think of it as Christ's love; and then, though the Messenger and the Interpreter, one among a thousand, where could he himself find a fit emblem or similitude of it. Could he find it among the irrational tribes, some of which are proverbial for their kindly tempers? No. Could he find it in the tender attachment of one human being to another—as, for example, in the love of a Jonathan to a David? No. Could he find it among heavenly angels, one class of whom are designated "seraphims," or "burners," perhaps to denote the ardour—the intensity of their love? No. There is only one other quarter in which he can seek it; and, therefore, he goes to the throne, to the bosom of his Father, and, lo! he finds it there! Yes, in the love of his eternal Father to himself, and in this alone, he finds a fit emblem or similitude of his own love to his people: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love."

IV. In the fourth place, God will rest in the *fruits* of his love. To speak of the fruits of his love in detail, your time and my capacity would fail. They embrace a mighty compass. They include every thing, from the first particle of imparted grace to a seat with God the Lamb on his throne. They comprise all the worth of precious Christ, and all the benefits of a spiritual and everlasting salvation. Uniformly the Bible is in the habit of representing Christ as the grand comprehensive gift of the Father's love, and of tracing to this love, as their moving cause, all the benefits of salvation with eternal glory. Now, the duration of these fruits of love is something which marks their excellence and their glory. God will never repent that he conferred them, nor betray any inclination to revoke them. He never was, and never will be heard to regret the gift of Christ for a lost world, nor the gift of salvation to a single sinner. No: blessed be his name, "the gifts and callings of this God are without

repentance." Indeed, my hearers, of this love as comprised in salvation through Emmanuel, are equally honourable to God and beneficial to his people; and, therefore, how unspeakably, as you may well suppose, must he rejoice to behold in Christ the honours of his law and government vindicated, gloriously vindicated, and, at the same time, the once guilty, and wandering, and wretched, and perishing objects of his love restored to the possession of more than primeval bliss! A single fruit of his love he never withheld, nor delayed a moment beyond the appointed season of its conferment; and the full fruits of it, although in their extent and excellence far surpassing all our powers of conception, and imagination, and utterance, he will, in due time, most readily and assuredly confer. Welcomed at last all the redeemed will be to heaven and all its bliss, as the fruit of love. He will deny them none of the glories nor pleasures of that state, nor repent that love which hath peopled the regions of immortality with the Lamb and all his company. On the contrary, with what ineffably divine satisfaction will God now survey his love in the perfected fruits of it! With what alacrity will he wipe away all tears from the eyes of his people! With what godlike pleasure will he pour himself, as the fountain of living waters, into their ravished hearts! And, oh! what to them will be the ceaseless language of his placid, his benignant smile! What but this—*this* is the kingdom my love prepared for you? It is all yours—possess it all—inherit it all—for evermore!

Now, from this subject you may learn, in the first place, that believers ought to love their God with the greatest ardour and constancy of which they are capable. If thy God, O believer, loved thee when thou wast most unlovely, and if his love hath made thee all that thou art, wilt thou not in return love him? If he changes not in his love to thee, wilt thou ever be inconstant in thy love to him? Or although he rests in his love ever the same, wilt thou honour him with no more than a rambling restless affection? But I will not tease and vex thy heart, O lover of God, by seeming to suppose it; for I know that thou art ready, with Peter, to make the solemn appeal, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." And if this Lord, after thou hast been on the mount of fellowship, and vowed allegiance to him at this

table,* were now to step into this assembly, and, in the way of inviting thee to leave the world and follow him, if he were to appear, saying, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amara, from the top of Shenir and Harmon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards," constrained by something irresistible, would not thy soul rejoice—"Whither thou goest, O my Saviour and Lord, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, thy cause my cause, thy God and Father my God and Father."

In the second place, believers may be instructed from this subject, that in whatever manner God may act by them, his love is neither changed nor diminished. Believer, thy God's conduct may sometimes be so dark and severe, that thou knowest not what to think or make of thyself, and of his way. Thou art not the first that hath complained of this state of sad perplexity; but amid all that thou seest or sufferest, let this, with the subject before us, under thine eye, be a settled point with thee, *that his love is immutable and ever-during.* He never corrects without a cause, or merely for correction's sake. He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. He loves even while he smites, and after he *hath smitten*, on seeing thy sorrow and repentance, he is touched and troubled with all the tender emotions of parental love and compassion. "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." If, therefore, at any time thou art long, and severely, and mysteriously tried, be on thy guard against the want of confidence; and ere thou yieldest the point to unbelief, recur, I beseech thee, to this text of ours, and believe that God will not suffer to fall to the ground this blessed word that hath proceeded out of his mouth. Never, never say in faithless haste, like Zion of old, "But the Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me;" "can

a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the fruit of her womb? Yea, she may forget, but I will not forget thee, saith the Lord." "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." In a little wrath, and for a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee.

In the third place, by this subject be lievers may be encouraged to smile defiance at every attempt to separate them from the love of God. Who shall, or who can, separate from that love in which God rests? Who, or what, O believer, can alienate God's heart from thee, or thine from him? Neither the flatteries nor frowns of a tempting world. Neither want, nor misery, nor pain, nor distress, nor death itself. The highest angels in heaven could not effect a separation. These blessed and pure creatures will never make the attempt. But although made, it were in vain. Devils themselves will never be able to effect it; no, not by all their art, or all their accusations, or all their violence. Secure, therefore, of interest, of never-ending interest, in this love; smile, O believer, triumphantly smile defiance at every attempt to separate from it: saying, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ; shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us; for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

There is another inference or two which I ought to have made, but I feel that I must stop here; and my prayer is, that the Lord may bless what has been said to your spiritual advantage and his own glory. Amen.

* Preached Sunday after the Sacrament.

* In consequence of a recent accident, the speaker afflicted with much pain.

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SERMON by the Rev. Dr. M'FARLAN, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. Mr. GEDDES, Glasgow.

Price 2d.

THE DUTY OF IMITATING GOD;

A FAREWELL SERMON, PREACHED IN ST. ENOCH'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE
AFTERNOON OF SABBATH, 8th JULY, 1832.

By the Rev. PATRICK M'FARLAN, D.D.

"Be ye followers of God, as dear children."—EPHES. v. 1.

As the word "followers" is frequently used in the English language to signify disciples, or adherents of some particular person or cause, it may be necessary to remark in the outset of this discourse, that in the passage before us, the word in the original signifies imitators. Consequently, the exhortation is an exhortation to make God our pattern, and to aspire after conformity to him in every particular in which we are capable of resembling him. This is the duty which is enjoined in the text on every true Christian. The exhortation is similar in its meaning and import to that which we find in the 23d and 24th verses of the preceding chapter, where the Apostle says to the Ephesians, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." We were originally created in the image and likeness of God, and it is the tendency and design of the gospel of Christ to bring us back to the possession of that character, and of the happiness and enjoyment connected with it. In regeneration and adoption, sinful men become the sons and the children of God in privilege and in character; and it ought to be their unceasing endeavour to walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith they are called, to live as the sons of God, and more and more to resemble him in righteousness and all holiness: and the consideration of the abounding mercy and love of God, in calling us to be his children—his unceasing kindness to-

ward us in Christ Jesus—and the numberless blessings which he bestows upon us, ought to excite us to the performance of this duty. We are enjoined to be followers or imitators of him, as dear children, feeling his grace and love in our hearts, and walking before him in the spirit of adoption, and in the freedom with which he makes his people free. This is the general meaning and import of the text. Let us, in more particularly attending to the words, consider, in the first place, the exhortation, "Be ye followers of God;" and, in the second place, the spirit in which the exhortation ought to be obeyed, "Be ye followers of God, as dear children." There is nothing presumptuous in the attempt to imitate God in all that in which he can be imitated by his intelligent creatures: on the contrary, we are not acting in accordance with our character and prospects as real Christians, if we set before us as the pattern and standard of our perfection any thing short of the infinitely pure and perfect Jehovah. There are, it is scarcely necessary to observe, some particulars in which we cannot be imitators of God. No creature can be like the Creator in any of his essential qualities or of his incommunicable perfections. We cannot resemble God in his infinity, his immensity, his omnipresence, his omniscience. No creature can imitate him in the sway he exercises over the wide extent of creation—in the wondrous acts by which he has formed and continually upholds the

universe, and by which he produces the varied changes that are constantly taking place around us, or in the striking and resistless power, with which he gives and takes away the blessings of his providence. These are things peculiar to Deity—the mighty acts of the Lord, which no man in his sound mind can think of imitating or would attempt to imitate; but we are capable of resembling him in wisdom, and in all his moral attributes, and in many of those acts of his government or moral administration, in which these attributes are displayed; and the spirit of our minds is not what the spirit of Christians ought to be, if we do not strive to resemble him in all the moral qualities or attributes by which he is adorned. We should endeavour to be holy, not merely because God is holy, but as he is holy, to be perfect even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect; and to grow in conformity to his image, until in him—seeing him as he is—we shall be satisfied with his likeness. There is no presumption, no impiety in this. It is the height of impiety, practically or professedly to lower the standard of excellence by which God has commanded us to measure our attainments. A perfectly holy conformity to him, he has enjoined us to aspire to. God has revealed his moral attributes to us in various ways. In creation he has manifested the infinite wisdom with which he has contrived and arranged all things in such a manner as to promote his infinitely wise and gracious purposes. He has manifested his goodness in the abundance of life and happiness, and the capacity of enjoyment he has bestowed on his creatures; and his goodness and holiness are united in the spotless holiness and purity in which all his intelligent offspring were originally formed. In providence, again, the same perfections are gloriously displayed, in every variety of illustration, by his wisdom and goodness—in the vicissitudes of the seasons, in the continual supply of our temporal wants, and in the manner in which we are ministering to his enjoyment, his holiness, and justice; in the punishments with which he visits here the crimes and offences of his sinful creatures, and his forbearance and long-suffering in sparing their lives. But it is in his Word, in a peculiar manner, that God has made known to us the glories of his moral character. In every description,

his threatenings, his promises, and his history, all reveal to us the perfect brightness and glory of the Lord. There, as in a spotless mirror, we are invited to contemplate his unsullied purity, his unchangeable rectitude and truth; there we are invited to contemplate that attribute of mercy which creation and providence imperfectly revealed, but on which depend the peace and hope of the true believer; there the immeasurable love which prompted the gift of God's own Son, and which is reflected in all the blessings and glories which his people are destined to enjoy; and there, in union with mercy and goodness, that infinite holiness which is expressed in God's abhorrence of all sin, and in his love of all goodness. Now, the exhortation in the text requires, that, in contemplating the character of God as thus exhibited to our view, we should endeavour to imitate—to take, so to speak, its glorious impression, and to become transformed into the image of him whose children we profess to be. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are to seek to be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even by the law of the Spirit. Is he revealed to us as a God of infinite wisdom, seeking good and wise ends by wise and righteous means? It is our duty and privilege to be imitators of him in this respect, to spurn away from us the frivolous pursuits of a vain and transitory world, and to be occupied only in things worthy of our character as intelligent and immortal creatures, the sons of God and heirs of heaven. Is he made known to us as a Spirit delighting in things spiritual and divine? We are enjoined to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, to set our affections on things above, to be spiritually-minded, finding in it our life and being. Is he represented to us as encompassed with all the awfulness and majesty of spotless holiness and truth? It is required of us that we should imitate him in these, by hating every wicked and false way. Is he rich in mercy, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin, not willing that any should perish, but that all should repent and live? We are commanded to be merciful, even as our Father in heaven is merciful, bearing injuries with patience, freely and readily forgiving them, forgiving our enemies, and ready at all times to

receive their acknowledgments of their guilt. Is the goodness of God displayed in the bestowment of blessings more valuable than the tongue of man can describe, or his heart conceive? We ought to do good and to communicate, ministering with liberal hand to the wants of the poor and the destitute, and exercising a wise economy in the use of our means, that we may have at all times to give to him that needeth. In the Scriptures, we have the character of God described as the object of imitation by his children. There is not a precept, nor a promise, nor an act of Jehovah, which does not convey to us some important lesson, suited to our circumstances, and capable of being applied for our correction and instruction in righteousness. But in the life and history of Jesus Christ, the character of God as the object of our imitation, is exhibited to our view in all its purity and glory; and the possibility, through grace, of imitating that character, is demonstrated in the dispositions and habits, and actings of the man Christ Jesus. Like his Father in heaven, he was holy, harmless, undefiled, free from sin, and perfect in holiness, spiritual in his affections, heaven in his aim, and heaven his delight. Like him, he was meek, and gentle, and forgiving; he shed the tears and tenderness of compassion over self-destroying sinners; he went about continually doing good; he demonstrated the possibility of uniting with this life the constant imitation of his Father in heaven, and has thus left us an example that we should follow his steps. The spotless perfection of the Father was deeply engraven on every part of his character, that it might be deeply and indelibly impressed upon ours. His goodness and moral excellence are particularly referred to in the exhortation to be followers as imitators of God. The goodness of the Supreme Being is not the attribute of imperfection and sin, but the presence of all perfection, the presence of every thing that is lovely, and excellent, and profitable. It is not merely the total absence of injustice, but the presence and glorious manifestation of goodness and love. The follower of God is enabled, through Christ, to rise above the corruption and sinfulness of a present evil world, and to shine as a light to the world, in all the beauties of divine holiness, as well as in all the splendours of the truly Christian

faith. He has become the partaker of a divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lusts; and, putting off the sins of an unregenerate state, he is enabled to shine in all purity and perfection. But where is the man that, in these respects, can be accounted a follower of God? Where is the Christian so eminent in holiness and uprightness, that it can be said of him, that he has attained to any thing like a perfect resemblance to his Father in heaven? There are sins cleaving to the purest characters in this present world; imperfection tarnishing and polluting our best obedience. With us, that is, in our flesh, there is no good thing. Still it is true that every real Christian is a follower of God. In Christ he is become a new creature: old things have passed away; behold all things have become new. There is no perfection on this side the grave. Every thing a Christian man does, or attempts to do, is mingled, more or less, with sinfulness; notwithstanding, the features of his Father's countenance are visible in him, the lineaments of the Deity may be discerned, and he has attained the likeness of God. But it is because of his imperfection—because he has not attained, neither is already perfect, that he is exhorted to follow after God; and because, if ever his diligence is relaxed, he falls behind in the Christian course—he becomes entangled in the pollution of the world, and is overcome. Therefore he must follow on to know the Lord; he must daily endeavour to resemble him more perfectly, than others, seeing his good works, may glorify him whose image he bears.

Are these, my friends, are these the aspirations—is this the conduct of all who make profession of Christianity? Is it the conduct of those who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof; of those who are strangers to the life and spirit of true Christianity, and hate, and perhaps ridicule the purity, the spirituality of its requirements? Is it the conduct of those who make a god of this world, or who seek, in the pleasures, or business, or honours of a present life, their chief satisfaction, their highest and holy happiness? No, my hearers; God is not really in all their thoughts. Conformity to his image and will is not their study, is not their character—cannot be the object of their

desires. Alas! that men shall be so blind, foolish and infatuated. If there be any one honour or distinction worthy of the pursuit of a rational or immortal creature, it is the honour of resembling God, of being his sons in character and in privilege, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. And if there be any kind of happiness worthy of intelligent and immortal beings; it must be the happiness that is to be found in the study of God, in the possession of his character, in the capacity of cherishing what he desires. Let not the impenitent continue in sin, when they might be exalted in righteousness; miserable in the unsuccessful pursuit of happiness, when they can find in the knowledge, and enjoyment, and imitation of God, all that could satisfy their souls. Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead to a purer, higher, and more elevated Christianity.

But unbelievers are not the only persons referred to by the exhortation in the text. There are few, perhaps no real Christians who remember as deeply, and impressively, and practically as they ought to do their high calling as the sons of God and heirs of heaven. They know they ought to be followers and imitators of their Father in heaven; that the full possession of his image ought to be the object of their unwearied and ardent pursuit; and it is their general character that they press on towards its attainment. But often have they cause to be humble in the sight of God on account of the languor of their efforts, the feebleness and inconstancy of their endeavours to be imitators of God, and the comparative lowness of their aim after spiritual perfection. They are overcome by temptation, and dejected in the christian conflict. They are sometimes tempted to think that to attempt conformity to the image of God is vain. Be ye followers of God, O my Christian brethren! Remember the exhortation, and study to put it habitually into practice. The prize you seek is worthy of a more constant and unwearied struggle than that in which in time past you have been engaged; and it is placed before you by Him who will not allow one of his promises to fail, but who will minister strength and support to your souls. Be not weary, then, in well-doing, for in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not. Be ashamed,

and be henceforth resolved so to run that you may obtain.

Let us now proceed shortly to illustrate, in the second place, the spirit in which the exhortation before us ought to be obeyed. Be ye followers of God, as dear children. The exhortation before us is addressed to professing Christians—as the children, the real children of God in Christ Jesus—men professing, in some measure, the character and the knowledge of God, and experiencing from day to day the rich manifestation of his goodness and mercy. The spirit, therefore, in which such men ought to comply with the exhortation is, in the first place, the spirit of reverence and humble subjection to the divine law. It is one of the most convincing evidences of the divine wisdom exhibited in the Gospel of Christ, that while it makes, in all their fulness and freeness, the offers of mercy and reconciliation through the cross of Christ, it contains nothing that tends in the least degree to weaken the sense of our obligation to be in humble submission to the divine authority. Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other. There is a full and free pardon of all our iniquities provided for us in the Gospel; yet must not the child of God return into foolishness. Forgiveness is granted us not because of any repentance or attainments on our part. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, yet the law is not made void, but is established and confirmed by faith. It is not from sin alone that the law is seen. It is seen, and seen in all its glories in the cross of Christ. It is there very peculiarly shown—it is there that God is beheld, a just God as well as a Saviour, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty. It is there that the Christian is taught to stand in awe, that he may not sin in humiliation too, while he clings to him with unwearied confidence and love. It is because the Christian is a child of God that he reverences the divine authority, and that he feels the obligation to follow his Father in heaven. It may be painful to flesh and blood—it may require the plucking out of the right eye, the cutting off of the right hand—it may demand of him a decided separation from the world and its maxims, and principles, habits, and pursuits, still it is his duty to

obey. It is the voice of his father that calls, and whom shall he reverence if he does not reverence his Father in heaven? It is the command of Him, all whose commands are holy, just, and good, and shall he refuse to submit to the command of him who will not sacrifice one of his perfections? and shall he be tempted to sin that grace may abound? No; as a child, he complies with the command of his Father—as a child, he yields an unreserved submission to his authority.

But, in the second place, I observe, that the spirit expressed in the text—the spirit in which we should comply with the exhortation, is the spirit of grateful, cheerful compliance in the will of God, as dear and beloved children. God, says the Apostle, has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and a sound mind: he hath not received us, says he in another place, into the spirit of bondage, but of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The reverence of a child of God is the reverence that proceeds from love—the fear of offending, which the divine mercy, joined with holiness, never fails to produce. The submission of the soul to the Divine authority is, in every true Christian, the cheerful submission of gratitude, of love, relieved from the bondage of sin, redeemed with the blood of Christ, called to glorify God with their bodies and spirits which are his. The love of Christ constrains them, the cord of the love of God draws them. In the mercy of God they are called to give themselves a living sacrifice to him. Their obedience is the obedience of beloved children to a Father, who has loved them with an everlasting love, and whose lovingkindness has drawn them. In not loving him in return, they only betray the coldness of their hearts; and, instead of counting his service a hard service, they are grieved that it is not performed more cheerfully, more perseveringly to the glory of God. The love of children to an earthly father is always conjoined with admiration of the virtues of the father, and a desire to imitate him. So it is in the spiritual relation between God and his people. They love him, and they admire while they love him; and while they admire and love him, their desire is to be like him, to resemble him in every thing in which they can imitate God's purity and holiness. They contemplate him in the beauties of his

holiness, and because they love him, they desire to be like him, and they desire to be like him, that, having more holiness in their hearts, and loving holiness more, they may love him more. They, seeing the forgiving lustre of redeeming mercy, and being partakers of this mercy, love him, and desire to be imitators of him whom they love. They are followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, even as Christ also walked, and gave himself for them.

In the last place, the spirit in which the exhortation ought to be obeyed is the spirit of humble dependence for grace from God to help us. The spirit or disposition of children is the spirit of conscious weakness and dependence. In the hour of danger and alarm he leans on his father's protection, trusts to his father's wisdom and his guardianship. In the time of weakness, he clings to his father's arms, or reclines on his bosom. So it is with the child of God. Weak, and defenceless, and ready to perish, he flees for refuge unto his Father in heaven. Exposed to danger on every side, faint in the christian warfare, he feels his need of strength from God, that he may be enabled to imitate that God, to be like Him who is without blemish and without spot; and, feeling the difficulty and, without grace, the impossibility of the task, he trusts in the faithfulness of him who, in the command to obey, has promised to give the strength also; seeking to follow him, he follows him in the spirit of humble, child-like dependence—growing in grace and the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour. Then, my friends, be ye followers of God, as dear children; press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. Be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the works of the Lord, knowing that your labours shall not be in vain in the Lord.

I have chosen these words, my friends, as the subject of our present discourse, in consequence of their connexion with that other subject to which your attention was directed in the forenoon of last Lord's day, and on a preceding occasion; and I have chosen them because I do not think that I could have fixed on a more suitable subject, when I am about this day to conclude, as in all human probability I shall conclude my ministry in this place as your pastor. The object, my christian friends,

which, while I have been your minister in this congregation, I have endeavoured to keep steadily in view, is expressed in the words before us—"Be ye followers of God, as dear children." It is the great end of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, of the provision which God has made in the Gospel, for our pardon and acceptance, for our regeneration and sanctification in holiness. It is the great end which every individual ought to pursue, and which every christian minister ought to endeavour to promote in his weekly or daily ministrations among the members of his flock. How far I have been enabled to preach the Gospel so as to accomplish this end and purpose, is known to Him only who knoweth the hearts of men, and their characters, and their dispositions, and their lives. Sorry I am at this, that imperfections, more than I can number, have been mingled with my ministrations of the Gospel in this place, and that these imperfections have been as visible to you as they have been to my own mind. You must see them to be numerous indeed. If so, my friends, how great, how very numerous must the imperfections of a christian minister be in the presence of that God who is a God of infinite holiness, who looketh not on the outward appearance, but on the heart! Yet I have said, I can say with sincerity and truth, and, I hope, with gratitude to him through whose grace I can say it, that it has been the sincere and earnest endeavour of my soul so to set before you the truths of the everlasting Gospel, that they shall come home to your hearts in all their power and interest, to console, to perfect, to sanctify. And I have to return my most hearty thanks to the members of this congregation, for the encouragement they have given to me in the midst of my labours, in this place—by the constancy of their attendance upon my ministry. I trust that whatever may have been the fruits of my ministry among you, that ministry has not been altogether lost or unprofitable. And what I would now exhort, and earnestly exhort, every one of you to do, is to look upon the exhortation in the text, and, considering it as the great end of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to become imitators of God, as dear children. Therefore, I would entreat you, this day to examine yourselves, that you may know how far you have profited in time past by

the ministrations of the Gospel, and whether the end and design of Christianity have been felt and experienced by you. If you remain at a distance from God, without a resemblance to him in your moral character, and in the dispositions and affections of your mind, then has the Gospel been preached to you in vain. If, on the other hand, God has enabled you, while you have received the ministry of the Gospel of Christ, to receive the seed of the word of God into good and honest hearts,—if it has taken root there, and is now springing up and bearing forth fruit to life eternal—and if the evidence of this be your being, in character as in practice, the children of God, and if you do strive to be more and more imitators of him, then you have reason to give thanks to God that he has blessed the ministry of the Gospel to your souls; and the exhortation ought to come home to you, in all its power, to encourage and strengthen you in the resolution to be more than ever followers of God, as dear children. Let none of you suppose that he has already in any respect attained, or that he is in any particular already perfect, but attend upon the means of grace, and, using with fidelity the means of spiritual improvement, grow in grace, in the knowledge of Jesus, and in conformity to the image of Him that set you an example, that ye be followers of God and prepared for the enjoyment of the kingdom of heaven. Unquestionably, my friends, I should be destitute altogether of the dispositions and affections which honour a christian minister, if I were not to feel deeply interested in your welfare in all respects, but particularly in the welfare and happiness of your immortal souls. You shall have, you cannot but have, an interest in my prayers: let me have an interest in yours. And when we meet together, as we shall unquestionably, before the throne of God, at the awful day of judgment, may it be with the joy of the pastor on the one hand, that has been the instrument, however unworthily, of saving souls; and with the joy of the people on the other hand, that have encouraged their pastor by the simplicity with which they have received the Gospel of Christ, and the eagerness with which they have appropriated it as their rule of life. God bless his word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE WORD OF GOD ;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE REV. MR. GUN'S CHAPEL, HOPE STREET, GLASGOW,
ON THE EVENING OF SABBATH, 17th JUNE, 1832, IN AID OF THE FUNDS
OF THE GAELIC SCHOOL SOCIETY,

By the Rev. JOHN GEDDES,
Of St. Andrew's Church, Glasgow.

Thou hast magnified thy word above thy name.—PSALM CXXViii. 2.

THESE words are very evidently a comparison between the works and the word of God, as declaring his name; that is, his nature and his will, his titles and attributes, his character and perfections, and the preference in this comparison is given to the word. "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." In proceeding, however, to illustrate this comparison and this preference, it may be of some use to advert to two extremes into which men are apt to fall, in judging of the works of God upon the one hand, or of the word of God upon the other, in making known his name and his glory.

I remark, then, that there are, in the first place, some who judge it unnecessary or even improper to dwell much on the works of God, as declaring his name; who look with jealousy at any proposal of a lengthened detail upon this head; who confound a judicious and well-connected consideration of it with no consideration at all; who fancy that it savours more of human teaching than of divine learning, closely or fully to investigate it; and who deem it almost a kind of derogation from the authority of God and his word to dwell at all upon his works, when these are superseded and excelled by his word, which he himself hath magnified. And they err in the extreme, for they not only magnify the word above and beyond all else, but they magnify it to the exclusion of all else. They destroy the comparison and the preference given to it, by excluding what God has kept; for the works, they declare the glory of God, though it be still true that God has magnified his word above his name. Now, this is wrong. God never designed by additional or fuller information to deprive us of information already possessed, and, by what was more excellent, anew to deprive us of what was still old and good, or by a new light struck out in his word, to blot out the greater and the lesser lights previously struck out and ordained

in his firmament. God has indeed set the one light above the other, but not against the other; he hath transcended nature and reason, but he hath not contradicted the proper testimony either of the one or of the other. He hath not outstretched and exalted them, in order to counteract and oppose them, but in order to add to, to enlarge, to elevate, to extend, and to refine them; he hath not added to take any thing away which men ever had; he hath added only in order to teach us to make a better use of that which we already possess; and if he bestows the privileges and the enjoyments of so much the more, which reason never did, and never could have had within its province, the whole testimony of the inspired writers in regard to it is, that eye hath not seen it, nor ear heard it, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what its contents would be; but the Spirit which searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God, hath made them known to us, even the will of God for our salvation. This, then, being the case, it is abundantly plain that the light of revelation was not designed to blind us to the light of reason, or to the light of God's works, but to carry us above and beyond all this, to something higher and greater still. We may err, and err egregiously, when we read only the one volume of nature, but our error consists not in reading to the full that volume in all its testimony, but in pausing, while we ought to proceed, in admiring only the splendour of the firmament, the glory, and the greatness which God hath stretched out in the heavens, and in not looking in into the inner parts of heaven's temple, where there is a greater glory still. We may lawfully pursue where we may not lawfully close our studies. We condemn no man for searching with all his skill the mysteries of nature; we only condemn him if he takes no interest in the mystery of godliness. We would close on no man the fountain of knowledge,

but would ask him to drink deep of its streams; and we would test and try his relish for truth, having much, or little, or none, by his drinking or refusing to drink of the well-springs that are in Zion. And we only call him a fool when he listens to his own understanding, when he fancies that God who gave him reason can teach him no more, and when he will look only at the book of nature as if God had written there all his name, and will not look at that word, in regard to which it is the testimony of the Highest, by his inspired servant, that God hath magnified his word above all else, that makes known his name or his glory.

If there be, however, an extreme on the part of some who, out of jealousy for the word of God, have an unreasonable objection to consider the works of God as declaring his glory, there are also many more who have a still more unreasonable objection—who, instead of meditating upon God's law day and night, fancy it a proof of genius, or taste, or ability, or skill, to deny or doubt, to mock or revile at the testimony of the Lord, which is sure and maketh wise the simple. There are also many who do not search the Scriptures, and who, though ashamed of real or supposed ignorance in almost any thing else, are by no means ashamed of their ignorance of the Bible. They are heard saying, that since they were at school they seldom read it. They do not blush to confess that except upon a Sabbath day, or in a season of trouble, they do not search it. They excuse themselves by reckoning that they have no time—no leisure for studying it. They fancy that seriously meditating upon it may be postponed to old age, or the time of distress, and that then they may speedily and effectually learn all that is most important to be learned, without entering into it with the closeness of students of theology, or without moping over it in what the world calls religious melancholy. These people do not know the Bible, and we are not surprised that they do not value it. The other error proceeds from their ignorance of the Scriptures, this from their enmity in heart and spirit, to the character and contents of the Bible; whether they be found among those who flippantly, petulantly, and impudently oppose it, or among those who doggedly, and perversely, and coldly, and obstinately oppose—or

whether it be a supposed character for science and learning which they wish to obtain by crying down the Bible—or whether it be by the prevalence of an ungodly life, making them worldly, and sensual, and vile, and vulgar in their habits, views and inclinations; whatever the varying shades and forms which their indifference to the Bible and their enmity to it assume, we can plainly tell them, that it is no proof of genius, no proof of talent, no proof of taste, to be indifferent to the contents of this book—and that persons well qualified and competent, have given it their fullest faith. The sagacious Newton, the immortal Hales, gave to God and his word their tribute of praise, and held it as their chiefest treasure, as the crown of all their wisdom, to have read the book regarding which David said, addressing his maker, "Thou, O God, hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

It is this last extreme, rather than the first, which it is intended to expose and condemn. The first may exist in a man who has the root of the matter in him, and may be the result of the limited character of his information, or the limited range which his faculties have had opportunity of making; but the last can be the result only of enmity to both the God of nature and the God of peace. For, alas! when we shut our eyes upon the light of God's word, we will make all which we know regarding the works of God of none effect by our unbelief. A man may know little of nature, and know much of revelation; but the man who knows nothing of revelation, though he know all mysteries besides, wants that knowledge which is connected with eternal life. Ignorant of Christ, of whom the Bible testifies, all else can be of no avail; but, having Christ, we have all that is necessary to sanctify and to elevate us, and to make us meet at last for the society and fellowship of heaven, where, however little we may now know, we shall at last know even as we are known, and be continually advancing from knowledge to knowledge, and from glory to glory.

I purpose, then, in discoursing from these words, and in dependance on the divine aid and blessing, simply to state wherein the affirmation of our text is true, or wherein the comparison employed

In the text is justly given. "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." There is a three-fold imperfection which attaches to the works of God, as declaring his character and perfections. And first, an imperfection as to the matter, as to what they communicate; second, an imperfection as to the manner in which they communicate it; and lastly, an imperfection as to the effects which are produced by the communication. None of these attach to the word of God: on the contrary, I propose to state and illustrate shortly, first, that God has magnified his word above his works by the matter of the contents—*lovingkindness*. Second, by the solid manner in which these contents are conveyed to us. In the word of truth, the Bible is spoken of as God's lovingkindness and his *truth*. In the last place, by the great and happy effects produced upon all who receive it, and of which we have some idea, when we find the Psalmist placing all his delight in this,—"I will worship" not towards the heavens, the veil of God's glory—not towards the earth, though so full of his bounty—but "I will worship towards thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness, and for thy truth, for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

In the first place, then, God has magnified his word above his name by the matter of its contents—by the subject of its revelation—by the message which it brings—by the truth which it sets before us. God's works were fitted to instruct man, and to elevate him in a state of innocence. It is only God's word that can instruct us, and direct us how we may be restored to God's favour, and how we may be renewed and sanctified. God's works, taken to the full, illustrate only his wisdom, his power and his goodness, or his omniscience and omnipotence, but they convey to us no idea respecting that justice which is magnified through mercy, and that mercy which is magnified through justice. They do not make known God's name, or proclaim God's glory, that while he will by no means clear the guilty, yet he is the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and slow to wrath, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin. They do not bring before us the seeming inconsistency—how the just God is also our Saviour—how grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life; and therefore

upon the matter of these points, it is evident that God has not only taught us by his word, but we have not learned by his works what God has laid up for our fallen and wretched world—that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, and illustrated the manner in so loving the world as to give his own Son to die for us, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life. Here, then, we remark, that God has magnified his word in this way: the word contains all that the works declare; the word tells us just what the heavens do about the glory of God: but the word does more than this; when man had fallen from a state of innocence; when he had plunged into a state of sin and misery, the word of God has revealed to us the plan according to which we are brought out of sin and misery, into a state of salvation by the Redeemer. The Sun of Righteousness has made known the person, and character, and work, and salvation of our Redeemer. The Sun of Righteousness is revealed as having risen upon our world with healing in his beams, illuminating a world darkened in ignorance, and error, and sin, changing the winter of our moral state into a spring-time of life, and immortality brought to light in the Gospel, and diffusing the purity and consolations of the Gospel over all the earth; his going forth shall be as the sun in his might—even from the east to the west, till nothing be lost, till the wilderness beneath him be made a fruitful field, and the whole earth filled with the glory of God. We are instructed regarding the entrance of sin and misery, and we are also instructed regarding the sufficiency of the divine remedy. We have made known to us the Word made flesh, and dwelling among us—our Prophet, Priest and King. There is set before us the greatest blessing in that we are delivered from the wrath to come, and this deliverance we shall receive purchased by the greatest price—the precious blood of Christ; bestowed by the greatest power—the power of the Holy Ghost. We have notice of the highest privileges—being made sons and daughters of the living God. We have a foundation laid for peace that passeth all understanding, and we have a hope given regarding an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. A free justifi-

cation through the righteousness of Christ is revealed; a full sanctification is made known, and the benefits accompanying this are also testified, such as peace with God, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace and perseverance therein unto the end; our path through life is illuminated; the dark valley of the shadow of death is also made bright; Jordan's swelling flood—Emmanuel's land is seen. The High Priest conveys us safely over. He shows us the path of life. He makes us full of joy with his countenance, and when death and the grave break in to bury our fondest expectations, our Redeemer says, "O death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction!" And the redeemed of every nation, and kindred, and tribe, and tongue, are heard declaring, that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb; that, therefore, are they before the throne and serving him.

There is a second view in which God has magnified his word above his name, and it is in regard to the manner in which it teaches us our hope. As to the matter, there is lovingkindness—and as to the performance, there is truth. God's mercy endureth for ever. God's grace never fails; and the word that contains the message both of mercy and of grace, is called not only the word of lovingkindness and promise, but also the word of truth and performance. We had at first but one promise—but one sparkling stream; but it was an everlasting spring—it became, from a rill, a murmuring brook, a mighty river, at last making glad the city of our God. promise was given upon promise, prophecy upon prophecy, type upon type—here a little and there a little, all in the substance lovingkindness, all in the execution unfailing and unbroken truth. God testified before hand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that would follow. God testified how in the beginning he had prepared the scheme—how his Son in the beginning had his delight in the habitable parts of the earth, and with the children of men. Before the earth was created, or before man inhabited it, God revealed this scheme from eternity; and when man fell, and when he revealed it, he has ever been giving word upon word, saying upon saying—Thus saith the Lord, what the prophets testify, what the types and ceremonies of

the law predicted and prefigured has been accomplished, and God has magnified the law and made it honourable. He has sent 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 sons. We have read of his birth, of his life, of his death, of his resurrection, of his ascension, of his exaltation. God has borne them witness by signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, and we have seen Jesus who was once crucified, now exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sin; and because of the light of prophecy and promise, all concentrated with the history of the Gospel, we see that we follow no cunningly devised fable, that it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that we have immutable things for our security—the oath of God, and therefore we have strong consolation, we have good hope—the full assurance of hope—an anchor cast within heaven's veil—a hope that maketh not ashamed. The word of the Lord is a sure testimony regarding all things, but it testifies regarding God and his lovingkindness; it testifies truly; it carries its own evidence along with it; it comes home to the heart of man, and the manner of the word is far above the work. Many have not time, talent, capacity, or opportunity for knowing much of nature, or for the cultivation of their reason, by studying the wonders and the beauties of nature; but any man, the enlightened and the ignorant, may know much of the Bible that shall elevate and purify his principles, sanctify and consecrate his life to the love of his God and his neighbour. Many a man who can tell nothing of the stars or their courses, who can say nothing about the mysteries of the earth on which he treads or the glories of the heavens which he beholds, can say much regarding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has been shining into his heart. He has seen there the glory of his God; he has learned from this book what he could have learned from no other, and in no other way, and when thinking of it, he says with the Psalmist, "O Lord thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

This view of the subject is a beautiful

illustration of the truth of the declaration—"to the poor the gospel is preached." To the poor, science does not unfold its greatest depths, but to the poor the Bible does unfold true riches, and open up everlasting treasures. It is the true character of the Bible that it gives understanding to the simple. It is the declaration of the Psalmist elsewhere, "the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;" and when the learned Sanhedrim of old were constrained to admire the Apostles, unenlightened and ignorant men, their greatness and their glory arose from the teaching of the Spirit, opening up in them the Scriptures that had testified of Christ, and whereby God's word was to them magnified above all that declared his name.

These remarks, then, may guide you in this second view. I have only to notice, in the third and last place, that God has magnified his word above his name, by the effects which it produces. Though God were to open up to us the mystery of the heavens, to tell us whether the sun, and the moon, and the stars were inhabited—whether the stars, so distant, are the centres of other systems—whether other planets move round them as around our sun—whether all these, too, be inhabited—what are their laws—what are their magnitudes—what their distances—what their movements—and what their harmony; though all these things were made known to us with as unfailling truth as God is true, still the communication, however fitted to exalt the Creator, could by no means raise and redeem the sinner. Reverently be it spoken, God must communicate other knowledge to save men's souls; for not the knowledge of all his works can save them, but that only which teaches us to know that he is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing unto men their trespasses. It is this matter of loving-kindness, on the part of this word, which God employs as an instrument for illuminating, regenerating, and sanctifying the heart of man. And because the word of God is the instrument, under heaven's agency, for accomplishing these important ends—because this is the very design of the word—this chiefly is one reason why the Psalmist here declares, "Thou hast magnified thy word above thy name."

Accordingly, this word, blessed by the Spirit, has been as the little stone cut out of the mountain, to break down all human might—all gold, and silver, and iron, and brass, and clay, and to fill the whole earth with the name and glory of the Lord. This word, in the Spirit's hand, is as a hammer to break down the rocky hard-hearted man. It is even as a fire to melt, and to purify, and remould us according to another likeness. It is as a light that shineth into our place of utter darkness, as alienated from the love of God, through the ignorance that is in us. It is as the glass wherein we see the glory of God, and so see it, that the sight is transforming. It is as the incorruptible seed—the vital principle—whereby God establishes his own life in the soul of man. It is as the milk whereby our bodies do grow in grace. It is as the meat whereby old and advanced disciples are made strong in the Lord, and in the power of his Son; and in reference to it, it is indeed the treasury out of which the heart of man, sanctified and directed, draws full assurance regarding those things that extend beyond this present life, and makes him acquainted with the principles of that godliness which is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life which now is, and that which is to come. And accordingly, in the whole 119th psalm, we have verse after verse, and line upon line, all illustrative of the regenerating, and the sanctifying, and the comforting effects of the word: and in the 19th psalm, the very comparison of the text is made, and the preference is given, and we read of the heavens and of their glory, and of the sun in his majesty and beauty. We do not read of conversion, nor of the heart being rejoiced, nor the eyes illuminated, nor the mind purified, nor of the fear of the Lord which is wisdom, and endureth for ever, nor of what is of more value than gold, nor of what is sweeter than honey, nor of salutary warning, nor of rich and great reward, till we come to the law of the Lord, and the testimony of the Lord, and the commandments and statutes of the Lord, and the judgments and fear of the Lord, which we more to be desired than gold, and sweeter than honey, by which the servants of God are warned, and in keeping of which there is great reward. And, therefore, we may sum up the whole, in reference to these nouns,

by saying, "O Lord thou hast magnified thy word above thy name."

You are well aware that the object of this present meeting is a claim upon your christian sympathy and your christian charity for the Society whose object it is to make known to your fellow-countrymen in the Highlands and Islands of this your native land this word which God has magnified above all his works. Do you delight to expatiate on those parts of our land, and to behold the beautiful lakes, and the towering mountains, and the hanging woods that adorn and cover them? But these may be admired and known, and the inhabitants who behold them may remain ignorant of the word which God has magnified; and it is one great design of the Society whose cause I am this evening permitted to plead, to open up to their inhabitants still more wonderful things than these, and to carry them up to and beyond nature to nature's God; and to speak to them of the Redeemer who was in the beginning with God, before these mountains were founded, before these hills were established, before these depths were in his hand, before he stretched out these seas, and firmed that dry land. And, blessed be God, much has been accomplished within our own day to illuminate these dark places, to erect altars, to promote personal and family religion where many were perishing for lack of knowledge. And I should convey to you indeed a severe rebuke, if I should suppose that you are till now ignorant of what has been done with a view to disseminate the Bible and preach the gospel in those parts of the land of our birth and affections. But I must entreat you not to weary in well-doing: I must ask you still to honour the Lord by your substance and by the first of all your increase. And I will tell you, that while the hand of the Highlander has been stretched forth to you in gratitude for what he has already received, it is also stretched in entreaty. Therefore give liberally—"Cast your bread upon the waters, and you shall find it after many days." The Auxiliary Gaelic School Society of Glasgow supports at present

thirty Schools, twenty-two of these on the mainland. The highest number in the list of these schools is, by last report, about 18,000, and the average number in attendance about 14,000. Last year twelve applications for new schools were refused, and who can say how many more have been discouraged by the refusal of these twelve. These make about a third part of what is needed or desired, and therefore you are not to estimate all they need by the number of applications refused. It is supposed that in the Highlands in general, notwithstanding all that has been done by different institutions, there are even now no fewer than 52,000 above six years of age who are in utter destitution as to the means of instruction. Surely this plain fact is of itself sufficient to prove that we ought not to rest satisfied with what has been done, so as to neglect what still remains undone. The Gaelic School Society in Edinburgh, to which this in Glasgow is Auxiliary, has lately published its Reports, and concurs in the same general statements. The number of its schools is reduced, I am sorry to say, to eleven; and there was a reduction in the year that went before it, so that, in this respect, the Parent Society has been going two years back. And as with the Parent, so with the Auxiliary there is a difficulty in maintaining what is still kept up. Now, consider how few are the opportunities of going to church in these lands, in consequence of the distance to be travelled—few can go in summer, and cannot go in winter at all; and consider what happy effects have been produced by the schools, where they have been established. They are circulating schools, going from place to place, visiting like shower after shower, the parched wilderness. Perhaps not fewer than 500 societies have been visited with schools, remaining for two or three years; and since the Parent Society began with three schools, maintaining, about sixty, it has been the means of information to your fellow-countrymen, to no fewer than about 100,000, who would have been otherwise, it may be presumed, destitute of instruction, and the Word of life.

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SERMON by the Rev. Mr. SMITH, Glasgow.

Price 2d.

THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSION OF CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. DAVID'S, CHURCH GLASGOW, ON SABBATH, 17th JUNE, 1892

By the Rev. DAVID WELSH, D. D.

Professor of Church History in the University of Edinburgh.

"Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."—JOHN xii. 28.

It appears from these words, that the promotion of the glory of God was the prevailing desire of the Saviour, and that in every thing connected with his mission, the glory of the Most High in effect was promoted. And in discoursing at this time from this passage, I propose to consider, in dependence on divine assistance, in what respects this was the case. When we speak of giving glory to God, we do not mean that any thing is added to his greatness or happiness. We merely mean that it will give the subjects of his everlasting dominion higher ideas of his character, and make them the more disposed to hope in, fear, and obey him. Thus the creation of the world did not add to the essential dignity or happiness of the Almighty, but it gave to all his intelligent creatures more exalted notions of his power and of his love; and in this sense it was that his glory was promoted, when the morning stars sang together, and when all the sons of God shouted aloud for joy. Thus also his glory was promoted by all the interpositions of his power that are recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. When he effected the deliverance of his ancient people, it filled the Egyptians with a deep and reverential awe of the power of the God of Jacob, and inspired the believing Israelites themselves with gratitude and love. Thus, also, when he inflicted grievous punishments on transgressors, it was to the end that man might

stand in awe, and sin not, and that before all people He might be glorified. It is in the same sense that God is said to be glorified in the redemption of mankind—the perfection of his nature being in it conspicuously displayed; and with this explanation I now proceed to show how the glory of God is promoted by man—to consider, in the first place, that the glory of the Most High is promoted by this great event, as it illustrates his faithfulness. The mission of our Saviour is strongly illustrative of the faithfulness of God. Immediately after the fall of man, the Lord revealed his purpose of reconciliation through the sufferings of Messias. This promise he renewed with increasing clearness to all the prophets of old, especially to Abraham, with whom he entered into a covenant, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, and to David, in whose house he had promised to raise up a horn of salvation, and the throne of whose kingdom he declared he would establish for ever. It was now upwards of 4000 years since the prophecy had first been made: for a long period the prophecy was *still*, and it may be thought that God had forgotten to be gracious, and that his mercy was clean gone for ever. A total want of religion, or a superstition still more degrading, prevailed over the whole heathen world. Nothing but the outward form of religion was to be found among the

Jews. The vices that prevailed among the nations corresponded to the state of iniquity, and iniquity abounded to such a degree, that it might have been supposed that the curse that God had originally pronounced against the ground had been extended to man himself, and that the wound inflicted by the great adversary of souls was altogether irremediable. It was a proposal improbable, too, that the promise made to Abraham should be fulfilled. The Jewish nation was now rendered tributary to the Romans, so that it was scarcely to be conceived that a subject nation should possess such an influence over all the nations of the earth, and still less that the throne of David should be established for ever. It was in this state of things when our Lord appeared so helpless, that God remembered the word he spake to a thousand generations, and fulfilled his holy covenant. From this proof of divine faithfulness, we may draw the most comforting conclusions of the state of the just in our own individual case. The promises respecting pure and undefiled religion in the world are explicit, and though we may be excruciated by the prevalence of sin, and the consideration of the many nations that yet sit in darkness, we should recollect that he is faithful who promised, and that as God remembered the words he had spoken, and sent his own Son to succour and save us, so he will not forget his covenant with Christ, but will make him to see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, giving him the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. Believers may also draw from the same source consolation and good hope, through grace, respecting their individual circumstances, for all the promises are, *Yea and Amen* in Christ, unto the glory of God. If, in the case where the fulfilment of his promises was most unlikely, in his promising that his own Son should humble himself, and become obedient to the death—if, in this case, where, for many reasons, it might appear that it would repent God that he had promised, as it repented him that he had made man on earth—if, in this case, God was faithful to his holy covenant, surely it must be offering the greatest dishonour that is in our power, to doubt for a moment that he will make whatever else he has promised come to pass! If, then, my

friends, there are any among you who are tempted to despair respecting the accomplishment of any promise of Scripture in your case, let the consideration presented to you, lead you to ascribe glory to God, by being no longer doubtful, but believing.

Are you, for example, filled with dark apprehensions respecting the state of your own souls, unable to obtain any answer to your prayers for mercy, and tempted to exclaim with the doubtful of old, *Where is the promise of his coming?* If this is your state, then let the mission of Christ lead you to glorify God, by persuading you that he is faithful who hath promised, and that as he did not forget his gracious declaration respecting the mission of his own Son, far less will he forget his promise of coming and dwelling with him that is of a humble and contrite heart, to revive the spirit of the humble, and the heart of the contrite ones. If you are entangled in the midst of the toils that Satan has set for you, and are unable to extricate yourselves, or to see how you can be extricated from the snares around you, remember the promise of him who is faithful and true, and has never failed in any good thing that he has promised—that he will not allow his people to be tempted above what they are able to bear, but with the temptation, will make a way of escaping out of it. Are you involved in the midst of trouble and distress?—are your souls well nigh fainting within you, because of the chastisements of the Lord? then, in your distress, remember the Lord, and he will make light to arise from the darkness.

Call upon me, is his gracious invitation and promise.—Call upon me and I will deliver you. Your individual situation cannot be more gloomy than was the state of the whole world before the mission of our Saviour, and yet God opened a way for bringing to pass the word he had spoken, and shall he not then be able to fulfil what he has promised, of making all things work together for good to them that love him, and enabling them to say in the midst of affliction, it is good for me that I have been afflicted.

II. In the second place, the mission of our Saviour promoted the glory of God, as affording the strongest possible proof of his justice. No event that the mind is capable of conceiving, could afford such an idea of the inflexibility of the justice of God, as the incarnation of Christ. The

way in which human beings show the strongest evidence of their justice is, by inflicting punishment on the offender. If no punishment were inflicted, or if something equivalent to the offence were not inflicted, this would show a deficiency of this quality. Though the want of punishment in the case of crime would infer a deficiency of justice, the infliction of punishment does not necessarily show that there is this guilt, for it may be inflicted from some personal motive—from dislike to the offender, from passion or some other unworthy cause. Now, in the case of the rebel angels who fell, the punishment they endured might be ascribed by them, not to its due cause, the unbending strictness of the divine laws, but to the cruelty, the pride, or the resentment of Him who inflicted it. Though the justice of God was by this magnified in a certain degree, still there was room left for cavil; but in the incarnation of Christ, the justice of God has received complete manifestation, and in the contemplation of which, even devils believe and tremble. There may have been, and there have been, fathers who inflicted the punishment of death on their own children, but, in these cases, the individuals were really guilty, but Christ was without spot, and in him the Father was ever well pleased. The humiliation of Christ, therefore, was a great sacrifice to the justice of God; and by it, that justice is satisfied, and made honourable. Let us then come, in glorifying God, to the contemplation of this proof of his justice. If you have an interest in that sacrifice made for sin, then adore God with heart-felt gratitude, because his offended laws have been set aside, and glorify God farther, by using all the prescribed means that may enable you to avoid transgressing, in any degree, laws which, when transgressed, require so terrible an expiation. If, on the other hand, you are without an interest in the promises, what think you will be the punishment that will be inflicted on those who refuse to honour him? If God spared not his own Son, who knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who, from eternity, was with God, and who was daily his delight—if, on account of the sins of others, God spared not him, but gave him up to death, what punishment will be inflicted on those who are indeed the transgressors? Let any

wicked man consider all that was under God with the spotless Jesus, his agonies, his bloody sweat, his cross and passion, and then let him ask his own soul, how it is possible that he can escape. The conclusion is inevitable. Yes, we may shut our eyes against the truth, but the truth still remains that there is a God, and that that God is just, and that his name has been, and will again be glorified in his justice. While in the vigour of health, or strength, or engrossed in the pleasures, or business, or cares of life, we may think of avoiding the threatenings of the Most High, and it may be a time before the threatenings are accomplished; but there is a time when he that cometh will come, and will not tarry, and every impenitent soul will then find that the punishment was delayed, not as you vainly imagining, because the Lord did not know, or did not regard your conduct, but that you might be the riper for the harvest of destruction. Let these considerations, then, lead you to penitence and repentance, so that you may be monuments of the truth and mercy of God, rather than the unwilling and eternal monuments of the inflexibility of his justice.

III. The mission of our Saviour is illustrative of the wisdom of God, and in this respect God has been, and is glorified in his Son. To show fully the wisdom of God in the redemption of mankind, it would be necessary to take a full view of the covenant of grace in all its parts. This, our time will not allow, and we can only offer one or two remarks. The wisdom of a man is judged of by the greatness and excellence of the end he pursues, and by the fitness of the means he employs for attaining it. In a word, we measure his wisdom by the pursuit of worthy ends by worthy means. Let us apply this standard to the scheme of redemption. If we attend to the end God had in view, nothing surely could be more divine than the redemption of a ruined world. Then, if we consider the means employed for this purpose, they will appear as fit and suitable as the end is good. He sent his Son to dwell on earth, who was wisdom itself, to set before us an example of perfect excellence, to instruct us in the will of God, and especially to atone for our transgressions, to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and to subdue his people fully to himself. Christ might be made

a satisfaction for our sins without descending into the world, but then we would have wanted the benefit of his example on the one hand, and if he had not assumed our nature, not being tempted, he could not have been touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Again, an angel from heaven might have set before us an example of perfect obedience, and instructed us in the revelation of God, but, then, he could not make atonement for us. Let us still make a farther supposition that God, by an exertion of his pardoning mercy, had forgiven us, upon our repentance, without any satisfaction being made to his justice. On this supposition, it is obvious, that the authority of the law would have been shaken, and if God had condescended to act upon the principle of forgiving every one that repented, a door would have been opened to transgression, and if he had altered his plan, his administration might have been accused of indecision and partiality. We, see, then that the great end the Almighty had in view, could not be accomplished in any other way than that in which it was, without having been cumbered with evils of greater magnitude than the good which would have flowed from it. The wisdom of man is estimated also by the number of ends accomplished by comparatively few means. The great difference between what men employ, and the methods of divine operation is, that men are obliged to employ a multitude of means to accomplish one single object, while the Almighty by one single mean, accomplishes a multitude of ends. Let us apply this test to the mission of Christ, by which are accomplished the glory of God in the highest, a display of his justice and mercy; and on earth, the recovery at once of man from the guilt, the power, and the punishment of sin.

In the fourth place, the glory of God is promoted by the mission of his Son, this being illustrative of his love and mercy. When we meditate on the sufferings of our Saviour, we are too apt to forget the wondrous illustrations they afford of the love of God. We think of our Saviour's humility, who was troubled in spirit, and resigned himself wholly to this end; but the justice of the Father is the attribute we generally are left to reflect upon. I may be perhaps wrong in saying that is generally the case, but the

error is so common, that it is necessary we should be put on our guard against it. The error is, that we are apt to think of the Almighty as a stern inexorable judge, and to consider our Saviour as interposing and baring his own bosom for our punishment. We think that our Saviour by his sufferings averted the wrath of an enemy, and by the merits of his life and death purchased blessings that were bestowed, with no willing mind, but solely in consideration of the price paid for them. Now all this is most erroneous and contrary to the Scriptures, and conveys most injurious ideas of the divine character. Wondrous as is the love of Christ in the incarnation, the love of the Father is not less conspicuous. We must not consider the sufferings of Christ as the procuring cause of the Father's love. No. It is the effect of the love of the Most High. He did not love and pity us because his Son came into the world, but his Son came into the world because the Father Everlasting, as well as himself, had loved us; for God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten and well beloved Son, that whosoever believed on him might never perish. The mission of our Saviour is the strongest proof of the love that pre-existed in the mind of the Almighty towards man. "He commended his love towards us," is the remarkable expression of the Apostle, "in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." The Almighty ever looked in pity and in love upon our fallen race. Even when he saw us polluted, degraded and helpless, he loved us—not indeed with the love of approbation, but of pity and forgiveness—with such pity as a father has to his disobedient offspring. Had not the Father as well as the Son loved us before time was, our redemption would never have been accomplished; but the love of both was equal. Nothing is wanting in the incarnation of the Saviour to make the display of the Father's love complete. There is, on our part, an offence infinite, and committed against a gracious God: there, is farther, a disposition to continue in the same course of disobedience; and then, on the part of God, there was not only pardoning mercy, but positive blessings bestowed. Nor is this all. Out of the exhaustless treasure of God, he led us to be adorers of his clemency and bounty. How are even these godlike attributes obscured by

the greater glory of that love which spared not his own eternal son. There have been kings and heroes who have devoted their lives to the service of their country, but then that country was deserving of all their love. But it was for his enemies that God delivered up his son. Peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die, but it was for sinners that Christ laid down his life. It has been asked if the faith of Abraham has been the admiration of all succeeding ages in the sacrifice of his son Isaac: what shall we think of the love of God in the sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ? If Jacob could scarcely part with Benjamin for the safety of his whole house: if we enter into all the anxiety and fear of Israel, when we see his favourite son preparing to leave his house, and exposed to imprisonment and death in a distant land, with what feelings of astonishment shall we carry back our minds to that mysterious time, when he who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, left all and subjected himself to the sorrows and sufferings of a man. It is impossible to read without tears the sorrows of David over his rebel child, when he went up to his chamber and wept there; what, then, think you of the love which heard the Saviour exclaim, "Now is my soul troubled." The subject is mysterious, and let no rash hand attempt to withdraw the veil between us and his inscrutable nature. Let us content ourselves with exclaiming, in the language of the Apostle, "O the height and the depth of the love of God in Christ Jesus, it passeth understanding."

God is love. This is a sentence that is written in legible characters on all his works of creation, providence, and redemption; on all of them it is so deeply engraved, that it could not be erased without their entire destruction; on all of them bright, on all beautiful; but it is in the work of redemption that it is blazoned forth in the fullest splendour of its glory. Yes, my friends, God is love. The works of creation attest it. Possessed of every possible perfection, enjoying pleasures for evermore, it was love alone that made him to create this fair form of things which we behold—the earth bringing forth grass, and every herb yielding seed according to its kind—and all the countless multitude of works. His love is also shown in his

works of providence. Look to the many ages which have passed away since the creation, and you will ever find his tender mercies over all his works. But it is not necessary to examine many ages, or to look back to distant times or lands. We have only to open our eyes to see around us the glory of the Lord,—the grateful variety of day and night, the wise succession of the seasons, the kind and liberal provision made for the wants of every thing, the cattle rejoicing on a thousand hills, the fowls of the air, and the sun that shines, and the rain that descends on the righteous and the wicked;—is it possible to look on these and deny that God is love? If such be the display of the love of God in the works of creation and providence, what shall we think of it as displayed in the work of redemption? It is indeed elevating and delightful to meditate on the time when all nature arose into existence at the word of God. It is impossible for any one, whose heart is not utterly degraded, to contemplate the providence of God in the preservation and government of his works, without reverence and adoration: but it is in the redemption of man that the love of God receives the consummation of its glory. We are told, that at the creation of the world the morning stars sang together and shouted aloud for joy; but we are told in the Revelation that when the Lion of the tribe of Judah prevailed to open the book and loose the seven seals, then a still higher and more rapturous song of admiration was heard in heaven: for when he took the book, the four beasts and the four-and-twenty elders fell down before the throne, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom; and

strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*

Thus, then, my friends, is the glory of God promoted in the mission of our Saviour, in that a striking display is made of his faithfulness, his justice, his wisdom, and his love. And as God has proved himself faithful to his promise, in the mission of the Messiah, we ought to repose the most undoubted confidence in the fulfilment of all his promises, in whatever circumstances of doubt or difficulty we may be placed. And as God has demonstrated his justice, we ought to honour it, by carefully avoiding the transgression of the Law, which requires this expiation; and the only way which we have is by affording, in our conduct, a demonstration to the world, of the excellence of the means which the Almighty has devised for the renovation of our fallen nature. Above all, as the love of God is manifested in his Son, we are bound surely to love him who first loved us. The first and great commandment is to love the Lord with all our heart; we are bound to this, as he is our Creator and Preserver: but when we consider him as our Redeemer, the obligation is increased a thousandfold. Look to the royal munificence with which he has provided for all your wants, and let your hearts be raised to the great Being whose power created and whose bounty sustains you. Look, still farther, on the means by which the Almighty came over the mountains of your provocation, and then let your soul magnify the Lord, and your spirit exult in God your Saviour. You may indeed complain that you do not enjoy all the happiness that is described; that, on the contrary, you are encompassed with troubles and distresses. Some may complain that they are afflicted and in poverty; but, then, remember your deserts; remember, that were it not for the mercy of God you would be utterly consumed—your light afflictions, which last but for a moment, would have been irremediable and eternal. Remember these things, and learn to love God. If you would consider that there is no comfort we enjoy that is not in

reality a mercy—that the food we eat, that the air we breathe, and the raiment wherewith we are clothed are not merely unmerited blessings, but mercy communicated through the blood of the covenant. Considering these things, what contentment would it diffuse over your minds; with what devoted affection would it fill your whole hearts to the Almighty, if you were to consider that the least of earthly blessings could not have been vouchsafed had not God delivered up his son to death. When we consider all that the Almighty has done for us, and how unworthy we are of the least of his mercies, we would think it impossible that there should be one to whom the glad tidings of Salvation have been proclaimed who is not filled with devoted affection towards God. Created by his power, are there any that do not love him?—preserved by his providence, is it possible not to love him?—redeemed by the blood of his own dear Son, it is monstrous not to love him.

Farther, as God has loved us, we ought to love one another. We have only to consult our own hearts, and they will tell us that he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God. Has God loved the world; and is not this a sufficient reason for our loving it also? Do we believe he has forgiven our sins; and is not this a reason for our forgiving those who have trespassed against us? Do we hope in future forgiveness? How are we so presumptuous as to entertain it, if we do not forgive our enemies? There cannot be a greater ground for hoping that our heavenly Father will forgive the infinitely aggravated offences against him, than the forgiving one another.

Let us, then, seek that God may be glorified. Let us glorify his faithfulness, by trusting in him; his justice, by obeying him; his love, by loving him. These are duties to which we are plainly called in the doctrine contained in the passage before us.

Let me, in conclusion, urge one and all of you to the observance of them. If you do observe them, God will be glorified in your salvation. On the other hand, if you do not observe the duties that have been laid before you, still God will be glorified in you; but it will be, as it was the case with the rebellious Israelites of old, in your destruction.—Amen.

THE PERPETUITY AND IMPERISHABLE NATURE OF THE RELIGION OF CHRIST;

A SERMON, PREACHED AT GLASGOW, ON SABBATH, 29th JULY, 1832,

By the Rev. JAMES SMITH, A.M.,

Minister of the United Secession Church, Laurieston.

"They shall fear thee as long as the sun and the moon endure, throughout all generations."—PSALM lxxii. 5.

THIS, and the foregoing psalm, contain two of the prayers of David, the son of Jesse; and with these, as we learn in the last verse of the psalm before us, "the prayers of David ended." In the first of these psalms, the aged monarch offers up a prayer for himself. In the second, he prays in behalf of his son Solomon. In the first prayer, you find, among other things, the following pathetic acknowledgments and requests. "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength falleth. Oh, God, thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and grey-headed, Oh, God, forsake me not, until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." In the second prayer, which is contained in the psalm before us, you perceive an aged and affectionate parent breathing forth the tenderest aspirations in behalf of a favourite son. As the Psalmist advances, however, his prayer seems gradually to become a prediction. He foretells the future glories of the reign of Solomon, and, under the guidance of the Spirit of prophecy, proceeds still further to speak of the glorious reign of that king of whom Solomon was but a feeble type. The greater part of this psalm, may certainly be applied, in a limited sense, unto Solomon the Son of David. He did "judge the people with righteousness and the poor with judgment." In the first part of his days at least, the "righteous flourished; and there was also an abundance of peace; and they that dwelt in the wilderness bowed before him." But even these and similar passages in the psalm, are especially true of the Messiah; and there are others that are applicable to the Messiah exclusively. For example—it was not, and could not be true of Solomon, nor of any of his successors, as stated in the text, that "men should fear them as

long as the sun and moon endured, throughout all generations." Solomon himself reigned only forty years in Israel; and the kingdom, even in its divided state, remained but a short time under his successors. Nor yet was it true of his dominion, as stated in the 8th verse, that "it ever reached from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth;" nor yet, as in the 11th verse, that "all kings should fall down before him, and that all nations should serve him." These and similar passages in the psalm were or will be true, only of the Messiah and of his kingdom. In the last verses of the psalm, however, the prophet has passed altogether from the thoughts of an earthly king and an earthly monarchy, and is celebrating the triumphs, and the glories, and the everlasting duration of the kingdom of Christ. With these plain and indisputable truths before us, then, we cannot be chargeable, in the smallest degree, with the wresting of Scripture, but are, on the contrary, only interpreting it in accordance with the mind of the Spirit, when we proceed to consider this text as exclusively applicable to the Messiah.

The grand doctrine brought before us in these words, is the perpetuity of the Church of Christ upon the earth; or, the imperishable, and indestructible character of his religion. We conceive that the same doctrine that is taught in this text, is taught in such passages of Scripture as the following: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church—one generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts—of the increase of the government of the Messiah, there shall be no end; my salvation shall be from generation to generation."

In illustration of the doctrine mentioned in the text, namely the perpetuity of the religion, or Church of Christ upon the earth; we shall endeavour in the first place,

to take a brief glance of the past history of the church of Christ.

You are aware, my friends, that long before this or any similar prediction was uttered; when no prophet or seer existed; yea, even before the foundations of this earth were laid, a decree must have passed the councils of the Eternal, that whatever might be the amount of the wiles of the devil, and the extent of the apostasy of men, "Christ should have a seed to serve him, and a generation to do him honour." Had the two great heads of the human family only remained contented, with that varied and abundant good that God had given them, the whole posterity of Adam had done honour to Jehovah, and the praises of a three-one God had been sung by happy beings, in bowers of innocence, without discord, and without hypocrisy; but when the adversary of souls tempted our first parents to the commission of the great transgression, it seemed as if the whole human race were now doomed to be the slaves of the devil in time, and the victims over which his murderous propensities might be gloated throughout eternity. There was a sweet still voice that brake the gloom, "The seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head." "The prey was yet to be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered." The Church of the Redeemer was thus early planted in our rebellious world, and though small indeed in its beginning, in its latter end it hath greatly increased. We do not stay to notice particularly the various vicissitudes of the Church of Christ, throughout the immediately succeeding periods of her history. Suffice it to say, that after a bondage of four hundred years, in the metropolis of idol worship, at a time, when the people of God had greatly increased, but where many of them had apostatized, and become indifferent to all religion, and forgetful especially of the God of Israel: and after a pilgrimage of unexampled toils, and hardships, and a series of new trials and apostasies; and particularly, after the endurance of much secret and open hostility at the hands of those powerful enemies that surrounded them, the seed of Jacob were at length established in the land of Canaan, and the tabernacle of God pitched upon Mount Zion; and at the time when David, the reigning monarch in Israel, uttered the prediction in the text, those who feared

the name of Jehovah, were more numerous, than ever they had yet been. Even in temporal power, and glory, they could have vied as a nation with any kingdom upon the face of the earth; and Solomon, the successor of this same pious and royal seer, raised unto the honour, and for the worship of the Almighty, a temple, which for the costliness of its materials, and the exquisite character of its workmanship, and its general splendour, far outshone the most magnificent structure that had ever yet adorned the earth. The worship of God was not now a reproach, but an honour, it became the fashion of the age. The tribes of Israel flocked together from the ends of the empire to the house of God: and ex-communication from the temple, or the deprivation of a share and an interest in the solemn services of this sacred ritual, was regarded as the very greatest of earthly calamities. At this period, then, there was every human probability that men "would fear the name of Jehovah while sun and moon endured, *even* throughout all generations." But, alas, for the baneful influence of apostasy! Solomon married strange wives, who turned his heart away after strange gods in his old age, and he built temples unto idols. The people but too speedily imitated the wickedness of their prince. Succeeding generations followed in the same course of apostasy; so God was wroth and brought up enemies against them. The people that were lately flourishing and prosperous, now became "a people scattered and peeled." Many of them were slain by the sword; multitudes were carried captive to Babylon, and many were scattered upon the mountains of Israel, as sheep without a shepherd.

What was now to become of the truth of the prediction in the text? Affliction brought this people back to God. Behold them weeping tears of penitence in the solitudes of Chaldea; sitting by the streams of Babel and chanting the hymns of their fathers' God; their hearts swelling with the sweet remembrances of bygone holy days, when they were in the habit of taking sweet counsel, and walking to the house of God in company. Such sorrows touched the heart of their heavenly Father; a decree was made to issue from the palace of the earthly monarch that Jerusalem should be rebuilt; and freedom of departure was allowed to all her children. Thus the

worship of God was again established, and his name feared in Israel; and O that now at least, there had been such a heart within them, as to have kept his commandments and his statutes: but hypocrisy once more usurped the place of piety; the outward worshippers indeed were numerous, but the spirit of the service had evaporated in its forms, and the stricter the outward appearances of devotion, the least was the real ardour and sincerity of the heart. Again, therefore, in one series of sufferings after another, the Church was tossed, until the time of the changing of the dispensation arrived; and then came the period of fearful trial. If this Church be of men, now shall it be abolished; it is only if it be of God that it can outlive the storm.

On one side, in this contest, as you are aware, stood the Saviour and his eleven disciples, along with a mere handful of devoted followers. On the other side were the whole of the Jewish rulers and priesthood; and at a later period in the struggle the whole power and authority of the Roman government. Yea, neighbouring princes, though mortal enemies on every other point, conjoined their power for the overthrow of the rising religion. But in vain. The undaunted fishermen told their holy truths in the presence of the rulers, and cut them to the very heart. They made light of bonds and imprisonments, and death itself, in the discharge of their message; and through the blessing of God, and the strong moral energy of the Gospel, thousands were added to the Church in the very seats of the persecution, "so mightily grew the Word of the Lord and prevailed." Tortures of every possible description were heaped upon the Christians; their lives were at the mercy of every unprincipled villain who could put himself to the trouble of uttering a lie against them; no proof of the calumny was required. Every outrage that was perpetrated in the kingdom was laid on the shoulders of the Christians and they bore the punishment of it. In times of public rejoicings they were wrapped alive in garments of pitch, and used as torches to dispel the darkness of the night. On other occasions, many of them were thrown defenceless before enraged lions for the amusement of the populace—a populace that boasted of their civilization and of the refinement of their feelings. And yet, after all, while one part

of the city rang with the barbarous shouts of those who were gazing on the tortures of the Christians, in other parts of it there were crowded assemblies of the saints, singing fearlessly and heartily the anthems of the cross! After a period of nearly four centuries, however, the struggle ended; and ended too in favour of the religion of Jesus. Paganism was expelled from the empire and Christianity established. The sovereign of Rome found it to be his wisest policy to favour the religion which he could not overthrow.

But when these triumphs closed, Christianity became languid; not from any destitution of her former energy, but from a too close alliance with the pomp and state of the earth. The religion that fire and sword could not destroy, was well nigh smothered amid the caresses of a court. Hence followed a period of comparative exhaustion, during the dark ages, when the name of Jesus was truly known and honoured only by a faithful few, and these in scattered groups, in the depths of valleys, or on mountain tops. Here and there the celestial light shone clearly, with one or two monks, amid the darkness of their cells. But what went generally at that time under the name of Christianity was a monstrous corruption of the gospel; a worldly system built upon the ruins of divine truth, where there was indeed a temple and a service, but where the wicked one sat in the temple, and where man or mammon and not God was adored.

Another period of revival came at the time of the reformation from Popery, but it was also a period of fresh trial for the Church of Christ. Infidelity had become powerful, old superstitions had been re-established; the ancient literature of Greece, with its enchantments, had engrossed the attention of the worldly wise, and the battles of the cross were to be fought anew; but again Christianity triumphed. From that time a flood of life and liberty hath flown across the earth, under the reviving influence of which we ourselves are now moving; and the name of Christ is more fully and extensively known and honoured at this moment than at any former period of the Church's history.

Thus, then, amid all the corruptions, and apostasies, and trials, that happened to the Church prior to the giving forth

of this prediction, there was universally a remnant left; and from that time to the present amid still greater changes, and more arduous conflicts, the Church of Christ hath continued to exist. That same God, whose name was honoured by weeping Jews at the streams of Babel, is now worshipped in the dwelling of every true Christian in the land; and that same gospel, for which Apostles bled and died, and for whose sacred truths so many of the faithful expired by varied torture in ancient Rome, is now preached with more or less faithfulness and purity in every religious assembly in the country. Once Christianity was confined to a single nation, now it is more or less purely and extensively known in every country under heaven. Idolatry has been dispossessed of its strongholds; and the learned and the powerful of the earth can now be numbered among the lowly worshippers of the name of Jesus.

After this brief review, then, of the past history of the Church, we would ask here, in the second place, if it is at all a *probable thing*, that the religion of Christ shall ever perish from the earth? Is it likely that it shall ever have to encounter greater opposition than it has hitherto braved, or more trying persecution than it has already overcome? Have not the kings of the earth conspired against it, and failed in their conspiracy? Have not the unholy stores of reproach and insult been already exhausted on those who ventured to adore the name of Christ? Diabolical ingenuity hath sharpened the wit of man, in the invention of new engines of torture for the Christians, and still the Christians swarm around us. Neither the horrid persecutions of primitive times, nor the corruptions of the dark ages, nor the *polished missiles* of infidelity, neither at the time of the reformation nor after it, have been able to give one mortal wound to the religion of Christ. From every contest she has gathered strength. Out of oceans of persecution she has emerged with increasing vigour and brightness, until in our happy time she has become "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!" Greater trials than she hath already encountered cannot possibly be awaiting her. She can never be involved in states of greater apparent weakness. And even the experience of former difficulties hath

made her better prepared for future trials; so that from her past history there is every human probability that the Church of Christ shall continue to exist "while sun and moon endure."

But blessed be God, that on this important point we have far more than probability. We have the very highest assurance that can possibly be given us, that the name of Christ shall be feared throughout all generations. In the first place, have the Word and the promise of God to this effect. The text is one plain prediction of the imperishable nature of the Church of Christ; so are the 17th and 19th verses of this psalm. The following also are represented in the second psalm, as the words of the Father unto the Son; "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Recollect also the following passage from one of the visions of the prophet Daniel; (vii. 13, 14.) "I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, that shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." It might be tedious, however, and at this moment it is not necessary, to mention many prophecies regarding the extension and the perpetuity of the name of Christ upon the earth. Such prophecies and promises abound in Scripture. While you bear in mind, therefore, that these are the predictions and the promises of that God, one tittle of whose revelations cannot pass until all be fulfilled, reflect farther, that many of them have been delivered in covenant unto Christ himself; and shall not the conditions of the eternal compact on the part of the Father be fulfilled? "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." We might have referred you here, also, unto the general truth or faithfulness of the Almighty, and the regard he must have for his own honour, as additional reasons for the fulfilment of the prediction before us. It is not supposable that God would permit this world to exist one instant, after the knowledge of the

Saviour, and the fear of him, had completely left the earth. Besides, is it consistent with the dignity of Jehovah to suppose, that the devil should ever be permitted to usurp the homage of the whole human race, or to mar altogether the honours of that decessate that has been accomplished on the hill of Calvary? No; the earth itself shall cease to exist before the name of the Saviour be forgotten.

But passing these things, we shall beg leave to refer you, in a single sentence, in conclusion, unto the intrinsic energy, and the adaptation of the Gospel, as another proof and reason why it shall never cease to be known upon earth. In the primitive ages, Christianity was much indebted to the influence of miracles, for the rapidity with which it spread. But apart from this influence of miracles, and apart also, in some measure, from the power of the Spirit of God accompanying the word, there is in the Gospel itself a certain moral energy that renders it an impossible thing that it should ever be forgotten. During the dark ages, the influence of miracles had ceased, or rather, what influence they still possessed, lay solely in the records of these miracles within the volume of inspiration, and is, therefore, nothing different from that kind of influence which these miracles possess at the present day. Reflect then, how, during that dark and protracted period the Gospel of Christ, without the influence of any new miracles, continued to exist, and to make its way in the world. The gross darkness of these ages was not able to quench the light of the Gospel. And when letters revived, and education became extended, and when the prevailing systems of philosophy were changing, and when men were almost too much given up to the practice of searching out the reason and the evidences of every thing—in that age of learning and of rigorous scrutiny, Christianity not only stood firm, but flourished. Its moral energy made an impression on many a conscience; and the learned of the earth were found willing to acknowledge that the Bible possessed claims to a heavenly origin which nothing would ever be able to set aside.

From these demonstrations, then, of the power of the Scriptures, and from the knowledge of their contents, we are surely borne out in saying, that, if it were a possible thing that Christianity should be

forgotten for centuries, and Bibles swept away from the earth, and education meanwhile allowed to proceed; if, after that period, a single Bible were picked up on a heath by a solitary traveller, he could read but a few sentences without feeling in his own heart that it was a book of divination—a book altogether different from any that was yet known amongst men; and that, whatever might be the particular history of its authorship, it was evidently a communication from an omniscient being—one who knew well the depths and the workings of every human heart; and that it had a tendency also, which none of the laborious works of the philosophers had ever yet attempted, and to which they were not even able to aspire. Oh, say, if, while the constitution of man's mind remains what it is, any nation could read the story of injured innocence in the person of Jesus, or the story of his ill-requited benevolence, and these, too, told in such simple strains of truth, without some of them feeling their hearts affected? Or, could they contemplate the history of his sayings, and of his actions, and of his tragic end, and the marvels that succeeded, without being convinced of his dignity, and of the truth and authority of his mission? Or, could they read those piercing and accurate descriptions which the Bible gives of the depravity of the human heart, without being conscience-smitten; and without feeling that he who gave such statements, must himself have seen, yea, must have made the human soul? Or, could they contemplate the salvation that is offered in the Gospel, so full and so free, and offered even unto the guiltiest of men, without being convinced that it is precisely the salvation which they require, and a salvation, moreover, which no creature could ever have provided for them? Or, in one word, is it possible that a nation of men could read those tender appeals which the God of the Bible makes within it unto the consciences of men—the illustrations of our absolute dependence upon God, and yet of our base ingratitude and forgetfulness of him; or could turn their thoughts to the revolutions that are here given us of a coming judgment, without being impressed with their truth and certainty: yea, without feeling a voice within proclaiming that such things must of necessity come to pass, and that the book that re-

veals them must be the Book of God? This testimony of the human conscience unto the truth of the Bible, and this admirable adaptation of its salvation unto the wants of men, and whatever else goes to constitute the intrinsic energy of the Scriptures, render it impossible that the Gospel should ever be forgotten upon the earth. The sun shall never rise and run his course, without witnessing the devotions of many of the followers of the Lamb, and that fair moon shall never cast her silvery light across a world on which the name of Jesus is forgotten. As that glorious orb that is now dazzling the heavens with his brightness, and on which the men of the present age so often gaze with ecstasy, which hath shone too on the heads of the patriarchs, and lighted on our own sires, in the paths of devotion and of faith, is the very same sun that is destined to pour the blessed light of day on the eyelids of your posterity, and onwards until the close of time; so that Gospel which Enoch and which Noah preached, and which Abraham so firmly believed, and whose later glories David predicted and sang, and which is now the most valuable jewel in the cabinet of every Christian—that is the very same Gospel that is destined to blaze in splendour and in purity in millennial times, and to be the all in all of earthly immortals, until that hour arrive when the sun and the moon, confounded and ashamed, shall drop from the firmament into the great general conflagration. “Men must fear the name of the Messiah while sun and moon endure, even throughout all generations.”

Oh, circulate the Bible! It carries its own evidence, the seal of heaven, along with it. When it enters the temples of idolatry, it must overthrow them. When the poor Ethiopian peasant reads it, he will

throw his household gods into the fire. The slave that is now groaning and bleeding under the cruelties of an inhuman tyrant, will bless you for that book that informs him of a rest beyond the rest of the grave—even that glorious rest that is in reserve for all the true people of God. Many a mother's heart will weep tears of gratitude to you, if you will only send her that Bible that will save her from laying her smiling infant on the fangs of the alligator, or from throwing it, in its holiday garments, into the midst of the devouring flame. And many a prayer shall return for your eternal prosperity from men to whom you may have sent this chart to heaven—to whom you have communicated the only assured tidings of immortality.

We insist not at present on your obligations to circulate the Bible, obligations, however, that are as imperative on private, as on public, or official members in the Church of Christ. How innumerable are the opportunities that we enjoy in our day, for discharging these obligations, opportunities that are accessible to every one. Who is there so poor in Christendom, that he cannot have the luxury of reflecting that he has sent at least one Bible into a benighted country. Besides, my friends, how worthy is the name of Jesus of being perpetually remembered and feared. Christ died to emancipate you from sin and from awful misery. It is to Christ you are indebted for the well-grounded hope of the priceless treasure of immortal blessedness. Rather than forget the name of Christ, then, “let our right hand forget its cunning, and our tongue cleave unto the roof of our mouth.” “Brethren—know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide multitude of sins.”

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SERMON by the Rev. Dr. GEORGE MUIRHEAD, Crumond,
SERMON by the Rev. ALEXANDER HARVEY, Glasgow.

Price 2d.

ON NEAR INTERCOURSE WITH GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE REV. MR. BRUCE'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON
SATURDAY, MAY 5, 1832,

By the Rev. GEORGE MUIRHEAD, D. D.,
Minister of Crumond.

"Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."—PSALM lxxxi. 10.

WHEN we raise our thoughts to the contemplation of the adorable majesty, the transcendent excellence, and the infinite exaltation of the sovereign Lord of the universe above all the works of his hand, are we not filled with astonishment at the thought that one so great, so glorious, so exalted, should have any communication at all with creatures of the dust such as we? But there is something more astonishing still—that he who is of spotless purity, who is glorious in holiness, who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence, should yet be pleased to extend long-suffering patience from day to day, and from year to year, towards his offending creatures upon earth. Yea, there is yet something that is most of all astonishing, if we were to take a serious thought of it, that this great and glorious Jehovah, infinitely blessed in himself, and infinitely exalted above the need of any of our services, should yet, in the exceeding riches of his grace, abounding to the very chief of sinners, invite, without exception, sinners of mankind to come near to him in the way of his appointment through the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be assured of finding rest, and peace, and blessedness, in the enjoyment of his everlasting and unchangeable love. And if there be thus much to call forth our astonishment in the conduct of God toward sinners of mankind on earth, we shall find also much that may well call forth our astonishment

in the thought of our conduct towards God, that instead of willingly, thankfully, and joyfully accepting his gracious call and his kind invitation, we should manifest so much of indifference to this subject—so much of backwardness to return unto God, from whom we have so deeply revolted—and so much of disposition to seek our happiness any where rather than from God, the uncreated fountain of life and bliss. But, my friends, what shall we say when, notwithstanding all our neglect of God, all our transgressions and backslidings, and all our multiplied provocations against him, it is still said in his word, "Yet return unto me, and I will heal your backsliding—I will receive you graciously—I will love you freely." O, is there not much here fitted to melt down our hardened hearts—to subdue the enmity that is in them against God—to draw us near to him, and as with the cords of love! Let every soul, then, in this assembly, hear the words which have just been read, as the voice of God—as the voice of God speaking to himself individually—and as the voice of God speaking to him in the accents of love—"Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." These words, my friends, are addressed to those of you who may hitherto unhappily have neglected the calls, the invitations, and the encouragements of God's word. God is this day once more calling upon you to come near to him in the way of his appointment

through the Lord Jesus Christ, and to rest assured that doing so you shall find in his love all that you can desire to make you truly happy. And oh, will you not hearken—will you not now hearken to the gracious call—will you not now accept of the kind invitation—and will you not now receive the blessedness which God alone can bestow, and which God will assuredly bestow on all those who come to put their trust under the shadow of his wings? O come then, however much you may have formerly neglected many calls and invitations from time to time, addressed to you from this place—come this day and “taste and see that the Lord is gracious,” and that “there is no want to them that fear him.” If, however, you will not hearken—if you will do by this call as you have done by many former calls, then who knows but this shall be the last call of mercy addressed to you, and that ere another opportunity is given you of hearing the gospel sound, the things which belong to your peace may be for ever hid from your eyes! But, again, these words are more especially addressed to you, my brethren in Christ Jesus, who, in receiving the testimony of God concerning his son, have been brought near to him. They are a call upon you to come near unto him, still to take a closer view, a nearer view, of his glory as revealed in the Gospel, and to seek for a more abundant share in all those blessings which he has treasured up for you in Christ. And I shall have much delight, my Christian brethren, in doing what in me lies, in a dependance on the grace of God, to awaken and cherish in your hearts the most longing desires after God and the good things that he has revealed to us in the Gospel, and to unfold to you something of those inexhaustible riches of grace that are treasured up for you in Christ. And here I hope, my friends, we shall find a subject of meditation suited to our present circumstances, when met together in the view of preparation for the solemn service of the Lord’s Supper; for it is one of those ordinances wherein I am sure all Christians would earnestly desire to have all their souls, as it were, going out after God as their most satisfying portion; and it is one of those ordinances where God is graciously pleased to satisfy abundantly the souls of his people—yes, where at times they have experienced that

blessings were actually poured out upon them. And what I propose, in an humble dependance upon the grace of God in the illustration of these words, is simply, in the first place, to consider something of what is contained in the exhortation here addressed to us, “Open thy mouth wide;” and, in the second place, to show you the encouragement we have to comply with the exhortation, from the promise that is here annexed to it, “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” And, O Lord, be thou pleased to send down upon us all refreshing showers of the influences of thy Holy Spirit. O awaken and cherish in our hearts longing desires after thee; and O do thou now satisfy our souls with the good things of thy house, even as with marrow and with fatness.

I.—I am, then, in the first place, to mention to you something of what I conceive to be contained in the exhortation here addressed to us—“Open thy mouth wide.” And, truly, my friends, whether we consider what it is that is here addressed to us, or what love there is in what is here addressed to us, or what blessedness may be expected in our complying with it, I am sure that there is everything in it that is interesting, animating, and delightful. Oh! may the Lord open our understandings, to understand the words addressed to us, to receive them as the truth of God, and to comply with their gracious design; for then shall we be truly blessed. These things, then, I conceive to be implied in the exhortation. In the first place, it proceeds upon a deep conviction of our own weakness, and insufficiency, and emptiness. In the second place, it more immediately consists in the giving out of our whole souls in continual, and longing, and unquenchable desires after God, as the only satisfying portion. And, in the third place, there is connected with it a well grounded hope, founded on God’s faithfulness and love, in that thus seeking after God, we shall find that he is ready to supply all our need.

In the first place, I say, this exhortation proceeds upon the deep conviction of our want and emptiness; for this is really the true state of one and all of us, however little we may be sensible of it. The Scriptures tell us, that man, in his very best state, is altogether vanity; and how much more in that low and fallen state in which we now are, when sin has robbed

of all that was truly valuable in us or about us, and has left us poor indeed—bereft of all that could make us truly comfortable and happy. There is, indeed, left in us a ceaseless craving after happiness and a restless pursuit of it throughout all creation; but, alas! my friends, this is just seeking for rest, and finding none. The object of man's pursuit is continually flying away from him; and, therefore, the question is again and again put by him—"Who will show us any good?" There is, indeed, a kind of shadowy image of bliss, that may be mistaken for true happiness, and that man may rest upon for a while; but as it is only of a shadowy nature, and not the true substance of happiness, it must, unquestionably, and from the necessity of the case, sooner or later disappoint the expectations that rest upon it. Indeed, the search of men in pursuit of happiness, while they are not enlightened from above, must, of necessity, be in vain; because it is always in a wrong direction: so that, searching throughout all creature comforts, they will be always met with this answer—"It is not in me." Thus Job is represented to us, when he speaks of the place of wisdom in the 28th chapter, at the 12th verse—"But where shall wisdom be found?"—it is true happiness that is meant—"and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depths saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold; neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it; and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls; for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it; neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence, then, cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof." So that, as long as men are desirous to fill up the wants of their souls by the mere husks of worldly good

things, they shall, in the end, find that there is an emptiness in them all—that there is a blank or vacuum in the soul, that all creature comforts can never fill up—in short, that nothing else than God himself can be a suitable portion for the soul, that was originally formed to find its happiness in God. And, well is it for men, when they come at length to this conclusion, and find, after many fruitless searches, it may be, in the end, with Solomon—"Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." This, you see, is really the state and condition of one and all of us. We are all blind and ignorant, and all deceiving ourselves with dreams of happiness; and it is only when we are awakened out of this dream, that we begin to open our mouth wide after God, just as a man ready to starve for want, opens his mouth wide to receive food and nourishment.

But, in the second place, these words, "Open thy mouth wide," do more especially imply in them the actual going out of the whole soul in continued longings, and unquenchable desires after God himself, and the good things of his gospel, as what alone can satisfy the desires of the soul. And O that the Lord may enable me to unfold to you something of the search of a renewed soul after God. There is seen by him in God an excellence, a fulness, and a suitableness that can satisfy his utmost desires, so that the language of his soul comes to be, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Then it is found, that nothing else can really be a satisfying portion to us. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee. My heart and my flesh faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Then there is found to be really true delight, and rest and blessedness, and near intercourse with God. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee." "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: We shall be satisfied with the good things of thy house, even of thy

holy temple." Then, when the soul is at any time prevented from enjoying near intercourse with God, all is felt to be uncomfortable—there is a sad blank within, and the desire is, O that I were where I might find God, that I might come even to his place; O that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest. And when God again is enjoyed in his word and ordinances, then the soul finds as it were the very consciousness of God. "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Lift upon me the light of thy countenance, and this will put gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their corn, and their wine, and their oil did most abound. Such are, then, the going out of the desires of a renewed soul after God. "Turn thou me, O Lord, and I shall be turned." "Draw me, and I will run after thee." O take me under the shadow of thy wings. Be thou, O Lord, my dwelling place, my habitation, my God, my Lord, my all.

But again, while God himself is thus the ultimate object of supreme desire to his people in opening their mouths wide, there will be a desire of being intimately acquainted with the way in which we can draw near to God with acceptance; there will be, therefore, a desire after the knowledge of Christ, and the way of salvation through him. There will be a desire to advance in this knowledge, to see the glory of God in the face of Christ; because it is only when God's glory is seen in the face of Christ that we can find encouragement to draw near to him. Therefore will the soul desire, above all things, to advance in the knowledge of Christ, seeing that there is an excellence, a surpassing excellence in that knowledge. His prayer, therefore, will be, that he may be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in his heart by faith; that, being rooted and grounded in love, he may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that so he may be filled with all the fulness of God.

And again, observe, in thus opening the mouth wide, will he be earnestly desirous of being clothed with the righteousness of Christ; because it is in this

raiment only that he can come with acceptance before God. He is convinced that all his own righteousness is but as filthy rags in the sight of God. He desires, therefore, to be found, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that, thus clothed in the armour, the unspotted armour of the Redeemer's righteousness, he may rejoice before God. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

Again, observe under this head, that the Christian, in thus going out after God, will earnestly desire that every obstruction to near intercourse with him may be taken away. He will, therefore, earnestly desire that God would take away all unrighteousness; that God would create in him a clean heart, and renew in him a right spirit; that God would search and try his heart and his thoughts, and see what wicked way there is in him, and lead him in the way everlasting. And I would only add farther, that the Christian, in thus opening his mouth wide in earnest desire after God, will earnestly desire a nearer conformity to the will of God; that thus being made holy in heart, and in life, he may be fitted for near and friendly intercourse with the God of holiness. He will desire, therefore, that God will write his law again upon his heart, that he may be renewed in the spirit of his mind, and that thus he may be enabled to run in the way of his commandments with enlargement of heart.

Such, then, is something of what I conceive to be implied in the second view I have taken of this subject, the zealous going out and longing desire of the soul after God; and when it is said not only "open thy mouth," but "open thy mouth wide," it is thereby intimated to us, not only that the desires should be in us, but that they should be called forth to the most lively exercise in us; that they should be abiding in us; that they should, as it were, engross the whole soul, to the exclusion of all earthly desires; so that we may say, our soul, and all that is within us, bless and magnify God's holy name. Now, it is God only, who, by his Spirit, can awaken and cherish such desires in

our hearts. But, observe, when we are called to open our mouths wide, we do so believing that God is ready to grant his Holy Spirit, and thus we shall experience that God will grant his holy Spirit, that he will do for us, not only above what we may be asking of him, but that he is ready to do for us exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think.

And this brings us to the third thing I considered as connected with the exhortation—that it proceeds upon a well grounded hope that God will grant the desires of our hearts. Observe, that when we enter upon any work where we have little ground to hope for success in the discharge of that work, hope languishes, there is little encouragement to go on, and our exertions are enfeebled; for why should exertion be made where we have reason to fear it may be all in vain? But, on the other hand, again, when we enter on any work, where we have good hope of success, then desire is increased—then we go on with greater vigour—then obstructions, that seemed to be in the way, are removed. Thus was it in the case of that poor blind man who had faith in the power and willingness of Christ to cure him. While he cried for help, it was in vain for the multitude to stop his mouth, and to forbid him, saying, Why should he cry so? The more they forbade, the louder he cried; nor did he desist until he had obtained his request; and, O that we were all as deeply sensible of our many spiritual wants as this poor blind man was of his natural blindness! Then would we be more earnest in seeking a supply of them, and we would, as it were, give the Lord no rest till he would arise, and have mercy upon us; and then should we assuredly find, that God is indeed ready, according to his riches and glory by Jesus Christ, to supply all our need.

II. And this brings me to the second general division of the subject, the encouragement that we have thus to open our mouths wide in longing desires after God, to the promise that is connected with that exhortation—“Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it;” *i. e.* that God is ready to grant those desires after him, in which we have shown, that the opening of our mouth does eminently consist. On this branch of the subject, it will just be needful shortly to advert to some of those desires we have

mentioned; and to show you, from the word of God, what encouragement we have to rest assured that such desires will be granted. Do you thus open your mouths wide? Are you really and earnestly desiring nearer intercourse with God, in the way of his appointment? Then, rest assured, such desires will be gratified.

Thou wilt remember them that remember thee and thy ways; and, says our blessed Lord, “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 him.” Are you earnestly desirous of making progress in the knowledge of Christ, and in the way of salvation through him, that thus you may see the way open unto God as your all-satisfying portion? Such a desire, you may rest assured, shall be gratified. Do you know that it is the great design of the whole volume of inspiration, from beginning to end, to set before you the Lord Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation through him; that the Spirit of God is promised for this very purpose, to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto you. This, says he, is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. Again, are you earnestly desirous of being clothed in the raiment of the Redeemer’s righteousness, seeing that you have no righteousness of your own on which you can venture to appear before God? This desire shall be fulfilled. You remember the parable of the prodigal son, how ready the father was to bring forth the best robe, and to put it on him, when he came returning to his father’s house. You remember what is said of Joshua, the high priest, when he stood in filthy garments, and the commandment was given to take from him these filthy garments, and clothe him in clean raiment. Thus it is with regard to all who are seeking after God in the way of his appointment. This is the generation of them that seek him, that they shall receive the blessing from on high, and righteousness from the God of their salvation. Again, are you earnestly desiring to have every thing removed from you that might interrupt your near intercourse with God—to have the power of sin removed from your heart, for if you regard the ungodly in your heart, the Lord will not excuse you? This desire, also, will be fulfilled. God as

promised to take away from you these hard and stony hearts, and to wash you, and cleanse you from all your filthiness, and all your iniquities. And, finally, are you earnestly desiring a growing conformity to the image of your Lord, that thus you may be qualified for nearer and more intimate intercourse with the Holy God? Then this also shall be granted to you; for God hath promised you his Holy Spirit, to dwell in you, to renew, and to sanctify your hearts. This, indeed, is the true end of your calling as Christians, that you be conformed in heart and life to the image of his Son. And if you should inquire what grounds have we to rest assured that God shall fulfil these desires? In the first place, observe, that these desires we have been illustrating are desires that are implanted in the heart, and cherished there, as you may see, by the Spirit of God; and surely God, who has implanted such desires, we may rest assured, intends to grant them. But farther, you have the word of God's promise to rest upon; you are confirmed by his oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, you might have strong consolation in flying for refuge to the blessed hope set before you in the gospel. And if any thing further should be required, you have it in the experience of the actual fulfilment of these promises in God's people. The people of God in every age are ready to attest, that he is faithful in fulfilling what

he has promised; and they are ready to invite others to what they have themselves experienced. They are ready to come and to attest that the Lord is gracious, and to invite others to make proof, in their own case, of the Lord's faithfulness.

And thus, having gone over what was intended for the illustration of the subject, I am not to detain you by making any practical application. The subject has all along had a direct bearing on what I conceive to be the frame of mind in which Christians would desire to partake of the Lord's Supper. Let us, then, each of us, make the application to himself. Is it so that you are experiencing these longing desires of your hearts after God? Then you are encouraged to come to the Lord's table, where you may expect that these desires will be still more enlarged, and where you are encouraged to hope that God will fulfil these desires, for there he feedeth the hungry with good things. But is it so that you are yet in a great measure strangers to such desires? that you are not conscious that you are desiring nearer intercourse with God in the way of his appointment? Then you are not welcome guests there. You could not get any benefit from it; for in that ordinance, while God feedeth the hungry with good things, he sends the rich, that is, those who are not at all sensible of his benefits, empty

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD IMPROVED;

A DISCOURSE DELIVERED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, CALTON, GLASGOW, ON THE EVENING OF SABBATH, AUGUST 25, 1832,

By the Rev. ALEXANDER HARVEY.

"When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."—ISAIAH XLVI. 9.

THE same events produce very opposite impressions on the minds of different men. The same outward objects are presented to the natural eye—the same melancholy tidings are poured into the ear—trials precisely similar in kind are endured—friends equally dear are consigned to the tomb—and appearances are as gloomy in

their visible aspects to one as to another; but on the heart of a Christian, and on the heart of an unbeliever, the effects produced are directly opposite. The natural sensibilities of the one may be as acute as those of the other; their education, station, and advantages in society may be alike. But the disciple of Christ has experienced a

moral change, on account of which he possesses a power of spiritual vision, and a state of moral feeling, to which the unregenerate must be an utter stranger. And, therefore, the Christian, amid his trials and bereavements, betakes himself to the exhaustless fountain of all consolation, and stays his agitated mind on his God. His faith recognises the hand of unerring wisdom and compassionate love ordering the occurrences of his life, and making every incident that befalls him contribute to promote his eternal well-being. He regards the present, with all its chequered scenes, its clouds, its storms, and its sunshine, as so arranged that a rich harvest of endless blessedness shall be finally reaped by all the friends of Jesus. And thus he is enabled to "possess his soul in patience," led to live nearer to his Saviour, and to rejoice even in tribulation. Whether affliction comes to him, or death enters his dwelling, or a more extensive and desolating visitation marks the footsteps of an offended God, he is solicitous to improve the dispensation for the advancement of his eternal interests. He says, "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have I waited for thee; the desire of my soul is to thy name and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." And while he thus feels himself personally secure, and his everlasting wellbeing placed on an immovable basis, he is truly desirous that every individual should embrace the same Saviour, experience the same felicity, and anticipate the same glory. And therefore it is that a period of general calamity is to him a season of earnest solicitude and increased devotion. Then, in the night season, while others sleep or rest amid their debaucheries, he pours out his earnest supplications into the ears of the omnipresent Jehovah, and early in the morning does he renew his petition. And he expresses his hopes of the thoughtless sons and daughters of folly around him in the language of the text, "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Now, surely those who despised the mercy of the Lord, abused his goodness, and refused to yield to the entreaties of the gospel, will be awakened from their slumbers by the thunder-storm and the hurricane, which threatens to erase the founda-

tions of error, and shiver into fragments every refuge of lies into which the deluded sinner can flee.

But while the Christian thus recognises the agency of Heaven, and studiously improves every dispensation of Providence, it is generally very different with the unbeliever. He is often merely carried along the stream of events a reluctant, struggling, murmuring victim. He will not recognise divine agency, but perplexes himself to discover the secondary causes of his sufferings, and vainly wearies himself to counteract what he esteems the natural tendency of events. In this situation, he wages a hopeless war with what he regards the stern destiny of his lot, and either sinks into cheerless despondency, or assumes the attitude of stoical apathy. And unless, amid the outward inflictions of Heaven, there be poured into his soul the spirit of grace and supplication, his suffering will harden him more and more, and call forth the language of blasphemous defiance instead of meek submission. But this is neither the natural tendency nor general design with which the judgments of God are sent upon our world. The very same depravity which slights his mercy may despise his severer dispensations. But these are intended to arouse the thoughtless, alarm the secure, and force the sinner out of his delusions, and induce him to flee to Christ for salvation, as well as to advance the general interests of godliness, and promote the spiritual welfare of the Christian. There are, indeed, judgments, whose obvious design is to punish the impenitent, and vindicate, in the eyes of men, the insulted authority of Heaven. At such a dreadful season, the whole sky may be mantled in darkness, and there may be no bright speck in which the bow of promise appears to relieve the dismal gloom; but even amid the most extensive and terrible visitations of divine judgment, the final issue will be a vast addition to human happiness, and an increase of piety during future generations. "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

It is, we believe, the duty of ministers of the gospel to seize on every occurrence which has a tendency to impress divine truth most deeply and permanently on the minds of their hearers. And surely, if ever there was a time when the voice of

Providence ought to be heard with reverential awe, it is the present. I have no wish to be regarded as an alarmist, or to excite imaginary fears. But if the state of the ungodly be always perilous, it must be doubly so when the thunderbolt of death is launched with such dreadful frequency amid our fellow-citizens; and it must be proper, at such a time as this, for every friend of man, to call with increased earnestness, on every one within the reach of his influence, to improve the dispensations of Heaven for his eternal good.

I trust, then, my dear friends, I may earnestly solicit your attention and your prayers, while, in dependence on Divine aid, I—

I. Specify some of the judgments of God which are at present abroad in our land; and,

II. Illustrate the effect which these ought to produce on the different classes in the community. I shall specify—

I. Some of the judgments of God which are at present abroad in our land. It may not be improper to explain the import of the phrase *judgments of God*, before we notice their prevalence. In its most obvious meaning, it signifies the righteous decisions which Jehovah has denounced against sin and sinners in his word. He has given to us a law, and he has attached to its violation a penalty; and this is the judgment which the righteous Lawgiver has pronounced on transgression. But it is the infliction of this penalty which is more generally denominated the judgments of God; and this is the sense which the expression appears to bear in the text. In this light, all the pain and misery which accompany the commission of sin, ought to be regarded as the judgment of God against it. But such a recognition would bring God too near to the feelings and consciences of men; and, therefore, they strive to conceal his agency, and account for their sufferings on the principles of atheism. Though the slightest pain, the least uneasiness that we feel, ought to be regarded as the voice of God addressing us, and saying, "O do not that evil thing which I hate;" yet it is not till He makes bare his arm, and draws his glittering sword, and parts the dark clouds that conceal his throne from the vision of mortals, and forces himself on their attention by the "judgments" which he executes on the earth, that his agency is reluctantly

acknowledged. The average amount of human misery is not enough to force sinners to confess that there is a God that judgeth in the earth. And, therefore, to vindicate his authority and demonstrate his holiness, he allows the accumulated profligacy of nations to bring down some of the drops, as presages of that storm which shall utterly sweep them away, unless by timely repentance they avert their doom.

At this present time there is more suffering, arising from various causes, endured by our population, than has been felt during the lifetime of the oldest amongst us. Our trade is nearly paralyzed; and this has occasioned a vast amount of misery to our industrious inhabitants. How many are there now in every city, town, and village of our land, who are willing to work, and provide by honourable industry for their own wants, and for the necessities of those who are dependent on them for food, who are compelled to live in idleness, and hear with a bursting heart the cry of hunger raised from famishing children? And how many are there of another class, who, though furnished with employment, can scarcely earn, by the greatest exertions, enough to satisfy the cravings of nature? Such a state of matters is one of great suffering, whatever may be the causes by which it is superinduced. We may fancy that we can distinctly enumerate the causes which have involved us in such extensive, and, I may almost add, unparalleled calamities. The present circumstances of our country must melt the heart of every philanthropist. We behold our population dying by inches, and sinking fast in the scale of comfort, intellect, morality, and religion. And when we ask why has all this happened to us, the politician may reply, it is the result of unrighteous wars, unjust monopolies, enormous taxes, unwise restrictions, and extravagant expenditure of the national money—and he may be partly right. The moralist may answer, the present distress is the natural consequence of unprincipled competitions in trade—the recklessness of speculation—dishonesty in business—extravagance on the one hand, and improvidence on the other—and he too, may be partly right. But the Christian looks beyond these secondary causes, which are obviously enough in operation, and regards the

agency of infinite wisdom and holiness, stamping with his righteous reprobation every thing that is evil, and demonstrating, by his providential dispensations, that national prosperity can only be enjoyed when its inhabitants practise righteousness.

But the judgments of God are abroad among us, in a shape which more immediately forces his agency on our notice. A disease hitherto nearly, if not altogether, unknown in our land, has been raging for months in the midst of us. We heard of its ravages at a distance, but we felt no fear. We regarded it as peculiar to a clime where all the operations of nature are magnificently grand, and its movements rapid and terrible. But it hovered not, like the deadly simoom, over the pestilential regions in which it was generated, but migrated westward till it reached the more temperate and healthy climate of Europe. Still it retained all its original malignity, and seemed to shroud itself in increasing mystery. In its march, it defied alike the vigilance of military cordons, and the skill of learned physicians. It entered our island, begirt though it be by the ocean, in defiance of all the precautions of quarantine. It reached our city, and the delusion which accompanied its career seized on many of our citizens. While on many a countenance there were seen the traces of alarming apprehension, from the mouths of others there was heard the language of scoffing incredulity. Our streets were emblazoned with the polluting cant of infidelity, and the deadly poison was eagerly imbibed by thousands, who allowed their political feelings to warp their better judgments, and pervert their hearts. Thousands felt that the hand of God was in it; but thousands also laughed the idea to scorn. And had the disease disappeared, at the time when it was reported to have left our city, the scoffers would have boasted of a triumph. But this repaite was just like the calm amid the bursts of the tempest, when the elements hold their breath to collect energy for a more furious onset. The disease took a wider range, and seized on a much greater number of victims with a deadlier grasp. Formerly, the sober and wealthy felt pretty secure; but now, no class or condition was safe. The cry of death was heard in every street. The longest day in summer was too short to bury the dead.

The unattended hearse, with its sable plumes, hurrying, amid the darkness of midnight, with another corpse to the place of graves, increased the general sadness. The usual burial ceremonies were suspended. Coffins, heaped on coffins, were hurried to the crowded trench, and hundreds consigned to one common grave. And the angel of death is still going on in his desolating career. The only voice which can arrest his progress has not yet said, "It is enough." And can we wonder at this? Though the scoff of incredulity be not now heard, the deeds of wickedness are nearly, if not altogether, as frequent as ever. The stroke has fallen heavy upon us, but it has not yet humbled us. We have still false refuges to which we flee. We are slow in recognising the hand of God, and in acknowledging that he hath done it. We do not, indeed, hear the proud defiance, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey him?" but there is a practical disregard of his authority, visible in the conduct of thousands around us. The very prolongation of the visitation, which ought to affect us more deeply, seems to harden us. Many a church was open for extraordinary prayer, when the mortality was not one-fifth of its present amount, which is now shut. The indiscriminate manner in which all classes and characters are seized, appears to foster the delusion, that it cannot be a judgment of God, else it would fall exclusively on the wicked. But thus to decide, is to usurp the high prerogative of the judge of all the earth. Besides, that which is a judgment to the ungodly, is fatherly correction to the Christian. An equal degree of suffering may be measured out to each. A common afflictive event may befall them in the present life, but both the present effect, and the final issue, may be vastly different. In the case of the sinner, he may be hardened in his impenitency, and, having braved once more the frown of Heaven, and despised the "terrors of the Lord," he may go on in the course of iniquity with greater boldness than ever, and treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, in a manner so terrific, as to strike despair into the stoutest heart. But the Christian sees, in every event, the visitation of a Father; and, whatever he may suffer, he knows it shall be overruled for his good. Sin is rendered more hateful

to him, holiness more lovely, earth less attractive, heaven more desired, and thus, under paternal discipline, he is matured for the unfading inheritance of the saints in glory.

I shall now—

II. Advert to the effect which these judgments of God ought to produce on the different classes of the community.

From what I have already stated, and you have observed, you must be convinced that the most salutary tendencies may be resisted, and wholesome food be converted into poison, by the perverted ingenuity of man. I do not assert that the judgments of God will necessarily produce the effect I intend to describe, but that they ought to do so.

1. The judgments of God ought to drive the open transgressor of God's law from his sins and criminal indulgencies. There is scarcely a form in which human depravity can manifest itself, but it has unblushingly assumed amongst us—from the saintly guise of hypocrisy, to deeds of abandonment which modesty refuses to name. Now, in a time of abounding judgments, we might naturally expect that there would be some pause in the maddening round of iniquity—that many would be brought to think on death and judgment, who never thought on these solemn realities before. And I trust that such is actually the case. But, in so far as visible appearances go, there is little room for gratulation on this point. The profane swearer is as loud in his curses—the Sabbath breaker is as regardless of the day of God—the contemner of the gospel is as neglectful of its inestimable blessings—and the intemperate are as frequent at the intoxicating cup as ever. Truly, the slave of sin is dead while he liveth, divested of every moral sensibility, and regardless alike of the judgments and the mercies of Heaven.

But if there be any class of sinners more hardened and thoughtless than another, it is the intemperate. To those who abuse themselves with strong drink, the voice of the present alarming dispensation is awfully solemn. There is not one fact better ascertained in the history of the Spasmodic Cholera, than the eagerness with which it seizes upon those who are addicted to intemperance. It has hitherto laid upon such its first, its hottest, its dead-

liest grasp: and it seldom leaves a city, a town, or a village, into which it has entered, till it has swept away those mere nuisances which pollute our very atmosphere with their pestilential breath, and destroy the peace and well being of society.

And yet there is scarcely a street into which we can enter, but there staggers past us some ghastly spectre, enervated in all his faculties—ragged, meagre, bloated with disease, and a ready victim for death and the grave. It is not my present design to expatiate on the malignant effects of intemperance on the health, the welfare of society, and the eternal interests of the individual, because I am aware that there are few, if any, of this description now within the reach of my voice. But I would urge upon every sober person in the community, especially every Christian, to exert himself to the utmost, and to employ every scriptural instrument, to arrest the progress of an evil which, if not checked, must inevitably plunge our country into irretrievable ruin. But, oh, my friends! it is not the effect which this vice has on the health, the interests of society, and the temporal condition of men, but on his endless destiny. Were there no future reckoning—no God—no eternity—no hell of burning torment for the intemperate, all other considerations might be disregarded. But a holy God has declared, and the sentence is irrevocable—“Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Amid the many hundreds who have fallen victims to the desolating malady by which we are afflicted, it is affecting to know, that very many have awakened from the sleep of intemperance, to grapple with this disease, in a state of nerveless exhaustion, and have, in a few hours, slept the sleep of death. When will the living lay these things to heart!

2. The judgments of God ought to stimulate every individual, who is destitute of personal religion, to attend to his spiritual interests without a moment's delay.

Religion is a personal concern. No man can attend to its duties and requirements for his neighbour. God has, indeed, been graciously pleased to spare large communities of men for the sake of a few pious individuals. He declared his willingness to delay the overthrow of the cities of the plain, if ten righteous persons could

be found in them. But though, for the sake of the righteous, he may delay the infliction of his judgments, he still says, in his word, to the wicked, "it shall be ill with him."

Genuine religion is essential to extensive usefulness and real happiness. It is a gross mistake to suppose that Christianity bears exclusively on our eternal interests. It is necessary to our present wellbeing, and smiles benignantly on all the reciprocities of life. It excites and directs every useful effort which bears upon human happiness, and throws the brightest sunshine over the fairest and gladdest hours of mortal existence. But the religion of Christ has this peculiar excellence, that it cheers and animates the heart when nothing else can do it. When bound by the fetters of affliction, and looking forward to a speedy dissolution, what can enable you to bear up under your sufferings, and look beyond the gloom and putrefaction of the grave, but that gospel which brings life and immortality to light?

If there be any, then, in this assembly, who is still a stranger to genuine religion, I beseech him to hear the voice of reason, of mercy, and of judgment, and let their combined entreaty move him to attend to the concerns of his soul. This is proper at all times, and in all circumstances, but much more so at present, when the uncertainty of life is increased in so alarming a degree. But do not imagine, my friends, that you can with safety or with innocence neglect the duties of religion. Though you be now blooming in youth, and rejoicing in prosperity—though your prospects in life may be rapidly brightening, and though an infallible oracle could assure you that your sun shall set amid the repose of an honoured old age, yet I can assure you that the portion of life between this and seventy can only be usefully and comfortably spent if devoted to the service of Christ. While you are at a distance from him, the curse of God's violated law hangs over your head—the frown of an offended Creator must wither up your comfort—and the painful remonstrances of a guilty conscience must frequently disturb your peace. But you cannot assure yourselves that you shall see old age. Life is uncertain. No truth in geometry more easily demonstrated. What is your life? It is a shadow—a vapour. It is frail as the

flower of the field. This is true of human life in the most favourable circumstances. But how much more striking do these images become when a deadly disease is raging in the midst of us. Death has opened his artillery, and the deadly shot is falling thick around us! And can you live in fatal security, neglecting the great salvation, when you know not but you may be the very next victim. This salvation, so suited to your spiritual condition, and so essential to your wellbeing, is brought nigh to you. It is exhibited in the Scriptures. It is preached from the pulpit. It is offered without money and without price. The glorious Author cries in the great assembly, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Here is pardon for your guilt—a purifying fountain in which to wash from sin and from uncleanness—peace for your consciences—support and direction while you journey through this world—and at the end of your course, a crown of glory that shall never fade away. And all this shall be secured to you on believing in Christ—so soon as you cordially receive the testimony which God has given of his Son. "He is made of God unto you wisdom and knowledge, and righteousness, and sanctification, and complete redemption." Then you are complete in him, and safe in him. With an interest in Christ, no real evil can befall you; death itself shall be great gain. Amid the struggles of dissolution, you may say, "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things, I am more than conqueror, through him that loved me. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord."

And seek an interest in Christ without delay. Salvation is offered to you now. The present is the accepted time. In not one instance in the Bible have you the slightest encouragement to delay preparation for eternity, but much to the contrary. The case is so plain, the proposal so reasonable, the proffered blessings so precious, the soul so valuable, eternity so enduring, and the objects which demand a preference to these so contemptible; that

time is not requisite for deliberation. The feeblest effort of judgment is sufficient to decide. Let not the works of a corrupt heart pervert its decisions. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." A time is coming when he may not be found in mercy—when prayers will not be answered. This may happen on this side the grave. To you who have frequently heard his pressing entreaties without compliance, God may say, as he has done to others, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproofs, I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind—when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call on me, but I will not answer—they shall seek me early, but shall not find me." This is a situation of all others the most terrible. I cannot imagine a creature in a more awful condition. Here are desolation, distress, and destruction surrounding the impenitent sinner. The God he has so often despised has left him to "eat the fruit of his own ways, and to be filled with his own devices." And thus abandoned of Heaven, where can he flee? Behind him there is the moral waste over which he has trod, and nothing visible but the traces of his crimes—before him there is death, and judgment, and eternity. Above him there is a holy God, the accents of whose voice were once full of melting tenderness, but now they are converted into righteous denunciations—beneath him, hell is moving upward to meet him, and enlarging itself to afford accommodation in its gloomiest mansion for a despiser of the Gospel. And, O impenitent sinners! that situation may be yours, if you are not induced instantly to flee from the wrath to come. Let no consideration induce you to delay. Calamity, disease, and death may come upon you this very night; and when these come upon you, to whom can

you flee, if the God of life and of death drive you from him? What can physicians do for you then? They may drag your senses with opiates, and drown them in temporary oblivion, but they cannot retain your spirit, already struggling to get into eternity. What can weeping friends do for you then? Their stifled sighs and burning tears, and unremitting attentions cannot still your fears, or hush into a calm the storm which divine wrath has excited within you. What can praying ministers then do for you, since yours is not the prayer of faith, but the cry of despair? They cannot roll back the wheel of time—restore to you once more the seasons of grace which you have trifled away—or reverse the dread decree which has gone out against you. And is not the most distant possibility that such a scene as this may be that amid the distractions of which you may close your despairing eyes for ever on all earthly things, enough to rouse you to give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. I call upon you to be happy now, and happy for ever. Interested in Christ, all things shall work together for your good. You may stand unmoved, and look at the raging pestilence. For "all are yours, whether death or life; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

3. The judgments of God ought to excite in every Christian more of the spirit and exercise of prayer both for himself and others. It is the command of God to the afflicted saints—"Call on me in the time of trouble, and I will answer." It is esteemed by the believer as an invaluable privilege, and felt to be a very great relief in the season of distress, to be permitted to cast his burden on the Lord. With unobstructed access to the throne of grace, he feels as if nothing could hurt him. He has taken refuge in an impregnable fortress, and he does not need to fear the most furious assaults. "God is his refuge and his strength; a present help in the time of trouble."

(To be continued.)

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SERMON by the late Dr. JAMES ROBERTSON,* South Leith.
SERMON by the Rev. GREVILLE EWING, Glasgow.

Price 2d

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE FRIENDS OF CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED IN SOUTH LEITH CHURCH, ON SUNDAY, APRIL 15th, 1832,

By the late Rev. JAMES ROBERTSON, D.D.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.—JOHN xv. 14.

THESE words, my friends, are a part of that affectionate discourse, which our blessed Lord delivered to his disciples, immediately after the institution of the holy ordinance of the Supper, and were, of course, designed not only for the instruction and direction, but for the comfort and encouragement, of his followers, in all generations. When we come to the table of the Lord, we publicly profess that we are his followers and friends. But this is not all that is necessary to ascertain the reality of that honourable relation; for he said to the disciples, as I now say unto you, in his name,—“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” And I am called upon to say to you, that ye are the friends of Christ, if, after having been at the table of the Lord, ye study to do carefully whatsoever he has commanded. The words of the text imply such striking condescension towards us, as to consider what is our indispensable duty an act of love and friendship to him. “Ye are,” says he, “my friends,” &c. Our communion with him is ascertained not merely by our words and professions, but by our deeds; and by these chiefly. “Ye are,” says he, “my friends, if ye do,” &c. Our duty, too, as a test of love and friendship to him, extends to all his commandments. “Ye are my friends,” says he, “if ye do whatsoever,” &c. Obedience proceeding from love, is cheerful and per-

severing, and regulated by a supreme regard to his authority and glory. “Ye are my friends,” says he, “if ye do whatsoever I command you.” Your attention, my friends, is, therefore, requested to each of these particulars; and it is my humble and earnest prayer, that the word preached may profit you, and that it may be applied for the purposes for which it is intended, being mixed with faith in them that hear it.

I observe, then, in the first place, that the words, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you,” imply such great condescension towards us, as to consider what is our bounden indispensable duty an act of friendship and of love to him. “Ye are my friends.” Not only ye are the objects of my friendship and love, but ye testify your friendship for me and my cause, if ye do whatsoever I command you. It is the general indispensable obligation of Christians to obey his commands; and when to this is added the farther obligation they lie under, in consequence of redeeming love, no language is sufficient to express the full extent and force of their obligation to duty. Is it not astonishing condescension to hear him say, after all he has done and suffered for us,—“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you?” If you do voluntarily what you are bound to do by creation and redemption, you plainly testify to all around you, that you

* This is the last sermon which Dr. Robertson delivered in Leith on a sacramental occasion. He was carried off by cholera, after an illness of twenty-four hours, on Monday, 27th August, in the 75th year of his age, and the 50th of his ministry.

dear love to me. The sovereign demands submission from his subjects; the master requires obedience from his servants: oh! how astonishing, then, to hear that our great Creator and only Redeemer says,—“Ye are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you.” Had he said,—“Ye are your own friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you, he would have spoken incontrovertible truth; for our duty and interest are here inseparably connected; but when he says,—“Ye are my friends,” &c., it is a proof of condescension truly divine. We may have both the ability and the inclination to keep his commandments, and hearken to his words. To his commands, he subjoins the promise of all sufficiency in every time of need. From him we derive an answer to the prayer of faith,—both the will and the power to do according to his good pleasure. How astonishing, therefore, to hear him say,—“Ye are my friends!”—ye act a friendly part to me, “if ye do whatsoever I command you!” Surely, an ability and an inclination to obey, imparted by God himself, lay us under an obligation which no sanctified heart can resist. On the part, therefore, of the servants of Christ, to do his will is an indispensable duty. And when such advantage is derived by his people, and when they are enabled from on high to do his commands, and hearken to his words, it must appear a mark of the most wonderful condescension, to tell them, after all this, that they are his friends, when they do whatsoever he commands them.

But I remark, in the second place, that these words addressed to communicants plainly imply, their communion with him as his disciples, and that their union is ascertained, not so much by their profession, as by their deeds. “Ye are my friends if ye do,” &c. It is not enough for you to be able to repeat the commandments and the creed, ye are only my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you. “But,” said the apostle James, “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.” It is not very unusual for people to make a profession of religion once or twice, or oftener, in a year, by a public appearance at the table of the Lord. It is not at all unusual to meet with persons that appear as often as opportunity occurs at a communion table, but who afterwards live either in total neglect, or in the presumptuous

violation of moral precepts. The language of their profession is, “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient;” and, if their future conduct is inquired into, it will be found, that though they have professed to be the Lord’s, they afterwards denied him. This boast, which is practised by dissemblers, is extremely insulting to the Saviour, while he says, “By their fruits, my friends are known.” “Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven.” The utmost fluency of speech about the commands will be vain, if duty is not done, or so much as attempted to be done. Accordingly, my friends, it must be carefully observed, that none but believers are the friends of Christ. “He that hath my commands and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” It is the unwearied study of such a man, by the power of divine grace, to be ever found in the way of duty. It is his frequent, fervent prayer, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” A moral duty is set before his eyes: he endeavours to comply with it—to engage immediately in the performance of it. Although he feels and laments the imperfection of his obedience, yet he tries to be ever found in the way of obedience. It is, therefore, active exertion in keeping the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ that is required of the Christian, in opposition to variable conduct—to deceitfulness—to forsaking the Lord. This our blessed Lord had especially in view when he said to his disciples, “Ye are my friends,” ye give proof of this, “if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

In the third place, when our blessed Lord says to those who were at the table of the Lord this day, “Ye are my friends,” &c., it implies, that the obedience which he is pleased to acknowledge as a test of love—a friendship to him, extendeth to all his commands, or to whatever we are commanded to do. “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” Now, this is a very important mark of true obedience, and produces at once a line of separation between the obedience of real and of pretended friends. Those who are true friends of Christ, though they cannot obey perfectly any one of the commands, have a respect for them all,—they would not wish them less strict or imperative

han they are ; whereas, they who are the pretended friends of Christ, limit their obedience to a few positive precepts, which do not require much of the exercise of self-denial. Now, if we obey in some things only, and not in whatsoever things he has commanded, we do not obey him perfectly in any thing, for obedience so partial can never be supposed to proceed from love.

Nothing affords the enemies of our religion greater cause of triumph, than the partial and inconsistent obedience of the nominal professors of religion. There are some, and, I dare say, you know some of them, who observe something like a form of devotion, by appearing at public worship on Sabbaths, by sitting at the Lord's table on sacramental occasions, and by coming before him as his people do in the partaking of bread and wine, as a testimony of their love of Christ ; while all the while they may be presumptuous sinners. There is something decent in their outward deportment, and they are not chargeable with the profanation of the holy name of Jesus ; but in all this there may be much of pretension ; for in your dealings with them in worldly business, you often find that they cannot say with the Apostle, that they have a good conscience, and are in all things willing to live honestly ; as if an inflexible regard to truth and integrity in their worldly profession were not essential, or, as if by appearing for a few minutes at the table of the Lord, they obtained a dispensing power to live afterwards in opposition to common justice and humanity. Now, there are others whose conduct is different from this, but erroneous still ; for they suppose, that if they are honourable in their dealings with their neighbours, it is a matter of no consequence, though religion and the worship of God should be almost entirely neglected. Not so with the real friends of Jesus. To each of his commands they pay a conscientious regard, and nothing grieves them so much as that they cannot keep them perfectly. The duties we owe to God do not supersede the duties we owe to our brethren of mankind, nor does the observance of the first table withdraw our attention from the precepts of the second. While men are just and generous, and desirous to promote the interests of truth and righteousness among their brethren, they recollect also the duties incumbent

on them in consequence of their relation to their Creator and Redeemer, and they dare not for conscience sake attempt to rob him of his due. In a word, they decline no duty which their Divine Redeemer has been pleased to appoint. They refuse not to follow him in the most difficult paths of self-denial, as well as in the easier paths of duty. They remember the test of friendship here laid down by himself. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Thus they put to silence the objection of foolish men, who say that the grace of God leads to licentious living, or has a tendency to weaken our obligation to duty. This calumny is refuted here by our Saviour himself in the text. The truth is, that there cannot be any love to the Redeemer unconnected with respect to all his commandments. Hence, the prayer of the Psalmist, "Ob, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes ! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

I observe, in the 4th place, that when our Lord and Saviour says to his disciples, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," it plainly implies, that their obedience proceeds from a willing, cheerful mind. Ye are my friends, if ye do with alacrity whatsoever I command you. Now, the cheerfulness of mind with which the obedience of genuine Christians is distinguished, is particularly taken notice of at the 10th verse. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." A state of love ought always to be cheerful, when the object is the keeping the commands. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." A Christian ought to be joyful in the way of keeping, by divine grace, the commandments of his divine Redeemer. And this cheerfulness is farther explained in the 15th verse, by the comparison stated between the service of an hired servant and of a loving friend. "Henceforth," says he, "I call you not servants but friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto ; for the purpose of cheerful obedience menial servant, or one hired for the purpose, very often considers his service as a task or a burden. He persists in his

labour under the conviction of its imperious necessity, and when his task is finished, he is apt to imagine that enough, and sometimes that more than enough, is done. But the services of a friend are voluntary rather than exacted; he embraces cheerfully every opportunity of exhibiting, by deeds, the sentiments of a loving heart. If a man enters with reluctance on religious duties, he will be very happy when the days of attendance on the public ordinances of religion are ended, that he may return, and with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, to the vain cares, or the vainer follies of the present world. He cannot, with propriety, be said to be the friend of Jesus. But when love is his motive, and a sense of that love is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, then what is his duty will be his delight and joy, and he will never be so happy as when, by divine grace, he is enabled, steadily, to observe the commands which have been delivered unto him. The Psalmist rejoiced in the divine law more than in all riches, and he preferred the keeping of the commandments to a vast accession to his stock of gold and silver; for, says he, "the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter, also, than honey, and the honeycomb." It is not meant by this to infer, that there are no difficulties in a religious life—that there are no difficulties after we have tasted that the Lord is gracious. It is not meant to affirm this, or even to imagine it, for we know very well that there are difficulties in the way of keeping the commandments from the remaining corruption in the hearts of the best of us; and we are not to expect that, in the way of holiness, we are to meet with nothing but peace and pleasure. Our Lord declares, that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it;" and if any man is to be his disciple, he must deny himself—he must renounce the gratification of his wishes even with regard to some lawful worldly enjoyments, when these come into competition with the interests of religion. In this sense he must take up his cross and follow Christ. Independent of this, it will be found, that when a sense of the

love of Jesus is shed abroad in our hearts, we will be more and more inclined to acquire the habit of serving Christ, and in proportion as that is acquired, we will find the yoke of duty comparatively easy, and the burden light. Was there nothing in his service but anxious fear and disquiet arising from the enemies of our salvation, it would not be true that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are paths of peace. But oh! how encouraging is it to know, that, amid all our difficulties, there is a provision in Christ to help us in time of need! Oh! how encouraging is it to know, that, according to our need so will our strength be also! How encouraging the hope of that eternal life which the Lord has purchased for his people, and will graciously bestow! "If any man serve me," says he,—and what encouragement the words impart!—"let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." We have good reason to be cheerful and happy in habitually attempting to keep the commandments of the Lord. Your labour is not in vain. Whatever is needful to carry you on in the path of duty shall be granted you, and the end is everlasting life. Wherefore let the love of Christ be the constant animating motive to obedience, and then that obedience will be cheerful. Let others who know not the grace of God in truth, be sorrowful and sad, wholly employed in the service of Satan, while they have nothing to expect but the wages of iniquity in their present course of life; but do you rejoice, believing in Christ, and obeying his commands, sensible that the benefits of the gospel are secured to you, not by your own merits, but by the merit of the righteousness of Christ, by the merit of his atoning death, and by his intercession within the veil. According to your need will then be the grace of your adorable Redeemer.

In the fifth place, I observe, that the obedience which the Divine Redeemer will acknowledge as a true test of love to him, is persevering; and therefore he says, at the 9th verse, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Observe what follows, "Continue ye in my love." Therefore, the obedience he will acknowledge must be consistent, constant, and persevering. "Continue ye in my love;"

testify your love not only by going to my own table, but testify it in every succeeding day. There are many who betray fickleness of mind in the observance of religious duties. They assume appearances about the time when the holy sacrament of the Supper is dispensed, or when they happen to be in company with the real friends of Jesus, but afterwards are found to pay no attention to whatsoever he has commanded. Such inconsistency is a proof that they have never known the grace of God, the constraining influence of the love of Christ, which influences his people daily in the observance of his holy law. Such inconsistency is a proof that those who manifest it are far from the fear of God. They may have partially known the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, but they do not know what steadfastness in his service is. Not so with those who are real Christians. Their concern is not only to do, but to continue to do the positive duties of Christianity. Not that Christians are to be always in the house of prayer, or that they are to be continually reading the Bible, or that they are to be from day to day at a communion table, as if there were no other duties to attend to. That is not the meaning of the word consistency in keeping the commands, for real Christians are commanded to be diligent in business, as well as fervent in spirit serving the Lord. The blessings of Providence are lost to us, if we are slothful. Now, we are required not only to read, pray, and communicate, but, in testimony of our religion, to be diligent in business, in the department of life we are destined to occupy, as well as fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Our persevering attention to these duties is to be a proof that the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath taught us to live righteously as well as soberly and godly. Now, to this important circumstance I wish particularly to call your attention, the line of duty we have to follow when the maxims and manners of the world would have us follow a different course. Some think that if they attend to the ordinances of religion they may take a little enjoyment in the indulgence of their appetites and passions. Now, this is not the case with real Christians. Iniquity ashamed would hide its head, and righteousness be shown to be that excellent thing which the Lord loveth, if all who named the name of Christ were

found conscientious in the discharge of every duty connected with their situation.

But I must bring the discourse to a close; and, therefore, I proceed to observe, lastly, that the obedience of the genuine communicant, as a testimony of friendship to the Saviour, proceeds from a fit regard to his supreme authority and glory. Read again the text, and pay attention to every word of it. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you;" and if you do it cheerfully, from a principle of love, it must be from a supreme regard to my authority. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." The service in which Christians are engaged as communicants, is not prescribed to them by fallible mortals. The duties they are commanded to attend to are enjoined them by infinite wisdom—by the King of Zion—by their Saviour and their Lord, and, therefore, a fit regard to his high authority must characterize every act of holy obedience. Believing that the moral law is of eternal obligation, believing that he who redeemed us has a right to rule us, we cannot avoid paying attention to whatever he has commanded. If, therefore, we would prove ourselves the real friends of Jesus, we must not only do what we are commanded, but *because* we are commanded, from a regard to his supreme authority. And this regard is that which characterizes his own people, and which distinguishes them from others, whose manners of life are regulated by fashion, and the maxims and customs of the world. Now, to know what we must do, as commanded by his supreme authority, we must read the law of the Lord—we must consult the oracles of truth, where the doctrines which we are to believe, and the duties which we are called to observe, are distinctly pointed out. Now, how can we know the commands, if we pay no attention to the written law of the Lord? How can we know what we should believe and practise, in order to salvation, if this holy Bible is kept out of view? How can we know whether we are in the right way, if the Bible, given us for instruction, is not in our hands? This blessed book, then, will be carefully consulted by Christians, if they wish to know what the Lord has commanded, which they are at no liberty to neglect, and what he has prohibited, which they are at no liberty to do. It is their glorious character, that they walk

not after the flesh, but after the spirit. Out of a regard to the divine authority, as well as by the fruit of redeeming love, they desire daily to manifest that they have a conversation becoming the Gospel. Now, without this, all professions of love to Jesus are vain—without this, all professions of religion are delusion; for this is the infallible test of love which the Saviour has laid down, in this interesting discourse, by which the obedience of his people is to be ascertained as genuine, that they attempt, at least, to do whatsoever he has commanded. Teach thou me, O God. It is now my purpose, as well as my duty, to obey. Enlarge my heart, that I may run in the way of thy commandments. I desire to testify my regard to thy supreme authority, as one of thy creatures, and one of thy redeemed, by doing, from day to day, whatsoever thou hast commanded me.

This whole subject, then, plainly implies, that so astonishing is the condescension of Jesus towards men, that he considers what is their bounden indispensable duty to him as a test of love or friendship—that we must not consider as a test of friendship to him so much what a man says, as what he does—that the obedience which we acknowledge as a true test of love to him extendeth to all his commands—that this obedience, influenced by divine love, becomes cheerful in proportion as men become pure in their purpose, and more holy in their conduct, when they will rise above trial and temptation, and find relief in the love of that Saviour, whose followers they profess to be—and that this obedience springs at all times when duty is attended to in a proper manner, from a supreme regard to his high authority.

What has been said, is sufficient to shew us the important privilege and high situation real Christians possess. However low they may be—however poor their circumstances, he says to them, "Ye are my friends." And farther, from what has been said, let it be observed, that if any of us have been at the table of the Lord in sincerity and reality, our after life will prove it. Now, that we may be enabled to keep the command, let us be constrained to acknowledge that our strength lies not in ourselves, but in the Saviour, whose

commands we are bound to obey. Let young Christians be ever ready to testify that their high ambition is to be found among those who are the friends of Jesus. Let those who are advanced in life be constrained by divine grace, to hold fast the profession of their faith, without wavering, to hold fast the beginning of their confidence in Jesus firm unto the end. O! let those who have never been brought to acknowledge themselves the friends of Jesus, consider their danger in that situation, their misery in living and dying the enemies of Jesus; for this table, devoutly approached, will make him their best friend, whereas, if they despise the proffered grace, he will prove their most fatal enemy.

Wherefore, my dear friends, it ought to be our great concern this evening to come to him as our Saviour, before we appear in his presence as our judge. And for our encouragement, be assured, that they who come to him shall in no wise be rejected, though it should be at the eleventh hour. "Him that cometh to me," says he, "I will in no wise cast out." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." He has no pleasure in the ruin of any. God waits to be gracious. He is omnipotent to save—and nothing more from you is required than just to say, on good grounds, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend," and then nothing will be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. O! blessed the people who are in such a case. Yea, blessed are they whose God is the Lord. Where is the person among us now who would not be a Christian, who would not be the friend of Jesus? Are you solicitous to come to him? Hear this one other message which he has sent to you, to invite you to come to him, and to submit to his commands, without delay. And the Lord conduct you forward in a right way to the place of eternal rest, where many eminent saints, and many who, on former occasions, were accustomed to communicate with us, and show forth the death of Christ, now are—and where, that we may all in due time be, God, of his infinite mercy, grant. Amen. The Lord bless his word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

ON THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF STEPHEN;

A FUNERAL DISCOURSE, PREACHED IN NILE STREET CHAPEL, GLASGOW, ON
SUNDAY, 29TH AUGUST, 1839,

By the Rev. GREVILLE EWING,

ON THE DEATH OF WILLIAM M'GAVIN,* AUTHOR OF "THE PROTESTANT," &c.

*"And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."—*ACTS viii. 1, 2.

I HAD expected to spend this Lord's day at a distance from this city; and I had intimated sermon in a village in the neighbourhood of the place where I was residing; but the Lord ordered it otherwise—an event, known to almost all present, having brought me back. And when I had returned to the usual place of stated employment, the passage I have now read presented itself in our ordinary course, as affording me an appropriate text, from which to speak to you on the present occasion. I had proposed, in the ordinary course of exposition, to have comprehended the first thirteen verses of this chapter; but I believe you are sensible, that, in consequence of the death of an esteemed and lamented brother, the second verse will of itself form ample subject for seasonable meditation. On so short notice, and under such feelings as the event unavoidably produces, I pretend to little more than bringing out the fulness of my heart, in the hearing of brethren who are already disposed, I am confident, to sympathize with me. At a future period, if the Lord will, I may have an opportunity of calling your attention again to several important particulars connected with this passage. Meanwhile, consider how extremely suitable to a sudden event of this kind, is the passage on which we are now entering. Certainly, next to the Apostles themselves, Stephen, one of the deacons of the Christian Church, was a preacher of the promises, and a successful one; and one would have expected, that the Lord had raised him up, not only to be eminent, but to be long useful in promoting His cause. But the Lord was pleased to allow him to be suddenly removed; and the next question would naturally be, who

shall be brought forward to fill up the place which he hath left empty? Little could any reader of the narrative have expected, that, not in the church, increased as it was, and daily increasing, but among the persecutors of the Church, and of Stephen himself, should be the person who should most completely follow up his labours, and should preach the faith which he once destroyed: nevertheless, such was the will of Him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom. In the 58th verse of the foregoing chapter, mention had been made, for the first time, of the young man whose name was Saul. The false witnesses, about to follow up their false testimony with their cruel conduct as executioners, laid down their clothes at the young man's feet. The death of Stephen afforded a temporary triumph to the enemies of the Gospel, and was probably viewed by its friends as a trying dispensation; but soon the thing that happened turned to the furtherance of the Gospel. One who was a persecutor was afterwards called to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. We find, in this chapter, that Philip, one of the seven deacons, was quickly honoured of God to imitate Stephen's example. Driven from Jerusalem, he went down to Samaria, and, after great success there, he was sent by an angel to meet an Ethiopian nobleman, whom he made the first instrument of carrying the Gospel to a distant country. Instead of supposing, then, that any obstruction had been permitted to take place in the progress of the Gospel, we are now taught to consider this as a second era in the history of Christianity.

The passage opens with reference again to Saul, "And Saul was consenting to his

* Mr. M'Gavin was cut off by apoplexy on the 25d of August. He was to have preached at Helensburgh on the day in which his funeral discourse was delivered by Mr. Ewing at Glasgow.

death." After the deed was done, it is said that his consent continued. The word rendered "consent," is of stronger import than our translation bears. The amount of the expression is, that Saul approved even of the deed. Notwithstanding of the faith with which he commended his spirit by prayer to Jesus, and the forgiving prayer for his murderers, and the security with which he fell asleep in the midst of their tumult and violence, Saul approved of the slaughter of Stephen. He was even highly consenting, for that may be the literal import of the term, vainly imagining that this first execution of such a bold attempt against Christianity would strike terror into all its friends, and put a stop to its increase.

There commenced, at the same time, a great persecution; "And at that time there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." They had not hitherto proceeded against any of the disciples, to the same extremity as they had done with Stephen; but, having made a beginning, a great persecution immediately followed; and it was not confined, as hitherto, to the apostles, or such distinguished individuals as Stephen, but against the Church at Jerusalem. All, therefore, that were not seized by persecution, were driven from the city, and dispersed abroad, not only to the south of Judea, but the adjoining provinces of Samaria. To these provinces, next after Jerusalem, the Gospel was propagated, as is narrated in the sequel of this chapter. This was according to the direction of the Saviour,—*"When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another."* It was also according to his promise, as given in the first chapter of this book, at the eighth verse, *"But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."* Samaria contained many Jews who were much to blame, falling into such corruptions of worship and gross ignorance, that, in the days of Jesus, they worshipped they knew not what; and yet they appear to have been in the state of the unbelieving Jews of this day. They were beloved for their Father's sake; and, therefore, he

who commissioned his disciples to begin at Jerusalem, sent them, in the next place, to proceed to Samaria; thence their commission was greatly extended, and they were honoured to carry the glad tidings to the uttermost parts of the earth—and this office is reserved for God's people to the present day.

On this occasion an exception was made in the dispersion of the Church of Jerusalem, no doubt under special divine direction,—the exception of the Apostles. They had received commission to make disciples of all men, but it was the will of him who guided them in executing that commission that they should not be among the first who should fulfil that commission by their personal exertions. The Apostles therefore remained. The Lord, although he permitted the Church at Jerusalem to be dispersed, still allowed that in that city it was to be, and that it was to be finally preserved in a state of dispersion, when the unbelieving Jews should experience the wrath of God coming on them to the uttermost; and this was in perfect correspondence with the enlarged commission to carry the gospel to others. Like the circulation of the blood to the extremities, it was to be carried on most effectually by continuing its activity from the heart. The Apostles remained, therefore, for a time at Jerusalem; and although they were among the best known and the most keenly watched, they kept boldly together—they staid in the city to support the cause of Christ, to observe the operations of Providence in respect of that city, and to be ready to go wherever the Lord would call them. And such was the protection afforded them, that although they were all known, and once and again interrupted and thrown into the common prison, and repeatedly threatened, and these threats so far put into execution, that, upon a particular occasion, they were beaten before they were let go by the rulers, yet, in the present case, they appear to have escaped personal injury. Afterwards, one was slain by the sword, and another was preserved by means of a miracle; but at this time, when the Church was dispersed, they remained in the midst of the danger and, like the children in the midst of the fiery furnace, the violence of the wrath of such persecutors was not allowed to touch them.

The history proceeds to the case of Stephen. He was like us in many things as to the circumstances of his death, and not unlike us as to the circumstances of his burial; for although he had been put to death in a manner probably intended to prevent even an attempt to bury him, he was treated with honour, and without any violation of the rites of sepulchre. "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him." In attending to this part of the history, we are naturally led to consider why was the selection made of the character of the company who attended this funeral—why was the funeral attended by devout men? A funeral is not a thing peculiar to the service of God. We were reading this very morning, in one of the chapters we read, a celebrated expression of our Saviour, "Let the dead bury their dead." Death followed sin; and they who are in sin are called to attend to the duty of burying the dead, as well as those who are saved from sin; and when God gave his command, he gave, in that instance, a command immediately to be followed. It was not even the consideration of burying a near, and perhaps a very dear friend, that could be sent as an excuse for declining or even delaying to obey the command. "Follow thou me," says he, "and let the dead bury their dead;"—not that Jesus ever teaches his followers to disregard any of the duties of life, far less duties of a nature humbling to ourselves, trying to our feelings, or of a nature calculated to do honour to the departed, or to express a reverence for that sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return;" but such is the importance of immediate service—such is the reverence due to clearly and positively expressed authority, that, without question, without delay, from a consciousness that he who gives the order is acquainted with all the circumstances of him to whom he gives it, it is our bounden duty, and it is recorded as an example for us in every similar instance, to give cordial, and ready, and implicit obedience. We are not to question the command, far less to presume to give any excuse for not instantly obeying it.

The burial of the dead was also an occasion in which men of all characters have been in the habit of meeting together; that they should be devout men was, therefore, not necessary to the occasion. We read, in the book of Genesis, that

Ishmael attended with Isaac in the burying of Abraham, and that Esau and Jacob were both at the burial of Isaac; and, when the history comes down to the burial of Jacob, we are told that Joseph was attended in burying his father, not only by his brethren and his father's house, but by the servants of Pharaoh, and the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt; and there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great company. When, therefore, it is said, that "devout men carried Stephen to his burial," the reason is, that it was a dangerous service, a service which none but devout men would have ventured to perform. Natural affection would have been intimidated. There was no leisure to invite a company, and no necessity or propriety in endeavouring to collect the multitude for the protection of those whose wisdom and duty it was to carry him to the grave. But charity, which is the bond of brotherly loving-kindness, operated, and they could not be prevented from doing honour to the manes of one who had submitted to shame and death for the name of the Lord Jesus; and, therefore, be the danger what it might, "devout men carried Stephen to his burial." The expression is a particular one. The literal expression is, they gathered him up! It is an expression sometimes applied to the gathering of corn in the fields, and it is also applied to the burying of the dead, and the preparation of the body, in order to be deposited in the grave. In this sense, it is most appropriate here. Stephen had been suddenly and violently put to death; but the Lord's time was come, and he might be regarded as coming home, like a shock of corn in its season, fully ripe, and the devout men were fain to gather up his battered remains, and compose them for funeral, as their circumstances would allow.

It was one testimony of their love to him, and of their sense of his value, that, when they had carried him to his burial, they "made great lamentation over him." The reason of the selection here, then, was the danger. The execution was a lawless and tumultuous one; the burial, therefore, a service of danger; for no animosity is so great as that which is undeserved. This service was publicly and boldly performed, and great lamentation was made for Stephen. We are hardly capable of understanding the import of the expression,

"great lamentation." Travellers in eastern countries have, in all ages, expressed their surprise, and even agitation, when they first listened to eastern lamentations over the dead. These lamentations are loud and long, and heard at a distance. The assembled friends make a noise that is heard by all the neighbourhood; and, when the company have approached the place where the dead are to be laid, their cry of lamentation is heard at a very great distance. It was so great, and heard at such a distance, in the case of the burial of Jacob, recorded in the last chapter of Genesis, that the Canaanites, who appear not to have come near, but to have left them, out of respect to attend to the duty which had brought them together, heard them, and gave a name to the place expressive of "the grievous mourning to the Egyptians." Thus the brethren of Stephen showed their attachment to him when they attended his remains, and carried them forth, and their loud lamentation expressed their sense of the value of him who had been treated in so unworthy a manner. It is said, in the 50th chapter of Genesis, that the lamentation for Jacob was "a great and very sore lamentation," and here it is called, a "great lamentation." This is surely a vindication of the feeling of Christians, when they have a due sense of the loss they have sustained as to the present life, and when they much value while they continue remaining behind such as are called away before them. It is Christian example. It is said to have been a great lamentation, but it was not an extravagant one. It was not like the sighing of those who have no hope. The heathen had been in the habit of not merely lamenting loud and long, but acting with violence, which was not only done in despair, but in rebellion against the disposers of the events, whoever they might imagine them to be, at which such lamentation was occasioned. Paul says, "I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope, but rather believing, that as Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." He gives us this information for our own and each other's comfort on trying occasions of this kind. "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and

edify one another even as also ye do." It is not unlawful, therefore; it is consistent with resignation and gratitude to give vent to our feelings when the Lord is pleased to try us by heavy bereavements. It was thus in the case of Job. We are told that he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Yet he felt the dispensation, and expressed his sense of it; and this is a natural feeling of brotherly love, honourable to the dead, and which may, through the blessing of God, prove very salutary to mourning survivors.

We have now arrived at that part of the subject which I have been led to consider as a text for the day.

I refer at present to the sudden demise of our honoured and beloved brother, William McGavin, who was taken away in the midst of usefulness, in the space of an hour or two, although not by the complaint which so much prevails in the city at present. He was attacked by a disease which comes on quick, and is soon terminated and experienced very little personal suffering. He was taken away by the hand of God, not by the hand of man, far less by the violence of persecution. Although he was not one whom all speak well of—although he was not permitted to avow his sentiments without contradiction, and without causing resentment on the part of those who felt themselves condemned by his peculiar sentiments; yet it may be justly said, that he died honoured by all ranks, and by every variety of character. He was distinguished equally in the church and in the world. He was endowed with very superior talent. These he had at one period not only exercised but improved in the work of communicating instruction to the young. Afterwards, he exemplified his talents and acquirements in extensive business concerns, and foreign mercantile transactions, and in these last he continued to the end of his life. It is not for me to describe his eminence as a man of business. The circumstance to which our attention is directed is, that, though much engaged in secular business, he was, from first to last, remarkably devoted to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. He appears to me to have furnished an excellent example of the benefits of christian instruction—of the advantage of being descended from christian parents

—and of having received an early education, which might strictly be called being brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. These benefits were the consequence, not of verbal instruction merely, far less of the mere communication of the form of sound words, but of an illustration of vital Christianity aided by example, and accompanied with the power of God. I never knew one whose views were more completely equal to the light of the day in which he lived, as to spiritual things, and which, at the same time, manifested his early profiting by the knowledge and labours of those who had gone before him. As might be expected, in the case of men much employed in religious inquiries, his creed and christian fellowship underwent some change. He first belonged to the Secession Church, and that branch of it called the Anti-burghers. The pastor under whose ministry he continued for some time, in this city, was a man of eminence, and Mr. M'Gavin was one of those who entered into his views, and went along with him, when a change took place from the Presbyterian to the Independent form of church government, which the late Mr. Ramsay was connected with in this city. And during the time that he belonged to that recently formed church, he was called to attend with him in his pastoral charge, and he has ever since been honoured by those who knew him, among whom I beg leave to include myself, as a worthy and able minister of the New Testament. As such, he never preached but occasionally, and for a friend; and as such, he was justly esteemed by those who knew his labours, and could appreciate their excellence. In process of time, he became a member of this church. When he applied to us for admission, he expressly said, he had no objection to the pastor whose colleague he had been, or to remaining in fellowship with him. As the members of that society were diminished to a small number, he thought he had ceased to answer the purposes of a public institution, such as he imagined a church to be. On that account alone did he make the change, and although it led to a separation between him and his former associates, it was not a separation as to personal friendship. He was remarkably attached to that church. To the end of his life, he expressed an unwearied affection to the head of the

family, to his widow after his death, and the children who survived him. As to his conduct since he came into fellowship with this church, I believe all the members are disposed to bear testimony to its excellence. While he was a blessing to the churches in our fellowship at large—while he was devoted to the cause of Christ in all christian denominations—while he was especially zealous and able in advocating the cause of protestantism and religious liberty—he was at the same time a most consistent and exemplary and humble member of the community to which he belonged. I have already said, that I regarded him as an able and worthy minister of the New Testament. I was often disposed, and thought all the members would be equally disposed, to receive, and acknowledge, and request his assistance and his labours. But while he was himself deeply sensible of the importance of devoting one's self to the work of the ministry, and while he was uncommonly attentive to pursue things sacred, he uniformly declined undertaking so much as a share of the pastoral office. The only office he enjoyed in the church, was that of being one of the deacons. Though he avoided the regular and constant exercises of the pulpit, yet he was eminently esteemed when on any occasion he appeared in that capacity. He was ever ready to preach in the churches in the country, in villages, and in school-rooms, or wherever, indeed, an opportunity offered. He was by no means to be regarded as one whose sermons were of an extemporaneous nature. They were so concise and accurate, and so appropriately expressed, as to be peculiarly instructive and striking to the best informed Christians, while they were so plain and pointed, as through the blessing of God to be adapted to quicken the attention and impress the hearts of those to whom the whole subject might be comparatively unknown. He was well fitted for instructing the young; and this appeared not only in his public addresses, but also in his writings; for he was no less distinguished as an author than as a man of business—a Christian in fellowship—an office-bearer in the church—and a preacher of the gospel in the region round about us. His celebrity as a writer has been noted in some of the newspapers as being chiefly confined to controversy. It was

remarkable in that respect; but that was by no means the only department in which he shone. Some of his earliest writings are among his happiest, and rank equally so with those of his more advanced life. He wrote in some of his first publications, on subjects suited to gain the attention of the young. He admirably described family scenes, the education which a mother was supposed to give to her children, and the success that attended her exertions. His attention was next called to the importance of itinerant preaching. He wrote the tract called "Journey to the Highlands," and indeed we may say of some of his writings, that, like *Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*, they will survive our day, and be heard of in subsequent ages. You are familiar with his *Rural Blessings, Profit and Loss, The True Riches, &c.* I need not attempt to go over them, and it is unnecessary, for you know them. Many of his writings, from his retired disposition, have never been brought forward as they ought. I trust that time will call for a collection of his works, and a greater publicity of them, and that thus, for the time to come, his usefulness will be extended as well as continued. I shall not enter on a formal description of his character. I have neither had time nor composure of mind to form my thoughts upon it; and, indeed, I feel the importance of the subject too fully to be able to speak even with ordinary facility at present. If the Lord will, I may have another opportunity afterwards. I can only say for myself, that, while he was younger than me in years, and, of course, had neither been so long nor so extensively engaged in the labours of the ministry, yet for many years I have not merely regarded him as a valuable preacher, but have been in the habit of looking up to him with reverence and

affection as a father, and a counsellor, to whom I feel deeply indebted, and by whose countenance, forbearance, and faithfulness, I have felt my mind supported. And perhaps there may be only one or two other cases to which I can say I as directly ascribe my being, under God, sustained in the work of the ministry to the present day, as to his instrumentality. Under these circumstances, you may easily conceive my bereavement; but I dare not attempt to explain myself more particularly. I hold in my hand a few lines, written by our loved and esteemed brother, Ralph Wardlaw, written at Dunoon, and handed me last night; and though a hasty effusion, I am sure he will not quarrel with me for reading it. [Here Mr. Ewing read Dr. Wardlaw's letter, commendatory of Mr. M'Gavin, which we may perhaps yet present to our readers, observing, that it showed that Dr. Wardlaw felt and expressed, better than Mr. Ewing was now able to do their sense of the value of the deceased.] The Rev. Mr. Ewing concluded with remarking, that there might be some even in this assembly, who, hearing of Mr. M'Gavin's death, might say,—Oh, let him go; the world can do very well without him. There may be some even triumphing in his demise. There may be some who have been opposed to his views, not so much from conscientious principles, as from party spirit; but if there be any such, to them I would say,—The mercy of God is free to you; the grace of God is sufficient for you; so that he can make you new creatures, cause you to be added to the church, as subjects of divine grace, and bring you, as he did Saul of Tarsus, to preach the faith which he once despised and rejected. May the Lord give to every sinner present repentance; and to his name be the praise.—Amen.

* * * Want of room obliges us to postpone, to a subsequent number, the conclusion of the Rev. Mr. Harvey's Sermon. The hint by a member of St. Stephens will be attended to.

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SATURDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 1832.

No. 25.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN PAUL, St. Cuthberts,
Edinburgh.

Price 2d.

THE REIGN OF THE LORD A SOURCE OF CONSOLATION;

A FUNERAL SERMON, PREACHED IN SOUTH LEITH CHURCH, ON SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1832,

By the Rev. JOHN PAUL,

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF ST. CUTHBERTS, EDINBURGH, ON THE DEATH OF

THE LATE JAMES ROBERTSON, D.D.*

“And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”—REV. xix. 6.

THE word here rendered “Alleluia,” itself a Hebrew term, is a comprehensive expression of praise, and might be translated, “Praise ye the Lord.” In the connexion in which it stands in this text, we find it made use of on the most befitting of all occasions, when, according to the visions of St. John, God had dealt out a righteous distribution upon his enemies, and had given ground for all his servants to rejoice, not certainly that they were punished, but because that, through their punishment, were promoted the glory and the government of infinite excellence. The sentiment expressed is one which will find a counterpart in every devout mind; and, whether uttered by the Church below or the Church triumphant, it is still a matter of solemn thanksgiving that God reigneth

over all—that he is an interested spectator of the affairs of this world, and that, in the exercise of his almightiness, he controls, and superintends, and takes account of, whatsoever comes to pass.

Without this conviction, indeed, of the dominion of God, our belief in *his existence* could have but *little* influence upon our conduct; for a power that interfered not with the matters of *this life*—that looked upon the good and the evil of it impassive and unmoved—that, instead of *mingling* with its transactions, beheld all its vicissitudes without interest and without emotion—a *Divine Being* that never did either appear or speak to the world—that maintained no intercourse with the creatures whom he had formed—that lived abstracted in the contemplation of

* Dr. Robertson commenced his public career in 1781, as assistant to Dr. Cross, then minister of the Tron Church, Glasgow. Had the wishes of the congregation been attended to, he would have been ordained successor to Dr. Cross; but the magistrates of Glasgow had not then broken in upon the custom, of only appointing clergymen ordained to churches in the country or in towns, to supply the city churches, and their suit was denied. In 1783, he was ordained assistant to the Rev. Mr. Thomson of St. Ninians and in 1787, was appointed to the church of Gargunnoch. In December, 1804, he was, with general approbation, translated to the second charge of South Leith. While the church of South Leith was undergoing certain repairs, Dr. Robertson had gone to reside for some time in the neighbourhood of Stirling. A few weeks ago, he preached his last sermon at his former parish, Gargunnoch, in his usual health and spirits. The people of this parish, in which he had laboured for seventeen years, were always warmly attached to him; and when they heard of his death, they expressed an earnest wish, that his remains might be interred in their cemetery. On the day on which he was attacked by cholera, he had engaged to preach at Kippen, and had spent the greater part of Thursday in preparing a discourse on that text,—“Ye thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” His remains were interred in the churchyard of Logie. Two members of his congregation, one of the ministers of Stirling, and an only son, were all that followed to the grave, the remains of him, whose flock, consisting of thousands, would have felt honoured in being permitted to pay to him that last tribute of respect.

his perfections, and, instead of commencing happiness, set himself only to enjoy it—a God like this would be to us a God at once unamiable and uninteresting, toward whom we could cherish no movements either of esteem or affection. Neither guiding us to what was right, nor keeping us from what was wrong, nor in any measure observing our conduct, we would have no motive to maintain his worship; no reason to fear his displeasure; no inducement, either to admire his excellence, or to supplicate his protection: he would be nothing to us, because we were nothing to him.

This, however, our text declares, is not the being with whom we have to do. It sets our God before us as reigning over all; and, in the affecting circumstances in which you this day are placed, it may be, with the divine blessing, profitable for our instruction in righteousness, that we set forth, and do apply, several separate illustrations of this consolatory truth.

1. Give praise for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth: he reigneth through the exercise of his providence.

When we speak of the providence of God, we speak of the exercise of his perfections, of his power, and wisdom, and goodness, *co-operating* for the direction of the universe. We say that he is the *Great Being* on whom the frame of all things depends; that he continually preserves all things, and every instant imparts a new being to all things; and that were he for one moment to stop his agency, and leave them to subsist of themselves, they would instantly lose their forms of existence, and vanish into that state out of which they were originally fashioned. We say that he is every-where present, and superintends whatever happens here below; that all things are the result, not of unmeaning chance, or relentless fate, but of the purpose and pleasure of God; that every thing in the greater world of nature, and the lesser world of man—that every motion in the material scene which he pervades, and every thought in the intellectual to which he is united—are to be accounted for by him; and that even things which to us seem fortuitous, puzzling as they may be to our reason, and counter as they may run to our desires, are solely the effects of his wisdom, and his will. We say that all dispensations, whether great or small, prosperous or adverse, are

entirely to be explained on the supposition of the present as an arrangement of things of which we are enjoined to confide in the *equity of the end*, though neither our diligence nor sagacity can always discover the *fairness of the means*. We say that he exercises a *moral government* over his *rational* creation; that angels and arch-angels fulfil his pleasure; that the spirits of darkness are under his control, and that we ourselves are, in an especial manner, the subjects of his administration; that by him our *very thoughts* are observed; the circumstances of our condition arranged, and watched, as it were, with the vigilance of individual attention. We say, in short, that the world, instead of being a kingdom deprived of its head, abandoned to be the victim of the lawless passions of its inhabitants, and to suffer all the vicissitudes of degradation and advancement, is under the direction of Him to whom not merely its interests are *known*, but by whom they are also *secured*; that, instead of being a family, amongst the members of which the seeds of discord are so copiously scattered as to make it rise up against itself, and, being unable to stand, to have an end, that it is under the management of a Father whose authority is never felt, but for the advantage of his children, and who consolidates, by the exercise of kindness upon his part, the ties of love upon theirs. And we say, over and above this, that his providence is just as *particular* as it is *certain*; that, so far from being confined to life in the *gross*, it extends over its *minutest* parts—from the *highest* to the *very least* and *lowest* of the gradations of being. There is not a plant that adorns the field—there is not an insect that creeps upon the earth—there is not a creature that flies through the air—that feels not its daily operation; for it is God who clothes the lilies of the fields—it is God who feeds the ravens when they cry—it is God whose wisdom contrives, and whose goodness doth satisfy the desire of every thing that lives.

It is interesting to trace the workings of a pious character, that has taken much of its form, and that is advancing toward its maturity, under the strong operation of this consolatory truth. Even in the *ordinary* course of events, when others see things going on only as they did since the beginning of the world, he discerns an Intelligent Reality, silently, but *unobscuredly*.

supporting an infinite charge of dependent beings, and not the less every-where present, hidden though his glory be beneath the curtains of the material world. Amid the uncertainty of surrounding events, amid the fluctuation of his hopes and fears, he feels that he need not be afraid; for this providence, as the providence of one *incomprehensibly excellent in all perfection*, has in it every quality which can recommend and endear it—every quality which can brighten even the *darkest* appearances—every thing which tends not only to secure the *submission*, but also to engage the *affections* of the heart. In this state of his *infant* being, where he is tutoring for a more *perfect* one, he cannot obtain that view of the series of God's actions, and of the relations which they mutually bear to each other, by which alone he can judge of the particular dispensations of his providence; but, notwithstanding of this, he is yet assured of this providence, that it can be neither erroneous nor unjust, and that they who blame it *most*, understand it *least*. Frequently, indeed, it is at variance with his views. It surprises, and often gives a shock to his expectations; but then, does he not know that it is *just*—that it is not only well intended, but rightly directed, and is marked, notwithstanding all its untoward appearances, by perfect rectitude and perfect purity? Instead of fearing that, amid the diversity of interests that exists, his may be overlooked, or feeling as if he could be lost, amid those infinite varieties of life with which this earth has been animated, is he not certain that this providence is *universal*—that it has to do with whatever can possibly be an object of it—that it extends to every action of every man, and to every thought of every breast—that it reaches not merely to *one* class, but to *every* class, and not merely to *one period* of their lives, but to all the periods, from the first commencement of their being in the womb, throughout all the stages of their after life. If at any time through the impatience of the flesh, he do indulge the bitterness of discontent at God's dealings toward him, does he not check himself by the thought, that whatever His providence has determined *will come to pass*; and that it is not more *daring impiety* than foolish infatuation, to *murmur at His proceedings*, whose counsel *we stand sure*, and who will fulfil all his pleasure? And is not this feeling of

reverence for his providence mingled and tempered within his breast by a feeling of *love*? In despite of the darkness that may be allowed to settle upon the aspect of its affairs, is he not persuaded that its object is in every case a *benevolent* one? Does he not believe that the great design of it is his spiritual good; and is he not sure, and does he not argue, that, like the hurricane in the natural world, which, though it desolate the earth, yet purifies the air, the forms of affliction which it occasionally assumes are intended to produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness; and that God does never more resplendently shine forth as *his* God, than in the *furnace*, and from amid the *fires* of tribulation? Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the fruit of her womb? Yes, she may forget; yet does he know that the Lord will not forget him. And with these views of that providence, of which he ever is the object, he can look without distrust and without dissatisfaction, over all the periods of his being. He can look back upon the time past, and, amid trials and experiences, over whose designs there were thrown at the time the shades of an unfathomable darkness, discover himself to have been under the direction of infinite goodness. He can look upon the present, and enjoy the plenitude of the passing moment, because he knows by whom every moment, and all the events of every moment, are dealt out to him; and upon the faith which he reposes on this providence, is he willing to make the great experiment of futurity—ready to go wherever he will transmit him, satisfied that *every-where*, in height and depth, in time and eternity, He will be his portion for ever.

Well therefore, may we give thanks and sing praises unto God. In the belief of a providence like this, are to be found innumerable, unspeakable, everlasting consolations. In that frame of mind which looks up to a wisdom that never errs, and a goodness that is never weary of doing good—to a power that is armed for our protection, and a faithfulness that is pledged for our security—no dispensations will alarm, no fears will perplex—neither the malice of devils, nor the injustice of men, nor any sort of enemy, will be able to overpower him. The heart reposing on it with confidence, and casting forth upon it all its cares, is enabled not only to acquiesce in, but even to adore all

the occurrences it brings about, however unkind they may seem, and however distasteful they may be felt. Believing that, though its agency be mysterious, it is yet the mystery of an omnipresent benevolence, he not only approves of it in his judgment, but even becomes reconciled to it in his affections, and approaches unto God, even under its severest forms, not with the fear of a slave—not with the cautious suspicion of a stranger—but with the love of a child toward its parent—with the confidence and chastened boldness of a son toward a father, whom he knows to be at once able to supply his wants, and tenderly affected toward him. Happy, indeed, is he who has been honoured to make the attainment of this precious faith!—a faith which tranquilizes the breast under even the sorest pressures of affliction, and which, spreading itself like oil over the troubled sea of thought, creates and consolidates that state of mind, under the influence of which he is excited to exult and to exclaim, with the Psalmist—“Oh! clap your hands, all ye people! Shout unto God with the voice of triumph. Say, among the nations, that the Lord reigneth.”

2. “Give praise; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” He reigneth through the mediation of his Son.

The mediation of the Son of God is the grand characteristic by which, as a religion, Christianity is distinguished; and besides being most distinctly laid down in the Scriptures, it is a presumption which, as a fact, receives no inconsiderable countenance from the very nature of the thing. The great feature in the idea of mediation, is that of *instrumentality*; and if, in the natural world, the government of the Supreme Being should give evidence of this, it is far from being incredible, that his spiritual government should manifest the same. As one man offers himself surety for another, and, placing to his own account the responsibility of his claims, redeems him from his debt, so, in the same way, though in an infinitely higher degree, did Christ, out of his great love and unpurchased bounty, give himself for us, that He might redeem us, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the price of his precious blood. Hence it is, we read that “He suffered for us, the just for the unjust”—that “He was once offered, to bear the sins of many”—that “He humbled himself, and became

obedient to death, even the death of the cross.”

Now, in order that we may judge with correctness of that government, which, through His agency, God doth exercise, it is necessary that we recollect the parts of which his mediation is made up. In appointing the Son to act as mediator between himself and us, God did ordain certain offices for him to execute, and certain characters for him to assume ere the purposes of his mediation could be accomplished. He commissioned him as a *teacher* to instruct us in the knowledge, and to reveal to us the will of God—to republish that law of nature which the fall had obscured—to dispel those apprehensions of futurity which our ignorance and guilt had engendered—to exhort us, in anticipation of a judgment to come, to live soberly, and righteously, and godly—and to revive and to animate our hopes with the assurance of a blessed immortality. He gave him up as a *sacrifice* to make atonement for our guilt as well as to dispel our ignorance—to rescue us from merited punishment, by offering a satisfaction to violated justice—to regain that favour, the title to which we had forfeited—and to satisfy that law, to the penalties of which we lay exposed—to appease by his sufferings and by his death the wrath we had provoked—and to recover, by his righteous obedience, the moral glory and the happy state we had lost. He has established him as a *lawgiver* to subdue our stubborn wills, and to bring them into his holy captivity; to make them obedient in word and deed; to fashion our lives after the rules he lays down; and to mould our hearts to the sway which it is given him to exercise. He has revealed him as an *advocate*, as our ever successful *intercessor* within the veil, pleading for the pardon of our sins, for the supply of our wants, for the strengthening of our faith, that he would be pleased to extend his mercy for the forgiveness of our great guilt, and vouchsafe grace and assistance for the day of sorrow and of trial. And, finally, he has exhibited him as a model for us to admire, a character for us to resemble, a pattern which we are called upon industriously to copy, that upon the table of our hearts we may inscribe those *graces*, and those *affections*, and those *virtues*, which animated and which distinguished *his*; and that, striving to walk even as he did walk, we may, by the zeal

with which we seek to imitate him, and the prayers we put forth that we may imitate him with success, endeavour to be in all our conversation and in all our practice, the images and the representatives of what he was during all the days of his earthly manifestation.

And from this view of the mediation of Jesus Christ, slight and superficial though it be, it must be evident that the government which the Divine Being doth maintain by means of it, is a government which is adapted to all the varieties of its subjects. What are all the means of grace which we receive—what are they but just so many ways in which this government takes effect? What is the removal of our ignorance—what is the forgiveness of our sins—what is the subjection of our rebellious wills, and the improvement of our own characters in excellence and perfection—what are those spiritual changes, when they are effected and brought about upon us, but each a separate field in which its influence has been displayed. In the spiritual and moral history of a man who has been born again, we may find many illustrations of this great truth, and trace the operation of this government in many different forms. We see it, for instance, in the pardon which such a man has experienced of sin; for when that righteousness is imputed to him which confers a *title* to Heaven, and those good and holy dispositions are inspired within him which will *qualify* him for its enjoyments, is not this God reigning through him whom he sent to be a sin-offering for us, whom he delivered up to the cross on *our* account, by whose death he declared that his anger was appeased, and of whose atonement he hath given the highest testimony of his acceptance? Do we not see it in the subjection and sanctification of such a man's heart; for when his will is renewed, when the obduracy of the natural man is melted down, when, from being the slave of sin, he turns the servant of the most high God, and to have it as his meat and drink always to be about his father's business, is not this God reigning through him whom he hath appointed to be a *leader* and a *commander* to his people, and to sit enthroned in their affections as his lawyer and his king? Do we not see it in the new wishes which such a man has for the attainment of excellence, in the attempts which he makes to press onwards

to perfection, in the holy ambition with which his spirit becomes fired to abound more and more in the practical habits of a good life, and the virtues of the christian character; for whenever these are observed to be the qualities that *predominate* in his mind, they are entirely to be ascribed to the agency of the Almighty reigning over his affections through Him who has left his people an example that they should follow his steps, and who has commanded them to exhibit the mind which he displayed. May we not see it, in short, in every spiritual blessing which we receive; for every good and every perfect gift which cometh down from above, cometh down for *his* sake and through *his* means, who has now entered into heaven itself to appear as our intercessor in the presence of God.

Under this government of the Omnipotent, therefore, it doth well become his people to sing forth their hallelujahs; for, as under his reign, through the exercise of his providence, they receive what belongs to this life; so under his reign, through the mediation of his Son, they receive what belongs to the life which is to come. Under it they have every security they could desire, every blessing which they need, every thing to quell their guilty fears, and to revive their dying hopes. Given into the hands of him whom the Father loves, to whom all power has been committed, and by whose direction all things are determined, they can want no blessing, they need have no fear: he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye. It becomes, therefore, under a reign so glorious, in circumstances so happy—it becomes them to cherish the disposition, to imbibe the spirit, to maintain the character of *joyful* subjects, and though they are not to expect an exemption from the *common* ills of life, or ever in any circumstances to imagine that no trials or temptations can befall them, yet they have *this* for their comfort and encouragement, that the government which is exercised over them, is exercised through one who has every quality to endear it; who *knows* all things, and cannot be ignorant of their wants; who is able to do whatever is really for their happiness, and who will withhold from them no good thing. Because of this, therefore, their hearts may be glad.

3. Give praise, for the Lord God omni-

potent reigneth : He reigneth through the means of grace, and the ordinances of his appointment.

These means and ordinances are every way suited to the circumstances in which we do feel ourselves to be placed, and possess in their very nature the most powerful efficacy for making a successful application of the gospel to the understandings and affections of men. By the kind providence which he daily exercises over us in giving us, with a *liberal* hand, all things to enjoy, God shows the regard which he has to us in respect of the wants which pertain unto life ; but in the instruments of grace which he hath put into our hands, and the opportunities of instruction with which he hath furnished us, and the sensible signs and positive rites he hath instituted in his Church, he shows the benevolent vigilance with which he doth watch over us in what pertains unto godliness. He has accommodated himself to that state of weakness and destitution into which we have been brought by sin. Instead of leaving us comfortless, he has come unto us. He has enjoined certain ordinances and positive appointments suited to our infirmities, and every way adapted to the weakness of minds that cannot *immediately* relish the more sublime and spiritual parts of religion ; and he has given to all of us a full and a free access to those channels of his grace by which he doth impressively administer to us the lessons of eternal life, and is pleased to communicate the benefits of redemption. How simple, and artless, and unencumbered are those rites for promoting that internal piety, and those heavenly dispositions of which they are designed to be the helps. There is the ordinance of *Preaching*, by which, under the suitable form of a human voice, the Almighty addresses himself to men, and enforces with the most persuasive admonition the imperious interests of that cause which his servant is commissioned and pledged to advocate. And there is the ordinance of *Prayer*, that is not more imperative in the obligation than it is successful in the result, in which we are invited to express our necessities and petitions to God ; and he has promised, even while we are yet speaking, that he will hear. And there is the ordinance of the *Sabbath*, which commemorates our new creation to the hope of eternal life, on which, from the rising to the setting sun, professing Chris-

tians do pay to their Maker the public expression of their homage and adoration ; on which the believer seeks more entirely to live under the powers of the world to come ; and the man who idolizes this one in his affections, and exerts his most vigorous activities in its pursuits, has the lesson most solemnly brought home to him, that instead of being made for schemes of only a transient interest, or formed for the revel of mere life and sensation, he has a much *higher* concern to look after, and that his body is but the frame-work of a substance noble as to its quality, and eternal as to its duration. And there is the ordinance of *Baptism*, by which we representatively take the vows of God upon us, and are admitted to the fellowship of his Church. And there is the ordinance of the *Supper*, by which we declare *our continuance* in that Church, maintain our communion with Christ, the head, and with all the members of his spiritual body.

It is true, indeed, that God *might* reveal all the essential truths of the gospel by a direct and immediate process to any man—that inward devotion might be excited and expressed without the agency of outward acts—that did it but seem good in his sight, he could produce the change which is *necessary* to be produced upon our hearts and affections without the intervention of means—that, in point of fact, in *some* cases, he does so, and by a mere act of his power of grace, unconnected with any visible agent, brings about the effect which he designs to accomplish. But though this *might* be the case, and sometimes is the case we have no warrant for expecting that it ever *will* be the case. Such a mode of procedure forms no part of his *ordinary* providence, in the course of which the gospel takes effect upon the consciences of men through the dispensation of the word, sacraments, and prayer, and the history of all experimental religion goes to prove that the soul must be instructed and alarmed, and have promises, and persuasions, and invitations addressed to it, ere ever the Spirit of life from God will enter into it, and that, notwithstanding all the deviations that may be sometimes allowed, we have no ground for anticipating that his saving impressions will descend upon us, except in the *use* and through the *channels* of the appointed means of grace.

Now, my brethren, if we reflect on the

object which those ordinances have directly in view, on the preparation which is necessary for their right observance, and upon that spiritual good which they actually do produce, in respect both of the instruction they communicate, and the impression which they make in the case of all who sincerely observe them, we may have some conception of that reign or influence which, through these means, the Almighty doth exercise.

The great design which every man, whose conscience is enlightened, has in observing these ordinances, is, that the glory of God may be promoted, the honour and obedience being rendered which are due to him, as his Father and Lord; that he may receive the tokens of his acceptance when, seeking to draw near to him in the way he has appointed, he lays his burnt-offerings on his altar, and hopes that, in conformity with his gracious promise, God may communicate a blessing out of Zion, and satisfy him with the goodness of his house. And when we consider with what success the dispensation of his ordinances is accompanied, that in all places where he doth record his name, he comes to his people, and doth bless them; that, before all who do sincerely approach to him, he makes to pass some measure of the magnificence of his glory; that he gives to them a sensible experience of their acceptance with him, and makes the emanations of his love to beam upon them, and causes them to feel his presence as the delight and the energy of their souls in all their acts of devotion—when, I say, we consider these effects, we may see how his throne comes to be established within many hearts; how, through these means, though he does neither amuse their senses, nor set any object of worship *visibly* before them, he yet directs their minds, and forms their character, and influences their hearts, and puts more gladness within them than when their corn, and their wine, and their prosperity did most abound.

And there is a preparation necessary ere the means of grace can be blessed to us. This preparation consists in guarding against any carnal boldness when we make an approach to the God of ordinances, in having a special reference to him as the author of the ordinance we observe; in showing a practical sense of his authority over us in the respect which we pay to it;

and in considering him in Christ as the immediate object of the worship we perform. It consists in remembering that God will be sanctified of all who draw nigh to him—in setting apart the best seasons for the exercises of meditation, and heart-communing, and prayer, which may bring on an appropriate frame of mind for the solemn service we have in view—in so improving the intimations of providence that do occur, as that they may promote within us the growth of gracious dispositions—and in cultivating those pious thoughts which, when rooted by faith, expanded by contemplation, and cherished by repeated acts of reflection, will prepare us after the preparation of the sanctuary, and prevent these ordinances, instead of influencing our conduct, from only aggravating our responsibility. And wherever this preparation is made, as it unquestionably is made more or less by all who are desirous of approaching to God with acceptance—wherever the dispositions are imbibed, and the temper is sought after, and the graces are cherished which it presupposes and implies—wherever there is the same pious determination that we call ourselves by God's name, and subscribe with our own hands that we are the Lord's, and the same earnest aspiration, as in the 84th psalm was exhibited by David, who represents himself as "*panting*," and "*longing*," and "*thirsting*" after the ordinances of God—in all these cases, we may trace the effects of that government which God doth exercise through the means of grace, and the wholesome influence which, through their institution, he doth wield over the habits and sentiments, the private affections and spiritual feelings of human beings.

And we must not forget the actual reception which is made of those ordinances by believers themselves, and the great ends which they are honoured to accomplish upon all. How often does God speak to the conscience in the preaching of his word; successfully administer the mystery of his grace by the instrumentality of a fellow-sinner; edify and refresh the souls of his own people, furnishing them with new encouragement to duty, with fresh strength under trial, and with more powerful motives to progress in the divine life; and so arrest the *worldling*, immersed in the *present* life and incredulous of *another*, as to make him feel that there

is a futurity awaiting him, and that it shall bear a *ratification* relation to this one. To what multitudes doth he overrule for edification the observance of the *Lord's day*, render that period of holy rest conducive not more to their temporal interests than to their eternal welfare, and convince these, even by the experience of the heart, that though he has forbid them the unnecessary pursuit of their ordinary avocations, and commanded them to regard it as binding upon them and to be kept holy to himself, that it is yet that day on which he brings to pass the designs of his Son respecting them, on which he vouchsafes an especial presence in the courts of his sanctuary, and is peculiarly gracious to the supplications and praises which proceed from their houses and their hearts! What a superlative efficacy hath he shown to be attached to earnest prayer and frequent intercession, making his bounty in bestowing to correspond with the eagerness with which they do implore, and causing them to experience that delightful exercise not so much their indispensable duty as their interest, their privilege, their delight, their *recreation*! And are not all of you who have ever been sincere in devoting yourselves to him at his *holy table* evidences of the position we are endeavouring to illustrate? For was not God reigning over you as you did approach his altar and commemorate that death by which death itself is overcome? Did not he make himself known to you in the breaking of bread? Have you not found that it is good for you to draw near to him in the ordinance of the supper? Did you not feel the living influences of his Spirit to be upon you as you did think of his loving-kindness in the midst of his temple? And have not many of you often experienced that this ordinance is indeed a mean for enlivening all your graces, for strengthening your convictions of the evil of sin, for fortifying your holy purposes against it, for comforting you amid the trials of life, increasing your longing after the presence of your Redeemer, and enlarging within you that *divine love* toward him, your brethren, and all mankind, which is the first beginning or image of heaven, and the want of which so often mars the profit and the pleasure of our solemn feasts, turns into bitterness the waters of the sanctuary, and the cup of salvation into a cup of wrath?

4. Give praise, for the Lord God omni-

potent reigneth. He reigneth through the agency of affliction.

In one sense, indeed, this is but another form of his reign through the exercise of his providence, but in our present circumstances it deserves to be made a separate head of discourse. It is a form of the divine government that is not less efficacious than those we have already mentioned. Indeed, of all the instruments which the Almighty doth employ either in *first awakening* the mind to the importance of spiritual things, or in promoting the *advancement* of those who have been *already* converted, that of affliction is perhaps the most frequent and successful. Sometimes he gains these ends by the *ministry* of his word, and sometimes by the dispensation of his *sacraments*, and sometimes by the *ordinance of prayer*, and sometimes by the teaching even of the *prosperous* events of life. As the individuals whom he wants to confirm or to convert are various, composed of different and very discordant temperaments, and characters, and dispositions, so the means which he employs are also different, and accommodated to what may *best suit* the propensities of each. But of *all* the instruments of which he makes use there are none that do more *successfully* gain the object that is in view, than that varied discipline by means of which God seeks to prepare a people for himself; and there are many cases upon record, and with which perhaps your own memories can furnish you, which go to prove that this mean has taken effect, and brought home the admonitions of our better interests, when *other* means, that often do succeed, had been repeated and renewed in vain. Some of you who are now hearing me, brethren and companions in affliction, can perhaps witness to one another the truth of this assertion, and your *own little histories* possibly may tell you, that when God kept you under the *cloud*, he kept you *safe* though you knew it not—that *trouble* has done that for you which *ordinances* never did—that the valley of tears has brought you nearer to him than the valley of visions ever did—and that the enmity of the heart of man may *resist* the impressions of Sabbaths and sacraments, the ministrations of the sanctuary, and the eloquence of prayer, and yet be *moved* and melt away under the influence of these afflictions with which God sees it meet to

visit us, which he warrants us to characterize, not as the punishments of a Judge, but as the chastisements of a parent, and for which, amid the ardour of infinite gratitude, believers have sometimes cause to give thanks and to sing praises to his name under their severest pressure and participation.

Many are the testimonies upon record to the potent efficacy of affliction as an external instrument for converting the soul to God, and though it hath not in every case such a happy influence, yet, did we know the spiritual history of all true believers as intimately as they themselves do know it, we should find, in regard of many of them, that they never understood the saving nature, and never felt the secret power, of divine truth, until they were taught it in the chamber of personal affliction; that it was *there* where their convictions of guilt were first awakened, their confidence in a course of sin interrupted, the duty first discovered of betaking themselves to Him who holds out the overtures of a reconciling affection to prodigals that will return, and the provisions of the gospel seen to be the only food for a hungry soul, and the only balm for a wounded afflicted spirit; that it was *there* where they were first taught the emptiness of that world whose objects *only* had engaged their attention, how shallow it was as a source of satisfaction, how incompetent to procure peace of mind here, and how inadequate for the necessities of futurity; that this scene was not their home, and that its gaudy and florid prospects were not to be their consolation. In this school of adversity, will many a devout man acknowledge—in this school of adversity, where I was separated from that world to which I had given my most vigorous pursuits, and left to the company of *my own thoughts*—in *this* school it was that I was arrested in my course of unreflecting criminality, that I was first invaded by convictions, harassed by a stirring conscience, lightened upon by intimations of a judgment to come; here that the forms of a *retributive* world did first open upon my sight—that I first began to feel how cold and comfortless the evening of life should set in if I made no preparation for the life that lay beyond it—that I felt the guilt, and did mourn over the infatuation which were implied in the fact, that I was to be the subject of responsibility and retribu-

tion in eternity, while all my schemes did embrace only a diminutive portion of time—and that I first perceived *my only safety* to lie in being sheltered under the covert of His wings, who, in the warm and figurative language of ancient prophecy, came into the world that he might be the plague of death and the destruction of the grave. Many there are who have this cause for glorying in their tribulations; many who can lift up this emphatic testimony as to the efficacy of affliction; many who will own, that, as an instrument in God's mighty hand, it has taught them lessons which other means could not, and brought them within the reach of that grace which made their consolations to be as remarkable as their distress, and not only supported them through their trials but put a *healing virtue* into them.

How prevalent, besides, is this form of the divine government, not only, as we have seen, in awakening those who had been previously careless about all spiritual things, but also in stirring up even those who have known what vital religion is, to yet greater measures of watchfulness and activity. There are few of the servants of God, upon whom the restraints of his providence have been laid, but will acknowledge that the affliction which he did put upon them was indeed sent for a *restoring* purpose; that it hath brought to light some defects and miscarriages in their christian character, which were retarding their spiritual progress, but of which they were at the time but little aware; that it hath destroyed some gourd which had become an object of passion to the mind, increased their preparations for that world, upon which they know not when they may be called to enter, but which the gathering comforts, or the stronger impressions of the present state, had begun to render less familiar to the thoughts, and less interesting to the affections. Affliction is indeed a precious instructor, when it leads a believer to the throne of grace, under a feeling of greater self-abasement, and in a temper of more earnest prayer than he ever did experience before—when it leads him *there* to pour forth the confessions of a repentant heart, and to ask aid, for the resolutions of a better obedience, from Him who, he knows, will hear his prayer, and, for *his* sake who carried his sorrows and sicknesses, will help his infirmities—when it discovers a greater amount of

guilt and imperfection adhering to him than he knew, notwithstanding of all his strivings against the burden of his own corruptions, and when it quickens his vigilance and his fear, lest a promise being given him of entering into rest, he should seem to come short of it.

And, finally, what a happy influence has this instrument been in the hands of the Omnipotent, in preparing them for what is to come. In the case of some, indeed, it does certainly act in this *prospective* character. It forms a part of that preparation which is necessary for their being able to encounter and to overcome the hostile efforts which are to be made against their salvation—a defence, by means of the virtues it calls forth, the vigilance it awakens, and the wholesome discipline it exercises over the mind—a defence against the devices of Satan, the infirmities of the flesh, and the allurements of a sinful world. It is often blessed to them as a warning, as an encouragement, as a *command* to be always at their post, like men who *wait* for their Lord, and *watch* lest they be taken unawares, to be ever ready to resist every attack that may be made upon their virtue, and to take to themselves the whole armour of God, to have their heads covered with the helmet of salvation, their hearts guarded with the breast-plate of righteousness, their loins girt about with truth, their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, their whole frame sheltered by the shield of faith. By the state of mind which it brings upon them, and the sober retirements for which it generates the relish, and the sentiments and affections which it begets in the understanding and the heart, it fortifies them against those sinful enchantments which they perhaps may find spread thick in the future path of their christian course. It trains them to feel, even under the sorest trials, more pleasure in obeying God's will, than if he had granted them their own; while the knowledge of the divine word, which affliction is so often the means of increasing, and that attachment to divine truth, which it so often calls into a more lively exercise, do operate the effect of enabling them, amid temptation, to cleave to that which is good, when they would have been successfully seduced and overcome of evil.

And if it be thus instrumental for the

advancement of believers in grace, it is also a preparative for their enjoyment of glory. The Scriptures tell us, what the experience of all Christians corroborates, that affliction, while it tends to strengthen them for the trials of this life, tends also to fit them for the purities of a better, worketh out for them a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory; that tribulation is that through which they *must* pass ere they enter into heaven; and that the trial of their faith being much more precious than gold which perisheth, is to this end, that they may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Christ; so that, with these reconciling thoughts of affliction, it is the interest and the duty, and will ever be the fervent prayer of the people of God, that they receive with a willing mind, and well affected heart, the chastisement, which he doth send; that they become reconciled to that sovereignty which he doth exercise over them; that they *relish*, as well as *endure*, the rebukes which he doth give, looking upon them as not more expressive of his *will* than as indicative of his *love*. They have, indeed, great cause to raise their hymn of thanksgiving amid the visitations of his mighty hand, and to sing and say of him, in even their sorest night of adversity, that his name and that his nature is love.

To you of this congregation the Almighty has lately been speaking by this voice of his afflictive providence, and giving you, in an impressive and very affecting shape, an illustration of this form of his righteous government. In the presence of so many who had the best opportunities for appreciating his worth, and estimating his piety, I shall not detain you with saying much on the character of your late venerable pastor; yet, as the Apostle, in the epistle to the Hebrews, makes honourable mention of the Old Testament saints, who all died, having obtained a good report, and wrote a chapter commemorative of their virtues, so it is due to the memory of his christian excellence, on the one hand, and may serve the purposes of comfort and edification on the other, that *something* be said by me, in *this* place, of him who has been lately gathered to the communion of the just, and who was dear to the affections of many whom I address. He was long privileged to labour among you in word

and doctrine; to the very *last* of his days he laboured and fainted not, and showed that he was what he declared he aimed to be—"a servant of the most high God," and "a faithful steward of the mysteries of Christ." The work of the ministry was a work to which he did *early* devote himself—a work which was his choice and delight, in which his whole affections were engaged, and to which his whole energies were consecrated. He did not serve God in this place with that which cost him nothing; for, as he felt it to be his duty, so did he make it his invariable practice, by the agency of reading, and meditation, and prayer, so to prepare himself, that, when he met with his flock on the first day of the week, he might have in readiness the food which was convenient for each of them, and be able to bring out of his treasures things both new and old. At the commencement of his career as a preacher of the gospel, when he was a very young man, he gave indications of a mind that was furnished, in no common degree, both with gifts and graces for the services of the sanctuary. The impressions which his discourses then produced are still remembered with interest by the few who yet survive in the part of the country where he was first ordained to the pastoral office; and from that period, down to the present day, none have been more *sincere* in doing the work of an evangelist—few, I believe, privileged to be more *successful* in awakening perishing sinners from the sleep of spiritual death—in comforting them who were mourning in Zion—in building up the saints in their most holy faith, and preparing them for the mansions that are in their Father's house above. With earnestness and solemnity he delivered to you the whole counsel of God. With the savoury satisfaction of one who had a personal interest in them, he proclaimed the glad tidings of the gospel; while, with the most tender solicitude, he did urge and beseech you, who believe in Jesus Christ, to be careful to maintain good works. He inculcated the obligation of faith in the atonement of the Saviour; but you know, my brethren, that he never forgot to show that this was a doctrine which is according to godliness, that justification by the righteousness of the Redeemer, is invariably connected with sanctification by the Spirit of the Redeemer; and that the profession of a belief in his

doctrine, and a dependance on his merits, can never be a *real* one, unless it be supported and embellished by the good works of a virtuous life.

It is not to be omitted, that what he appeared to be in the pulpit, that you found him to be *out* of it. He lived under the power and experience of personal religion. That was the great source of all his conduct, and gave spirit and life to his public ministrations, as well as to his deportment in private life. He went out and in amongst you as the man of God—as one who feared the Lord, living in the *spirit* of the gospel which he preached, and exemplifying himself the graces and self-denial which he inculcated upon others. It was his delight to preach from this place the unsearchable riches of Christ. But the conduct of his zeal for you was not *confined* to this place. Private opportunities of promoting your best interests were as eagerly embraced by him, and you know well, my friends, of his conscientious fidelity in visiting the afflicted and the mourner—how he was never *far* off when trouble came near to you, comforting and sympathizing with you under whatever was harassing in your experience or gloomy in your prospects, directing you to the contemplation of those attributes of God's character, and of those ways of his providence, which were fitted to reconcile you to every event, by assuring you of its gracious purpose and its final issue, and staying the mind of the *dying* upon God, as, in *Christ*, the Father of mercies—the fountain of consolation—the rock of their deliverance and safety. There are many amongst you, I am persuaded, who will concur with me in bearing testimony to his faithfulness in this department of the christian ministry;—*the troubled in mind*, who can recollect how he did bind up their broken heart, and pour what was better than wine or oil into their painful wounds—*the disconsolate and bereaved*, who can recollect how he led them not to sorrow as those who have no hope, but to dwell in the anticipation of that day when they should be reunited to their christian friends in a state where the pangs of separation should be neither feared nor felt—*the many more* whose personal experience enables them to refer to scenes of private life where the voice of this sympathizing pastor was as life from the dead to their souls, "for

edification, and for exhortation, and for comfort."

He has been taken from you, but the word which he preached liveth and abideth for ever. Oh! my friends, let it be your great ambition to be witnesses that he has not laboured in vain, nor spent his strength for nought. "Remember them," says the Apostle, "who have the rule over you—who have spoken to you the word of God—whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Happy, indeed, will it be for you, if, by the proficiency which you daily make in that godliness and those good works which he did inculcate and exemplify, you show that this is indeed the case, and that though he has no more a portion in any thing that is done under the sun, that yet "though dead" he "nevertheless speaketh," and is still present, as it were, among you, in the fruits and living influences of his ministry.

The circumstances of his death, upon which a regard to your feelings will not allow me to dwell, were in every respect most deeply affecting; and though, from the suddenness and severity of the disease with which he was attacked, he was afforded neither the opportunity nor the strength to express himself as we know he otherwise would have done, he was yet enabled to say enough to show that he felt in his own mind the comforts of that gospel with which he had comforted others, and that death itself could not shake his faith, diminish his love to God, or the persuasion which he had of the love of God to him. From his advancing years and declining vigour, it was not to be thought that he would be continued long among you; but, though anticipated by himself, the event has certainly come unexpectedly upon us, and is one of the many warnings which God is giving to us in the present day, that we know not how soon—that we know not how suddenly—

* * * Since the appearance of our last Number, Cholera has singled out another clerical victim in the person of the Rev. Robert Findlater, the respected pastor of the Chapel of Ease, Inverness. He died on Wednesday, 5th September, having, on the Sunday preceding, preached an affecting sermon to his congregation on the prevalence of the pestilence, and earnestly exhorted them to prepare for their latter end.

The conclusion of the Rev. Mr. Harvey's sermon in our next.

From the great length of the discourse in this number, the sermon of the Rev. Mr. Grant of South Leith, delivered upon the same occasion, is unavoidably postponed.

we too may be called. Without doubt this is the great lesson which the dispensation itself is fitted and designed to teach us. Let us turn it, therefore, to this account, and, like him whose loss we deplore, live daily under the power of the world to come. We may choose to think death *distant*, notwithstanding of all the admonitions we receive, but death is not on *that* account the less *near*. We may choose habitually to *disregard* it, but it is not on that account the less *important*. We may lull our fears of it *asleep*, but it is not on that account the less *awful*; and whether it be true of us or not, it nevertheless *ought* to be true of us, that not upon this merely, but upon *all* occasions, our minds should be sobered with the thought of our departure out of this world, and maintain the wise and watchful conduct incumbent upon those who "all do fade as a leaf," who "spend their years as a tale that is told," who "wither like the grass" on which they tread, and crumble like the dust of which they are formed.—AMEN.

ANTHEM,

THE DYING CHRISTIAN TO HIS SOUL.

Sung at the Funeral Service of the late Rev. Dr. James Robertson.

Vital spark of heavenly flame!
Quit, oh quit, this mortal frame!
Trembling, hoping, ling'ring, flying,
Oh the pain, the bliss of dying!
Cease, fond Nature, cease thy strife,
And let me languish into life!

Hark! they whisper; angels say,
Sister Spirit, come away!
What is this absorbs me quite,

The world recedes, it disappears.
Heaven opens on my eyes! my ears
With sounds seraphic ring!
Lend, lend your wings! I mount! I fly!
O Grave! where is thy Victory?
O Death! where is thy Sting?

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THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 22^d SEPTEMBER, 1832.

No. 26.

SERMONS by the Rev. JAMES GRANT, Leith.
SERMON by the Rev. ALEXANDER HARVEY, Glasgow.

Price 2d.

REASONS WHY GOOD MEN MAY LOOK FORWARD WITH DESIRE TO THE TERMINATION OF LIFE;

A FUNERAL SERMON, PREACHED ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9th, 1832, ON THE DEATH OF
THE LATE DR. ROBERTSON, MINISTER OF THE SECOND CHARGE, SOUTH LEITH.

By the Rev. JAMES GRANT,
Minister of the First Charge, South Leith.

"I would not live away."—JOB vii. 16.

THESE, my friends, are the words of Job, "a perfect and an upright man—one that feared God and eschewed evil," in a season of overwhelming distress and perplexity. His history exhibits to us a very striking instance of the reverse of what is called fortune, the instability of all worldly possessions, and the nature of that discipline by which the saints are trained to a fitness for their future inheritance. He is introduced to our notice as "the greatest of all the men of the East," occupying a high place in wealth and authority, and blessed with a numerous and flourishing family. Suddenly, however, the picture is reversed; and we behold this man of God deprived of his wealth, bereaved of his children, and smitten with sore and loathsome disease, "from the sole of his foot unto his crown; scraping himself with a potsherd, and sitting among the ashes." In this situation, he is visited by three friends, who, taking an erroneous view of the ways and dealings of the Most High, accuse him of impatience, and attribute his misery to want of religion. "Remember," said they, "who ever perished being innocent, or where were the righteous cut off? They that plough iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same." Irritated by a sense of the wrong thus done him, and under the influence of acute suffering, Job utters that discourse from which the words of our text are taken; in the course of which, he expresses

an earnest longing for death, as the termination of his troubles. "Oh," says he, "that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for—that he would let loose his hand and cut me off! My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life. I loathe it; *I would not live away.*" It must be admitted, that notwithstanding the meekness and resignation which appeared so conspicuously in the general conduct of Job, and many traces of which are even here observable, the manner in which he expressed this wish betrayed symptoms of fretfulness and impatience. He not only longed for death, but cursed the day in which he was born. He not only prayed to be delivered from his afflictions, but charged God with cruelty and injustice in inflicting them. And fondly as men in general cling to life, yet there is occasionally to be witnessed the same weariness of the gift, and the same anxiety for its being taken away; not only accompanied, as in the case before us, with *unbecoming impatience*, but prompted by feelings and motives inconsistent with, and subversive of, all religion. There are men whose soul, like Job's, "is weary of life—who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave;" but this state of mind may, and often does, arise from sinful discontent—from a spirit of repining under the evils of life—from the languor and weariness which idleness

and want of serious views too often generate—from the gloom and depression consequent on a course of dissipation and excitement. The sentiment of the text is not unfrequently the breathing of a *guilty* soul—racked with remorse, stung by an accusing conscience, haunted by the recollection of deeds of guilt, and prompted by the *hope*, if not the *sober belief*, that death shall prove the end of all. Hence, not only a cursing of the day of one's birth, and an ardent longing for death, but that sporting with the precious gift of God, which leads to rush on death, and prompts the foul deed of self-destruction. The words of our text, however, do not necessarily imply either impiety or impatience. Taken in connexion with the context, they may, indeed, exhibit, in the case of the holy man by whom they were uttered, a certain degree of fretfulness under evils of almost unexampled severity; yet even *good* men may be weary of life, and may long for its close, and, although willing to remain, they may yet be anxious to depart; and as it is natural and lawful, in a time of sickness, when the love of life is strong, to pray to Him in whose hands our times are, to "spare us, that we may recover strength before we go hence and be no more." so is it lawful and natural for those whose love of life has been tempered by experience, and who have declined into the vale of years, to adopt the sentiment, "I would not live away," and to breathe the resigned yet ardent prayer, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

In the first place, good men may be so far reconciled to death, from their experience of the evils of life, and the unsatisfactory nature of all earthly enjoyments. Though the present be a state of trial and discipline, not of mere enjoyment, and though it may even have been represented, by the gloomy and discontented, as one of unmingled evil, yet it must be acknowledged, by every right-hearted inquirer, that there are enjoyments in human life; nay, that, in ordinary situations, these are even bestowed with a lavish hand. The very gift of existence, throughout the whole scale of animal being, from man himself, the lord of the creation, down to the gay and happy insect that flutters in the noontide sun, is felt and enjoyed as a blessing. Our use of the bounties of Providence—the varied beauties of external

nature—the grateful alternations of day and night, of summer and winter—the exercise of our animal, intellectual, and moral powers—are all, in their various degrees, means of happiness and sources of enjoyment. In *infancy*, we rejoice in parental care: in *youth*, our imagination is gladdened by the beauty and novelty of the scene around us—we live in hope, and are ignorant of the evil to come: in the *maturity of life*, we exercise, with peculiar satisfaction, our ripened powers, and draw liberally on the stores of friendship and affection. But it is also true, that there are evils in life—that "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward"—and that, as his days are few, they are also full of affliction. From what a multiplied variety of causes do grief and sorrow spring? Health may, in one day, be exchanged for sickness, and the couch of rest for the bed of languishing—the fond hopes we had cherished in youth may be disappointed in manhood—fortune may exhibit to us all her fickleness—want may come upon us "like an armed man"—the vigour of our minds may be impaired—the sources of our best enjoyments may be dried up, and the objects for which we had longed with most ardour, and toiled with most perseverance, may fail to yield us any happiness, when acquired. Hence it is that this world is termed a vale of tears, and that they who have lived the longest and enjoyed the greatest portion of this world's good, have with one voice declared their days to have been both few and evil; and those causes that render the best enjoyments of life unsatisfactory, and are apt to create weariness and disgust, operate with more force and are more generally felt towards the close of life. Then more experience has been had of the world, of its fickleness, of its instability—of the deceitfulness of its promises—of the vanity of its best enjoyments; the pleasures of hope are then limited to a narrower circle; the vigour of manhood and the maturity of strength have given place to the feebleness and decrepitude of age; declining years have chilled all the finer sensibilities of the soul; the buoyancy of youthful spirit hath for ever fled; the fire of imagination is extinguished, and desire itself hath failed. It may not be that the aged have been reduced to want—that they have been disappointed in their views—that they are bowed down with unusual

infirmity—that they are harassed by enemies or neglected by friends—but they have already outlived *many* of their enjoyments, and to “live always” they feel would be to survive them all. While the evils of life depress, its pleasures and its honours have ceased to interest them—the season of meditation hath come—they despise the baubles by which younger men are pleased, and feel a capacity for happiness which God alone can fill. And amid the vanities of life, and its to them now insipid enjoyments, and while warmed with the prospect of a better and more enduring existence, they exclaim, “Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest: I would nesten my escape from the winds, storm, and tempest: I would not live always. Oh, that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for!”

But good men, we observe farther, may be led to look forward with desire to the termination of life, from the changes taking place around them, and particularly the death of friends and companions. It needs no argument to convince, and it should require no elaborate description to impress on the mind, that this is a mutable and changing world. All things around us—we ourselves, and the world in which we dwell—men, and manners, and opinions, and things—are subject to decay, and are perpetually changing. The flowers of the field wither, and the trees shed their leaves. “What was once a flourishing city,” in the words of an eloquent author, “is now a neglected village. Where castles and palaces stood, fallen towers and ruined walls appear. Where the magnificence of the mighty shone, and the mirth of the gay resounded, ‘the owl and the raven,’ as Isaiah says, ‘now dwell, and the nettle and the bramble grow in the courts.’” We see ruins of temples where once our fathers worshipped. Babylon “is fallen” and hath “become a desolation among nations;” and of “the city of God,” of which such glorious things are spoken, there is not “one stone left upon another.” And as it is with the world and all the works on its surface, so is it with its inhabitants, for “one generation goeth and another cometh;” and in the country to which we belong, and in the neighbourhood in which we live, —within the narrow circle of our own

acquaintances—we have a specimen on a less extended scale, yet far more impressive of this general change. How many changes since our boyish days have taken place around us! What variations have occurred since you, my aged fathers, first knew the world, in the views and opinions, in the habits and manners, of society! And do not these changes, while they remind you of your own approaching change, in some measure reconcile you to your departure; for who would witness the decay of all around him, and have his weary life prolonged until all should be dissolved? But above all, there is a change of persons around us, as well as a change of things, and these are affecting and tend to reconcile us to death, in proportion to the happiness derived from our social nature, and the enjoyment arising from the interchange of friendship and affection. For the experience of changes like these we need not refer to those who have had long experience of life. Even the youngest can tell of a companion snatched away, and of the pangs of premature separation endured. And how many are the changes of this sort that have been witnessed by those more advanced in years? Where are the teachers that disciplined, and the faithful pastors that instructed, you in your tender years? Where are those venerable for age and wisdom whom you were taught to regard with reverence and respect? Where are the parents who ministered to your helplessness, and guided you amid the frowardness of youth? Where are those with whom you set out in the path of life? Can you think of your father’s house without recalling the image of some now sleeping in the dust? Can you look back on a life, even of moderate duration, without thinking of many once necessary, as you thought, to your very existence, taken away—of friendships terminated which nought but death could have dissolved—of affections blighted—of ties broken—of objects of fond attachment removed, the very remembrance of whom is more highly prized than all that remains? And can such events befall us—can such reflections be indulged in—without weaning us from the vanities of life, and smoothing our passage into a better world? Can we commit a parent to the grave without indulging the fond hope of immortality, and thinking of heaven as our father’s house? From the

grave of a friend does not life appear a wilderness, and even the path of virtue dark and lonely? Can we consign to their kindred dust the children in whom our fondest hopes were centred without longing for the day when they and we shall be redeemed from the dust of death—when the parent shall be re-united to his child, and all the families of the earth shall be gathered into one? It is true that while vigour of life and buoyancy of spirit remain, while we are closely engaged in its business, we may reconcile ourselves to the world, and the vacant place in our affection may be supplied; but in the decline of life, who can supply the loss of an early and a cherished friend? The ranks of our companions have been gradually thinned; the last of our contemporaries, it may be, has dropt into the grave; we feel solitary and friendless among a race of strangers, who are incapable of sympathizing with our blighted affections; and how congenial in such circumstances to our views is the sentiment of Job, "I would not live away." Here is nought that can now interest me—*there* are the friends of my youth and the companions of my age, my parents, my partner, my children, it may be, *all* are there. How wisely and beautifully is it thus ordered in the providence of God, that those affections, the exercise of which constitutes our chiefest joy on earth, should in the end make us most willing to depart! Those who once occupied our hearts have departed hence. Their place cannot be supplied from among living men. The affections, then, once centred on earthly objects, are transferred to the world of spirits. We contemplate our approaching departure, not with complacency only, but delight, for we are about to be "gathered to our fathers," and journey to a land already peopled with our kindred and our friends. Who, that has long sojourned in exile in a foreign land, does not gladly receive a call to return to his country and his father's house? Who would live here alone among a race of strangers, when invited to rejoin the society of his friends?

We observe once more, that good men may be reconciled to death, and may be led even to desire it, from the remains of sin and their growing desire after perfection. When a man first devotes himself to the service of God, though convinced of sin

he is generally unacquainted with the full extent of the depravity and deceptfulness of his own heart, and consequently too sanguine of speedy and complete success in the christian race. It is only after much experience—after frequent trials and sober reflection—after having been frequently baffled, and having frequently tasted the bitterness of remorse—that he knows the depravity of his nature, how weak is his resolution, how imperfect his goodness, how many the remains of sin and of iniquity. Meantime his desire of goodness is enlarged, his aspirations after God and perfection are more ardent, and under a holy impatience of sin, he is apt to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?" Age, too, which confirms his good dispositions, renders the performance of active duty more difficult, and diminishes his power of doing good. The spirit is thus often willing while the flesh is weak. He enjoys indeed the peace of God, even that peace which "passeth understanding," yet he knows and laments that while the remains of sin continue, his joy must be mingled with penitential sorrow. How sweet, then, and soothing to the aged saint must be the contemplation of his latter end, viewed as the period when he shall be made perfect in holiness! Now his love of God and of duty is apt to wax cold, especially since his finer sensibilities have been blunted by age—*then* his devotion will burn with a pure, and ardent, and steady flame. No worldly cares shall then distract—no bodily infirmities shall any more annoy—no temptations shall allure—no evil passions seduce, no evil habits mislead—his love of God and of goodness shall be confirmed, and the dominion of sin be for ever destroyed. The graces of the Spirit, though now implanted in the heart and cultivated with diligence and care, are yet mingled with weeds, and bring forth their fruit but in niggard measure; but they shall then be transplanted into a richer soil, and shall flourish with luxuriance in a more genial clime. Oh! glorious and happy day, which shall translate us from earth to heaven, which shall finally deliver us from the bondage of sin, and qualify us for the exalted ministrations of the heavenly temple! Who with such a prospect beyond the grave would continue here for ever? The struggle that accompanies our departure

may be painful, but it will soon end in victory; and even while it lasts we hear attending angels whisper peace. The vale of death may be dreary, and the waters of Jordan deep, but these shall not overflow us, and there lies beyond a land of happiness and of peace. O Jerusalem! thou city of the living God, when shall we come to thee?—when shall this mortal put on immortality, and this corruptible be clothed in incorruption? We would be absent from the body and present with the Lord.

In whatever estimation, my brethren, you may hold these remarks, you will admit that the subject of them, at least, is appropriate to the occasion on which they are addressed to you. Since last we met together in this place, it has pleased divine providence to call to his last account my late colleague in the ministry, your aged and esteemed pastor. The suddenness of the event may have added surprise to the regret and sorrow which, in any circumstances, it would have occasioned. As regards us, however, we must have been insensible to manifest symptoms of approaching dissolution if we were *altogether* unprepared; while, as regards himself, I am satisfied that the sentiment of the text has been for some time the prevailing sentiment of his mind; and that though even amid all his infirmities, willing to remain, he was desirous “to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.” There is no need, then, to lament that his call was sudden, and his warning short, if, when called, he was found watching. Still less need is there to lament the *circumstances* that attended or followed his departure. These are among the things which may harass the feelings and humble the pride of the living, but cannot affect the dead who have died in the Lord.

It is usual, on such occasions as this, as a last tribute of respect to his memory, to offer a short description of the character of the deceased; and though to those among whom he laboured so long in the ministry, and after the judicious and discriminating statement you have already heard from other lips, this may seem uncalled for and unnecessary; yet I feel that it were not more consonant to *your* feelings than to *my own*, to omit the melancholy duty. The leading feature in the character of your late minister has always appeared to me to be a devotedness to his profession, and a high sense of the

responsibility and the duties of his sacred office. To these duties all his views, and habits, and actions were rendered subservient. To discharge them with fidelity, acceptance, and success, I may safely say, was the great aim of his life. Hence his interest in the young, and his assiduous attention to the sick and the afflicted. Hence the constancy—I had almost said pertinacity—with which he clung to the discharge of his public duty, after declining age and growing infirmity, justified, or rather demanded, his partial retirement. And having said this much, I have in truth said all; for what higher or more comprehensive praise could even flattery allege of any man, than that he was honoured to be placed in the ministry, and proved himself worthy of the sacred trust. Of his character as a preacher I need not speak, seeing it was in this capacity that he was most familiarly known to yourselves. Suffice it to say, that he aimed at no ornament, affected nothing whose object or tendency was to exhibit the preacher at the expense or to the disregard of the cause he advocated, and kept steadily in view the great object of preaching, which is not to amuse the fancy, and please the imagination, but to inform the understanding, affect the conscience, and win the heart. Hence his plain, and artless, and scriptural expositions of christian doctrine, and the earnestness and tenderness with which he unceasingly urged on your acceptance the offers of the gospel. As to his personal character, it was such as became a Christian and a christian minister. He was a lover of peace, and he sought to unite other men in the bonds of peace. He took a becoming interest in the temporal as well as spiritual wants of his people, and supported and countenanced every plan whose object was to relieve them. He was singularly kind and inoffensive in his whole deportment, and has, in consequence, I venture to say, died without leaving an enemy. What he was in the retirement of domestic life, in which he delighted, the tears may best tell of the widow and fatherless, who, in bitterness of soul, lament his departure. Bear with me yet a moment while I speak of him as personally connected with myself. The tie that bound us together was near and interesting: I trust that his sacredness was felt and acted on by us both, and that we ever exhibited to you;

as became us, an example of brotherly love and unity. For him, I can with truth say, that he treated me not only with brotherly affection, but paternal kindness, the remembrance of which, coupled with all the circumstances of our connexion will not easily be effaced from my mind. I humbly trust that, on my part, I was not unmindful of what was due to his superior age, and how well it became me, while I looked for counsel to his experience, to make my more youthful activity subservient to his ease and comfort.

Finally, brethren, let us all improve as we ought an occasion so interesting, He hath died full of years, lamented and

honoured. Long accustomed to lead our devotions on earth, he is now the fellow-worshipper of angels and just men made perfect in the heavenly sanctuary. Let us imitate his example that we may inherit his reward. Let us cherish his memory, and "follow his faith, considering the end of his conversation." If we have owed to him aught as our spiritual guide and instructor, let us pay the debt due to the departed in kindness and attention to his surviving friends; and let us ever bear in mind, that every expression of regret for his loss is unavailing and hypocritical, if we do not also reduce to practice the lessons which he taught. God bless his word. Amen.

OUR TIMES ARE IN THE HAND OF GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED IN SOUTH LEITH CHURCH, ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 9th, 1832,

By the Rev. JAMES GRANT.

"My times are in thy hand."—PSALM xxxi. 15.

THERE is nothing which is more obvious, my brethren, to a reflecting mind, though at times it may be overlooked or forgotten, or which is more richly fraught with consolation and encouragement, than the great and interesting truth of our text, that "our times are in the hand of God"—that he orders all the events and circumstances of our lot, and alone determines, by his overruling providence, the period when we are to pass away into forgetfulness. On this great truth, then, let us meditate for a little, at a time when late events have rendered it peculiarly interesting, and peculiarly impressive. And, first, let us consider the fact which is implied in the text, that we ourselves are ignorant of the events that are to befall us, and especially of the time and circumstances of our death. "My times," says the Psalmist, "are in thy hand," *i. e.* wholly beyond my own direction and guidance. But little reflection, and a very limited extent of experience, will be sufficient to convince any man, even though he should never have reflected on the subject before, how few of the events and circumstances on which his condition and happiness depend have owed their occurrence to himself: and that, whether they

may be under the guidance of God, or are the result of chance, they are at least but little under his own control. We have but to look back on the chequered and diversified scene through which we have severally passed, and to compare the issue of things with the plans we had laid, and the schemes and expectations we had formed, to be satisfied how little influence we ourselves have exercised over the course of events, and how little what has passed before our eyes can entitle us, with any certainty, to predict the future. The great phenomena of nature may be regular in their occurrence—the sun may rise and set, and day and night succeed each other in regular rotation—hoary winter may follow mellow autumn, and may be succeeded in its turn by the genial spring—but how many changes, how many unlooked-for events, may a single season give birth to! Look back on the course of your past lives, and tell me what it teaches you on this interesting subject. You have passed, most of you, through the period of infancy and childhood—many are in the vigour of youth or the maturity of life—a few have arrived at the utmost limits of existence. You have all been conversant with various scenes of joy and

sorrow—you have pursued various paths, whether of gain or godliness, of pleasure or ambition, in search of happiness, which is the object sought by all, though attained by few—some of you may have met with success in your pursuits—yet tell me, have *all* of you succeeded in your plans? On the contrary, how many are there who, by their desponding looks, bear testimony to the truth that they have struggled in vain? How many can tell of the untoward events that have defeated their best laid schemes, and falsified their most confident predictions; and of the succession of unlooked-for misfortunes that have disappointed their most sanguine hopes, and left them, it may be, at an advanced period of life, as distant as ever from the object of their pursuit? Nay, say ye who have prospered in the world—whose lot has been one of uninterrupted prosperity, and who have obtained your heart's desire, was it by your own might and wisdom that all this hath been achieved? Have events always happened according to your anticipation of them; or, on the contrary has not your success been increased by, if it have not been wholly owing to, seemingly fortuitous circumstances and to events prosperous in the issue but over which you had no control, and which you did not even venture to anticipate? But how few, alas! are taught by experience, notwithstanding that every one must acknowledge how little events have been under his own control in times past, that few of his hopes and anticipations have been realized, and that circumstances innumerable, either adverse or favourable, have occurred, altogether beyond, and contrary to, his expectation! How confidently do all men count on the future!—with what assurance do they boast themselves of tomorrow!—and with what invincible perseverance do they lay plans which require, for their accomplishment, the union and concurrence of a thousand circumstances which they cannot control, and which are inconsistent with a thousand events which a day or a single hour may bring forth! Seasons of peculiar prosperity or deep affliction may, indeed, occur, in which the hand of God may be so plainly revealed, and all human calculation so completely set at nought, that the most indifferent spectator, and the least accustomed to look beyond second causes, cannot refuse to acknowledge that his “times are in the hand of God.” But, alas! it is compa-

ratively seldom that men acknowledge at all the hand of God in their ways—that they look back with gratitude to his interference in their behalf, or think his blessing necessary to the success of their schemes.

Hitherto we have talked of the expression, “our times,” as referring generally to the events of life, and the various circumstances of our earthly lot. But it has unquestionably a more particular reference to the close of life, and the termination of our earthly existence; and if there be one event of life, of which more than all others we are, by the appointment of Heaven, kept in ignorance, and the occurrence of which generally surprises us, it is this last and most important event of all. Well is it compared in Scripture to “a thief in the night,” coming on us as secretly and unexpectedly: for who are they that are taken away around us, and whose committal to the grave occasions those sad groups of mourners who frequent our streets? Are they the pious and worthy alone, who are advanced in years and ripe for immortality, and who, weaned from the vanities of life, were waiting with patience till their change should come? Death, alas! claims as his prey those of every rank, and age, and sex, and condition. The young, the gay, the thoughtless, on whom the world was smiling, and they on the world, are oftentimes summoned untimely into the world of spirits. The man of skill and wisdom is taken away in the midst of his usefulness—parents are often left to mourn the premature departure of children—the palsied arm commits to the earth him who but lately was exulting in the pride of strength—and the fortunate man, as if in very mockery, is cut off in the midst of his prosperity, while the wretched is doomed to drag on a prolonged and miserable existence. “Our times” truly “are in the hand of God.” “Man knoweth not his time; but as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.” In short, if we look forward into the future, it is, to our weak and short-sighted view, a dark unknown, in which we cannot discriminate between light and shade, and joy and sorrow. Guess, indeed, at coming occurrences we may, but every step we take only tends to falsify our predictions, and convince us of our utter ignorance.

But let us meditate a little, in the second

place, on the wisdom and goodness of God apparent in his thus drawing a veil over future events, and the uses which this appointment was meant to serve. There is nothing more characteristic of the human mind, or which has given rise to more degrading superstition, than a strong desire to penetrate into futurity, to ascertain the destiny that awaits us, and the issue of the projects we form, and the plans in which we are engaged. Hence it is that witchcraft and sorcery take their rise, and that men even of wisdom and learning have condescended to consult oracles, to observe the flight of birds, and to be the dupes of any crafty deceiver who pretends to be skilled in the art of divination. On the eve especially of some great occurrence, on which our life or fortune may depend, the desire to pry into futurity, and to anticipate the event, is almost insupportable; and, even in more ordinary situations, when we consider the darkness and uncertainty that hang over the future events of life, and the ignorance, above all, to which we are doomed in regard to the period, as well as the manner and circumstances, of our death, we are apt to repine that our knowledge and our vision are so limited, and to delude ourselves with the idea that it would have conduced at once to our happiness and virtue had God otherwise ordained it. "How," we are apt to say, "would it have moderated our enjoyment of prosperity, to have foreseen the total reverse by which it was soon to be followed! How would it have checked our indulgence in sinful pleasure, to have perceived the pain and disease in which it was to issue! And how would it have stimulated our preparation for death, to have known the precise period at which it was to arrive!" But how vainly and impiously are the faculties of man employed in judging the ways of the Most High God! He knoweth well the end from the beginning, and that very knowledge of futurity which we covet has been purposely withheld from us, at once in wisdom and in goodness. So far from promoting either our happiness or our improvement, it would have effectually destroyed both. Present happiness could have no charms for those who saw before them the lowering cloud of adversity. Present affliction would have been tenfold more difficult to bear, with the prospect of new sorrows that were to succeed it. The sweetest

domestic intercourse would be embittered by the certain foreknowledge of those events that were successively to wound the heart and narrow the social circle. In short, give but to man the knowledge of future events, which he so much and so rashly desires, and all his gaiety and happiness are forthwith changed into moping melancholy; his arm is unnerved for action; present discipline, with its salutary train, is annihilated; good conduct becomes a matter, not of choice, but dire necessity, its very nature and essence being changed; and present duty is neglected, that the eye may wander through the scenes of futurity. Nay, the very sight of death, which, it was supposed, might stimulate our preparation for eternity, would overwhelm and confound us—would engross the whole attention, to the exclusion of every present duty, and fill the mind with fear and apprehension. In every view, indeed, we have cause to adore the wisdom and goodness of God, which are as conspicuously displayed in the knowledge which he hath withheld as in that which he hath bestowed. Let us be thankful, then, instead of repining, that our times are not in our own hands—that we are ignorant at once of the events by which the scene of life is to be successively chequered, and of that great event in which at last it must close. And seeing we know *something*, though we know not *all*, let us study to improve at once our ignorance and our knowledge; let us beware of filling up by conjecture that blank which futurity presents to our view, and of guessing at those events yet to come, the knowledge of which hath been purposely and wisely withheld. In the path which we have yet to tread, we know not the nature of the scenes through which we have to pass—whether the cloud of adversity shall darken, or the sunshine of prosperity illumine our progress. Let us neither be too confident that our lot will be a happy one, nor yet indulge in gloomy forebodings. If the future resemble the past, we may conclude that it will be a chequered scene. Let our own ignorance of the future, then, and our want of power to regulate and control it, lead us to acknowledge and adore that Being who numbers the hairs of our heads, and orders all our steps, and prepares us to receive prosperity with thankfulness, and submit to affliction,

if it be our lot, without repining. And seeing, above all, that we know not how soon our time shall close—when the sand shall have run, and the thread of life be snapped asunder—let us improve each fleeting hour as it passes by us, and work the work of Him that sent us here while it is day, and let us be admonished at once of the *shortness* and *uncertainty* of time by those instances of death sent purposely to remind us of the great and important truth. And seeing, from these, that we know not how soon, nor yet how suddenly we may be summoned into the world of spirits, and that, when the time appointed in the counsels of Heaven shall have arrived, neither private worth, nor public usefulness, nor apparent health, nor respect and attachment of many friends, can for a moment stay out departure, let us study to be *always* ready, and to walk circumspectly, “redeeming the time.”

But the text teaches us more than our *own ignorance* of the events that are to befall us in life, and of the time and circumstances of our death. It may be true, as we have said, that we ourselves know nothing of, and can exercise no influence over, our own future destinies. But in whose hand, then, it is natural to ask, are our times? Are they at the mercy of *chance*, or under whose control are they placed? And this leads us, in the last place, to meditate on the comfort and encouragement derived from considering our times as “in the hand of God.” To a rash and inattentive spectator this would often appear a scene of confusion, in which no trace of order or government is to be discerned. On the contrary, however, we may conclude, from the divine perfections, and we know it on the authority of Scripture, that all things are under the guidance and direction of the almighty all-wise and gracious God, and that throughout his widely extended dominion nothing is left to the blind decision of chance. “The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of its isles be glad.” It ought to be no matter of regret to us, as we have seen, that we ourselves neither know nor can control the course of events. This should reconcile us to our own ignorance. But how should we rejoice, moreover, to know that our times are in the hand of God, who knows what is good and fitting for

us, and is ever both able and willing to bring it about! We may not clearly understand the nature of his doings, and the tendency of some of his dispensations, to promote our happiness and well-being; we may not clearly perceive, but we have the express promise of Him that cannot lie, that “all things” shall be made to “work together for good to them that love him;” and, with this promise, whom or what should we fear, or wherefore should we be cast down? The ways of God to us may be mysterious, and his purposes of goodness and mercy toward us concealed for a time under afflictive dispensations. “Clouds and darkness may be round about him,” yet “righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.” He knows better far what is good and fitting for us than we do ourselves. He determines to us all “our times,” and “the bounds of our habitation,” and orders, by his providence, every thing in our lot. If we enjoy prosperity, it is his gift. If we suffer adversity, it is by his appointment. In health we are preserved and upheld by him. In death we are the objects of his special care; and if we were left to choose for ourselves, in whose hand “our times” should be, and to whom it should be committed to allot us our portions, whom would we select but the almighty Jehovah, our Father and our friend, who hath led us, like a Shepherd, all our life long, and whose ways toward us hitherto have been truth and lovingkindness? We ourselves are incapable of distinguishing good from evil, but all things appear in their true light, and are “naked and open in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do,” “who knoweth what is good for man in this life all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow.”—“In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.”—“My times are in thy hand.” But, my brethren, if it be matter of comfort and encouragement to reflect, that “our times are in the hand of God” as regards our lot and circumstances in life, it is no less comforting to consider that to Him it exclusively belongs to fix the time, as well as the manner and circumstances, of our departure. We have already seen how hurtful it would be to us to foresee our death, as regards the precise period of its occurrence. It would confound, astonish, and dismay us, and, attracting

our exclusive regard and attention, would totally unfit us for the discharge of present duty. But while a veil has been thus wisely interposed to conceal from us the hour and manner of our death, how consoling is it to think that these are determined by our Father in Heaven—that disease, with its loathsome train, and sickness, and accident, and lawless violence, are but his messengers, having no power to act but by his permission, and being unable of themselves to subtract one minutest portion of that existence which he has allotted us. True, it is natural for us to wish to have our lives prolonged; but, even on this point, the least reflection must convince us that God is a better judge for us than we are for ourselves.

We know not the circumstances on which the propriety of such a wish must depend. If we be living in his fear, and he see it meet to call us hence, it must surely be our interest as it is our duty cheerfully to obey his call, hoping when we depart, "to be with Christ, which is far better." The enjoyments of life may be sweet and refreshing—we may be "eating our bread with joy, and drinking our wine with a merry heart," in the assurance that "God accepteth our works;" but what are all the pleasures of life, even when accompanied with a sense of the divine favour, from which their true relish is derived, compared with the joys of heaven and the rapture resulting from the presence of God and the Lamb? Besides, who knows but the cup of pleasure we now drink might soon be drained? We may be happy in the society of our friends. Beloved and respected in the circle of our family and dependants, we may wish to remain, if not for our own, at least for our friends' and brethren's sake. Yet the tender ties which the rude hand of death may sever here, we hope and believe shall be formed anew in heaven. We leave our friends but for a time under the care and guardianship of God. And who would wish to remain till he should be left, like the last rose of departing summer, to pass, it may be, the winter of age without a friend or companion to sympathize in his sorrows, or to cheer his solitude? "I would not live away," said Job.—"The righteous," saith the prophet, "is taken away from the evil to come."—"My times," says the Psalmist, "are in thy hand." Let us not be over solicitous, then, in regard

either to the time or to the manner and circumstances of our departure. These are all in the hand of God, our Father and our friend, who hath promised to be with us through life, and especially in the last sad and painful struggle. Whether we are to be called away in youth, or "brought to our grave in a full age, like a shock of corn in its season"—whether our death is to be sudden or preceded by sore disease and days of languishing, God alone can tell. This we know, that he will order all things for us well and wisely, and not try us beyond what he will enable us to bear. Oh, let it be our study so to live that we may be ever prepared to die, that when He "in whose hand our times are," shall say to us, It is enough, we may give in our account with joy.

These reflections, Christians, are fitted more deeply to impress our minds in present circumstances. In a population such as that of this place, instances of death can never be rare; but of late the great Destroyer has been doing his work in a manner more fitted to arrest our attention. Several connected with this congregation have been suddenly called into an eternal world leaving behind them relatives and friends, in whose grief it is our duty to sympathize. And there is one bereavement which we all in common feel and all in common lament. The pestilence, now raging among us, has lately numbered among its victims one who was placed over you in holy things, and on whose lips you have often hung while he discoursed to you of the things belonging to your everlasting peace. I mean not now to renew the testimony I have already this day borne in the hearing of most of you to his professional as well as private character—to the faithfulness with which he discharged the sacred trust, and the manner in which he exemplified in his own life the precepts and duties he inculcated on others. He hath gone, we trust, to receive his reward, and "his works have followed him." A few short weeks since he joined with us in the services of the sanctuary. Now he "hath said to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister." We trust his spirit, which shall never die, is now engaged in the services of the upper sanctuary. Let his death operate as a warning both to pastor and to people—to us who "labour in

only things" to be diligent and assiduous like him in discharging the duties of our station, that when we are called away, however unexpectedly, we may be prepared to give account of our stewardship—and to all of you not to trust to times and seasons yet to come for doing that which the present time may accomplish. If God has taken away the shepherd, he will in due time remove also the members of the flock. God grant that by us all this event may be duly improved, so as to issue in a more complete and more habitual preparation for an eternal world, and a more assiduous and faithful discharge of the duties of our respective stations. May God Almighty bless his word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

The Judgments of God Improved.—A Discourse by the Rev. ALEXANDER HARVEY.

(Continued from No. XXIII. p. 276.)

BUT, while he seeks relief to his own heart, by unboasting his griefs in the ear of infinite benevolence, he is not forgetful of the sorrows of others. To unite in closer fellowship, and bind together, by the ties of christian sympathy, every member of the human family, the universal Parent has enjoined every individual who prays for himself, to pray also for his fellows. And the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Many an evil has been averted from a nation and people, for the sake of the intercessions of the faithful. In answer to the prayer of Abraham, the Lord healed Abimelech and his household. At the prayer of Moses, the fire of the divine vengeance, which was raging through the camp of the Israelites, and consuming them, for their rebelliousness, was staid. In answer to the entreaties of the same intercessor, a remedy was provided for the deadly bite of the fiery flying serpent. At the prayer of the man of God, the withered hand of the idolatrous king was restored to its vigour. At the supplication of Elijah, the departed spirit of the son of the widow of Zarephath returned to him again, and he was restored from the dead to the embraces of his weeping mother. At the prayer of Joshua, the sun and the moon were arrested in the midst of heaven. And "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are; and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." All these instances of answered prayer powerfully enforce the apostolic command—"Pray one for another." And we know not a more dreadful prohibition in the whole Book of God, than

the thrice repeated injunction given to the prophet Jeremiah, not to pray for his impenitent countrymen. Such a command as this, is as the sentence of death, and the signal for total destruction. We fancy we behold the angel of vengeance, stretching out his sable wings, and ready to seize on his prey. But, guilty as is our land, and numerous as are its impieties—and awfully as it has abused its mercies—and daringly as it has insulted the long-suffering patience of God—no such command has been issued forth against it. Its praying inhabitants are still permitted to spread out their hands before the Lord, and to beseech him to have mercy on its sinful people, in the hope that he will hear, and be entreated. And, therefore, ye who make mention of the name of the Lord, keep not silent. Be more frequent and fervent at the throne of grace, on which he, who has the destinies of nations, is yet seated. While ye confess your own sins, and the sins of your countrymen, and implore forgiveness through the blood of Immanuel, supplicate also that his judgments may be sanctified and speedily removed. He is the best patriot, who is the best Christian. Believing prayer is more valuable at the present crisis, than learned physicians. The prayer of faith brings into operation the skill of Him who is able to save or to destroy. I do not mean to say, that mere human aid is utterly unavailing; but, oh! how little has it hitherto done, in arresting the march of the malignant disease, which pours a bitter mockery on all the boasted ingenuity of man. I care not though I be branded as an enthusiast, for declaring, that, in my opinion, the humble Christian in his closet, wrestling in prayer with his God, may do more to arrest the

ravages of this deadly disease, than the combined skill of a nation's physicians. The bare mention of this may excite the derision of the infidel, and the scoff of the wiling; but the Christian knows, that prayer moves the arm of Him who rules the world, and who has all the agencies of nature completely under his control. The unseen—the unheard prayers, from many a humble contrite heart, daily ascending to heaven, ward off many a stroke, and bring down many a blessing on this sinful land.

In conclusion, I entreat you, my friends, not to despise the judgments of God, but seriously study to improve them, for his glory and your own eternal welfare. Whatever may be the amount of your trials, they are nothing when compared with what your transgressions merit; and if you do not "hear the rod, and Him who hath appointed it," he may yet "punish you seven times more for your sins." His quiver is not yet emptied of its arrows. As his resources to bless his friends are exhaustless, so his means of inflicting punishment on his enemies are boundless too. Though the pestilence, one of his "four sore judgments," is walking in darkness through our streets, and diminishing, with alarming rapidity, the number of our inhabitants—and breaking up the dearest relationship of life with un pitying sternness—and leaving to the compassion of Christians many an orphan child, and many a desolate widow—there are still the "sword, the noisome beast, and the famine," whose destructive agency He is yet restraining. All these came upon Jerusalem, the chosen city of His residence, because they would not take warning; and what can we expect if we harden our

hearts and refuse to be reproved? There is still much mercy mingled with the present judgments. Though our commerce is low, our granaries are stored with plenty, and our fields are waving with abundance, and ripening to the harvest; though the pestilence is taking its desolating rounds, the sword is rusting in its scabbard; the country, which was so lately agitated like a stormy ocean, from its centre to its remotest circumference, has subsided into tranquillity; and the roar of dissatisfaction is converted into the pleasing congratulations of victory for extended liberty. The voice of Providence is therefore loudly calling on us to mingle trembling with our mirth—to abandon every species of wickedness—to renounce our impieties, and acknowledge His agency—believe on His Son—and make all our temporal and political advantages bear on the advancement of His glory. If we thus listen to the loud warnings, which are now sounding in our ears, and return unto the Lord with supplication, penitence, and faith, we may confidently hope that the hearer of prayer will graciously answer the entreaties of an humbled people, and send us again health and prosperity; but if we remain firmly wedded to our sins, and refuse to be reformed, we may anticipate still sorer judgments—we may expect to see our dark cloud rolling upon another, till our whole atmosphere be shrouded in darkness, and the storm of the divine vengeance burst with a fury which may leave us an utter desolation. And thus our beloved land may become a monument to other generations, of the danger of despising and abusing the patience of Heaven. May the God of mercy avert from us a doom so dreadful! Amen.

* * * Owing to the great interest felt by the public in the preceding funeral sermons, evinced by innumerable inquiries and suggestions as to the particular sermon to be selected, no further apology need be offered for including both in this Number.

Every possible exertion will be made to meet the wishes of correspondents, in taking up the sermons of their favourite pastors.

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SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 29TH SEPTEMBER, 1832.

No. 27.

SERMON by the Rev. Dr. MITCHELL, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. Dr. BROWN, Edinburgh.

THE DEFECTIVE AMIABILITIES OF THE YOUNG;

A SERMON PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 1, 1832, IN BEHALF OF
THE YOUNG MEN'S RELIGIOUS SOCIETY FOR MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT,

By the Rev. JOHN MITCHELL, D.D. & S.S.T.P.,

Minister of the United Secession Church, Wallington Street, Glasgow.

"Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest."

MARK x. 21.

THAT portion of the history of our Lord, in which these words are embodied, is extremely interesting and instructive. It contains the account of an interview which he had with a youthful inquirer; and is narrated by two of the evangelists, with some variety of circumstances, but with no discrepancy of statement. The object, which our Saviour contemplated in this conversation, may be mistaken, and has been misapprehended. It was not to teach him how he might acquire the blessing of immortality by his own doings, although he asked—"What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" and although Jesus answered—"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;" for this method of salvation is now entirely shut up, in consequence of the fall of man; and is not only impracticable, but interdicted. The Saviour had another design. He saw that this youth was labouring under a great, and a fatal error; and he wished to undeceive him. He saw that he was a stranger to himself; and he wished to detect the secret workings of his corruption. He knew that the love of the world was predominant within him; and he wished to expose its reign, and to show the specious applicant his own character and temper. Therefore, after leading him to declare, ignorantly and presumptuously, that he had observed all the commandments of the law of the Lord, from his youth; he bids him, if he would be perfect—"Sell all that he had, and give to the poor, that he

might have treasures in heaven, and come and follow him." "When the young man heard that saying," saith Matthew, "he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions." And, as we nowhere read of his return to Jesus, we are left to suppose, that he repented not, and was finally lost. Thus, the deficiency to which our Saviour pointed in the text, was essential; and most probably proved fatal.

There is another statement in the words before us, which is remarkable, and requires to be explained. It is said, that—"Jesus beholding him, loved him." Now, how is this? How could Jesus be said to love one, who was actuated by the reigning love of the world, and preferred its possessions to his service? You must have remarked, that by reason of the poverty of human language, many things, very distinct in themselves, are often comprehended under the same general term. All love is not the same love. The love of a parent to his child—of a husband to his spouse—of a brother to his brother—of a man to his friend—all partake of the common character of affection; but each, obviously, is not by any means the same kind of love. Now, the love which our Saviour bore to this young man, unquestionably is not the same that he cherishes towards the children of God. He must contemplate every person and every object, with a due respect to circumstances and to character. The light in which he views the sinner is, doubtless, very different from that in which he views

the saint; and the regard that he entertains for one man, who has nothing at all estimable, or even much that is very reprehensible about him, is by no means the same with that which he bears to another, who, it may be, has much that is commendable, exhibits in his character and conduct something promising, though nothing that is morally and spiritually good. Now, this last was the case with this young man. His appearance was prepossessing—his manners pleasing—his address courteous—his language submissive. He seemed docile, as well as deferential; and it is said, that Christ “beholding him, loved him;” *i. e.* regarded him with a friendly interest, and sought to do him the greatest good. At the same time, that the love which he entertained for him, though it involved particular concern for his best interests, and amounted to the love of benevolence, was not the love of complacency, or delight, is sufficiently evident, from what immediately follows:—*“And he said unto him, one thing thou lackest;” i. e.* “There is an essential defect about thy obedience, which spoils all, which precludes thee from inheriting eternal life, and which subjects thee, amid all thy fair appearances and specious pretensions, to the just condemnation of God:—namely, thy predominant love of the world; and to discover thee to thyself and others, I say unto thee, “Go sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up thy cross, and follow me.”

How appropriate the subject we have selected is to the particular design of our meeting, you will all at once perceive. The general principle involved in our text,—the summary view exhibited, is what we would designate *the defective amiabilities of the young*. Now we intend to show throughout the sequel, as an illustration of this general idea, that there may be much exceedingly fair and interesting in youth, while yet something may be wanting in them of essential importance, which shall taint all that is amiable or apparently excellent—which shall cause them to fall short of eternal life, and prevent them, unless that defect is supplied by divine grace, from entering the kingdom of God. This done, we shall add some practical improvement of the subject.

First, then, we are to show, that amid all the fair appearances which human

nature may assume in early life, there may be some bad principle within, some fatal deficiency, which will work like a worm at the root of the flourishing gourd, like a fly in the ointment of the apothecary, corroding all, empoisoning all. Now, my brethren, in order to render this illustration and its application as extensive and as useful as possible, we shall treat, very briefly, of the following qualities, or combinations of qualities, incident to early life, or characteristic of it, in its most engaging forms, which yet, if unaccompanied by higher properties, will leave the young far from the kingdom of God. And we would speak of corporeal beauty—of tender sensibility—of mental talent—of docile tempers—of literary acquisitions—of unexceptionable sobriety—of religious assiduity—of benevolent activities—and of ardent friendship—with a view to show you that, allowing such to exist, yet “one thing may still be lacking;” and that one thing, if not remedied by divine grace, be fatal to the youth, to his present acceptance with God, and future hopes of eternal life.

First, let us begin with that which is most obvious—*corporeal beauty*. This is attractive to all, and justly so; for comeliness of feature, freshness of complexion, symmetry of form, gracefulness of movement, necessarily attract general attention, sometimes high admiration, and not seldom very particular interest. And, no doubt, when “the human face divine” is presented in all its lovely grace, it must appear to be one of the most wonderful of the works of our God here below; and when the human frame is exhibited in all its nice adjustments, and perfect balancings, it is a most amazing structure. But, although corporeal beauty is something that in itself is mightily interesting; yet, my brethren, there may be “one thing lacking,” and that deficiency, in the sight of God, of awful moment. If that body, so comely and attractive, be subject to sin, and not made an instrument of godliness and of goodness; if that fair form be united with a depraved and deformed soul; if all within be dark and unlovely; if there be no divine light in the mind; if there be no love of God reigning in the heart; if a regard for the world be predominant there; if there be pride and vanity, folly and selfishness, envy and ill-will, pervading all, tainting all—who does not see that “one thing is lacking.”

and that the absence of this one thing spoils the excellence, and, to a moral being, the interest and the acceptance of all the rest. Absalom was so exceedingly fair, that "from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot," there was not a blemish in his person; yet how foul was all within—What an ingrate—what a wretch—what a traitor—what a rebel was he to his father, and his king!

Tender sensibilities, again, are another quality that frequently distinguishes the young. Indeed, the heart, in early life, is comparatively soft and susceptible, until it be hardened by the ways of the world—by the collisions and jostlings of society—by the afflictions and mortifications of life. You have often seen, and, I dare say with interest, the sensitive young one weeping, perhaps, over a dying bird, or pouring a tear over a sere leaf, or a fading flower; and these sensibilities are ever apt to awake at the sight of distress. The youth weeps readily over the tale of wo. What it has to give, what it can do, it rushes forward to impart and to accomplish for the sake of the diseased and the destitute. And all this, doubtless, is amiable. But if, in this very heart, there be no sense of sin, no ingenuous compunctions for guilt, and no repentance towards God—if there be no love of true excellence—if there be no sensibility towards God, and the things of God—if there be no regard for the Saviour—if there be no grace of the Spirit—and if there be no holiness, no heavenly mindedness, no aspirations after immortality—if there be no struggle against the evil principle within, and no desire to triumph over the depravities of the fallen nature;—then it is evident that there is a sad, a palpable, a vital defect; that "one thing is lacking," and fatally lacking. Many females wept over our Saviour, when he was led forth to Calvary, who appear to have been none of his, and were afterwards involved in the final catastrophe of their country. "Daughters of Jerusalem," said the Saviour, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children; for, behold the days are coming in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts which never gave suck." These persons poured out a tear of tender sensibility over the suffering Saviour; but they wept not as

they ought; they forgot that which he most regarded, and without which they would be lost for ever.

Another endowment that is very attractive in the eyes of parents the most enlightened, and of men of the higher class, is *mental ability*; and this, unquestionably, is something graceful, of a nobler order. The former is only the gilding of the casket; this is the brightness of the jewel. Yet even here there may be a sad defect. Who has not seen the eye of the fond mother glisten at the opening powers of her child, at the early presages of precocious ability, perhaps the shrewd remark, or witty repartee; or at the proofs of strong memory, or of ready judgment, or of shrewd observation, or of lively fancy; in short, of brilliant talent beyond his years? And, in subsequent life, who does not delight to observe the manifestations of powerful intellect, of refined taste, of expanded view, and of strong sense and varied information? And if he be a person of distinguished genius, and acquire celebrity by his productions, the admiration and the applause are often excessive. All this, my brethren, is desirable, and, to a certain extent, estimable; but still "one thing may be lacking;" and all this, in a moral, and spiritual, and eternal view, may be unavailing. His understanding may yet be blind in reference to the things of God. Moral darkness may yet brood over it; its powers may never yet have been employed in the service of its Maker, or to the glory of the great Redeemer;—it may be clear and powerful toward every thing else, yet weak, and foolish, and fatuous with regard to the things of eternity;—it may have turned in its contemplations to every object in the universe, except to one, which ought to have had its first and best thoughts. To such a youth, you may say emphatically, as Jesus said to this young man, "Yet thou lackest one thing." Thus Balaam was a prophet, but he died the death of an enemy of the Lord. Thus Ahitophel was a sagacious counsellor, but he sold his powers to a traitor, and plotted against the "anointed of the Lord."

To talent let us add *docility*, as not only a pleasing, but a promising temper in youth. This young man seemed to possess it, and Jesus loved him. He came to Christ to learn—he approached him in a bland manner—he made polite inquiry—he was

apparently disposed to hearken to "the teacher come from God;" but the sequel showed that on one subject, one all-important, he was indisposed to learn or to obey. How often do we meet with similar instances in life? You will see a young man devote himself strenuously to this or that pursuit; woo knowledge at the midnight hour with all the ardour of the most enthusiastic votary, till his eye waxes dim, his cheek grows pale, and the symptoms of consumption begin to appear; but he will not be taught the things of God; he seeks not "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven." There is one book he does not study, and that the best of books. There is one science that he seeks not to learn—the science of salvation. There is one chair that he does not venerate—the chair of Moses and of Christ. There is one course of lectures that he cares not to attend—the discourses given in the sanctuary of God. There is one system of lessons that he is averse to learn—the principles of religion, the elements of immortality, the doctrine concerning redemption. Now it is obvious, that this person, who has been learning all other sciences, but will not learn this, has left out of his study that very science which alone would "enlighten him with the light of the living."

Let us add to docility *the acquisition of learning*. Now this, my brethren, is above all other things extremely apt to enamour, and to bear away ardent youth of genius. It is also apt to engage the attention and esteem of others, particularly of enlightened and reflecting men. Nor can it be denied that literary acquisitions are important in their nature. They bring an accession to intelligence, and increased knowledge is the ornament of the mind and of the man. They suppose uncommon powers of intellect, together with industry, and success in that industry—honourable industry and honourable success. Besides, it is a treasure which may be turned to important account in the business of life, and is as rare as it is valuable. But with all this, the human being, in the language of Solomon, may not be "getting understanding." The mind may be filled with all manner of lore; but, alas! it is Pagan lore—it is unbaptized lore—it is not scriptural lore; and this mind, in its researches, may have turned to every quarter but that which was divine. To such a person we might address the

emphatic language of an original and powerful writer—"By what dexterity of irreligious caution did you precisely avoid every track where the idea of God would meet you, or elude that idea when it came?" What must sound reason think of that mind, which, amid many millions of thoughts, has wandered to all things under the sun—to all the permanent or vanishing appearances in creation; but never fixed its thoughts on the supreme reality; never approached, like Moses, "to see that great sight?" And what shall we think of a sinner, who hath never thought of a Saviour?—of a scholar, who hath never sought to learn Christ?—of a student, who hath never endeavoured to learn that science, which can alone make him "wise unto salvation?" Tertullus may plead with the eloquence of an advocate, but it is Paul alone that can look with an unshrinking eye to the eternal tribunal. Simon Magus may be an oracle, and desire the best gifts; but it is Saul of Tarsus alone that can say, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ—the righteousness which is of God by faith." Solomon may understand all wisdom, and yet leave behind him a dubious character as a religious being; and Grotius may be the most learned man of his age, and yet be heard to exclaim at last, "Alas! I have wasted my time in doing nothing laboriously." And it too frequently happens, that men of genius and learning are also men of irreligion and immorality! Nay, you would sometimes think that there are those, who imagine that the powers of their genius, or their signal skill in art gives them a right to live without rule, and to transgress at pleasure the laws of God, and the decencies of life.

We shall suppose, however, that our youth is possessed of *unexceptionable sobriety*. Such it appears, was he who came to our Lord; for when Jesus had recited the commandments; he could say, "Master, all these have I observed from my youth." To science, then, we shall add sobriety; and this unquestionably is a laudable attainment. For, my brethren, how delightful is it to observe a young man, placed

perhaps, in the midst of temptation, yet untainted—in the hey-day of life, yet under the perfect influence of self-government—possessing all the means of gratification and indulgence, yet denying himself to all, and given to no excess—enjoying the tranquillity of the passions, and manifesting a perfect sobriety in the midst of a dissolute age. This, doubtless, is not a very frequent, though it be a pleasing sight. Yet, here again, one thing may be lacking, and sadly lacking. We are to remember, that external sobriety is not all that is comprehended under the expressive declaration of the Apostle Paul, "Exhort young men to be sober minded." There may be much that is disorderly in the heart, where there is nothing irregular in the life. There may be the riot of passion, when there is no revelling without. There may be a love of sin, while there is no commission of iniquity. At all events, this sobriety may proceed from a regard to decency—to propriety of character—to the laws of man—to the regard of the wise and good—to the wishes of parents; not from a love to the law of the Lord, or from the influence of the faith and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The former may exclude the latter; and, of course, make the principle of conduct sadly defective in the sight of God. Unbelief, too, may predominate—the love of the world may rule in the heart of that man, who has been demurely decent, and invariably sober. "Why," said Judas, "why all this waste? (in love, apparently, with a prudent economy;) might it not have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" Yet Judas was a vile hypocrite, an arch traitor, who sold his Lord afterwards for thirty pieces of silver, and spake thus, not because "he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

To all that we have mentioned, we shall again add *religious assiduity*, which will raise the character of the youth still higher, and render him more estimable and more hopeful. By this I mean attention, exact attention, to the external exercises of religion. A youth may frequent the sanctuary of God, may be punctilious in rite, reverential in aspect, solemn in service, he may even seem to be melted under the word, and be apparently zealous in the cause of Christ; yet my brethren, if he goes no

farther, one thing will be palpably and essentially wanting on his part. He may know the truth, and not love it; he may hear the gospel, and not believe it; he may contemplate the scheme of redemption, and not improve it; he may know somewhat of the doctrine of the cross, and yet not appropriate it for the salvation of his soul; and he may speculate about the glory of the Saviour, and the suitableness of his character and his work, and yet not embrace that Saviour, or improve his righteousness as the ground of his everlasting hope.

Advancing a step farther, and admitting what is still more estimable in the eyes of men—with these assiduities, let us conjoin *active benevolence*. Now, the good offices of kindness, and the activities of beneficence, being obviously both amiable and useful, may be assumed as probable proofs of religion. For they seem to say, that selfishness has been subdued, and that the power of the world has been made subservient to higher considerations; and you know how often exercises of beneficence and of charity, even towards enemies, are inculcated by Christ and by his holy apostles. Indeed, they have told us, that, without them, faith is counterfeit, and may be regarded as inefficacious; and have represented them as intimately connected with vital piety. "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Yet, let us not deceive ourselves, beneficence is not the all of religion, nor is it inseparable from the principles of godliness. "We may speak, my brethren, with the tongues of men and of angels, as the Apostle Paul has told us—we may prophesy, we may have that kind of faith which might remove mountains, we may give our goods to the poor, and our bodies to be burned, and yet, having not charity (or holy love,) we shall be nothing." Nay, deeds of beneficence may not only be naught, but sinful. They may be performed rather in deference to the wishes of others, and the usages of mankind, than from love to God, or obedience to his holy law. They may proceed rather from natural instinct and social sympathy, than from moral sensibility and divine grace. They may originate, even when religious in their aspect, from sinister considerations, rather than from Christian regards, and be

intended to please man, not God. They may, in short, be the offspring of selfishness, and a sacrifice to vanity, and to self-seeking of various kinds; not of holy love, of Christian faith, and of supreme devotedness to the will of God. Thus, all our religious zeal, all our fair activities, all our goodly alms-deeds, all our patriotic sacrifices, all our philanthropic exertions, all our evangelical assiduities, tainted by the corrupt principles from which they flow, may become, what an ancient father of the church calls the celebrated achievements of heathen warriors, only *splendidas*. We may be sacrificing, all the while, as it is in the prophet, only "To our own net, and burning incense to our own drag." "Come with me," cried Jehu, who was actuated only by selfish passions, and bloody ambition, "and see my zeal for the Lord."

Finally, let us crown all by the supposition of *ardent, and apparently holy, friendship* on the part of the youth; and yet, even in this view, he may "lack one thing," and that a matter of extreme importance. Youth is peculiarly the season of ardent attachment; and, perhaps, we can hardly conceive a finer, or more promising trait in the temper in the young than warm regard to the good, and a predominant desire to do them good. Affection to the righteous, companionship in charities, co-operation in conducting public institutions of a religious and philanthropic character, are, doubtless, good and hopeful symptoms of persons in early life. Nor, if persevered in, can the youth fail to profit by such associations and exertions: "he that walketh with the wise shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Yet let us not so far deceive ourselves, or betray our ignorance of human nature, as to suppose that such things may not exist without a principle of grace. Alas! there may be a friendship without Christ, and there may even be attachment to the good founded on sinister principles. Demas accompanied the Apostle Paul for a considerable period, but at length "forsook him, having loved this present world." Judas waited upon our Lord—did him and the brethren service, by carrying the bag—seemed to love the poor—preached and wrought miracles like others—but he was a traitor, and sold his Lord for a paltry bribe. Accordingly it is possible that attachments and atten-

tions, which are in themselves good, may proceed from evil principles, which shall corrupt both, and render them naught in the sight of God. And how many have attended, for a time; fellowship meetings, and church meetings, and society meetings, who have at length fallen away, and, after appearing to be "something," at last showed to the world that they were nothing. Alas! all friendships, even in religious matters, are not lasting; and connexions among the young, the most intimate and honourable, have been broken up, on the one side, and broken up for ever. There was, on that side, a want of faith, of love, and of grace. Holy friendship is perfected, and perpetuated, in heaven.

Thus, my brethren, we have endeavoured to show you certain qualities, or combinations of qualities, in the young, which, in the common acceptation of mankind, are estimable and lovely—which, yet lacking something of excellence, intimate and essential, in one or more respects, are thereby rendered naught in the sight of God. Hardly any youth can be supposed to possess all these good qualities; but, though he did, yet if, without divine grace, there be something radically defective in each, how great must be the aggregate of deficiency in the whole!

Let us now see what practical improvement may be deduced from these views. And one of the first effects it ought to produce is self-jealousy and deep searchings of heart. We ought, my brethren, to look beyond what is external, to that which is inward; beyond what is amiable and estimable in the eyes of men, to that which is lovely and good in the judgment of God. For you see, that youth may be beautiful, may be sensitive, may be talented, may be docile, may be intelligent, may be assiduous in application, and unexceptionably sober, attentive to religious duties, benevolent and active in commendable enterprises, ardent in apparently holy friendship—and yet, after all, in the sight of the Most High, who "searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men," be unacceptable—yea, and repulsive.

This subject will place, in a striking view, and strongly confirm, the doctrine of human corruption, and of the inward depravity of man. Such imputations may be repugnant to feeling, but they are consonant to facts. And do you not see, that much that is fair

and engaging in human nature, when profoundly inspected, is seen to be worthless, and to proceed from principles and dispositions which the God of truth and of goodness cannot approve or accept.

The topics to which our attention has been turned show us, what ought to be awfully interesting, that the good-will and grace of God, his benevolence and general regard, may be unavailing to many who have a promising appearance. Our Saviour, when he beheld this young man, loved him—felt a particular interest in him; but on him that interest was lost, for he went away sorrowful; forsook Christ, and probably abandoned that which could alone prove effectual for salvation. No doubt, the electing love and saving grace of God can never be frustrated; but there is a general benevolence of Deity which does not by any means always issue in the eternal redemption of its objects. "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" yet, alas! how many of that world have we reason to dread shall perish, and perish for ever? "As I live," saith Jehovah, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." But, oh! how often does the disobedience of the young, and the obduracy of the old, render this declaration ineffectual for the best of purposes, as far as they are concerned? O my brethren! let us take care, that the revelation of the love and grace of God be not lost upon us. Let us see to it, that Jesus, beholding us may love us, not only with a generous regard, but with a divine complacency.

Behold how far the best of unconverted men fall short of any excellence, which can justly found any plea of merit, or give any title to eternal life. We have examined all that is most pleasing in unregenerate nature, and have shown, that there is in each case something which stains the pride of human glory. We have seen a young man amiable apparently in character, unpossessing in aspect, pleasing in manners, soft in language, docile in nature, coming to Christ apparently an ingenuous inquirer, but proving himself intractable, going away and renouncing all. The complexion was bright and beautiful, but the constitution was unsound, and a fatal disease was seated deep within, and preying upon the vitals.

Let us be convinced, from what hath been said, and from the reflections which it will naturally suggest, of the absolute necessity of the atonement in the death of Christ; as well as of the influence of the divine Spirit, to regenerate the nature and the heart; and of a better righteousness than our own, to render us acceptable to God, and to obtain for us eternal salvation. Yes, my brethren, without these, man in his best state as an unconverted sinner cannot be saved, and the judgment that condemns him and excludes him from heaven, is, if you examine matters aright, a righteous judgment. Without the atonement of Christ, our sins cannot be expiated—without the merit of the obedience of Christ, eternal life cannot be procured—and without the grace of God reigning through the righteousness of his own Son, and communicated by the Holy Spirit, we cannot be fitted for heaven, the world of perfect goodness. Let us bless God, then, for both; and let us be most anxious to improve them.

The meditations in which we have been engaged will show farther, the sad danger of self-deception in all, particularly in the young. How dreadfully, how fatally mistaken, was this youth! He imagined, that he had kept the commands of God from earliest life, and was worthy of eternal life, when yet the world reigned in his heart, and he abandoned the Saviour for the world. And we are especially liable to this delusion if we possess natural talent, educational advantages, literary attainments, and benevolent and religious assiduities; for all these are apt to impose upon us, and upon others. We are ever prone to convert those things which are external into proofs of internal grace, into evidences of our high calling, and of our hope towards God. This is especially the case with the young. The freshness of youth is lovely, men always look upon it with peculiar interest; and the affection of parents, the esteem of friends, the applause of the general public, and the commendation of religious societies, are extremely ready to induce this self-delusion. We need, therefore, to be exceedingly on our guard. And I cannot avoid adding, that there are certain soft, and palliating, and complimentary expressions used with regard to the young, that are especially calculated to foster this deception. You hear people often speak of innocent children, of good young men; of

amiable and estimable youth;—language which tends to lay the flattering unction to the conscience of the young; to cherish deception, arising from the deceitfulness of the human heart; to make a man imagine he has a claim on God, and has laid a foundation in himself for eternal life.

Learn from this subject, what most of all we ought to seek after, and to do. Not external attention and obedi-ence, but spiritual homage:—not the beauties of the outer man, but the graces of the spirit. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," and remember, that all those come from God, and are of a spiritual and immortal nature. And, oh! seek by holy activity, by generous activity, by self-denied activity, to treasure up evidences of your connexion with God and his Christ, and to cause these evidences to accumulate upon the whole, and to increase in each case until they be completed and crowned with eternal life and everlasting glory.

Finally, this subject shows us the wisdom

and advantage of that association among the young, in whose behalf particularly we are assembled this evening. It brings young men together for the best purposes. It converts every Christian brother into a holy friend. It causes every one to watch over the other. It multiplies the guards against self-deception. It throws the best checks around the young in this day of trial and of temptation. It increases the delights and the interests of the young in one another and in general society, yet affords them opportunities of edifying one another in love, and of promoting the good of others around them in the most extensive and influential manner. It pours the gifts and graces of each into a common treasury for the good of all. In short, if the association be formed on right principles, and conducted in a right spirit, it begins a holy friendship on earth, which, through the grace of God, will be perpetuated in heaven, and become a fellowship of glory, equally honourable and delightful. Amen.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MASSACRE OF EPHRAIM'S CHILDREN;

A SERMON PREACHED IN PORTSBURGH CHURCH, ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON,
SEPTEMBER 16, 1838,

THE FIRST SABBATH AFTER THE DEATH OF THE REV. ALEXANDER NISBET, MINISTER
OF THE UNITED SECESSION CONGREGATION, PORTSBURGH,

By the Rev. JOHN BROWN, D.D.,

Minister of the Secession Church, Broughton Place, Edinburgh.

"The men of Gath, that were born in that land, slew the children of Ephraim, because they came down (or when they came down) to take away their cattle. And Ephraim, their father, mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him."
1 CHRON. vii. 21, 22.

"ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In the mines of Peru, there are veins of peculiar richness; but their very rubbish is valuable. In the Holy Scriptures, there are passages of peculiar importance and excellence; but there is nothing trifling—nothing useless. The careless reader of the Bible will meet with many portions of it from which he may find it difficult or impossible to derive instruction, and may rashly call in question the wisdom of giving such passages a place in a

volume intended for the permanent advantage of mankind; while, in truth, his own weakness, or ignorance, or inattention, may be entirely in fault. But the thoughtful, prayerful reader of the Bible will meet with no passage, which he cannot very easily perceive may have answered, or may yet answer, some important purpose; and with exceedingly few indeed from which he cannot draw for himself lessons of important religious and moral instruction. To be able to extract from what have been called the more barren, from what should have been called the less exuberant, portions of Scripture, the instructions they are calculated and intended

to communicate, is a talent which every Christian should cultivate: for, without it, there is a large portion of the Bible from which he can derive but little improvement; and it appears to me a very important, though a secondary, part of a Christian minister's duty, to educate his people, as it were, in the right way of interpreting and applying such passages of the inspired volume, showing them how replete even the most apparently trifling of these are with important truth, and guarding them, at the same time, against that passion for allegory, which often converts the words of the Spirit of God into a vehicle for the dreams of the human imagination. A conviction of this, is one reason why I have chosen my text this afternoon from that book in the Bible which I believe is least read, and least studied, by the great body of Christians—a passage, the very existence of which I should not at all wonder at being felt as a discovery on the part of some individuals, who, after all, may not with justice be chargeable with being habitually negligent of reading the Scriptures.

The greater part of the first book of Chronicles is occupied with a set of genealogical tables, from the beginning of the world to a period considerably posterior to the return from the Babylonish captivity, extending thus through a long series of almost forty centuries. These were highly useful to the Israelitish church at their return from the Babylonish captivity, in enabling the exiles to fix their respective tribes, families, and possessions; and are not without their use to us, as they furnish us with a most satisfactory kind of evidence, that, in believing that Jesus of Nazareth was, according to the declarations of the prophets, the descendant of Abraham, in the line of Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David, we are following no cunningly devised fable. Mingled with these genealogical tables are a variety of fragments of ancient history, some of which are considerably interesting. None of them, perhaps, is more so than that which now lies before us for consideration. The story may be told in a few words:—At a period apparently not long anterior to the removal of the children of Israel from Egypt, a body of marauding Philistines attacked the possessions of Ephraim, the son of Joseph, in the land of Goshen, and not merely despoiled him of all his property, but murdered the

whole, or, at any rate, the greater, part of his descendants. This sudden and severe calamity made a deep impression on the old man's spirits. "He mourned for his children many days." His kinsmen gathered around him, to administer such consolation as the circumstances required; and God, who is rich in mercy, ere long, repaired a calamity, which, at first sight, seemed altogether irreparable.

Such is the story—and now for the moral of it. This passage plainly teaches us the following important truths—truths interesting at all times—truths that must be felt by this congregation to be peculiarly interesting in the circumstances in which Divine Providence has at present placed them. It teaches us, first, that the happiest individuals or societies may meet with sudden and severe bereavements. Secondly, that the *dispensations* of Divine Providence are often *apparently* in direct opposition to the *declarations* of the Divine promise. Thirdly, that the loss of valued connexions and friends occasions severe suffering, and lasting sorrow. Fourthly, that it is the duty of neighbours and friends to do all that lies in their power to comfort those that are visited with such bereavements. And, in the last place, that God, in his mysterious and benignant Providence, not unfrequently makes up losses, which at the time they took place, seemed to those who sustained them altogether irreparable. I shall turn your attention shortly to these important and reasonable truths.

I remark, in the first place, this passage of Scripture teaches us, that there is no individual or society secure from sudden and severe misfortune.

It was an honest confession of the Syrian patriarch, "I said I shall die in my nest;" and I believe there are few persons indeed, who have been placed in very favourable circumstances, who have not indulged similar anticipations. Oh! it is natural for us, when we are happy, to cherish the thought that we shall continue to be happy. When all things are as we would have them to be, we are apt to say, "To-morrow will be as this day, and much more abundant." And we may be placed in circumstances in which such an anticipation seems not only natural but reasonable. We may have all the comforts of life in abundance, and these placed as completely beyond the reach of ordinary accidents as

they well can be. Our worldly substance may be abundant; our bodily constitution may be sound and strong, promising us a long and healthy life; our children may be growing up around us, with every appearance of being the support and comfort of our declining years. We may enjoy the affection of our friends, the esteem of our acquaintance, and the general respect of mankind—yet, even in the most favourable circumstances in which man can be placed—he is not beyond the reach of vicissitude and distress; and it were extreme folly for him to say, “My mountain stands strong and I shall not be moved.”

Very few persons have ever been so prosperous, or had equal ground to presume on the permanence of their prosperity as Ephraim. We have reason to hope that Ephraim was a good man. He was certainly the son of a very good man. We cannot doubt that his father Joseph gave him a religious education; and we can as little doubt that a well managed religious education is ordinarily blessed; for it is a promise, as well as a proverb, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it.” We know that Ephraim was a wealthy man. It was, indeed, his great wealth that excited the cupidity of these Philistine robbers; and his riches, which seemed to be his defence, were the occasion of his desolation. It is obvious that he had reached a good old age, and he had gathered around him children and children's children, and the children of children's children.

You can easily suppose the good old man retiring to rest happy in his possessions, and happier still in his anticipations, for he had reason to anticipate coming prosperity. God had spoken good of all the descendants of Israel, but of none had he spoken so much good as of Ephraim. In his numerous descendants he probably pleased himself with the thought, that he saw the begun accomplishment of the promise that his seed should become a multitude of nations. But what a fearful and sudden reverse was he destined to experience? During the silence of night a ruffian hand attacked his peaceful dwelling, plundered him of his property, and murdered his children. The sun which set on him the richest of Jacob's descendants, rose on him the poorest of his brethren; and instead of a comfortable habitation and a host of healthy happy countenances welcoming as usual, the

grandsire's morning smile, nothing met his astonished gaze but smoking ruins and mutilated corpses.

This affecting incident reads a lesson to us all. It tells those who are afflicted, “in patience to possess their souls;” and it bids those who are happy, “join trembling with their mirth.” It tells those who are in affliction to give God thanks that they have not been afflicted as Ephraim was. We may have been bereaved of much, it may be, but where is any of us that can for a moment compare his bereavements with those of Ephraim? If God had bereaved any of us as he bereaved Ephraim, we durst not have said that he had acted unjustly. And while the consideration of this piece of history is calculated to repress every thing like fretfulness, to moderate every thing like excessive grief, it is equally fitted to repress every thing like boastful confidence in the continuance of worldly prosperity. Whose situation is more happy—whose prospects are more flattering than those of Ephraim? Brethren, “the time is short. It remaineth, that they that have wives be as though they had none—and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not—and they that buy, as though they possessed not—and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

This piece of sacred history teaches you, secondly, That the *dispensations* of Divine Providence are often *apparently* in direct opposition to the *declarations* of the Divine promise.

It is difficult to conceive a more striking illustration of this general principle than that furnished by the remarkable incident recorded in the passage before us. Ephraim, as a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had an interest in all the promises made to his illustrious ancestors. “I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth,” said Jehovah to Abraham; “as the number of the stars, so shall thy seed be. I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. Thou shalt be a father of many nations. Surely in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thee; and thy seed shall be as the stars, and as the sand on the sea shore innumerable.” Such were the promises made to Abraham, and confirmed to Isaac, and Jacob.

Ephraim was one of the sons of Joseph,

and of course Ephraim had his share in the remarkable blessing that was pronounced on his father. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, (from thence is the shepherd the stone of Israel.) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee, and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above—blessings of the deep that lieth under—blessings of the breast and of the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

Nor was this all; Ephraim had a share in that blessing which Jacob pronounced on himself, and on his brother Manasseh. When Joseph heard that his father was sick, apparently to death, he went to visit him, and he took along with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, Jacob having been told that his son Joseph was coming to see him, strengthened himself, and sat upon his bed. "And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people, and will give this land to thy seed after thee, for an everlasting possession. And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance." And when Joseph brought forward his two sons, that their dying grandfather might embrace them and bless them, he said, "God, before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day—the angel which redeemed me from all evil—bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

There was more even than this. There was a great peculiarity in the manner in which Jacob pronounced this blessing. He crossed his hands, and laid his right hand on Ephraim, the youngest, and his left hand on Manasseh, the eldest; and when Joseph attempted to alter the position of the old man's hands, he replied, "I know it, my son, I know it. He, that is, Manasseh, shall be great but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim, and as Manasseh. And he set Ephraim before Manasseh." Such was the promise; and in the narrative before us, you see the providence. Can two things be more apparently in direct opposition? Here is a promise that Ephraim shall be more prosperous than all his brethren; and here is a providence that deprives Ephraim at once of all his property, and, as it would seem, of all his children also.

Nor is this at all an unparalleled or even an uncommon case, so far as apparent contrariety between the providence and promise of God is concerned. Was it like a fulfilment of the promise made to Israel that Jehovah would give them a good and large land, flowing with milk and honey, to lead them directly into the depths of the Arabian wilderness, and keep them wandering there for forty years? Was it like a fulfilment of the promise which God had made to David, that he would make him the ruler of his people, when he drove him from the court of Saul, and exposed him to imminent hazard of his life on the mountains of Israel from the persecutions of his infuriated enemy?

But I need not confine myself in my illustrations to what has taken place in former generations. I can appeal to the experience of every Christian. Is it not distinctly stated in God's word that no evil shall happen to the righteous? Is it not distinctly said, what is good God will give his people? Now, I put it to every Christian at present hearing me, if he has not in the course of his life met with much which at the time he could not help thinking evil for him? Has he not frequently had denied him that on which his strongest affections were placed, and which at the time he could not help thinking would have been good for him? There

can, indeed, be no doubt of the general principle that the dispensations of Divine Providence are often *apparently* in opposition to the Divine promises.

The reason of this apparent inconsistency of the providence with the promises of God, is by no means that there is a real opposition between them. It is the same God who speaks in his word that works in his providence—and He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. His word and his work are really perfectly harmonious; and in many cases those dispensations, which are apparently frustrating the promise are, in reality, fulfilling it. The reason why the promise and the providence of God often seem to us to be at variance, is our ignorance of the extent and of the particular design of the Divine dispensations. If we could see the commencement, and progress, and issue of all God's dispensations, we would gladly say, He is doing all things well, as he will by and by be constrained to say, He has done all things well. But in the present state this must be a matter of faith, not of sense. It is the divine appointment, that here we must walk by faith. And what were the use of faith, if we distinctly saw all the designs of the divine procedure with regard to us? Let us learn wisdom, and never do what we are exceedingly apt to do—make use of the dark providence to interpret the plain promise; but make use of the plain promise to interpret the dark providence. We do not—we cannot understand the doings of the Lord. "His way is in the deep, and his path is in the mighty waters. It is high as heaven, what can we do? deeper than hell, what can we know?" But his word is plain, we may understand it—we *ought* to believe it. Let us then trust God when we cannot see him, believing that the promise stands sure at the very time when providence seems in direct opposition to it.

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Judge not the Lord by feeble senses,
But trust him for his grace,

Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his works in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

COWPER.

The passage of Scripture I have now read, teaches us, in the third place, that the dissolution of those connexions that bind us together in a variety of relations in human life, occasions to all right constituted minds severe suffering and permanent sorrow.

The Author of the human constitution, who is benignant as well as wise in all his arrangements, having obviously intended man for society, has so formed us as that much of our happiness springs from our domestic and social relations, and from those affections and habits which arise out of these relations. It would be a miserable world—at least I am sure it would not be a happy one—if there were no husbands and wives, parents and children, and brothers and sisters, relatives and friends. That man must be deplorably selfish, who, on reflecting on the various sources of his happiness, does not find social relation and affection one of the most copious. In proportion to the happiness springing from these relations, is the pain that is occasioned when they are dissolved, especially when they are unexpectedly and violently dissolved. Of all the evils to which we are subject, perhaps the loss of good once possessed, is the severest; and of all losses the most painful to the mind of ordinary sensibility, is the loss of valuable relations and friends. Not merely are our friends the proper objects of a much stronger kind of affection than any other species of property; but their loss is of all other earthly losses the most irreparable. Our property, our reputation, our health, may be lost and regained. But a friend whom we have lost by death, we never can bring back again from the grave. Bereavement of relations and friends, is bereavement indeed.
(To be concluded in our next.)

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SERMON by the Rev. Dr. BROWN, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. Dr. RUSSELL, Leith.
SERMON by the Rev. E. CRAIG, A.M., Edinburgh.

Price 2d.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MASSACRE OF EPHRAIM'S CHILDREN;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. JOHN BROWN.—Concluded.

It has been said powerfully, by a great man, who obviously felt all he expressed, that "the loss of a friend on whom the heart is fixed, and to whom every wish and every endeavour tended, is a state of desolation, in which the mind, impatient of itself, looks abroad, yet finds nothing, in a wide world, but emptiness and horror. I have, ever since such an event," adds he, "found myself broken off from mankind, a solitary wanderer in the wild of life, a gloomy gazer on a world to which I had little relation." It is quite plain, that Ephraim's family afflictions produced a very deep impression upon him, and it would have been strange if it had been otherwise. "Ephraim mourned for his children, and he mourned for them many days."

All right constituted minds feel strongly such bereavements. We are bound together, in the various relations of life by the bands of love; and "it is a proof that that heart is hard which does not bleed when these bands are broken."* There is nothing improper in all this—it is a natural feeling; and wherever it does not exist, it is a proof that there is either something physically defective, or something morally

Wherever this insensibility exists in a high degree, I apprehend there will be found to be a combination of both. Not to feel and to feel keenly, such bereavements, is to shut ourselves out from deriving from them the moral improvement they are intended and calculated to minister to us. It is wrong to faint when we are rebuked of the Lord, but it is still farther wrong to despise his chastisement. Yet these feelings, natural, and amiable, and

praiseworthy as they are, within certain limits, may, by becoming excessive, become sinful. They may refuse the restraints of higher principles, and become bitter sources both of sin and misery. There can be no doubt that our sorrow for the loss of any worldly blessing has become excessive, when it blinds us to the value, and renders us insensible to the sweetness, of those divine gifts which the munificent Author of all good is pleased still to continue with us; when it leads us to quarrel with the divine dispensations, as unwise or unkind; or unfits us for rightly performing the duties that arise out of the various relations in which we are placed.

It is no easy thing to sorrow without complaining—to mourn without murmuring; yet though difficult it is not impossible. Men possessed of the same passions as ourselves, have, under the influence of divine truth upon their minds, maintained a happy medium between impatience and insensibility. You recollect how Aaron conducted himself when, by a very awful dispensation, he was deprived of two of his sons in one day—"Aaron held his peace;" and what Eli said, when denunciations, peculiarly fitted to agonize a religious father's heart, were pronounced on his family—"it is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." There is perhaps, no better example of the right spirit in which bereavements ought to be borne, than that which is exhibited by the man after God's own heart, when he was deprived of a favourite child. We have a full account of this affecting scene in 2 Sam. xii. 15—22. The only other example I shall advert to, is the instance of our Lord's virgin mother, Mary. The picture presented by the apostle John is peculiarly touching. John xix. 25. She stood

at the foot of the cross—there can be no doubt that Simeon's prediction was then fulfilled, "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul;"—but, to use the words of an old divine, "she stood, sad and silent, and with a modest grief, deep as the waters of the abyss, but smooth as the face of the lake, full of love and patience, and sorrow and hope." This is the way in which we should endeavour to bear our bereavements; with a calm resignation, and, if I may be allowed the expression, with a cheerful sorrow.

I go on to remark, in the fourth place, that this passage teaches us, that it is the duty of friends and neighbours to do every thing in their power to relieve the minds and assuage the sorrows of those who are visited with bereavements.

Ephraim's brethren came to comfort him. Their conduct was amiable and praiseworthy, and deserves to be imitated by all who are placed in similar circumstances. There are men who hasten away from the chamber of sickness, and will not enter the house of mourning, even when these are tenanted by relatives and friends. However these men may attempt to cloak their inhumanity under the pretence of excessive sensibility, we have no hesitation in saying, that their conduct is not only in direct opposition to the more amiable feelings of human nature, but is entirely inconsistent with the spirit and express statements of this holy book. Here we are told that "it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting;" and that it is an important part of "pure and undefiled religion, before God and the Father, to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction." The apostle Paul, who had much of the spirit of his master, bids us weep with those that weep; and our Lord, in shedding tears at the grave of Lazarus, and in coming to comfort his sisters while mourning his death, has set us an example that we should follow his steps.

There are others who are not without a disposition to give consolation to persons when they are visited with these bereavements, who yet, in consequence of mistaken notions with regard to the proper manner of communicating consolation, frequently do more harm than good. When they visit those who have been bereaved, they do every thing in

their power to lead their minds away from the occasion of their sorrows, and to make them forget their griefs in the business or in the amusements of the world. This is cruel kindness. It is doing all in their power to prevent their afflicted friends deriving any improvement from the merciful chastisements of their heavenly Father. And often these persons lose even their own object. They increase instead of alleviating sorrow. He knew human nature well who said, "As vinegar upon nitre, so is he who sings the songs to a heavy heart."

There are others still who try to reason mourners out of their sorrow, by telling them that the bereavement is nothing but what multitudes are daily meeting with—that such individual suffering is necessary to the welfare of the general system—and that it is absurd to make ourselves unhappy about a loss which we could not prevent, and which, now that it has taken place, we cannot retrieve. The mourner may find it quite impossible to answer these arguments; but they exasperate instead of assuaging his sorrow. What comfort is it to me to know that I am but one of an innumerable company of mourners? and why dwell on the irremediableness of my misfortune? It is that which causes my deepest regret. "I weep the more *because* I weep in vain."

There is no right way of comforting such mourners, but by leading them to the consolations that are unfolded in the Word of God. Where the persons bereaved, and the friends of whom they have been bereaved, have belonged to the family of God, there is no great difficulty, nay, there is extreme satisfaction in communicating to them consolation. We should draw the minds of these persons to the heart-soothing discoveries that have been made with regard to the state of departed saints between death and the resurrection. We should tell them that their friends who are "absent from the body," are now "present with the Lord;" and that it is with reference to them that the revelation was made to John the divine, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth

on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." We should direct them to the glorious prospect before them—the re-union of their souls and bodies—the eternity of perfection in holiness and in happiness they shall enjoy "with the Lord." We should also point out to them the important benevolent purposes which this dispensation is intended to serve in reference to themselves. Here we are warranted to take high ground, and to say to Christians when bereaved of their friends—"Though this chastisement is not joyous but grievous, it will yield to you the peaceable fruits of righteousness, patience, experience, hope, which maketh not ashamed." "All things are working together for your good; and these light afflictions, which last but for a moment, are working for you a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory."

It is not quite so easy to administer consolation, even to decidedly religious persons, when there is reason to doubt with regard to the religious character of their departed friend, who may have left the world with no satisfactory evidence that he was interested in the blessings of the christian salvation, or with but too strong proof that he was one of the wicked who are driven away in their wickedness. Yet, even in this case, you may find materials for consolation to the christian mourner. We should state to him that he has no right to pronounce on the final state of his departed friend. What may have taken place between his spirit and the great Father of spirits before death, after all intercourse had ceased between that spirit and its embodied brethren, it is impossible for us to say. At any rate, the following train of thought seems fitted to minister comfort and relief in these very trying circumstances: There is, perhaps, scarcely any of us who has not some one human friend, in whose principle and kindness we have such confidence, that if, on our dying bed, we could be fully assured that that person was to outlive all our family, and that nothing was ever to take place with regard to

any one of them but what appeared wise and right to our confidential friend, we would die in peace, so far as our anxieties about our families are concerned. Now, as Christians, have we not a friend incomparably wiser and kinder than the wisest and kindest of human friends? and is not every thing that concerns the destinies of our relations, in time or in eternity, entirely in his hand? and are we not certain that he will ultimately make us perfectly well pleased with every thing he does, either to us or to ours?

The greatest difficulty a person has to meet with in administering consolation, is when he is called to comfort those who are themselves utter strangers to the knowledge and belief of the truth—men who are without God, and without hope in the world. A christian minister, in circumstances of this kind, finds that his humanity is sometimes in danger of getting the better of his christian principle—that he is in hazard of "casting pearls before swine," by offering consolation which the individuals, in their present circumstances, are not prepared to receive, and that in his anxiety to relieve a temporary uneasiness, he runs a risk of involving them in permanent and soul-destroying delusion. Still, however, this book enables us honestly to comfort even the ungodly, when mourning over the death of their friends, by telling us that these afflictions are, on the part of him who sends them, kindly intended. We are not warranted to look on affliction, whether ourselves or others are the subjects of it, in any aspect but one of these two—as a means employed by God either to make the bad good, or the good better. Let us assure the poor sufferer that his affliction is mercifully designed by God to awaken him to consideration, and urge him to flee for refuge from the wrath to come to the hope set before him in the gospel. We may say to the most thoughtless and wicked man that lives, You may have reason to bless God for the death of your nearest and dearest relative; for the loss of that friend, if rightly improved, may prove the salvation of your immortal spirit.

In attempting to comfort those who are bereaved of relations and friends, we ought to pay attention to the *manner* as well as to the *matter* of consolation. The most consolatory truths, if spoken in a harsh, cold manner, will increase rather than allay sorrow. The wounds of the

heart require to be touched tenderly, and he needs the "tongue of the learned" who would speak "a word in season" to the mourner.

I have only further to remark, 5thly, That the passage teaches us, that losses which, at the time they took place, appeared to be utterly irreparable, are often made up, in a very wonderful way, to those who have sustained them.

We have a striking instance of this in the passage before us. There is nothing in the passage opposed to the idea that the whole of Ephraim's descendants were murdered by those Philistine robbers. If it were so, the bereavement must not only have been felt to be severe, but must have appeared absolutely irreparable, as it is quite plain, from the statement, that Ephraim was at this time a very old man, and that there was no probability of his having any more children. And yet He with whom all things are possible gave to Ephraim a son in his old age, and blessed that son; so that, in the course of a very few generations, no trace was to be found of a misfortune, that threatened at one period completely to annihilate one of the tribes of Israel. Thus, those providential dispensations, which seemed to contradict the promise, really magnified it, and made its fulfilment a more illustrious manifestation of the divine power and faithfulness. Nor is the case of Ephraim a solitary instance. You have all heard of the sufferings of Job, and of the reward bestowed on him for the manner in which he bore those sufferings. His health, his substance, his children, were all taken from him; and there was no probability of his ever regaining his lost enjoyments. Yet he lived to recover his health—to have a family equally numerous, and possessions still more extensive than he had previous to his afflictions. The Lord blessed his end more than his beginning.

Let no individual, smarting under late bereavements, say, these are the miracles of past ages. Is the ear of Jehovah heavy, that it cannot hear? Is his arm powerless, that it cannot save? Is not his heart as generous, his hand as munificent as ever? He never can take any thing from his people, for which he cannot, for which he will not, sooner or later, in one form or another, make compensation. And they should never forget this—that while there are very few blessings which he has

pledged himself never to take from them, there is one that is more than sufficient to make amends for all of which he may deprive them. He *may* take from you your wealth—he *may* take from you your reputation, your children, your dearest relatives and friends, your reason—he *will* take from you your health and your life; but there is one thing that he will never take from you—"his loving-kindness will he not take from you, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. His covenant will he not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips." "I am the Lord thy God," is the great, the all-comprehensive promise of the new covenant; and the man who knows that this is true with regard to himself, may stand unterrified, and witness the whole created universe disappearing, and say, I have lost nothing.

I have thus endeavoured shortly to illustrate the instructions which this portion of sacred history, recorded in the text, seems calculated and intended to convey. These instructions, my brethren, are of wide reference. They may be of use to us in whatever circumstances we may be placed. Most of us have sustained some bereavements. All of us, if we live long, may lay our account with sustaining more. But it does appear to me, that they are peculiarly fitted for ministering to the instruction and consolation of this congregation, in the painfully trying circumstances in which God has been pleased lately to place you. You, as a christian church, have met with a very sudden and very severe bereavement. I gladly leave to another, much better qualified than myself, to delineate at length the character of your deceased pastor; but I would be doing great violence to my own feelings, did I not take this opportunity of distinctly stating that, in my estimation, this congregation was highly favoured indeed, by the great Head of the Church, when the gift of their late pastor was here bestowed on them, and that the loss they have sustained, is no ordinary one. He was a star of pure lustre, and promised to shed forth a powerful and most benignant influence. Under the mysterious arrangement of Him who rules in the heavens, that star has disappeared long before reaching its zenith; but we have no doubt it has arisen in a brighter firmament, where it will shine forth like a sun among many suns, in the kingdom of our Father,

for ever and ever. He was a lovely plant, which we fondly hoped would, ere long, have become a flourishing tree, producing beautiful blossoms and refreshing fruit. "It has withered in all the leaves of its spring;" but no—it has been but transplanted to the paradise of God, where, deeply rooted by the river of life, "its leaf shall be always green, and it shall never cease from yielding fruit."—To speak without a figure, he was a young man and a young minister of uncommon promise. His talents were of a high order; and his acquirements, for his years, of extraordinary extent. Even although he had been destitute of real religion, he would still have belonged to the same class as the young man spoken of in the Gospel, whom Jesus loved. But when this natural amiableness was found connected, in so remarkable a degree, with "the beauty of holiness," it formed a character of peculiar loveliness. He was, indeed, to borrow the words of a great writer, "one of those rare specimens of human nature, which the great Author of it produces at distant intervals, and exhibits for a moment, as he is hastening 'to make them up among his jewels.'" You expected, and you were warranted to expect, much from him; and the bereavement you have met with, is indeed a great, as it has been an unexpected one. I have no doubt, that to many of you it seems not only a painful, but a very dark and mysterious dispensation of Providence—that it appears to you as if it were scarcely consistent with the declarations of the divine promise. You form a part of that Church which has been purchased by the blood of the Redeemer, and with regard to which, Jehovah himself says—"I, the Lord, will keep my vineyard; I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day." You may be apt to think, that the late dispensation is not in correspondence with this promise which Jesus has made to you, as a part of his Church, that he will watch over you for good, and that no evil shall come near you. You feel the bereavement; it were strange, indeed, if you did not. I have no doubt that this feeling is strong, and as little, that it will not be momentary. I consider it my duty, and the duty of all your

christian brethren, to sympathize with you in your affliction, and to do what lies in our power to comfort you. We know, that all that is in our power is but little. But we will mourn with you, and pray for you, and lay before you the rich consolation which this blessed book provides for bereavements like yours. Be assured you are not sorrowing alone. We believe it may be very safely said of the Secession Church in this city, on the present occasion, that "when one member suffers, the whole body suffers with it." It is not improbable that to many of you at present every thing looks gloomy and unpromising; but we come to tell you, that the most apparently irreparable losses may be—have been—repaired. We appeal to your own experience. When lately mourning the loss of one, who, for many years faithfully ministered among you, that loss was soon supplied in a manner which filled all your hearts with gratitude; and now that your young minister is dead, still believe and rejoice in the faith, that his Master lives—the chief Shepherd never dies; and his name is Jesus—the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. The language of such dispensations is—"Be still, and know that I am God. May I not do what I will with my own? What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." I trust you will be enabled to respond in your hearts to these solemn intimations—"We are dumb, not opening our mouth; for Thou hast done it. Good is the will of the Lord. Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." You ought to be thankful that you ever had such pastors, instead of repining that you have lost them; and you ought to rejoice, that he who gave them to you, can and will, if you continue steadfast and immoveable in your duty to him, still supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, through Christ Jesus. "All flesh is grass; and the loveliness of man is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

THE GAIN OF THE WORLD THE LOSS OF THE SOUL ;

A SERMON PREACHED ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1836,

By the Rev. MICHAEL RUSSELL, LL.D.,

Minister of St. James's Episcopal Chapel, Leith.

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—MARK viii. 36, 37.

THE great object of religion is to enable a man so to pass through things temporal, that he finally lose not the things eternal. That the enjoyments and pursuits of this world are not incompatible with those duties and sentiments which will fit us for the next, may be inferred from the goodness of our Almighty Creator, who would not, in designing us for everlasting happiness hereafter, have involved us at present in a condition which would render the attainment of that happiness impossible, and thereby defeat at once our hopes and his own benevolence. Such, however, is the effect of temporal motives upon our minds, that we are in great danger of allowing the things that are seen to deprive of their just value the things which are invisible; and thus to sacrifice eternity to time, the soul to the body, and heaven to earth. Seduced by the desire of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, we are apt to love the world, and the things of the world, till the thoughts of our immortal nature die within us, and we forget that the threescore years and ten of this transitory state will carry us into one, of which the duration has no limits, and of which the objects possess a magnitude and an importance which pass all understanding. It will, therefore, be of great use to us, to revive frequently in our minds the solemn truth conveyed to us in the text, that a man may, in endeavouring to gain the world, lose his soul; and that, in such a case, the success of his endeavours would prove at once his folly and his everlasting ruin.

The disciples of our Lord, to whom this serious warning was first addressed, were, no doubt, placed in circumstances somewhat peculiar; and to them, of consequence, the words of their master had a degree of point and emphasis, which they do not convey to us, whose duties and temptations are not a little different. He had just informed them that he was about to suffer many things, and to be rejected of

the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed; a declaration which excited their fears and indignation to such a degree, that, as St. Mark tells us, Peter took him and began to rebuke him. Our Lord, notwithstanding, continued to assure them that his ministry, as well as theirs, was to be performed in the midst of suffering, and ended in death. "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" To the Jews at large, when our Saviour appeared amongst them, the great object of ambition was to gain the whole world, as the followers and countrymen of that prophetic son of David, who, in the character of the Messiah, was not only to restore again the kingdom to Israel, but place in subjection under their feet the persons and territory of all their enemies, as well in the East as in the West. The true Messias, however, diverted their thoughts to a very different subject. He reminded them of the high duties with which they were about to be charged as the first preachers of the gospel; prepared them for encountering opposition and suffering, instead of gaining victory and preferment; for meeting death at the hands of their enemies, instead of leading captivity captive. But to suggest to their minds the proper motive and reward for such exertions and sacrifices, he turns their hopes to the future and eternal world, where the souls of good men shall enjoy everlasting happiness, and with which the gains and enjoyments of this imperfect state are not worthy to be compared. He did not conceal from them that, in the arduous warfare in which their faith and courage were about to be engaged, the bodily life would be hazarded, and in many

cases lost; but he established their constancy by the assurance that to lose the life in such circumstances was to save it; and that to die for his sake and the gospel's was to begin a life that would never end, and the felicity of which would never know any limits either of duration or extent. Before they could take up the sceptre in the kingdom of heaven, and wear the crown of glory promised to the faithful, they were to take up the cross upon earth; endure the crown of thorns; feel the iron of affliction enter into their souls; follow their master along a path of tribulation, every step of which was moistened with tears and blood; they were to taste the cup of anguish, and the bitterness of death.

Such, my brethren, was the perspective of futurity which was opened to the eyes of the apostles, by the prophetic admonition of our blessed Lord: and they were induced to encounter all its horrors, by the reflection that there is a life after the present to compensate all its losses, and to reward all its sufferings, its self-denial and its exertions. The same reasoning and the same motives apply to us, who live in these latter days. We are admonished, as well as the disciples were, that there are duties which we are called to perform; that there are pains to be endured, and indulgences to be laid aside, in pursuing the path of the christian life; and we are also reminded, that what we lay down here, we shall take up hereafter; what we relinquish for the sake of holiness and a good conscience in this world, we shall have restored to us tenfold in the world to come; and that the life which we resign for Christ's sake and the gospel's in the presence of men, shall be compensated, by an inheritance of immortality and bliss in the presence of God and of the holy angels. The change of circumstances in our times occasions, no doubt, a slight modification in the import of our Saviour's words, as well as in the manner of obeying the precept which his words set forth to Christians in all ages. But still the general principle is the same; and he who thinks of no life besides the present shall not live eternally; and he who tries to gain the whole world, without using the means which divine grace has appointed to save the soul, will find that his labour has been in vain—that he has grasped at a shadow, whilst he

threw away the pearl of great price—that, in searching for riches, he has met with poverty and disappointment—and that, instead of the river of life, he has fallen into the gulf of misery and everlasting death.

But, even if a man were to gain the whole world, at the expense of his soul, what would it profit him? The world is but for a day; and he who holds himself its master this moment, is the next in the dust, his name perishing, and his place nowhere to be found. Nothing would prove so vain and valueless to a man in the hour of death, when remorse were settling round his soul, and when his conscience laboured with the fearful thoughts of judgment, than the assurance that all the power, and the wealth, and the obeisance, and the service, which had tempted his soul in the day of its might, and made it sacrifice its hopes of heaven, were still at his command, and still waiting to do him honour. All the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them, would be no compensation to the dying sinner for the loss of those precious hopes which respect eternity—the light of God's countenance when entering the valley of death—and the confidence of his favour, in that mysterious world, where only the souls of the good can behold their Creator and live. So far from proving a solace to him, the bribes of unrighteousness would only sicken on the heart and weigh down the spirits. They would present themselves as memorials of his folly—as tokens of that miserable miscalculation which made him throw away his salvation, forfeit an immortality of bliss, devote his soul to perdition everlasting; and have, in return, a few objects which glitter in the eye and tinkle in the ear, and create in his mind a silly dream of vanity, and then crumble into dust or vanish into air, at the moment he would retain them with the firmest grasp.

Such would be the disappointment and reproach of the most successful candidate for the power and glory of the world—even of those who have outstripped all others in the race of ambition, and reached the goal, crowned with all the honours for which their souls had lusted, and loaded with a greater share of wealth and of power than they had ever dared to fancy in the highest flights of their imagination. What, then, must be the miserable condition

of that greater portion of mankind, who sacrifice the future to the present, without obtaining either—who lose their souls and gain not the world—who are chargeable with the evil thought and the covetous eye, but whose hands have never been filled with the rewards of unrighteousness? To all men, the world, and the things of the world, act the part of deceivers. They promise much, but perform not. They fill the eye and warm the imagination, but they prove traitors to the heart; giving it neither the fulness of joy which they held out at a distance, nor the pleasant recollections, without which the deepest draughts of earthly delight become bitterness and wormwood to the conscience. In this way, men are drawn aside from the paths of peace and salvation, by the mere semblance of enjoyment. They follow shadows painted on a cloud, which, amidst a thousand brilliant colours, change their form at every step, and elude for ever the foolish hand which is stretched out to seize them. Man, says the Psalmist, walketh in a vain show. There is no reality either in his pursuits or in his enjoyments. The object on which he sets his heart, keeps for ever at a distance; or if he attains to it, he finds it not what he expected. He drinks of the brook, and is only more thirsty than before. He increaseth his stores, and finds himself only more empty than when he began. He extends his power, and feels only an augmented desire for obedience, flattery and submission. Like the grave, and the fire, and the parched earth, the heart of a worldly man is doomed never to say, "It is enough."

These considerations are sufficient to show, that he who exchanges the hopes of the future world for the possession of the present deceives himself, and is not more destitute of religious principle than of ordinary discernment. But no man ever made this exchange of his soul for pleasure or power with his eyes open to the result, and with a firm resolution to abide by its consequences. This miserable bargain is never seriously contemplated, except, perhaps, by those unhappy individuals who, in the language of Scripture, may be said to sell themselves to work wickedness even in the sight of God. In general we are betrayed by our corrupted nature in a ruinous traffic with the devil, the world, and the flesh, before we

are aware that our feet have relinquished the paths of innocence, or our hearts have given their consent to an evil thought or a guilty deed. Passion is blind, and neither anticipates results nor calculates consequences; and on this account, we find ourselves involved in pernicious courses, without once thinking that we have entered the broad way which leadeth to destruction, or endangered the soul, which ten thousand worlds cannot ransom from the effects of its sins. We permit ourselves to become the slaves of the evil principle and thereby to forfeit our dearest hopes and most exalted privileges, without having perceived the progress of his wiles, or the extent of our own weakness. The soul may be lost before danger is apprehended, and the miserable victim may be in the hands of hell before his thoughts have yet ceased to linger on the blessedness of heaven, and his imagination to delight itself with the purity and the glory which clothe, as with a garment, the ransomed of the Lord.

We are, therefore, led from these plain considerations to infer, that nothing is more important to our safety here, and our eternal welfare hereafter, than caution united with humility and watchfulness. While we are in the world, its cares and its enjoyments justly occupy a portion of our thoughts, and give employment to a large share of our time; and, as I have already remarked, the duties of this life if honestly performed, and the pleasures of the body if moderately pursued, will not incapacitate us for those higher duties which respect the world to come, and fit us for the society of angels. But there are limits beyond which we cannot proceed, without giving too large a space to the interests of time, and neglecting those of eternity; without surrendering to the passing moment thoughts which are due to the future; without, in short, losing the soul in attempting to secure or increase the things which belong to the body. These limits we are very apt to pass before we are sensible that we have touched forbidden ground; and we can only be kept right in this respect, by habitually calling to mind that the body, and all its wants, will soon cease to solicit our cares, while the soul has interests which will never diminish in importance, and never come to an end.

The immortal part of man, by stretching

its hopes and fears into eternity, which it is doomed to inhabit either in bliss or in misery not to be described, lays claim to the utmost concern which can operate in the heart of a reasonable being; and this concern will not be lessened when we reflect that a time is fast hastening on, when our errors will be past remedy, when our neglect will admit of no compensation, and when our losses shall not be retrieved. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? said our Lord; and this question implies, both that a desire will be felt to secure the blessings of eternal life when the day of salvation is past, and also that the difficulties to be overcome are such that they cannot be viewed but with the deepest apprehension. It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment; and then we shall experience how deplorable a thing it is to have gained the world, or any part of it, by unjustifiable means. Then pleasures which are past and perished, and possessions which must be quitted, will appear to us in their true emptiness. How dreadful must it be to such as have loved those things only which God hates, when the omnipotent Judge shall proceed to pass a sentence on the impenitent soul, the effects of which can neither be conceived nor expressed! Then would they willingly give, in exchange for the hope of salvation, all that their success in the world, or the pursuits of ambition, or the love of pleasure, had enabled them to secure. But the ransom will not be received. The wages of sin, like the leprosy of the prophet's servant, will cleave to the guilty soul, pointing at once to the crime and the punishment. The two talents of gold and the changes of raiment may be cast away; but the avarice and the falsehood by which they were obtained cannot be purified by all the waters of Jordan. The vineyard of Naboth, too, would readily be relinquished by the covetous Ahab to purchase peace of mind, and to wash away the blood by which the acquisition had been stained; but the vineyard will not be taken in exchange for the soul of the wicked king; nor would the restoration cleanse his conscience from the horrid crime to which the desire of it had seduced him. Judas, in the hour of remorse, cast from his hand the thirty pieces of silver, the price of his treachery and ingratitude; but he could not cast

away at the same moment the painful conviction that he had betrayed the innocent blood, that he had requited, with the basest desertion, the benevolence of a kind master who had never ceased to train his heart to goodness, and to make him partaker of his affections and solicitude. What shall a man give, said our Lord, in exchange for his soul? What would he not suffer; what would he not relinquish; what would he not promise, could the bars of the everlasting prison-house be removed, the gates of eternal death thrown open, and the condemned spirit set free from the avenging ministers who wait to destroy. When the array of the last judgment is prepared; when the judge of the quick and of the dead summons the thousand generations of men to stand before him; when the graves open, and the sea gives up its dead; when the rocks are rent, and the foundations of the earth are shaken, and the firmament burns with a devouring fire; when the final sentence is pronounced, and the wicked are commanded to depart from the presence of their Creator into everlasting torment,—what would not a man give in exchange for his soul! Then, my brethren, it will be too late: the time of mercy will have gone by, and the hour of justice will have succeeded it. Therefore, let us take heed betimes while the day of salvation lasteth; for the night cometh when none can work. Let us, while we have the light, believe in the light and walk as children of the light, that we be not cast into utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Let us not abuse the goodness of God, who calleth us mercifully to repentance, and, of his endless pity, promiseth us forgiveness of that which is past, if, with a perfect and true heart, we return unto him. For though our sins be as red as scarlet, yet shall they be made white as snow; and though they be like purple, yet shall they be made white as wool. "Turn ye," saith the Lord, "from all your wickedness, and your sin shall not be your destruction." Cast away from you all your ungodliness that ye have done; make ye new hearts and a new spirit; "for why will ye die, oh, house of Israel, seeing I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," saith the Lord God.

"What shall it profit a man," saith our Redeemer, "if he shall gain the whole

world, and lose his own soul?" What is the world but the means of having food, and raiment, and ease, in greater variety and abundance than others have them—a distinction which, if viewed narrowly, and taken by itself, is not worth half the pains and labour by which only it can be obtained. But what is the soul? It is the immortal and everlasting principle of all thought and feeling in man's nature—the subject in which abide all hope and fear, all joy and sorrow, all happiness, or all misery. It is that part of our intellectual frame which cannot die, which cannot forget, which cannot cease to be conscious, which cannot fly from itself, but which lives for ever, beloved and cherished by its Almighty Creator, or expelled from his presence in horror and despair. If threescore years and ten were to bring it to an end, and make all its thoughts perish; if, after death, there were no judgment; if the worm of remorse were to become extinct on the bed where the last breath goes forth, and to cease its gnawings with the mortal pains of the body, then might we hesitate between the interests of the present and the future, and adopt the maxim of the atheist, and say, "Let us

eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But as these things cannot be; as the soul which sinneth and repenteth not has to die a death which will never be completed—a death of horror and despair, of which the sighs, and agony, and groaning ascend up for ever and ever—the question which should now interest us the most is, What shall we give in exchange for our souls? We must, in the first place, present before God, my brethren, on the altar of faith, the atonement which he himself has provided, the sole procuring cause of human salvation; we must offer up to him a broken and contrite heart, weaned from the world, and devoted to his service; we must solicit his mercy with the tears of penitence and vows of reformation, entreating that his grace may be sufficient for us, and his strength made perfect in our weakness;—and these are the things which the Lord will accept in exchange for our souls. May the Almighty and everlasting God, of whose only gift it cometh that his faithful people do unto him true and laudable service, grant that we may all so faithfully serve him in this life, that we fail not finally to attain his heavenly promises, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE LOT OF MAN'S INHERITANCE ON EARTH;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. JAMES'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, EDINBURGH,

By the Rev. EDWARD CRAIG, A.M.

"His flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn."

Job xiv. 22.

THIS is the language of holy Job as he sat in the dust, bereft of his family and his fortune, and miserably afflicted with disease. He recognised by sad experience the lot of man—that he was liable, in this short period of his existence, to two serious afflictive evils: to bodily pain, and to mental distress. "His flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn." Both the rational soul, and the material frame in which it dwells, shall experience suffering according to their several character. The mind shall be agonized by the various circumstances with which it is associated, and the body by its inherent tendency to corruption. Both shall be exposed together to a variety of incidents calculated to produce suffering

suiited to their respective nature, and community of suffering, as far as from their intimacy of relation they are capable of sympathizing with each other. The mind sinks under bodily pain: the bodily frame gives way under mental oppression. Job was a very striking exemplification of the sad truth which he uttered. The flesh upon him was harassed by one of the severest and most humbling diseases to which flesh is liable; and, added to the common afflictions of loss of property, friends and relations, he had to endure the still heavier affliction of being suspected to have been a hypocrite in his religious professions, and to have called down his outward afflictions as a divine chastisement for his secret vices. Yet Job was a

man of virtue, of sincere religion, a man of whom God said to the tempter, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil." Nevertheless he was not exempt from this peculiar feature of man's lot below, "His flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn."

Upwards of three thousand years have rolled away since the days of Job, involving in them the mortal history and the eternal destiny of unnumbered millions of men; and still in every part of the habitable globe whereon man is found, the statement of the text is verified by fact. Man throughout all ages, and in all countries, is a sufferer both in body and mind. This mortal flesh is liable to pain, and these souls to sorrow. And if we go into the detail of each other's history, what heart-sending scenes present themselves! How many sorrows each one has to encounter in personal and domestic trials, and in what endless variety of anxieties which arise out of each individual's peculiar circumstances! And, then, to what a host of afflicting diseases and accidents is this frail body subject! Let us go into the public hospitals of a city—into the hovels of the poor, where suffering is aggravated by want, and into the bed-chambers of the wealthy, where suffering is scarcely alleviated by the ministrations of abundance, and what a mass of bodily suffering is developed to you!—such as to show too plainly that it is the common lot—such as to bring it home powerfully to our own mind, that we ourselves cannot calculate on exemption from these visitations—such as to intimate to us that even already there may be in this sound, and vigorous, and unscathed flesh, the seeds of extensive mischief, the germ of indescribable, and almost unsupportable, and even mortal agony—the commencement of suffering which shall dim the eye with tears and watchings, and bring down the lofty spirit to childish complaints, and wither the yet unshrinking energies of manhood to the extreme of emaciation, and make him who at this moment treads lightly and joyously upon the earth, creep softly, and languidly, and mourning to his grave.

Brethren, these are the realities of life. These are the solemn truths, and the useful contemplations of this existence. These facts should occupy our attention; we

should sympathize, while we may do it disinterestedly with the distresses of others, for the hour of affliction may soon be upon ourselves. But this is not the only reason why our attention should be turned to this subject. There are others still more important. It is impossible but that the fact of this appointment to bodily and mental distress must bear an important relation to our moral state, and, on this account, our attention should be directed to it with intense interest. If we have any thing like wisdom, consistent with our circumstances, we shall be led to inquire diligently what ought to be our conduct with reference to this extraordinary fact.

And, 1st, Let us ask, how is this fact received by the multitude? Thanks be to the God of all grace, that, in passing through the varied scenes of life, we do not find men altogether destitute of sympathy towards each other in suffering. There is much, very much, of apathy and neglect; but there is much that is opposite; and even, in many instances, where there is little or no religious principle, there is a tenderness and kindness of feeling, as between man and man, which shines out very beautifully at times, in circumstances of even peculiar oppression and poverty. There are the wealthy who have scattered their abundance far and wide; and the poor man has been known to give readily of his little to alleviate the sorrows of a greater sufferer.

But notwithstanding all this, there is a sad want of close and serious consideration of the fact, that this life is a suffering state. It is not looked at, seriously calculated on, and met in a proper and a submissive spirit; on the contrary, in a great proportion of persons, especially of those who think scantily and lightly of the sanctions of religion, there is a selfishness which wraps itself up in its own concerns, and desperately satiates itself with its own present enjoyments. Many a man evidently acts on the principle that sorrow and suffering are not to be thought of till they come. "As long as the day of calamity does not come to me, I am to cherish a light heart, and trip through life unthinkingly, without regarding those declarations which would show me that suffering must, at one time or other, be part of my own lot; without allowing the actual sufferings of others to weigh me down and depress me." This is too much

the feeling of all. But, alas! there is one class of persons in whom the acme of this character exists. It is that circle called the gay world, and known by a number of other distinguishing names in which they pride themselves—the grand secret of whose mystic fellowship appears to be the compact between each other to keep the dread realities of life out of sight, and to throw a glittering veil over all which might tend to damp their desperate and determined hilarity. As they run their mazy round, many must drop away from them—must sink into affliction—must lie down on beds of languishing, or agony, or death. The aged must at last be dragged unwillingly by the grasp of death from the sparkling circle; and often even the young and the fair, and the witty and the gay, are suddenly snatched from it before the first freshness of the scene has faded on them. But all these gloomy facts are to be put aside by those who remain untouched;—no such testimonies to the truth of our lot are to be listened to within that magic circle. Death is a consideration for others, but not for the votaries of gay and fashionable life. Those who remain are to forget the sufferers, and to act as if they were to remain for ever. They are to lay the realities of the world out of sight, and “snatch a bliss beyond the reach of fate.” Suffer who will, the saloons are still to be illuminated, the tables spread, and the “sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer, and all kinds of music,” are still to sound; and this crowd of hardened, idolatrous revellers are still to fall down and worship the golden image which fashion has set up. This is the device for happiness; to this they are exhorted to devote themselves; and, as the inevitable lot of man repeatedly thins their ranks, they are desperately to refuse to remember the awful truth, that “man’s flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.”

Oh, if the kind providence of God should ever compulsorily awaken some of those persons from their dream, with what scalding tears would they weep over the wretched hours of past life; over a mind frittered away in worse than idleness; and over a heart hardened by the restless pursuit of trifles against the sufferings of their fellows; and an immortal soul brought

down to the very gate of eternal wretchedness.

And, if we turn from the maze of vanity and folly to the man of business and of thought, How does he take the fact of those afflictions with which the world abounds? You will see him, who is yet untouched in body or in circumstances, plodding onward perseveringly, in eager devotion to his own objects of gain or elevation, and never suffering the afflictions of others to delay his progress, or to disturb his peace. He just bestows the necessary civilities of a moment—the customary courteous language of an unfelt sympathy, upon those within his range who are afflicted, and then turns back again with increasing force, the resistless force of a settled habit, to the world and to his favourite object. No remark seems to him more ill-placed or uncalled for, or more decidedly to be put down with dryness and distance, and determined silence, than that which endeavours to force upon him the conviction, that the afflictions of others may soon be our own, and that, in either case, they are kind and gracious warnings, sent expressly to loosen our grasp upon the things of time, and to make us think of death and heaven.

But, alas! when a man has been forming for years this habit of selfish indifference, and, in the sufficiency of his own encouraging success, has been shutting out all practical acquaintance with sorrow; and has lived, in his own comfortable apartments, an utter stranger to the scenes of want and destitution, and wretchedness and disappointment, and distress and ruin, that are around him, and within his reach, and has not seen the languid look of want, nor heard the moan of misery,—how unfit is that man to encounter the storm which at last breaks upon him the more suddenly, because it has been the longer delayed! When the symptoms of a more rapid decay appear upon himself, and the lesson which he might have learned by anticipation and with profit, in the way of a kindly sympathy with others, he now learns, in all the suddenness of its severity on himself, that “his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.”

(To be concluded in our next.)

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SERMON by the REV. EDWARD CRAIG, A.M., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the REV. DAVID DICKSON, D.D., Edinburgh.

Price 2d.

THE LOT OF MAN'S INHERITANCE ON EARTH;

A Sermon, by the Rev. E. CRAIG, A.M.—Concluded.

AND then, when affliction comes to the world in general, how is it sustained? It is regarded as the inevitable lot of our race—as the decree of fate—as the law of nature—as a necessary part of the circumstances of our existence—without attempting to institute a single step of inquiry into the moral objects of such trials. "It is our turn to suffer next, and we must bear it." And with this ignorant and unthinking view of the matter each one makes an effort, in his own natural strength, to bear up under the affliction as quietly as possible, and with as little perturbation of the natural spirits as may be; and to allow it to interfere as little as possible with the avocations of business, or with the fascinations of pleasure. It is melancholy, indeed, to see many struggling against the afflictive dispensations of a kind Providence—looking resolutely away from the hand that brings the chastening, and from the moral lesson that it is to teach, and encountering this their infirmity in their own natural strength, as an ill that must be borne, a cross that must be taken together with the comforts of life; but which is to have no moral meaning—to speak no warning voice—to correct no indulged error—to produce no elevating or sanctifying result! And yet this is the case with multitudes, who, in bodily or mental trial, have not only never set themselves to ask after the cause of their trials, and never said to the Lord, "Tell me wherefore thou contendest with me?" but, if the thought of such a course have been suggested to them by others, or by their own conscience, they have frowned it down on the one hand, if intruded on them by advice, and, on the other, repressed it at once in their own breast, by a bold effort of infidel daring:

What can be expected from a world in
VOL. I.—No. 29.

such a state as this? Is it not the most manifest and fearful rebellion when a sinful and guilty people still continue indifferent to their guilt, and resolutely set against the rod of their correction? Can we expect any other than that God should say, as he has said in former times, "Why should ye be stricken any more—ye will revolt more and more; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint?" Can we expect otherwise than that God should leave men to contend vainly against the evils that must ultimately push them out of life, and then meet them at the last as an unpropitiated and irresistible avenger? Verily, if our God were not a God of unspeakable compassion, we could expect nothing short of this awful consummation to the whole race. Men in general are so fearfully characterized by the worldly mind, the sensual affections, the evil heart of unbelief, the headlong thoughtlessness on better subjects, and the firm compact by which they support each other in practical irreligion and neglect of God, that nothing but the energies of a sovereign mercy could break a way through such impediments, and turn them seriously and savingly to the God whom they have abandoned. Yet there are those who are so brought back—the triumphant monuments of divine grace. They are those on whom the Lord works this mighty change, and leads them by his Spirit to consider seriously and dispassionately the nature and object of their present trying circumstances.

2. Let us then consider, in the next place, how the fact of our afflictive lot is to be received by those who are made really anxious to profit by it. Man is evidently "born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." If he is at all in a healthy moral state of mind, he will be diligent to

ascertain the object, and to obtain the benefit of such a dispensation. And with this view, the first point for consideration is the *origin* of such afflictive visitations upon our race. It is a wonderful thing, that in this portion of the divine dominions, as the earth rolls its continued pathway for successive ages round the heavens, it should still present before the Eternal an universal scene of sorrow, suffering, and death. Yet so it is. It was so in the days of our fathers, whose bodies are mouldering in the dust beneath our feet; so it was even in days of old, so that the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. So it has ever been, if the page of history, or if the page of inspiration, be read as a witness. It was so in the days of Job or of Noah. It was so when discord brought mourning into the first family of our race,—when Cain rose against his brother, and slew him—when the first man died under the murderous hand of a brother—and the first mourners wept over the lifeless corpse of a pious child, and the still more melancholy and accursed lot of their living first-born. It has been so from the beginning. “The flesh of man upon him has had pain, and his soul within him has mourned.” But that accurate, historical, and inspired record, on which we lean as our guide and our comforter, gives us a plain and distinct account of the origin of this evil. It tells a plain tale why we are afflicted—why this body is made subject to pain, and the mind to distress. It declares, as you know, the fact of our first wilful apostasy from God under the influence of a wicked spirit, and the subsequent judgments denounced upon our race. The God who made us had a right to put our obedience to the test. He did so. He rested the fact of our cordial loyalty and allegiance upon our compliance with one simple and profitable restriction, the abstaining from the fruit of one tree in the garden. Yet temptation prevailed, and our race incurred the threatened penalty. “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” That death was, as you know, in its immediate and remote effects, death spiritual, natural, and eternal. To disobey God was to forsake him, and this was spiritual death—the withdrawing of God’s holy influence from the human heart. This was the instant consequence of sin. And then the two other evils followed

—natural death here, with all the train of sad preparation, in bodily and mental affliction; and, finally, if it be not averted, eternal misery of both body and soul, as the eternal enemy of God, in hell. The judicial sentence pronounced on Adam, is the only explanation that we have of our sorrows and sufferings; and it is a sufficient and a melancholy one. It goes into, and explains, the essential character of our lot below: “In the sweat of thy face, thou shalt eat bread, till thou return into the grave; for out of it wert thou taken. For dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.” This sentence involves in it all the evils of our lot on earth. The life of labour and of care; the daily contending against a curse; the struggling against the destined lot of death, denounced upon the whole race; meeting the appointed suffering in all its various forms, some in one way, and some in another, till at length, by the very law of our fallen nature, it succeeds in bringing down this frail tabernacle to the dust, out of which it was taken, and dismisses the spirit to another and unseen world.

It is wonderful, my brethren, that we should be in possession of a Volume which has been watched over for eighteen centuries, with jealous care, by the Christian Church, and kept throughout all that time, by the angry collision and jealousy of controversy, from being corrupted; and that the Christian Church should have received that book from the Jews, unquestionably one of the most ancient nations in the earth, whose care over these writings should, in their earliest pages, give the simple and conclusive account of that fact of our nature, which otherwise would have been inexplicable—why the creatures of a benevolent Deity should so suffer, and sorrow, and die. It becomes us, then, to go to that Book with earnest inquiry. Here are abundant and ample reasons why we should regard it as a revelation from the God who has seen it right to afflict us; and we should therefore turn at once to it for advice and consolation. Is it true, that in labour and sorrow we eat our bread, till we return unto the ground. Is it true, that “man’s flesh upon him shall have pain,” &c. until it pushes him out of life; and that nothing but the Scriptures presents us with an adequate explanation of this matter? Then let us

each give ourselves diligently to the line of inquiry here suggested. What is the object of affliction, and which is the mode in which it should be received? It will be necessary to defer the remainder of the subject to the afternoon. Let me, however, in the mean time, conclude with a word of advice. Are you a sufferer yourself, or are you suffering in the person of others, or are you looking with anxious anticipation to the time when some severe bodily disease may develop itself, and bring torture and distress into your frame? Are you a partaker with others in the misfortunes of life? and is your soul taught to mourn over fading hopes and closing prospects, and frowning providences, and an evening of disappointment and affliction? Whatever is your case, do not suffer yourself to be beguiled by the wicked and the vain, from a due consideration of these things. There must be some substantial reason to be found why it is so—a reason to be found, if you will seek it. Then, let each of us, in our several stations in life, give ourselves to the inquiry. It is an inquiry in which each and all are deeply interested. Common sense tells us to look into the present evils of our lot. It is only madness and rebellion which says, "Forget them." As the creature of a good God, you could not be the sufferer you are, or yet shall be, unless some good reason existed for it.

Let it then be your determination to dismiss delay, to scatter to the winds every thought, object, or pursuit, which may prevent resolute and full inquiry. Go with your Bible in your hand impudently to the throne of grace, and say, "Tell me, O my God, wherefore thou contendest with me."

We have been this morning looking at the fact of our destination in this life to bodily and mental suffering; we have considered the sadly infidel manner in which both the probability and the reality of such afflictions are generally regarded. And with a view to regulate our own conduct, we have looked at the inspired account of the origin of this extraordinary state of things; we have seen that the capacity of this body for pain, and the possibility of the mind being a prey to sorrow, are traced directly to the decree of a just God against a wilfully disobedient people. We have now two farther points to consider;

and may the Eternal Author of our spirits give us grace to consider them profitably while the opportunity offers! We know not yet what is behind of our own necessary trials; but experience teaches us, that a very few months may unfold severe afflictions altogether unexpected. The pain and distress of others under the influence of bodily disorders recently arising, but rapidly and fearfully extensive; in mischief, risk, and suffering, teach us what may be our own lot; and we know well that some searching disease or other, must bring us down, in our turn, to the gate and grave of death, and that this very flesh, over which we watch so carefully, must waste and wither. Death must prevail against us, and change our countenance, and send us away. It is our wisdom then, and our happiness, to meet this case without delay; to calculate upon the probabilities of all this uncertain cloud of evil hanging over us, and to acquire the ability of sustaining each successive portion of our needful trials in a right and profitable state of mind. We have then two points to determine:—

I. The purposes of God in these afflictions.

II. The proper conduct of man in them.

1st. What is the purpose of God in these afflictions? What is the object of God, as a moral governor, in permitting a race of immortal beings to be successively evolved into life, and continued for years in a state of suffering? And, first, it is strictly *punitive*, and ought to be so regarded. The decree against our first parents declares this; and so says the Apostle, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Death, in this passage, is evidently the whole of the evil involved in the sentence of death on Adam, as it respects this life, viz. not merely the act and article of natural death, but all the precursors and accompaniments of it in this world's trials, all the labour and the trouble, the thorns and the thistles, the disease and decay, the pain and languor, that precedes and that terminate in death. All this, must in every case, be regarded as punishment denounced on sin. If man had not sinned, such afflictions would never have been. If we had not individually a sinful nature, issuing in sinful dispositions and sinful acts, we should not

so suffer. It is sin that is the key to the enigma of this unhappy world. It is the moral state of the human heart that vindicates the Divine procedure.

We ought, therefore, when we find that we are appointed to suffering, to view it in this light. It does not necessarily indicate the final displeasure of God; but, if God send evil of any kind upon me, I am bound to read in it the original curse denounced upon a sinful world. There is no suffering in heaven: *there* is the fulness of joy. There is nothing but suffering in hell, because *there* is irremediable iniquity. On earth, as there is a measure of that iniquity, so is there a measure of that sorrow; and God is a righteous governor in appointing his rebellious creatures to suffer even here a measure of the consequences of that rebellion.

It is this penal decree against sin which directly explains all those features of this world's history, which otherwise must stagger and confound the moralist. The wretched life of the savage in inhospitable climes—the ferocious propensities of wild beasts—the wide-wasting pestilence—the desolating hurricane, and the still more destructive famine—the carnage of what is called legitimate warfare—and the crowded misery of great cities—all these are features of a world under the Divine displeasure. We cannot conceive of such powerful agents of mischief at work, but for the moral purpose of punishment; and as such the Scriptures repeatedly speak of them. And it is the same with the minor agents of individual affliction. They come as the messengers of God's anger for sin; and it is because man has disobeyed his God, that his flesh upon him has pain, and his soul has sorrow.

Suffering, however, in this world is not purely and only penal. The trials of this life bear no proportion to human guilt, and they are evidently mixed and tempered with many mercies. There is not a sufferer at this moment under the sun, who could not, if he took an impartial view of his case, trace many unmerited alleviations of suffering in his lot; so that, although there can be no question that suffering is punishment even in this world, (for the Lord hath spoken it,) yet, at the same time, there is every reason to believe that God has also in it a merciful object. He has in it a *corrective* purpose also. The Deluge, awful as it was to the existing

generation, was meant in mercy to all the succeeding generations of men; and the solemn, but gracious, lesson has been written on the cloud. The Plagues of Egypt were not to harden, but to soften, Pharaoh's heart. The sufferings of Israel in the wilderness, were for their profit, that they might not harden their hearts, but hearken to the voice of God. The Lord said, "I led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to try thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart, that I might do thee good at thy latter end." And so it is with the individual. He rises into life very unconscious of the evils of his heart. Experience gradually brings them out, and shows him what he is; prosperity discovers some evils, and affliction others. And, then, when a man has arrived at a consciousness of the moral evil of his character—when he knows where he breaks down—then God has a controversy with him, and calls upon him to forsake his way, and his unrighteous thoughts, and to turn from those evils, which, if left to themselves, would reign prominently within him. And, then, in after years, God is pleased to bring upon the individual, as much in the way of correction as of punishment, a measure of trial fitted to bear upon the evil of his character, and to call upon him to look into himself, and to remember his latter end, and to turn from every sin, and especially from the sin that easily besets him. And, often, if any one watches attentively the dealings of Providence, he will discover, that sufferings increasingly severe, will, in the course of years, come upon a man, all striking with greater force upon the peculiar point of error in his character, and calling in a more awful tone of decision, for a thorough cleansing of his ways—for a hearty return to God through the Gospel. If every one of us on whom the Lord has laid an afflicting hand, would but give the measure of time necessary for the due consideration of his case, by the light of God's word and his providence, he might clearly ascertain which are his reigning errors—which are the peculiar features of his moral case—what is the duty expressly required of him at this moment—and what is the aspect of God's providential dealings towards him. By a fair examination of the whole circumstances, he might know, from God's dealings with him, whether he

have yet returned to God through his Son, and been justified by faith and made "accepted in the Beloved" or not; and if this be the case, and this first grand step have been taken, then, whether or not he is walking worthy of his high vocation, or, on the contrary, is mingling unduly with the world, drinking into its spirit, and savouring the things that be of men, rather than the things that be of God; or whether, though a faithful servant of God, yet, like the self-willed and petulant prophet Jonah, he is murmuring and repining, and "kicking against the pricks," and saying, "I do well to be angry even unto death." But we must notice also a third object, which God has, in afflicting his own people with bodily and mental distress. He intends such trials to be *sanctifying and elevating*. I speak particularly now of the true believer, the child of God. There are many persons on whom, like as on Pharaoh, the Lord bestows a penal and corrective discipline; and it only hardens them in sin, till they come to ruin. But there are others, who have believed through grace—to whom affliction is like the storm that roots the oak more deeply, that purifies the atmosphere, and fertilizes the soil; and this is the express object of pain and sorrow to the real Christian. Some have called such visitations blessings in disguise; but they are not disguised—they are open and avowed, and they are rich and abundant blessings. Any man who knows himself, knows how naturally the soul cleaves to the dust—how difficult it is to maintain a spiritual and devotional mind—to live above the influence of the present world—to live with God, and for God. Any man who has ever tried it seriously, finds the difficulties increase upon him, as he strives to rise higher in the love and the service of God, in the perception of eternal things, and in the cultivation of the christian graces. Every one who has laboured and prayed to walk separately and circumspectly as a Christian, must know how powerful is the influence of the multitude, the action of common motives, and the opposition of an unbelieving world, to bring him down to the low standard of morals which that world approves. Now, it is in these respects that suffering, either in body or mind, becomes a blessing. It pulls a man up at once, and calls upon him to look diligently to his going. It sends him for

grace and strength to his heavenly Father and Redeemer. It leads to more lengthened meditation and more fervent prayer. It makes him feel after the reality, and after the substance of the christian system, and not to be content, till he has the full assurance of that hope, which should be "as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and—entering into that within the veil." For what happiness or peace can there be, to him on whom the clouds of misfortune in this life are gathered, or against whom are arrayed the poisoned weapons of the persecutor, or whose frame, during the remainder of life, is destined to be torn by acute suffering, or oppressed by lengthened languor?—what happiness or peace can there be to him, if he cannot get a satisfactory hold upon the hope of another world—a hope of the joys of an existence where these evils shall not come? What has the sufferer within his grasp, if he have not this? Now, thanks be to God, this is evidently one of the peculiar blessings of affliction. God makes it a time of revival of increasing grace; and if afflictions abound, so do our consolations, with which we are comforted of God. It is the time when we feel for the solid rock under our feet and *find* it. It is the time, when our aspirations go up with greater energy towards an opened heaven, and reach it. And whenever you see the real Christian in much affliction, you witness in him a softened and a chastened spirit, a desire to be more holy and circumspect in all things, and a breathing forth of the peculiar fragrance of the christian graces. He treads this earth with less of the appearance of belonging to it; but he treads it with a firmer step, as hastening on, in the full assurance of hope, to that consummation which must come, and which daily becomes an object of greater interest, when the afflictions of this wilderness shall be exchanged for a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Much, very much, is still wanting, to complete the loveliness of the christian character, in every one yet remaining on earth; but it is delightful, indeed, to see the very evils of life made the channels for imparting grace—the pang of humiliating suffering, the germ and spring of a sublime devotion—and the necessary infliction of the curse, so as to bring us down to the dust of death, made the means of spiritual

life, and perfecting within us those graces which constitute our meetness for immortality.

But now, such being our views of the object of God in affliction, let us inquire, lastly, how ought we to receive affliction, so as to profit by it. Come it must, in some shape or other. Already, perhaps, many of us know it in many forms; and evils far greater, but evils essentially necessary to our sanctification, may be yet beyond. How, then, shall we rightly meet both present and future suffering, be it what it may?

1. Receive it with humiliation of soul before the great eternal God. He is a God of unspeakable mercy to you, a covenant redeemer in Christ Jesus, and he afflicts in love; but when he does afflict, it is a solemn moment with you. When he brings upon us the realization of the original curse—when inflicted suffering says to us, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return"—it is a time to go in brokenness of spirit, and lie low at the feet of Omnipotence. Let us be prepared at once to admit our demerits—to confess that we have sinned, that we have done wickedly, and that, if God should mark iniquity in us, we could not stand. Let us take at once the low ground of our guilty forefather: let us receive present suffering as a correction infinitely less than our deserts; and, entering cordially unto God's corrective purpose to us, let us pray for grace to consecrate the depression which it induces to the exaltation of the glory of our God.

2. Let us make the time of affliction a time for a more cordial application to the remedy. Not that we are to leave the business of closing with God's offer of grace till the time of pain or of misfortune. Experience abundantly shows that this is a bad time indeed to begin to seek God. They who have not sought God in health, find it hard work in sickness or in sorrow. But if we have previously closed with God's offer of grace, and turned to the atonement of our Lord and Saviour for redemption, as the means whereby alone we may be saved, then let the hour of trial be the time when we renew our application—when we drink at the fountain which we have discovered—when we endeavour to realize the sufficiency of this grace. Let us call upon our Redeemer—our Surety, in the time of trouble, and

he will hear us. When we have upon us the palpable and humiliating proof of that curse, which would have doomed us to eternal infamy and woe, let us approach in faith the propitiatory cross of Jesus; and, while we admit the justice of our sentence, and confess our sins over this extraordinary victim, let us receive, through his precious blood, the grace of eternal life, with fresh power, at his hands. Our blessed Saviour suffered in the flesh. He drank deep of this awful curse. His flesh upon him had pain, and his soul within him mourned. But in his sufferings—rendered infinitely valuable by his divine nature—there was a propitiatory, a healing virtue. They satisfy for our sins. He was wounded for our transgressions; and he was brought down to the dust of death that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. Let those afflictions which are the proof of a fallen state, drive us more eagerly to this wondrous and condescending remedy; and, while we gratefully acknowledge our Redeemer's love, let us rejoice in the strength of our salvation.

3. In affliction, let us desire and endeavour, most seriously, to enter into the purpose of God in the visitation which he has brought upon us. Every such trial has a specific object. With some it is a call to the first steps of a repentance hitherto neglected or scorned; with others, it is a call to a renewal of declining faith and obedience; and with others, it is a stimulus to increasing devotion, and a means of fitting the soul more entirely to glorify God, both here and hereafter. We should diligently enter into our dispensations—look out for the point and meaning of the trial—regard it at once as a call to search and try our ways; and then, when we find the peculiar application of it—the point on which it evidently presses—then take that point, whatever it is, to God, in earnest prayer. Am I proud? am I selfish? am I vain, or covetous, or censorious or worldly? Do I, in any of these respects, dishonour the holy name by which I am called? Then let me rejoice in the chastening of the Lord, and, without leaning on my own strength, or attributing any merit to my endeavours after greater sanctification, let me plead with God for a blessing on the trial, and hail with joy even the pain that otherwise I would have dreaded or shrunk from, or

the sorrow which would otherwise have been unsupportable; and, while I learn more entirely to abominate sin, let me glory in mine infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

And, then, let us receive every appointed trial with increasing anticipations of another and a happier state of existence. The promised world is to be free from sin; and, consequently, there will be no death, nor pain, nor sorrow, nor crying, for the former things are passed away. The promise of that world is "sure to all the seed"—to all who have fled for refuge, to lay hold of the hope that is set before them. It is confirmed to us by "two immutable things, in which it is impossible that God can lie"—the promise and the oath of God. Doubtless, the afflictions of this present life are grievous. It were vain to say otherwise to a suffering man—to him who knows, by bitter experience, that "his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn;" but faith may cheer the actual sufferer when nothing else can. He looks to the glorified body of his Lord, risen from the tomb—risen to his glory at the right hand of God; and he triumphs. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. So, when the corruptible shall put on incorruption, then shall be brought to pass that saying, "Death is swallowed up in victory." "Oh, seek, my beloved brethren, a brighter faith and hope! and, much as you may yet be broken by suffering and sorrow, you will find a cheering radiance gathering

around your spirit, while it still lingers in the frail tabernacle below, with which neither pain nor misfortune, nor bereavements, nor persecution, can interfere. It is joy and peace in believing—it is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.

And, oh, my brethren, think, in conclusion, for a moment, what are the evils from which, if you are Christians, you are emancipated! The decree is gone out against you—the "flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn;" and, as it respects this present life, it is mercifully permitted to continue, because it is over-ruled to your sanctification here, and it issues at last in that death which ushers you into glory. But, oh! what would have been our lot had the whole sentence been fulfilled? Our flesh would have had eternal pain, and our soul eternal sorrow. This flesh would have endured the torture of everlasting fire—this spirit the corroding of the never-dying worm. Think what pain and sorrow are for a few years, even when mitigated by the visitings of Divine grace and consolation. Think, then, what they would have been without alleviation, interval, or end. Think of this, and lift up your heart with joy and gratitude. What an unspeakable mercy!—how inconceivably gracious! How it alters the lot of the most wretched sufferer on earth, to have a hope full of immortality! How it extracts the sting of the curse from a suffering and dying body, to know that sin is forgiven, and that even this flesh shall live again! Amen.

THE DANGERS TO WHICH THE YOUNG ARE EXPOSED, AND THEIR REMEDY;

A SERMON, PREACHED ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY, 7TH OCTOBER, 1832, IN ST. CUTHBERT'S CHURCH, IN BEHALF OF THE EDINBURGH YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY FOR INTELLECTUAL, MORAL, AND RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT,

By the Rev. DAVID DICKSON, D.D.,

One of the Ministers of St. Cuthbert's.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word."—PSALM cxix. 9.

IN the phraseology of Scripture, a man's way signifies his conduct or habits of life, what he does, the manner in which he acts and lives. To "cleanse his way,"

therefore, is to free or keep himself free from the polluting influence of sin; and this way, or conduct, is in the text described as a road in which we have to walk,

and according to the peculiar state of which, as influencing our steps and affecting our raiment, these will be either clean or polluted; or, in other words, our conduct will be either godly or ungodly, and our character either pleasing and seemly, or displeasing and loathsome, in the sight of God. "Wherewithal," says the Psalmist, "shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word." This question, and the answer given to it, it shall be my endeavour at present, through Divine grace, to illustrate and apply with special reference to the very interesting and important object which the Edinburgh Young Men's Society, on whose account we are this evening assembled, has primarily in view—the religious, moral, and intellectual improvement of its members. The question, "Wherewithal shall a young man learn to cleanse his way?" obviously implies that the young are in danger of having their conduct and character defiled by sin. Now this danger we may consider as arising, in the first place, from the native corruption and deceitfulness of their own heart. We should give the lie equally to universal experience, as far as men have allowed themselves impartially to examine the state of their own minds, and to what Scripture most explicitly declares, were we to deny that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and that even the "imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." To what source, indeed, but this can we truly trace that strong aversion to serious reflection on the subjects of religious truth and duty which the young too often exhibit, or that secret predisposition which they so decidedly feel and discover to seek their chief gratification and happiness, not in the favour and service of the God who made and preserves them, on whom they every moment depend for all that they enjoy, and to whom conscience often tells them, they must one day, and ere long, give an account, but in the unsubstantial and fleeting enjoyments of sense and the world, in the occupations and pursuits of secular business, or even in the more positively sinful gratifications of natural appetite and passion? Whence not only that indifference, but that repugnance, to spiritual exercises and duties, which even the custom early acquired, and still continued, of externally attending to them,

has not diminished? Whence that weariness which the Sabbath brings along with it, and that pleasure which is felt when its services are concluded, and its hours closed? Whence that neglect of earnest and frequent prayer, the obligation of which they perhaps do not altogether deny, and that preference of worldly to religious conversation, and of books of profane history, science, or amusement, to the Word of God, the precious record of eternal life, which makes them so constantly peruse the one and avoid or neglect the other, and which gives them such a relish for the things of time, and such a disrelish for the concerns of eternity? Whence that feeling of irksomeness and restraint with which, in the experience of some, submission to the salutary councils of paternal affection and wisdom, or, to that outward decorum of morals which is necessary to their standing well in the opinion of their christian friends is accompanied? Whence that impetuosity of passion which has led others to break through the strongest fences which a virtuous education, and the example of godliness from infancy set before them, had placed around their conscience and their path; or that artful attempt to conceal secret ungodliness under the mask of a religious profession, with which a third class may be charged? Or whence, finally, that almost constant forgetfulness of those better resolutions which they had formed during intervals of seriousness, induced either by affliction, or the thought of death, that were pressed on their minds by the events of life, or the ministry of the Gospel; that deceitful and delusive delay of repentance from one season to another, which is continually hardening their hearts more and more; and those progressive and wider departures from what they know and feel to be their duty, which have insensibly, but gradually increased, till their character has already become ten times more depraved and ungodly than it once was? To what can we ascribe these and similar evidences of alienation from the love and service of God, but to the corruption and deceitfulness of the heart? And if this cause be allowed to remain in active influence, owing, as it must do, in strength, the longer that it operates, who can say what effects it may ultimately produce? Flowing unopposed by any sufficiently counter-

acting force, it may burst through every barrier that has hitherto kept them from undisguised and wanton profligacy, and at length sweep them resistlessly away into the gulf of everlasting perdition.

And think for a moment, I entreat you, what is the real condition of those, whether young or old, who are the enemies of God in their minds, by wicked works. Ah! this is to have sin—that which is hateful, infinitely hateful to God—that which he holds in utter abhorrence—that on which his awful curse, that curse the actual infliction of which, in its full extent, would be misery itself, is continually lying—it is to have this lurking and cherished in the chamber of the heart, where nothing but what He loves should be seen or found. It is to have the soul darkened and polluted, instead of being filled with light and purity. It is to have the enemies of God, evil thoughts, and carnal affections, and devilish passions, lurking, and nourished, and worshipped in the temple which ought to be hallowed by his presence, and devoted to his fear alone. It is to have Satan, who was the first author, and gave the first example of sin, and is still the great tempter to it, seated on that throne on which Jehovah alone should reign; and to have the deformity and loathsomeness of hell, where the beauties of holiness should be displayed, and the robes of heaven worn. And is not this a condition of danger, and danger the most extreme?

In the second place, the young are in danger, from the principles and example of the world. There is an unsuspectingness in youth, and a deference for the opinions of others, which, though pleasing and even commendable in themselves, unless governed by right principles, and directed to right objects, are most ensnaring and perilous to their best interests. In every case, especially where flattery is employed as a mean of securing their confidence, or influencing their sentiments, suspicion is not only justified, but dutiful and necessary, if they would not wish to have their conscience lulled asleep, and their principles perverted. Men flatter, only to mislead and destroy them. There is often, indeed, such a speciousness in the pretences under which the ungodly try to gain over the young to the same modes of thinking and acting with themselves, as requires a caution and sagacity to avoid their influence, and detect their unsound-

ness, which it is by no means easy to exercise. The secret bias of their inclinations being on the side of the world, their understanding is in danger of being dazzled by the splendour which it throws over the deceitful and ruinous path of sin; while their passions, eager for gratifications which can be enjoyed only in this path, are continually impelling them to grasp at, and embrace those objects of sinful pleasure, with which it is strewn. They are thus ready to become an easy prey to the dangerous maxims and insinuating examples of unprincipled deceivers. You may be told, for instance, that there is no such need of appearing so decent in your habits, or so strict in your morals, as the Scripture recommends, as your friends inculcate, and as the instructions from the pulpit have taught you; you may be told, that religion may do well enough in the time of sickness, and at the hour of death, but has little or nothing to do with the day of health, or the business of life; you may be told, that it is unsuitable for persons in the ardour of youth, whose hopes are sanguine, and whose natural passions are strong, to indulge the same views, with regard to the enjoyments of time and sense, as those do whom many disappointments or infirmities have rendered fearful or morose; you may be told, that you may for a season follow, under certain restraints, which it would be imprudent entirely to break asunder, the dictates of your own inclinations, in order to avoid the imputation of singularity, or enthusiasm—that others have tried this course, and have found their account in it as conducive to their present interests; and, at all events, that you may discontinue it at pleasure, if, on trial, you do not find it so advantageous or agreeable as you expected it to be. Such are some of the many pleas by which the safety of the young is brought into peril, by the sentiments that are obtruded on their minds when they come into contact with those who are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” The example of such men, besides, has a most seducing influence; for while you see them perhaps rising in the world, maintaining a high respectability of character in the circle in which they move, and, it may be, actually professing to be Christians, by attending the house of God at least one part of every Sabbath, and solemnly avowing their faith and

obedience as disciples of Christ at a communion table, or the baptismal service, you are thus exposed to regard whatever is not altogether praiseworthy in their spirit, or language, or conduct, as but a shade of imperfection in characters on the whole estimable and good—you are ready to be enamored into an imitation of their manners, and to be deluded into the idea that you will follow them no farther than you think they really deserve to be followed. But, in reality, you are in much greater danger from these half-Christians than from the openly irreligious and immoral. The latter insult your principles, and shock your feelings by the outrages they commit against religion and morality; but the former, more warily labour to undermine the one, and weaken the other, without presenting any unblushing front of ungodliness, to excite your suspicion or alarm your fears. Their insinuations are guarded, and their arts concealed, the more easily to seduce you into the same inconsistencies with themselves. What need, then, have the young of better principles, to bear them up against the influence of such maxims and examples, if they would not sacrifice conscience to duty, and lose their souls for ever by attempting an impossible compromise between the service of the world, and the service of Christ and of God! Yes, my young friends, those who will thus lay snares for you, instead of really wishing to promote your happiness, are only solicitous to be countenanced in their own ungodliness by your companionship in the same course of folly and sin. They lie in wait to deceive, for the very purpose of betraying you. They are as so many serpents in your paths, whose colours are exquisitely varied, and present to the eye an object of attractive beauty, yet have the venom of asps under their tongue, and the sting of scorpions in their tail, to poison the breath of your immortal spirits, and inflict on them the wounds of eternal death. Oh, then, beware of their influence and effects!

In the third place, the young are in danger from the pursuits of the world. Every condition has its own temptations, diversified in character and force according to the particular constitution, propensities, and habits of the individual whom they assail. Addressed to his ruling passion, they enter into league with it against every principle that opposes

its gratification, and every mean that is employed to moderate or subdue its power. From every species of secular pursuit, accordingly, whatever be its precise nature, temptation of one kind or other arises—temptation to discontentment or envy—to dishonesty or fraud—to immoderate thirst after those objects from which the largest portion of good is expected—or to excessive indulgence in those worldly satisfactions of which they furnish the abundant means—and, in general, to an undue preference of present imagined interests to future and more distant, though real good—of the concerns of the body to those of the soul—of the temporary conveniences, accommodations, and possessions of this state of being, to the permanent and enduring substance of salvation and happiness, in the kingdom of heaven beyond death and the grave. Now, to the influence of such temptations the young are peculiarly exposed. Their own hearts are naturally on the side of the world, and its lying vanities. The verdict of the great multitude around them, in every class of society, is given by the most powerful of all voices, that of their uniform conduct, in favour of the importance and value of its pursuits. When the world, then, presents its solicitations, how will you resist them? It will not all at once open its plans of selfishness and sin fully to your view; but, by its gradual and unsuspected insinuations, induce you first to look with indifference, or with a feeling of diminished abhorrence, on its minor features of iniquity, till, having become sufficiently familiarized with their aspects, you are prepared to contemplate with a partial eye its broader characters of duplicity, and cunning, and over-reaching, and fraud, and injustice, and similar unequivocal vices; regarding them only as means which you will employ to gain the object of your pursuit, because you persuade yourselves that they are absolutely necessary to secure it, and the necessity of which you conveniently, though most unsoundly, plead as a justification to your own mind for having adopted them, or in palliation of that departure from the Divine law, with which your own conscience tells you, you have been justly chargeable. This is the progress of sin, to indulgence in which the world throws out so many baits for ensnaring you. When entering on the business of life, therefore whatever

be the occupation to which the time and talents are devoted, a stand should at the very outset be made against the temptations which it presents, if the conscience would be kept pure, and the conduct clean, from its wickedness and pollutions. To give place at once, and at the first assault, is to weaken the power of every subsequent effort at resistance, and to pave the way, not only for constant defeats, but for that most alarming of all conditions on this side hell, in which temptation ceases to give uneasiness, and is even welcomed with fondness, and yielded to with delight.

Such, then, are some of the dangers to which the young are peculiarly exposed—dangers arising from the corruption and deceitfulness of their own heart, and from the principles, and example, and purmits of the world; and which ought to press on the mind of every one of us the importance of the interesting question in the text, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" And let none call in question the reality of these dangers, or suppose the preceding to be an exaggerated representation of them. The Word of God, that cannot lie, confirms its truth; and, if you only look around you in the world, you will discover a multitude of the most melancholy illustrations of its certainty. Those whom you now see dead to every virtuous feeling, the slaves of drunkenness or sensuality, or bankrupts equally in character and circumstances, who even glory in their shame, and make a mock of conscience and religion, were many of them once as unsuspecting of their own corruptions, and of the principles, and maxims, and manners, and pursuits of the world, as it is possible for you to be. Many of them would not believe in the reality of those dangers by which you now perceive them to have been so fatally overwhelmed. They first began with cautiously tasting the poisoned potion of irreligion and ungodliness, and their thirst being increased instead of allayed by the sip, they eagerly panted after a larger draught, till they became maddened with the intoxicating cup, and would not be satisfied with all that they could quaff. And if you neglect the warnings that are given you in faithfulness, despise the admonitions that are tendered to you in love, and prove equally incredulous with them, what can you reasonably expect, but that their aban-

doned prodigality, their seariness of conscience, and their "certain fearful looking for of judgment," may be yours also?

Let, then, the inquiry of the text be yours—"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?"—Wherewithal shall I cleanse my way? O, how interesting and important the inquiry! Without understanding how this may be done or attained, you must be ignorant of the only means of enjoying true happiness—you must be every hour in danger of perishing in your sins—you can have no real comfort in life, and no solid hope when you think of death, which even now may be at the door, or look forward to that eternity into which you may ere long, and without warning, be hurried away.

This leads me to the answer in the text. The question is, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" and the answer is, "By taking heed thereto, according to thy word." And in order that we may take heed unto our way, it is evidently necessary that we seriously reflect on the state of our mind and heart. Serious reflection and self scrutiny are indeed the very first steps towards the attainment of right principles and right conduct; for without these, the knowledge acquired by even the best religious education, or the soundest moral instruction, may be little more than empty notional speculation—neither deserving the name, nor possessing the qualities, of a principle that can regulate the spirit and conduct. Without, therefore, entering into the chamber of your heart, and constantly repairing there for the very purpose of inquisitorially examining into its real state and character, watching over the nature of the thoughts, and desires, and affections and principles that lodge in it, and seeking to have them purified and sanctified, you will most assuredly follow that which is evil—sin against God, without perhaps being conscious of it—and be in danger of everlasting misery, without feeling any just alarm or anxious solicitude to escape from it. Oh! then, if you would not run the hazard of entering on the world with a heart ready to become the victim of its corruptions, and the slave of its follies or its crimes; nay, if you would not run the hazard of being cut off from the land of the living in a state of impenitence and ungodliness, retire within yourselves, and commune with your own hearts. Let

a sense of the all-pervading eye of that God, "who looketh on the heart," and to whom you must one day, and you know not how soon, give account, excite you to a most jealous suspicion of yourselves, and impel you to a minute and faithful scrutiny of your real inward character, earnestly praying that God, by his Spirit, may give you eyes to see, and a heart to feel, what that character actually is, that so a deceitful and a deceiving heart may not lead you astray.

It is necessary also that you "take heed" or attend to your "way," or conduct and manner of life. Without attending to this—without well considering what it is right, and what it would be wrong for you to do—what objects, what actions, what society you should avoid, and what conduct you ought to adopt at all times, and in every situation, you can never be certain that the path in which you are treading is that which leadeth unto life, but, on the contrary, may be sure that you are in imminent danger of wandering in the broad way that leadeth to death. But in conducting this inquiry into your heart and conduct, and maintaining this watchful superintendence over both, are you left to the guidance of your own reason, or your own notions of what is right and proper? No, my friends; you have a safer, and a surer guide; for the second instruction which the Psalmist gives the young as to the means by which their way may be cleansed, is by "taking heed thereto," according to the Word of God. This divine record of truth and duty is indeed "a lamp unto the feet, and a light unto the path." It makes us acquainted with all that is necessary for us to know, all that is required of us, all that is promised and will be given, if we ask it, to lead us in the way everlasting. To the high and the low, to the rich and the poor, to the old and the young, it speaks in language that cannot be misunderstood, in words of warning, and yet of encouragement—of terror, and yet of love—of "doctrine, and reproof, and correction, and instruction in righteousness." But what are the more special directions, that the word of God furnishes on the peculiar subject of the text?

To this I answer, in the first place, It

invites and commands young men, and the young in general, to give their heart unto God. "My son, my daughter, give me thine heart," is the language of the God who made, preserves, and alone can redeem us, to every one of us, and especially to the young. And surely this is an exhortation to which it becomes you earnestly to take heed. As the heart must be purified and guarded against the influence of sin, before the conduct can be cleansed and preserved from its defilements, so it is with this, "the inner mar of the heart," that your first concern lies. As long as the strong man of sin holds possession of it, he will subject the passions and desires to his wayward, ignominious, and demoralizing sway, and drag you impetuously along at his pleasure. But let him be but once dislodged from his usurped dominion, and his debasing yoke be burst asunder, and though you will not even then cease to have many struggles against his attempts anew to enthral you, you will be enabled, through grace, successfully to walk in the peaceful liberty of His service who is the God of purity and of love. Now, the only way in which this can be accomplished is by giving your heart to God. This is indispensable to real purity and holiness of conduct. You may be told that religion is very well in its own place—that it is right outwardly to respect its ordinances, and give a general submission to its laws, but that any thing more than this has a tendency to produce moroseness and gloom of mind, and to unfit you for that pleasurable enjoyment, from intercourse with the world, which is the great object of desire to the multitude around you. But allow not yourselves to be misled by such unscriptural and unreasonableness of the duty you owe to him on whom you are every moment dependent, for every comfort of life and every hope of salvation. The least reflection may convince you of the fallacy of the sentiments in question. For, can that be either duty or a mode of procuring real happiness, which denies to God that place in our affections and our heart, to which every consideration of his claims over us, and of his conduct towards us, demonstrates him to be so justly entitled?

(To be concluded in our next.)

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SERMON by the Rev. DAVID DICKSON, D.D., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM PURDIE, Libberton.

Price 2d.

THE DANGERS TO WHICH THE YOUNG ARE EXPOSED, AND THEIR REMEDY;

A Sermon by the Rev. DAVID DICKSON, D.D.—Concluded.

Is nothing more than external reverence and respect due from us to that God whose goodness called us into being, whose bounties have hitherto sustained us, whose tender care and watchful providence have preserved us amid the thousand dangers of infancy, and childhood, and youth, and riper years, and whose loving-kindness has been exercised towards us, notwithstanding all our ingratitude, and trespasses, and guilt; nay, who hath so loved us as not to spare his only begotten Son, but to have delivered him up to the death for our redemption, and as to promise his Holy Spirit, to renovate, and sanctify, and comfort us, if we will only, through faith in the Saviour, implore the influence of his grace, that so we may be blessed with his favour in this world, and with the enjoyment of his glory in heaven? Is nothing more than external reverence due from us to him who has done all this for us, and done it, too, when in justice he might have sealed our everlasting condemnation as rebels against his law and love? I appeal to the conclusions of your own judgment, and to all the movements of affection in your yet warm and susceptible hearts, whether you do not owe to him the love, the gratitude, the subjection, the government, the undivided possession of your whole souls. Give him these, then; for this is to give him your heart. Look to him with ardent gratitude as the God of your life and your salvation. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and ye shall be saved." This is the inscription written over the gateway by which alone we can enter the road that conducts to heaven. Let this, then, be engraven on your heart; and rest not satisfied till enabled to contemplate Jehovah with

comfort and hope as your reconciled God and Father in Christ Jesus, you can say with returning Israel, "Thou art our Father, and the guide of our youth." Let your understanding embrace the whole doctrine of His word. Let your affections rise and centre on him. Let your memory recal the unceasing kindness of his providence, and the exuberant riches of his grace. Let your restless passions be hushed at the command of his voice. Let your will bend in subjection to his law, and be constrained to yield to the rules which it prescribes, and the service which it requires. This, and this only, is to give the heart unto God. In fine, let your whole mind be laid open, as it were, to the influence of the grace and power of the Holy Spirit; for it is he alone who effectually and savingly convices of sin, restores the heart unto God, by renewing it after his image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and seals it to the day of everlasting redemption. Often and earnestly, therefore, pray for his grace, and it will be imparted to you in the time and the measure you severally need; for this is the gracious assurance of the Son of God, "If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

In the second place, in taking heed to their way according to the Word of God, the young are called to regulate the whole of their conduct by the directions of His word. These are plain, authoritative, and obligatory on every individual to whom they are addressed. You will find them in the Bible, in all their native unadorned simplicity, as delivered by those who received them by immediate inspiration

from God. They are, therefore, given by God himself, and, consequently, are as infallible, as they are authoritative. By them the standard is established to which the character of all who would attain the blessedness of present comfort and future glory, must be conformed. Follow their directions, and you are certain of acting as you ought: abandon the line of duty they mark out, and you are certain of departing from the path of life. Nor is there a difficulty as to the course you should pursue, which either the general principles they inculcate, or the specific precepts they contain, are not capable of removing, any more than there is a temptation that may be thrown in your way, which they do not furnish you with the means of detecting, in order that it may be escaped or overcome. No other rule of conduct, indeed, but that which the will of God, as revealed in the Scriptures, has laid down is either safe in itself, or suited to the character we sustain, or the circumstances in which we are placed. Our greatest danger, whether we are young or old, arises from the deceitfulness and corruption of our own hearts. To submit, therefore, to the guidance of our reason, blinded as it is, and must be by that deceitfulness and corruption, is to commit ourselves to the mercy of a vessel, without a helm or a pilot, which will be tossed and driven among rocks and quicksands, whenever the wind of passion hurries it along, or the waves of temptation cast it away.

Another source of danger to which the young—to which all, more or less, are exposed, is to be found in the principles, example, and pursuits of the world. To listen to its counsels, therefore, is to rush on the very danger we should be solicitous to avoid, and to sail down the stream that will carry us to an immeasurable distance from the land of peace. To take the world for our guide, indeed, is to steer our course towards eternity, by a compass, the magnet of which, having lost its true polarity, points to the very opposite quarter of the heaven from that to which we imagine it points, and will miserably disappoint our every hope of finding ourselves at last in the haven of everlasting rest and joy. No doubt, you may receive an external polish from the maxims of the world—you may learn from its example to turn every thing around you to the best account,

in so far as secular interest, or animal enjoyment is concerned; you may acquire from it much that may add to your wealth, or power, or reputation; but along with these merely adventitious circumstances, if you seek and find your chief satisfaction in them, you will lose what is infinitely more valuable than any or all of these combined—that simplicity, and integrity, and fairness of character, which alone are truly excellent and estimable. Your religious and moral sensibilities will be deadened, your judgment even of right and of wrong, will, in many instances, become perverted, your immortal interests will be bartered for the vanities of time, and your preparation for eternity be delayed and even resisted, till a more convenient and far distant season, when it may be utterly impossible, or attended at least with tenfold difficulty and bitterness of spirit.

Finally, It is by the word of God that we are hereafter to be judged. On that solemn day, when "the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed," and the character of men impartially tried, what but this is the standard according to which the final and irrevocable decision of the Judge of the whole earth, on our everlasting condition, will be passed? Were it otherwise—were our own notions of what we may or may not do with safety and without guilt, or were the opinions and sentiments of the world, to constitute the test of our character in that great day of the Lord—we might be safe, nay, it would be right to make these the rules of our conduct. But, if, when it is by God, and not by ourselves or our fellow-men, that we are then to be judged, and when it is by his word that our character is then to be tried, what a tremendous hazard must we run, by disregarding the admonitions, and setting aside the restraints of that word—to what certain and irremediable punishment must we subject ourselves, if we live not according to its spirit and commands! Let me then beseech you, by these solemn considerations, to make the word of God your study and your guide. Look to its directions, for instruction as to the way in which you ought to walk. Let your words, your actions, your pursuits, your intercourse with one another and with the world, your filial, your social, your public and your private conduct, be regulated by its dictates, and conformed to its rules. Let not the sneer of the scoffer, the

ridicule of the worldling; the solicitations of your companions, or the fear of reproach from any quarter whatever, deter or seduce you from the path which it prescribes. Be strong in the grace that shall be given you, if you ask it. Stand fast in faith and in godliness. Quit yourselves like men, and ever seek to glorify Him who has called you to virtue, as well as to glory.

In taking heed to their ways, according to the word of God, the young, in the third place, are required to avoid and resist all unnecessary habits of intimacy with the irreligious and ungodly. "My son," says Solomon, "if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. My son, walk not thou in the way with them. Refrain thy foot from their path. Enter not into the path of the wicked; and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it; pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away; for the compassion of sinners shall be destroyed." Such are the admonitions on this point, of the wisest of men, who, not only from fatal experience, as well as personal observation, was thoroughly acquainted with the debasing effects of intimacy with those who fear not God and keep not his commands; but was divinely inspired to record the result of his experience and observation, for the warning and instruction of every succeeding age. And oh! how important is it for you, my young friends, to attend to the spirit and design of these and similar admonitions. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." The heart has no need of excitement to evil, from the solicitations or example of others. It is already sufficiently inclined to sin; and knowing this, what must it be, but madness and crime, to court the means by which its sinful propensities will be kindled and inflamed. Look around you. Consult what you yourselves have observed, what some of you, perhaps, have already too sadly felt, or what at least you have heard from the testimony of those who have had the most perfect knowledge of the facts, and then say, if the ruin of multitudes both for time and eternity, may not be justly traced to the perverting and ensnaring influence of ungodly companions. See that young man coming forth from the bosom of his family, where parental instruction, enforced by parental authority, and parental love, and parental prayers, had counteracted for a season the

natural tendency of his heart, to seek the gratification of his lawless desires and passions, amid the pollution of a world lying in wickedness, and had placed a guard of affectionate and powerful restraint around his path and his steps. See him, in a hapless hour, tempted by an associate, of whose profligacy he was scarcely aware, or who was endeared to him by congeniality of dispositions, the recollections of early intimacy, or habits of frequent though more distant intercourse. His safety is endangered. His fall is almost certain, though gradual and slow. He first listens to an insidious counsel; and when his mind, fortified as yet by better principles, is ready to repel it, compliance with the temptation is represented by his artful seducer to be only a harmless indulgence, or, at most, a youthful folly, for which, if any excuse be required, his years will be a sufficient justification. Or, if still averse to the trespass against duty which he is solicited to commit, he is told that it is but for once he is requested to taste the cup, from whose bitter dregs he is shrinking back. The lure held out to him succeeds. This deceitful and ominous "but once," silences, though it does not convince him. He cautiously proceeds, doubtful and suspicious; but at last he yields; and the fence by which he had hitherto been hedged in being once broken through, he gradually enlarges the opening by new and more aggravated transgressions, till conscience being lulled asleep, and new scenes of temptation presented, he becomes the devoted slave of passions, which he knows not how to resist—of wickedness at the very thought of which, in the commencement of his downward career, he would have startled and stood aghast, as almost the entrance to death and hell. Yes! this is the natural, and, alas! the frequent progress of sin, when entered on through the counsel or the example of others. And which of you can say that it would not have been, or will not be, verified in himself, if he had followed, or if hereafter he should follow, the enticing solicitations of godless associates. Familiarity with sin lessens our abhorrence of its character, and our dread of its consequences; and intimacy with those who are its decided votaries, is almost invariably the passage of our own habits becoming assimilated to theirs. We tread on sinking ground, whenever we enter their society. We

breathe an infectious air, whenever we listen to their conversation. But we are peculiarly in hazard of plunging into their depths of sin, and of being poisoned by their atmosphere of corruption, when we take them by the hand, and press them to the heart, as our intimate companions and chosen friends.

Few of you may have it completely in your power to select the society with which you must constantly mingle; for you must, of necessity, hold intercourse with many in the business and duties of the world, whose principles and characters are not only suspicious, but undisguisedly irreligious and immoral. But all of you may have it in your power to select the individuals, with whom only it will be wise and safe for you to form the soothing and endearing intimacies of friendship or love. Or, if any such should be unknown to you, better, infinitely better, will it be for you, to stand solitary and alone, with your Bible to read, and your God to commune with, than to seek enjoyment during your hours of leisure from the occupations of the day, in the company of those whom you see fearlessly walking in the counsel of the ungodly, or standing in the way of sinners. Avoid, then, as you value happiness here and hereafter, all unnecessary connexion with such men. Set a mark upon them, as beacons of warning against being polluted by their sins. Resist the very first movements of your heart towards intimacy with them, lest, having insensibly gained on your affections as companions, they should become at last the chosen associates of your vacant hours, when a late and bitter repentance will be in store for you—a repentance which may be that only of remorse and despair. Let those only enjoy your confidence, and share in your joys or sorrows, on whose principles you can truly depend as worthy of being imbibed, and to whose characters you can look as objects of just imitation; from whose spirit you may learn to be more serious and devout; whose conversation may be the means of exciting you to be working out your salvation, and following after holiness; and whose prayers are daily offered up at the throne of grace, in behalf of themselves, and you, and all mankind. "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed."

In the last place. With all other means;

which the word of God points out, for enabling young men so to take heed to their way, that it may be cleansed or purified, the duty of earnest, and frequent, and daily prayer, must be united. Yes, my brethren, to live without prayer, is to live "without God in the world." It is to be fighting against corruption, and passion; and temptation, if, indeed, any real resistance is made to them, in a strength that has always proved unequal to the combat, and in armour which appears formidable only at a distance, and leaves the warrior exposed to the wounding stroke of every weapon that assails him. It is to be wielding a sword without temper and without edge; and instead of having on the breastplate of righteousness, and the helmet of the hope of salvation, to have the heart guarded only as by a linen bandage, and the head defended only as by a broken or a rust-eaten casque. For whence is it, let me ask, that your best resolutions have so often proved fallacious, and your opposition to sin so feeble and discontinued? Whence, but from forming the one, and presenting the other, in dependence solely or chiefly on your own prowess or strength? Whence, but from regarding the temptations that beset you, in relation principally to the effect which compliance with them might have on your worldly interests or prospects, and with but little, if any, reference to their character in the sight of God, and to their influence on your preparation for eternity? And whence this spiritually insensible and defenceless state of mind, but for want of earnest and frequent application for divine aid at the throne of grace? If you would not then abandon every desire and every hope of beginning and advancing in that course of Christian faith and Godliness, by means of which alone a blessed immortality can be yours, oh! let this duty and exercise of prayer engage your most devoted attention, and occupy your most secret hours. Kneel, I beseech you, as every morning returns, at the footstool of divine mercy, and implore, with all fervour and importunity, the light, the guidance, the strength the watchfulness, and the godly jealousy, which you need throughout the day; and as evening returns, let the retirement of the closet, or, it may be, the rough floor at the bedside of your humbler dwellings, be sacred to the duty of confessing the sins you have committed—of mourning over,

the unfaithfulness of God, with which you have been chargeable—of praying for pardon and a better spirit—or of giving thanks for the restraints that have been laid upon you—for the conquests which through grace you have obtained over sin or temptation—for all that God has enabled you to avoid or perform, in obedience to his authority and love. Nor think that such stated seasons are the only ones that ought to find you thus employed. On the very contrary, whenever you open the Scriptures—whenever you peruse a volume of religious instruction—whenever you sit in the sanctuary, and there join in praise, or listen to the ministry of truth and of righteousness—nay, whenever a temptation is set before you—whenever a purpose, a desire, or even a thought of sinning, in any form or any degree, enters your mind—let your heart rise in devout and ardent aspirations unto God, for the grace of his Spirit to sanctify the exercises in which you are engaged, to nerve you for the resistance which you ought to make, or to banish the delusion which threatens to ensnare your mind or your steps.

Will you not, then, my young friends, make this your habitual desire and persevering endeavour? Fear not the ridicule of the world. It may be directed against you; but the less that you yield to its influence, the sooner will you live it down. It may pain your feelings; but far better submit to this, than allow it to kill your souls, by inducing you to forget, that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God.” Better, far better, to be the object of derision to those who reckon prayer a burden or folly, than to become at last the scorn of devils, and the companion of men who will cry, but in vain, for a drop of cold water to cool their tongue. Give your hearts, then, unto God. Submit your conduct in all things to the direction of his word. Carefully avoid, and strenuously resist all habits of intercourse, and especially all closeness of intimacy with the irreligious and the ungodly; and “in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.”

Are there any present, whether in youth or maturity, or more advanced age,

whose conscience testifies that they have been, or still are, the unrepenting seducers of the young and unwary from the path of life; by undermining their principles, sneering at their seriousness, enticing them by their solicitations, or encouraging them in sin by their countenance and example. Such men have been, and are, devils in human form; and unless they repent, and be converted, and “bring forth fruits meet for repentance,” their damnation is sure. And, oh! let parents and guardians of the young beware of discouraging them from serious godliness, lest the blood of their souls should be required at their hands. Rather let them instruct, and warn, and restrain the objects of their endeared affection, or tender care—teaching them, by their own example, how to walk and please God, and “praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit,” that they may be preserved from the way in which destroyers go, and have their heart and character purified through obeying the truth as it is in Jesus. Nor let masters forget that their servants are given them in trust; nor companions and friends, that those with whom they associate, if they are not profited, will be injured by their society or friendship. Finally, let all of us remember, that it is only through “sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth,” that we can become partakers of holiness, and that, if we are not partakers of holiness, we shall never see the Lord.

And now, what shall I more specially say in regard to the Society whose objects and interests I have this evening engaged to state and to plead? Its primary object, as formerly noticed, is the improvement of the religious, moral, and intellectual character of the young, who are, or may become, its members. And who will not hail the institution, and bid God speed to the success of so interesting an association, particularly in times like the present, when those principles of infidelity and irreligion are so generally prevalent, which, if not checked, threaten to deluge our country with all that is offensive to God, and not only unprofitable, but ruinous to men, whether as citizens of the world, or as candidates for immortality? Nor are the means they employ unsuitable or unchristian. On the contrary, they are calculated, by the divine blessing, effectually to accomplish the object they have in view. For they

consist in the regular reading and study of the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and manners—in preparing, reading, and conversing on essays of a religious nature, as well as others of a more literary cast—in friendly intercourse with each other, and in humble united prayer for the influences of divine grace to descend on and render effectual all their exercises and exertions. Most suitable and christian, I have no hesitation in pronouncing these means to be. But yet, in carrying them into actual practice, the members of the society have peculiar need of “the wisdom that cometh from above.” There is danger, and that not of a slight kind, lest their preparation of essays, even on religious subjects, should become an exercise merely of intellect—an attempt to display genius and talent, instead of being directed to the simple discovery, elucidation, or establishment of the great doctrines, principles, and requirements of the Christian system; while, on more peculiarly literary topics, there is equal danger of their being treated without suitable reference to the standard of evangelical truth, and thus of the sentiments contained in them being calculated to subvert, rather than to confirm, the faith, and advance the personal piety and godliness, as well of those who hear, as of those who compose them. It is true, that such essays are to be the subjects of conversation among the members. But even here there is also danger of their conversation degenerating into dispute, and of opinions being defended by some, and opposed by others, with the view, on both sides, rather of exhibiting their own acuteness and powers of reasoning, than of bringing forward and supporting what they know and believe to be the only just and scriptural statements on the questions or points at issue. Much prudence, therefore, and constant prayer are requisite; and this the more, that the qualification of membership, in so far as concerns the religious sentiments of those who are admitted to it, is scarcely defined with all the precision that might be desired. The society, no doubt, profess to “take the Holy Scriptures for their guide, and to avoid controversy” in general, no less than “political discussion;” and in this they do right and well. It is also laid down as a special rule, that the members, besides being young men of from fourteen to thirty-five years of age, “shall be of good moral character, and not pos-

sessing opinions subversive of evangelica doctrine.” But what the opinions are which they consider in this light, they have nowhere as yet publicly said. At the same time, it is satisfactory to learn that, without imposing any thing like what may be called a test, or requiring union of sentiment as to church government, or such questions as relate to the subjects or mode of baptism—and for this I am far from blaming them—they do hold and recognize the doctrines contained in the Shorter Catechisms concerning all the essential and fundamental truths on which alone the faith and hope of any sinful human being can securely rest, as those to which they are attached, and are solicitously unitedly to adhere: and from this I pray they may never depart. In regard to their meetings for prayer shall I commend them? To speak in commendation of prayer! My brethren, what can we do, whether individually or collectively, whether singly or combined, without the blessing and grace of God? and, if not implored, there is no reason to expect that these will be experienced. Prayer is that which moves Heaven in our behalf. It is the channel of communication between the soul below, and the great Father of Light and Life above; and brings down from on high, that spiritually quickening and guiding, and sanctifying influence, which alone can render us fruitful in love, or in any good word or work. The object of the society, besides, is to benefit others as well as themselves. And there is one feature in this part of their benevolent designs, to which I would more particularly call your attention, as equally important and commendable. It is that of providing suitable houses, where young men, on leaving their native homes, and coming into this city of vice and temptation, may be comfortably lodged or boarded, with families in which the fear of God is to be found, and his worship is established, and where the religious impressions, and virtuous habits of their youth, instead of being effaced either by the secular occupations of the day, or the ensnaring leisure of the evening, may, on the contrary, through grace, be rendered deeper and more permanent, as seeds of those fruits of righteousness, which, in their future conduct, shall be to the praise and the glory of God. Let the young around me, then, who may not yet have joined this society, think of its objects

and importance; and ask, whether they should hesitate or delay to give it their personal support, by enrolling themselves as its members? And let all of us endeavour to countenance by every means of encouragement, and prayer, and influence in our power the exertions of these our younger brethren, in their works of faith, and labours of love. And now would we hope and pray, that, through their means, there may be raised up in this city, where irreligion and immorality so widely pervade every class of every age, many who shall hereafter become the instruments of great and increasing usefulness to those who are around them, and with whom they daily

and hourly, or only more occasionally, associate; to the christian churches, of whatever denomination, with which they may be connected; and to the interests of truth and godliness throughout the world at large; and that, thus serving the Lord, and being "reckoned unto him for a generation," when they shall be called to resign their spirits into the hands of their redeeming God and Saviour, they may be enabled to give in their account with joy and not with grief, and be found to have done more service to Him, and to their fellow-men, than we of the present race have ever been enabled to do. Amen.

PEACE WITH GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE PRESBYTERY OF EDINBURGH, ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1832, AT THE INDUCTION OF THE REV. JOHN HUNTER TO BE ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE TRON CHURCH, WITH THE CHARGE TO THE PASTOR AND CONGREGATION,

By the Rev. WILLIAM PURDIE,

Minister of Libberton.

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."—

ROM. v. 1.

THE most solemn and alarming truth which we know concerning ourselves, is that we are by nature in a state of warfare with God. So long as our first parents retained on their minds the impress of the divine image, after which they had been created, their occupation and their happiness consisted in manifesting their love to God, and advancing his glory. No sooner, however, did they fall from the holy and happy state in which they were made, than a great and melancholy change was effected in their whole constitution. Instead of delighting, as before, to hold communion with the Lord, and rejoicing in the light of his countenance, the guilty pair fled from his presence, when they heard his voice in the garden. They would fain have screened themselves from his view among the trees; and had he left them alone, they would thenceforth have been content to live as outcasts in the world, without God and without hope. And the same evil spirit ever since has been at work, through every successive generation of their descendants. Those who were left to the natural influence of corrupted affections, dispositions, and desires, speedily cast aside the very appearance of allegiance

to the Most High. Not liking to retain God in their knowledge, they rejected his authority, and gave themselves up to idolatry. They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image, made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things—thus changing the truth of God into a lie, and worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Even the Jews, distinguished as they were by the extraordinary privileges which the Almighty had conferred upon them, in choosing them out from among all the nations of the earth, to be his own peculiar people, in committing to their care the oracles of truth, and showing forth his infinite perfections before them, by a series of stupendous miracles, mighty signs and wonders, frequently forsook the service of the one living and true God, and bowed the knee to Baal, and to other senseless images of stocks and stones, fashioned after the devices of their own corrupt imaginations. And what shall we say in regard to the present race of mankind? If we look to the condition of heathen nations in our own days, we find them like the Gentiles of old, in open

rebellion against Jehovah, equalling, if not surpassing their forefathers in extravagance, and absurdity, and horrid impiety. If we look to the land most highly favoured in regard to moral and intellectual cultivation and refinement, in regard to gospel light and liberty, we find even there, in spite of all their privileges and advantages, that the children of Adam are still by nature at enmity with God. Some are seen, with a bold and reckless profanity, openly avowing their belief, that there is no God at all in the heavens to call men to account; while others, without venturing so far as to deny his existence, are daring enough to set his power at defiance, and to trample under foot all his righteous and holy commandments, rushing headlong to the indulgence of every vicious inclination, and plunging without scruple into the perpetration of every crime. It is no doubt true, that such men as these, under ordinary circumstances, form but a very insignificant portion of any christian community; while the few who dare to be openly profane and profligate, are content to be held up to the eyes of the world, as despising equally religion and decency, the great majority exhibit an appearance of respect for them both. They are anxious and careful to maintain an outward conformity to the various requirements of God's revealed will; they are guilty of no flagrant violation of the moral law; and they are regular and punctual in their observance of all the institutions and ordinances of religion: but in how many instances does this arise from no higher motive, than that they may stand well in the eyes of their fellow-mortals; while He who is entitled to the homage of their every thought, and word, and action, has no place at all in their hearts—while they are still, in point of fact, wholly given to the world and its perishing objects, and feel no interest or concern in regard to the things which are of God, refusing in their hearts to acknowledge him as the guide of their ways, and frequently setting up their own affections and desires, in direct opposition to his righteous commands! Let the natural man be honest enough to confess the truth, and he will tell, whatever his professions and his conduct may be, that he feels no pleasure in religious exercise and meditation; that the services of the

formal observances; that he has no love to God in his heart, no desire to enjoy his friendship and favour, and that the business of his life is not to advance the divine honour and glory, but to promote the object of his own selfish devices and pursuits.

Even those whose hearts have been touched and softened by the grace of God; so that they are renewed again after his image in righteousness and true holiness, as far as is consistent with the weakness and imperfections of humanity, have still to struggle with many sinful, rebellious affections. So long as man is confined by the fetters of the body, "the spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that he cannot do the things which he would." And thus, whether we look to the testimony of history, or observation, or personal experience, there is enough, independent of the direct evidence of Scripture on the subject, to establish the truth of the doctrine, that we are all by nature in a state of warfare with God.

Nor has this hostility been confined on our part to the indulgence of dispositions and affections opposed to the revealed will of the Eternal. It has broken out in a thousand offences of a heinous and aggravated kind. For the law of corruption and depravity which is in our members is continually at war with the law of our minds, and bringing us under the captivity of sin, insomuch that the most upright man that ever breathed the air of heaven, yea, the most sincere and pious Christian that ever called on the name of Jesus, has been guilty of actual transgression, times and ways without number—not in thought only, but also in word and in deed. We know that God is of purer eyes than to behold evil—that he cannot look on iniquity—that he cannot regard sin but with perfect abhorrence; and accordingly, we find it declared in his Word, that the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off their remembrance from the earth; that unto them who are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, he will render indignation and wrath, and tribulation and anguish; upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest. This shall be the portion of their cup. The sentence to be pronounced upon such in that great day, when he cometh to

cannot be changed,—“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” So that, were God to visit us as we have deserved, and to punish us according to our sins, we should have had nothing to expect at his hands but to be banished for ever from his presence, and consigned to everlasting destruction.

If these solemn and important truths constituted the sum of our knowledge in regard to ourselves, and the relation in which we stand towards God, these were enough to overwhelm every mind with despair, and to convert the whole earth into one wide and dreary scene of desolation and dismay. What are all the pleasures the world can bestow on its votaries if there were nothing before us through eternity but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation? What were all the happiness that ever was or can be enjoyed upon earth, if we were doomed in the end to dwell with the rebellious apostate spirits in chains of darkness, amid devouring fires and everlasting burnings? Let our portion in life be what it might, peace must in such circumstances have been an utter stranger to our minds. We might have endeavoured to drown the serious and appalling thoughts, to which the consideration of these things is calculated to give birth amid the excitements of business, the pursuits of ambition, the allurements of secular study, or the giddy exhibition of sensual delights; but in spite of all our efforts, gloomy apprehensions and fearful forebodings would still have been found rising in continual succession around us at every step, and mingling a bitter draught with every cup. Death would then have been the king of terrors to the whole human race; and as he pursued his desolating march among families and nations, his course would have been followed with mingled shrieks of agony and dismay. Nowhere would have been seen the patient resignation and triumphant joy which so frequently mark the last moments of the dying Christian. Every sickbed would have been a scene of restless anxiety, alarm, and despair.

But thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, man has not been left to perish in this helpless and hopeless condition. In the midst of deserved wrath, God was pleased to remember us with undeserved mercy; and, instead of baring his arm to launch the fiery bolt of vengeance,

and hurl us to everlasting destruction, he displayed the banners of love in the heavens, and sent down a legion of holy angels from above, to announce the glad tidings of great joy, that while there was glory to God in the highest, there was on earth peace and good will toward men. Why need I enlarge on the wondrous scheme which God, in infinite wisdom and goodness, devised to redeem men from this miserable condition in which they were placed by nature, and on the no less wondrous means by which his gracious design was accomplished? The eternal Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, came upon earth, God manifest in the flesh, as a mediator between him and his rebellious subjects. He groaned, and bled, and died on the cross at Calvary, amid mockeries and curses, to atone for the guilt of transgressors, and open a way, by his own blood, to pardon, and reconciliation, and acceptance. The Almighty was pleased to accept the sacrifice which Christ then offered up, of his own free will, for sinners. And now God stands revealed toward us, not in the attitude of an offended king and relentless foe, ready to hurl eternal perdition on our heads, but as a kind and affectionate father, reconciling a guilty world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses. He is offering the free pardon of sin to those who have been the very chief of sinners: he is offering peace to those who have been most rebellious and wicked; he is offering to justify, and sanctify, and save the most guilty and polluted of his creatures, through the atonement and intercession of this crucified Redeemer.

But though pardon, and reconciliation, and peace are thus freely and fully offered to every descendant of Adam in whose ears the joyful message of salvation is proclaimed, it does not follow as a necessary consequence that all who hear the gospel should in fact become partakers of its blessings. Such an opinion, it is much to be feared, is too common among professing Christians. Though not openly avowed and maintained, it may be secretly cherished under a thousand disguises and modified forms; and, in point of fact, it is evident from the whole life and conversation of many, that they are practically living under its influence. Some will listen to the gospel not only day after day, and week after week, but year after year, without ever

being impressed in the slightest degree with a sense of the truth as it is in Jesus; others will be kindled, from time to time, into a momentary glow of feeling when any of the peculiar doctrines of our faith are pressed on their notice, with more than usual solemnity, but cast away every serious impression from their minds, the moment they return to their usual occupations. If such individuals be questioned in regard to their hopes and prospects for the future, they do not hesitate to avow their expectation, that the death of Christ, in some way or other, is destined to save them; and thus do they pursue their career through the world, in almost exclusive devotion to its temporal concerns, as if their peace were already made by Jesus, so that they may dwell in all security, certain of obtaining salvation at last, though they feel no anxiety or interest in the matter. If a man have no better ground for his hope, than this vague and indefinite apprehension of God's mercy in Christ, it will assuredly be completely overthrown. Said the rich man to his soul,—“Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, These goods shall be required of thee.” Even as will many who have enjoyed the privilege of living under the gospel dispensation, find, to their unutterable confusion and dismay, that they have neither part nor portion with Christ; for he himself has declared, that many shall be called, but few shall be chosen; neither shall every one who saith Lord, Lord, be permitted to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The reason of this is abundantly obvious, and consists in the simple, yet most important fact, implied in our text, and directly taught in many passages of Scripture, that there is an appointed means by which the benefits of redemption are applied to the sinner—without which means, not so much as one of the spiritual blessings purchased by Christ with his blood, can be obtained. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” was the answer given by St. Paul, to the conscience-stricken jailor at Philippi. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” So that it is by belief or faith alone that the sinner can be justified, and find peace with God.

I shall not enter into any farther

discussion in regard to the nature of saving faith, and the connexion subsisting between faith, and justification, and peace. If men had early been contented with the information furnished by Scripture on these points, few, if any, would ever have felt any doubt or perplexity about them. But, as has been well observed, men have so perplexed themselves and one another with speculations, and controversies have been so multiplied and managed, that the simple testimony of Scripture is frequently disregarded, or even wrested from its obvious meaning, to establish some preconceived opinion. Instead, therefore, of plunging into any of these speculations and controversies, I shall content myself with giving a short and simple account, of what appears to be the Scripture view of the matter.

Faith is defined in the standards of our church, to be “a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation, as he is freely offered to us in the gospel;” from which definition it obviously follows, that there is really but one thing to be ascertained of any importance in a practical point of view, and that is how is Christ offered to us in the gospel? A few scriptural statements will be sufficient to settle this point. The purpose for which the Son of God was manifested in the flesh was to seek and to save that which was lost—to redeem men from the curse under which they were lying by nature as rebels against God, and transgressors of his law—and to open up a way by which they might be pardoned, and reconciled, and sanctified, and finally admitted to the inheritance of eternal life in the heavens. Having accomplished this object by his perfect obedience and sacrificial death, he is set forth as the Mediator and Intercessor for men with the Father, able and willing to save to the uttermost, even the very chief of sinners; and now he is offered in the gospel, fully and freely, with all his benefits, to every individual sinner, on the simple terms, that he believe this testimony which God has given concerning his Son. If a man, by the grace of God, be led to entertain a true sense of sin, then does he feel that he belongs to the class for whom Christ died, and that he is entitled as such to take home to himself all the invitations, and promises, and offers which are made through him. Feeling his need of a Saviour, and being

able and willing to save him, then is he of necessity led to see to him as his only hope, and to trust to him for pardon and acceptance, and every blessing which he requires. The moment that the sinner is thus enabled to exercise faith in Jesus, he is justified in God's sight, not on account of any saving virtue in faith itself, but simply or wholly on the ground of Christ's atonement and intercession, made effectual to him, by the instrumentality of faith. A change has taken place in the relation in which he stands towards God; that is to say, God no longer looks on him as he is in himself, a guilty polluted creature, lying under sentence of just condemnation, but as an humble penitent believer, covered with the imputed righteousness of Christ. Thus is he saved from the curse of the law, and made a partaker of all the privileges and blessings of grace. As the manslayer, to use the words of another, having entered the city of refuge, was by a special constitution of mercy in the Mosaic law, secured from the avenger of blood; so the sinner, having fled for refuge to lay hold on Christ, the hope set before him, is, by the gracious constitution of the Gospel, secured from the curse. All the threatenings which belonged to him as a child of wrath no longer stand against him, but are reckoned by the Judge of all as having been executed on Jesus his substitute, who was made a curse for us. On the other hand, all the promises and blessings in the Book of God belong to him, and die when he say, eternal life is his portion.

If this view of the matter be correct, then it follows that believers, being justified by faith, have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. For they have the warrant of God's own word for regarding him, not as an enemy, but as a friend—a kind and gracious Father reconciling them to himself by the mediation of his own dear Son, willing and ready to communicate to them a portion of his richest and choicest blessings, both in this world, and in that which is to come. But it does not equally follow that believers are of necessity conscious of this happy change, in their relative position toward God, the moment they have been made to feel the influence of divine truth in their hearts; or that in the very exercise of faith, they must feel a perfect assurance of salvation, and at once arrive at the possession of the tranquillity, and peace and

joy, which a knowledge of their interest in Christ is naturally fitted to impart. There are professing Christians who seek no other evidence for the sincerity of what they profess than the consciousness of inward emotions and sentiments, and who do not scruple to avow an unhesitating and unshaken confidence in regard to their state, without the slightest reference to the fruits of the Spirit as manifested in their ordinary life and conversation. But this seems to savour more of the presumptuous pride of the self-righteous Pharisee, than of the meek and lowly spirit of the penitent sinner. Our Saviour and his inspired servants, whom he appointed to the work of the ministry, are careful to inculcate on their disciples habitual self-examination and godly jealousy. "Watch and pray," says our Lord, "lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."—"Examine yourselves," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves."—"I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," says the same Apostle, "lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."—And again, "Let us fear lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any should seem to come short of it."—"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling;" "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

Though, therefore, we may have been persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ as he is offered to us in the gospel, we must not expect to enjoy at every moment of our lives in equal degrees that peace of conscience which flows from the conviction that we are not in a state of wrath, but of grace. "There is no condemnation," we are told, "to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" so that we must look for the fruits of the Spirit, the progress of sanctification in our hearts, as the only sure and unquestionable test by which to try the reality of our interest in Christ. And if this be the case, then the feeling of security and peace in the mind of the Christian must vary from time to time in liveliness and strength according to circumstances. So long as he remains in the body, evil cleaves like a polluting leprosy to his corrupted nature; he has a deadly struggle to maintain with the devil and the flesh; wicked thoughts and vicious inclinations assail him from within;

all the powers of the prince of darkness are leagued against him from without, and so is he often betrayed into temporary fits of perplexity, and doubt, and apprehension, regarding the condition of his soul.

But if he really be in the faith, all his misgivings will speedily vanish. The Comforter will come to his aid, and he will again experience in his heart the fulness of hope, and confidence, and joy in the Saviour. Let him confine his view to what he is in himself, a sinful, polluted, perishing creature; let him feel the power of indwelling sin working within him, and he is ready to exclaim in an agony of fear and alarm, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Let him look to Jesus, the Lord of Glory, pouring out his soul into death on the cross; or ascending to the heavens, leading captivity captive, taking his seat at the right hand of God—and then will he burst forth into the song of triumph, "I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ." See Rom. viii. 33—39.

What, then, should have power to stagger and perplex the man who is justified through Christ, and at peace with God? Is he exposed to trials and distresses in this life?—he has a sure anchor of the soul, which can keep him steadfast and unmoved amid all the storms and troubles with which he is assailed. For he is intitled to say, with God's servants of old, "I know on whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom." "I will not be afraid, though ten thousand of the people set themselves against me round about. I will not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea—though the waters thereof roar and be troubled—though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Yea, the little frets and anxieties of the world vanish out of sight, or shrink into the most contemptible insignificance, when he views the boundless prospect of honour, and glory, and immortality, which stretches

through eternity before him; and not only so, but he glories also in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed; and that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed. When he finds himself standing on the brink of the grave, instead of shuddering at the sight of its dark and dreary chamber, and casting a wistful, lingering look on the world, and clinging, with fruitless efforts, to its objects, when they are gradually shrinking, one by one, from his grasp, his eyes will be fixed, with steadfast gaze, on the heavens above, where he sees, in faith, the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of his throne; and he will enter the dark valley of the shadow of death, rejoicing in the prospect of his heavenly inheritance, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

When the Lord shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on the ungodly, they who have not known God, nor obeyed the gospel, will endeavour to flee from his presence, and they will say to the mountains and the 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 wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand; and they will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power. But believers shall be raised up in glory, to meet him in the clouds, with the song of praise and triumph in their mouths: "To Him that loved us and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." They shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is; and then shall they enter on the enjoyment of those pure and exalted pleasures, which are at his right hand for evermore. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; nor shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Amen.

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To whom all Communications should be addressed.

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SATURDAY, 27TH OCTOBER 1833.

No. 31.

CHARGE by the Rev. WILLIAM PURDIE, Liberton.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN HUNTER, Edinburgh.

Price 2d.

CHARGE TO THE PASTOR AND CONGREGATION;

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY, 11TH OCTOBER, 1833, AT THE INDUCTION OF THE REV.
JOHN HUNTER TO BE ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE TRON CHURCH,

By the Rev. WILLIAM PURDIE,
Minister of Liberton

MY DEAR SIR,—As a member of that Presbytery to which we have both the honour to belong, it has devolved upon me to address a few words of exhortation and encouragement to you in reference to the office with which you have this day been invested. I cannot conceal my regret that a duty of so solemn and important a nature has not fallen into more worthy and competent hands. For, highly as I value the spirit of Presbyterian parity, and deeply as I am attached to all the laws and forms of our church, I cannot help feeling as if it were almost an act of presumption to address a single word of admonition, even though it be in an official capacity, to one so greatly superior to myself in experience, and in every other respect. But, sir, the very fact that you are no novice in the work—that you have already, during a long succession of years, approved yourself as a diligent zealous, and faithful labourer in the vineyard of the Lord—is calculated in some measure to support and strengthen me on the present trying occasion; because I am well aware that, however deficient I may be in the performance of the part assigned to me, no practical injury is likely to result, in so far as you are concerned. You know from personal experience the nature of the functions which you have to discharge in the new sphere of labour to which Providence has been pleased to call you; you know the various qualifications which are requisite to constitute a successful minister of Christ; and I cannot doubt that the reflections and resolutions to which your own feelings and principles must naturally give birth, will be in all

respects such as are becoming for you to entertain, independent of any thing which may be suggested by another. At the same time, however, I cannot forget that He, in whose name I have been appointed to address you, is one who has destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nothing the understanding of the prudent, and ordained strength and perfected praise out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. We are assured that his grace is sufficient for us—that his strength is made perfect in weakness; so that in a humble reliance on His aid and support, I feel warranted to hope that the few hints which I venture to throw out, not for the purpose of communicating instruction, but of stirring up your pure mind by way of remembrance, may be so blessed as to prove both seasonable and profitable to you.

Permit me, then, to remind you, that the object for which the gospel ministry was instituted was to win souls to Christ—to bring men, through the influence of the Spirit, out of that state of enmity with God, of sin and of misery, in which they are lying by nature, into a state of salvation through a crucified Redeemer—to open their eyes—to turn “them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God,” that they may obtain forgiveness of sin and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith. In every situation, therefore, in which a minister can be placed he has a work to perform, whose magnitude and importance are such as to exceed all the power of human calculation. The simple fact that he is appointed to watch over the interests

of immortal creatures, not only capable of infinite happiness and infinite misery, but actually destined to exist in one or other of these conditions through the endless ages of eternity, is sufficient to prove that his office is at once the most honourable and the most responsible to which a human being can be called. "Eternity," says one well calculated, by a rare combination of the most splendid talents and accomplishments with the most ardent devotion to the cause of his Master, to embody in fitting language the lofty conceptions suggested by this solemn subject, "eternity invests every state, whether of bliss or of suffering, with a mysterious and awful importance entirely its own, and is the only property in the creation which gives that weight and moment to whatever it attaches, compared with which all sublunary joys and sorrows, all interests which know a period, fade into the most contemptible insignificance. In appreciating every other object, it is easy to exceed the proper estimate; and even of the most distressing events which occur to mortals the feelings which many possess are frequently more than equal to the occasion. When God is pleased, for example, in the mysterious dispensations of his Providence, to remove from the world, by sudden and unexpected calamity, some illustrious personage on whose welfare the prosperity of a nation is thought to depend, on whom every eye is turned and all hopes centred, men are seldom wanting in expressions of the most poignant regret, and in sympathy with those who are deprived of the object of their dearest affections. Sorrow is painted on every countenance. The pursuits of business and pleasure are suspended, and the kingdom is covered with signals of distress. But what—if it be awful to indulge such a thought—what would be the funeral obsequies of a lost soul? Where shall we find the tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle? or, could we realize the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of commiseration and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light, or the moon her brightness? to cover the earth with mourning or the heavens with sackcloth? or were the whole fabric of nature to become unfastened and void, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the

magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?"

If, then, the loss of an immortal soul be so dismal a calamity, that no human language is adequate to represent, no stretch of thought sufficient to comprehend it, how unutterably great and glorious an event must be its salvation, implying, as it does, not only to escape the chains of darkness and the pit of torment, whose smoke ascendeth for ever and ever, but to be admitted to the heaven of heavens, into the presence of God and of the Lamb, and of his holy angels, and to dwell in the enjoyment of those pure and exalted pleasures which are at God's right hand evermore! This is a spectacle which angels cannot view with indifference. They watch with anxiety the progress of salvation among men, and the song of congratulation, and joy, and triumph, bursts from the assembled host, whenever a sinner is converted, and led into the way which conducts to life everlasting. How honourable, then, the ministration which we have received, and how awful the responsibility which attaches to the manner of discharging it!

I know that considerations such as these would have led you to devote yourself, as you have hitherto done, with unwearied diligence and zeal, to the work of the ministry, though there had been nothing to call forth an extraordinary exertion. But, sir, you come amongst us at a time when there is a loud and an urgent call for increased vigilance and activity on the part of every servant of Christ. It is true, that death has been no unusual thing among us; not a day has rolled over our heads on which the King of Terrors has not been busy plying his work of destruction on every side—not a moment has passed without leaving thousands of our fellow creatures struggling in the last agonies of dissolution—thousands of disembodied spirits winging their way to their place of everlasting abode. And at no period of our lives have we been certain of having our existence prolonged for so much as a year, or a day, or an hour. But the Angel of Death has lately been sent into the world, invested with power tenfold greater than before, to smite and to destroy. He has wheeled his destructive flight over almost every nation of the earth—he has scattered destruction and dismay through the whole length and breadth of

this land—and he is still continuing to hover around our dwellings, sweeping his daily and hourly victims into the grave, without distinction of age, or rank, or any other circumstance. The shortness and uncertainty of life have always been familiar to us as household expressions; but they now stand recorded in letters of blood before us, and the solemn lesson is sounding with a voice of thunder in our ears, *that we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth.* In which circumstances, I cannot doubt that you are resolved and prepared to devote yourself with still greater energy and zeal, if possible, than before, to the discharge of the duties incumbent upon you, as a minister of Christ.

There are, as you are well aware, various subordinate means by which, through the grace of God, the great purposes of the ministry may be accomplished; and I am sure that you are not disposed to overlook or neglect any of them. But it is in the public preaching of the word that the most effectual instrument is furnished for convincing and converting sinners, as well as for building up and establishing the godly in the faith; and, therefore, it may reasonably be supposed, that your success in this place will depend, in a great measure, on the way in which that part of your duties is performed. Your knowledge of human nature and of gospel doctrine will readily suggest both the kind of subjects most suitable to the condition of your hearers, and the manner in which they ought to be treated. You will not be contented with setting the truth as it is in Jesus, simply before them on every occasion, and leaving it to work its proper effect on their minds by its intrinsic excellence, and exact adaptation to their wants. As there is a mixture of character, a difference of religious knowledge and feeling, in every Christian congregation, so, in spite of the able and faithful ministrations of those who have hitherto been labouring in this place, you must expect to find a considerable diversity of attainments among your people. While some are far advanced in the christian life, others may be still sitting in darkness, in the valley of the shadow of death, ignorant of the first principles of the oracles of God, and altogether senseless and indifferent in regard to the condition of their souls. It is requisite, therefore, that you be careful

to vary your discourses so as to suit their several capacities and wants. Sometimes you will endeavour to rouse the heedless sinner to a sense of his guilt and danger, by searching appeals to the conscience, and displaying, in terrible array, all the threats and curses of the law; sometimes you will seek to calm the troubled spirit, by holding up to view the precious privileges and blessings which Christ purchased for his people with his blood, and setting forth the invitations and promises which are given to all men, fully and freely, in the gospel; sometimes you will speak of the mount that might not be touched, and that burned with fire, and of its blackness, and darkness, and tempests, and of the sound of the trumpet, and of the voice of words, which voice they that heard entreated that it might not be spoken to them any more; sometimes you will lead them to Mount Zion, and to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel's.

Thus you will become all things to all men. Of some you will have compassion, making a difference, and others you will save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. You will be instant in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, exhorting, with all long-suffering and doctrine. You will meditate upon these things; you will give yourself wholly to them, that your profiting may appear unto all. You will continue in them, that you may save both yourself and those that hear you.

Finally, my dear brother, permit me to remind you, that no amount of skill or experience can warrant you to trust for success to your own unaided exertions, Though a Paul may plant, and an Apollos may water, yet it is God alone who giveth the increase. Let your hope and your confidence be in him, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance. By his quickening and strengthening grace you will be enabled not only to declare to your people the whole counsels of God, but also to be an example to believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith,

and in purity. And thus, whether you are destined to spend many years still upon earth, or to be called away before many days pass over your head, you will be able to say, with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "I am ready to be offered, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day."

It now remains, my dear friends, that I address a few words of admonition to you. I trust and believe that it is not requisite to say much, for the purpose of urging upon you the necessity of giving your new pastor not only a friendly, but a kind and warm reception. In all circumstances, it is right that the people of a parish or congregation should receive the minister who is appointed to labour in holy things among them, with an affectionate welcome. This they should do for the sake of the character he bears as an ambassador of Christ. They should do it for their own sakes, that he may be encouraged at the outset of his ministry, to devote himself with diligence and zeal to the work of his vocation, and that watching for souls, as one who must give an account, he may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for them. But it is of more than usual importance, that you do every thing in your power to testify your affectionate regard for him who has this day been admitted to the ministry among you. The opposition made to his settlement, I am aware, was founded entirely on general and public grounds; for of those who opposed him most keenly on principle, almost all have been loud in the most unqualified expressions of respect and esteem for the individual concerned. Seeing, however, that such opposition has been made, and an unhappy delay in the settlement been the consequence, it is incumbent on all of you to use every exertion, for the purpose of showing that you are not the less disposed, on that account, to regard him with the honour and affection to which he is entitled, not only as a minister of Christ, but also as a man. I am sure that a mutual attachment will at once be established between you, which will, I trust, prove a source of much comfort and profit both to him and to you.

In regard to the manner in which you should receive his public ministrations, and especially the preaching of the word, which is, as has been said, the means most generally efficacious for accomplishing the objects of a gospel ministry, I now proceed to throw out a few hints. I take it for granted, that you are disposed to be regular in your attendance on all the services of religion in this place; but allow me to remind you, that it is not enough that you come to God's house, Sabbath after Sabbath, to hear the gospel. You must come with right dispositions and affections, willing and anxious to be taught the things which concern your salvation, prepared to follow the exhortation of the Apostle, by receiving *with meekness the ingrafted word which is able to save our souls.*

We often find in christian congregations individuals of so narrow, and conceited, and intolerant a spirit, that they will not listen with patience to any thing which does not exactly harmonize with their own opinions on every point. Instead of coming up to the house of the Lord in a right and charitable frame of spirit, seeking knowledge, and edification, and comfort, from the preaching of the word, they set themselves as judges of the orthodoxy of the sermons, and never think of taking the lessons which they convey home to themselves. They are more anxious to criticize, than to profit by what they hear. In guarding you against such a spirit, I have no desire to magnify the office of the ministry, or to claim for any frail, erring mortal that infallibility which would entitle him to give law to your opinions, whether your judgment agreed with him or not. But it must be obvious to every one possessed of ordinary candour, that a minister, trained, as he is, by preliminary discipline, to habits of minute and accurate inquiry, and engaged, day after day, in examining and explaining the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, is more likely to arrive at a sound conclusion on any given point, and especially on abstruse and difficult questions, than any of his people; so that, if his opinion differ in any respect from yours, the probability is, that you are labouring under an erroneous impression. "Wherefore, be swift to hear and slow to speak, remembering that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

Another class of men generally found in every christian society, consists of

those who frequent the house of God, not so much for spiritual profit, as for intellectual gratification. If the preacher be able, by the profoundness of his learning, to bring forth continual supplies of knowledge; or, by acuteness and strength of intellect, to expound the most difficult and perplexing passages; or, by ingenuity and eloquence, to illustrate and enforce our various obligations; or, by liveliness of fancy, and warmth of imagination, to throw a charming lustre over every topic which he handles;—many will admire and praise his discourse, while they never bestow a thought on the truths which he is endeavouring to impress on their minds. And, on the other hand, if he be destitute of talents such as these, no consideration of the solemnity or importance of the truths unfolded will induce them to give him a patient hearing. I do not presume to undervalue or decry such qualifications in a preacher, for it is impossible to doubt that they present a most important means of communicating instruction, and that they are often instrumental, in God's hands, for making saving impressions on the minds of careless, indifferent sinners. And I know that your new pastor is possessed of talents and attainments which will render his ministrations acceptable to the most cultivated intellect, and to the most polished taste. Yet I am anxious to guard you against attaching too much importance to what is, after all, a matter of secondary concern. The gospel, teaching as it does the way to salvation, is the most important, and ought to be received as by far the most interesting and joyful message that ever was delivered to man, whether it be recommended by learning, and genius, and eloquence, or be preached in weakness, and fear, and much trembling. Let your first and great concern be, to increase in knowledge and in grace: *as new born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.*

The last class of persons to whom I mean to allude, consists of those who come to God's house every Sabbath from a sense of duty, or from habit, or from a regard to the customs and decencies of society. Of these, some will listen with a dull and sluggish ear, when the most important doctrines of religion are the subject of discourse, and experience no

corresponding emotion or sentiment; others will be roused to a feeling of apprehension and alarm, when the sinfulness and misery of their natural state are pressed on their notice with more than usual earnestness and solemnity; they will be serious, and anxious about the welfare of their souls; they will even feel in their hearts something like love to Jesus, and gratitude and joy, when they hear of all that he did and suffered in order to save perishing sinners from destruction. But no sooner has the voice of the preacher ceased to sound in their ears, and they are released from the calm and stillness of the sanctuary, and of the Sabbath, than they cast aside every religious impression, and give themselves up to the excitements of the world, and to the ordinary round of business and amusement, as heedless and unconcerned in regard to their souls, as if they had never heard of death, and judgment, and eternity. To such men the gospel is not a savour of life unto life, but of death unto death: it is a stumbling-block and a rock of offence, that they may hear, and wonder, and perish. "Be ye, therefore, doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves; for if any man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass, for he beholdeth himself, and straightway forgetteth what manner of person he was." If the warnings and threatenings of the law, the invitations and promises of the gospel, be set before you week after week from the pulpit, without producing any corresponding effect on your lives, how can you hope to obtain any portion of the benefits of redemption? or how will you answer to God for the neglect of all those opportunities and means of grace with which you have been favoured? May he not justly say—"Behold I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and none regarded; but ye set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh, when your fear cometh as a desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind. Then shall ye call, but I will not answer. Ye shall seek me early, and shall not find me; because ye hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord."

THE INFINITE IMPORTANCE OF SALVATION;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE TRON CHURCH EDINBURGH, ON THE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1833.

By the Rev. JOHN HUNTER,

One of the Ministers.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." ROM. x. 1.

IT is impossible for those who are invested with the christian ministry, and who feel in any measure the magnitude and responsibility of their office, to peruse the solemn and affectionate language of my text, without the deepest humiliation for their own deficiencies, and without sincere and fervent prayer that God may breathe into their souls the holy flame of gratitude to Jesus, and love to men, that, like the venerable Apostle of the Gentiles, they may travail, as it were, in birth, until Christ be formed in the souls of their people. But these words are fraught with instruction, not only to us, but also to you; and it is to promote our mutual edification and encouragement in the paths of godliness, that I have selected them as the subject of meditation on the present interesting occasion.

In the first place, they remind us, that the salvation of the soul is of incalculable, of infinite, importance. Contrast heightens and enhances all our pleasures. Health never appears so precious, as when we have been stretched on a bed of sickness, and racked with agonizing pain; life never so valuable, as when we have been brought down to the very gates of death; nor friends so dear and loved, as when we tremble at the thought that they are about to be for ever separated from our fond embraces. And so it is that even heaven itself seems more blessed and glorious, when we turn our eyes to the gloomy caverns of hell. But what imagination can conceive, what tongue can utter, the anguish endured in a region where sinful and malignant passions reign with uncontrolled dominion; where every tie that united man with the wise and the good is torn asunder, and he becomes the constant companion of devils and wicked spirits; where guilt at once creates and perpetuates misery; and where hope, the last stay and

solace of the wretched, is for ever extinguished! There the beams of Jehovah's reconciled countenance never shine; there the cheering accents of forgiveness and mercy are never heard; and there the divine Spirit strives not with the fallen and guilty children of the dust. The soul is harrowed with deep and unavailing remorse, and not one ray of light ever enters into the abodes of the children of perdition, to cheer their dreariness and gloom. Scripture employs the strongest and most expressive metaphors to describe the misery of the place of punishment. It compares it to a worm continually preying upon the vitals; to everlasting burnings; and to unquenchable fire. It tells us that the smoke of the torment of its wretched inhabitants ascendeth up for ever and ever; and, in one short expression, it conveys an idea too awful for the human mind to dwell on, but which may well cause the stoutest heart to be afraid. *There* we learn that the wrath of the self-existent, the omnipotent, the eternal God *abideth*. And what, on the other hand, is it to be saved? It is to be for ever delivered from all these calamities, and to obtain blessing, the full value and extent of which eternity alone can unveil. Oh! that I could speak to you, in strains worthy of the sacred theme, of the happiness which springs from a mind enlightened to behold the glory, the majesty, and grace of the Godhead; from a heart purified from all that is evil, and inspired with all that is good; from a soul filled with love to its God and Saviour, and receiving rich, and constant and endless communications of divine gifts; from the most endearing and delightful intercourse with angels, and archangels, and cherubim, and seraphim, and all the mighty company of the redeemed, who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the

Lamb; from united and heartfelt acts of praise to the everlasting Jehovah; from the exercise of every amiable and kindly affection; from deeds of disinterested and diffusive benevolence; and from serving the Almighty day and night in his holy temple! When the queen of Sheba beheld the magnificence and splendid treasures of King Solomon, she declared that the half had not been told to her; but when we attempt to describe the joys of immortality, we feel as if it were but one scanty drop from that mighty ocean of bliss which our heavenly Father has provided to refresh his redeemed children, that we are permitted to exhibit to your view; and that all our descriptions, except when clothed in the very language of inspiration, only darken counsel by words without knowledge. My brethren, there is one idea which renders the thought of our condemnation or salvation infinitely awful, or ineffably dignified and animating: the joys and the sorrows of the world of spirits last for ever—they are eternal. But who shall fathom the unknown, the mighty abyss of eternity! We think of it—we speculate on it—we speak of it; but we understand it not. Like the incomprehensible, the majestic Being, whose peculiar attribute it is, it is high as heaven, and we see it not; it is deep as hell, and we hear it not: the measure of it is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. When we reflect on millions of millions of ages, of weal or woe, rolling on in endless succession, and yet that the existence of human beings is not one moment nearer to its close than when it at first commenced, we feel our minds completely bewildered, and we abandon a contemplation too vast and sublime for our limited and feeble powers. But, would we learn the full value of the soul of man, we must not rest satisfied with the unassisted dictates of our reason, or the wild vagaries of our imagination. We must contemplate it as it shines forth to our view in the mirror of redemption. Behold, then, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, the object of the Father's boundless love, and of the adoration and obedience of countless myriads of the heavenly host, undertaking, in the mysterious counsels of eternity, to save the soul of man. Trace the execution of this mighty scheme. Ere the apostate children of the dust can be delivered from everlasting misery, and

raised to the hope and enjoyment of eternal life, the Son of the Highest must veil his celestial glory, must assume the human nature into close and intimate union with the divine; must be subjected to the assaults of the prince of darkness, and exposed to the ignominy and contempt of wicked men; must endure the most severe and excruciating bodily torture, and the deepest mental distress; must have the sword of his heavenly Father lifted up against him, and bear the mighty load of our imputed guilt, and must at last expire upon the cross. When we look to Bethlehem, to Gethsemane, and Calvary, we feel the original dignity of our nature, and the exalted glory to which it may even yet be raised. We tremble at the awful peril to which we are exposed; and the force of our Lord's solemn interrogation presents itself in the most impressive form to our minds—"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

And this leads me to observe, secondly, that while salvation is infinitely important, there are many individuals who enjoy the choicest religious privileges and advantages, who are yet in extreme danger of falling short of its attainment. This will be readily admitted, with regard to the unbelieving Jew and the idolatrous Gentile, who scoffed at the mission of the Son of God, or who imbrued their hands in his blood; but we shrink from its application to our own individual cases. We are disposed to say to ourselves, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," and when sudden destruction is ready to come upon us. Look around, my friends, and look within. I will not speak to you at present of the infatuated mortals who never utter the name of the Deity, but to blaspheme—who despise the Sabbath and the sanctuary—who are entire strangers to every act of devotion—whose bodies are debased by intemperance and debauchery, and whose souls are polluted by every base, malignant, and revengeful passion—who indulge in fraud and falsehood—and who even hesitate not to commit deeds of violence and cruelty, at which humanity shudders. Wide as some imagine the gate of heaven to be, they cannot believe that it will admit persons of so infamous and depraved a character. We all feel that their touch is pollution, their society

misery, and that the paradise of God itself would be transformed into a region of darkness and of the shadow of death, were not such to be excluded for ever from its abodes. But, my brethren, we must probe yet deeper the wounds which sin has inflicted upon the moral nature of man. Taking the word of God as our guide, we must, in the spirit of meekness, yet of firmness and boldness, inquire into the eternal prospects of persons of a very different character. It may be, that we behold before us an individual of high-minded integrity and chivalrous honour. His tongue is the genuine index of his heart, and his simplest affirmation possesses all the sacredness of an oath. In his transactions, there is no paltry meanness, not the most distant approach to duplicity or cunning. All is pure as light, and open as day. On his unbending firmness and consistent uprightness, we can depend on every occasion, and to him we could confide our fortune, our reputation, all that is justly dear to us as men and as citizens. It is impossible to contemplate such a character, without feeling for its possessor the highest respect and esteem. Yet that individual, estimable as he is in the sight of his fellow-mortals, may have no well-grounded hope towards his God. These virtues may be the effect of natural constitution, or they may have been generated by the influence of external circumstances, or ingrafted and strengthened by the power of education alone; but they spring not from a sacred regard to the authority of Almighty God, nor from a firm and lively faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, instead of leading the man to bend in devout humility before the cross, they may often induce him to cherish a proud, a boastful, and a self-righteous spirit. View next the votary of benevolence. In this world of selfishness, it is delightful to trace the manifestations of a mind, whose highest joy seems centred in promoting the happiness of others. We mark its mild, yet steady influence, in rendering him who possesses it a kind husband, an affectionate father, an indulgent master, an attached friend, and an active and useful citizen. We behold its secret power, in leading him to weep over the tale of woe, or deeply to bewail the calamity of the child of misfortune, which he is yet utterly unable to ward off or to mitigate; and we dwell

with delight on the still more unequivocal proofs of its benignant energy, while we see him entering the squalid abodes of poverty, visiting the dark and dreary cell of the captive, exposing himself to all the loathsomeness and infection of disease, standing by the sick and dying bed, uttering the soothing accents of consolation and of peace, and cheerfully sacrificing his time, his fortune, his social enjoyment, and even his domestic comfort, to mitigate the calamities, and to increase the happiness of the great family of mankind. It is indeed pleasing to know, that a large portion of those who have been most conspicuous in the walks of active usefulness, or in the labours of self-denying or devoted charity, have been influenced by gratitude for the love of a crucified Redeemer, and that our Howards and our Frys, and multitudes who have been the benefactors of the ages in which they lived, and of the country in which they dwelt, have exercised a firm and unshaken reliance, not on their own merits, but on Him who is the only appointed medium through whom guilty man can approach into the presence of his Maker. Yet still, experience and Scripture unite in teaching us, that there may be much natural benevolence, and many amiable qualities, in individuals who are utterly devoid of divine grace, and destitute of the power of vital Christianity. The heart may melt in sympathy, and expand in kind affection toward a fellow-creature while it has never experienced one emotion of love, or throbbeth with one feeling of gratitude towards the Saviour of a fallen and miserable world. The very susceptibility of its feelings with regard to man, increases the measure and degree of its guilt towards its Creator; and, to love every human being while we have no love to our God, is to have the very stamp of ungodliness engraven upon our souls in characters the most plain and legible.

But we must now proceed yet a little farther in the apparent scale of religious and moral excellence, and inquire into the case of the man whose profession of piety stands high among his fellows. Here we are often forcibly reminded of the declaration of Scripture, that "God seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh to the outward appearance, but God judgeth the thoughts and intents of the heart." An individual may acquire a very accurate and minute knowledge of Christianity as

a speculative science, while he has no regard to it as the rule of his faith, and the guide of his life. He may be able to give a clear and luminous view of the doctrines of revealed truth—to state the arguments by which they are supported, and to defend them from the heresies by which their beauty has been defaced, or their utility impaired; he may adhere to all the forms of godliness; he may repeat his morning and evening prayer; he may read the sacred volume; he may erect an altar in his family for the worship of the Father of all the families of the earth; he may regularly attend the house of God, and largely contribute to the diffusion of Christianity throughout the world; yet all the while his religion is vain and delusive, his heart is not right with God; the love of the Most High has never been shed abroad in it by the Holy Ghost; he has never felt the burden of sin, nor come to Him who alone can deliver him from its punishment and its power. He is building on a foundation of wood, hay, and stubble, which must be consumed by the fire of God's wrath, and not on that sure, tried, and precious corner stone which the Lord hath laid in Zion.

This brings me to observe, in the third place, that the sanctification and eternal salvation of his hearers, ought to be the object of the earnest desire and fervent supplication of every christian pastor, and the constant aim of his life. If the soul be of infinite value; if it be exposed to imminent peril; and if, under God, its condemnation or salvation be dependent on the carelessness and sloth, or the fidelity and diligence of those invested with the holy ministry, sacred indeed must be the office they fill, and awful the responsibility they incur. They hold their authority not from man, but from the Great Head of the Church; they profess to have dedicated themselves to his service, and they are bound, by the most holy ties, to watch for souls as those who must give an account; to speak not as pleasing men, but as God; to take heed to themselves, and to their doctrines, and to be examples to the believers in word and conversation, in charity, in faith, and in purity. The life of Saint Paul affords a bright example of ministerial fidelity and zeal. He recollected the time when he himself was an unbeliever in the great principles of the christian faith, a rebel against the authority

of its divine author, and a persecutor of his followers; but the Lord Jesus had been pleased to remove the scales of ignorance and guilt from his eyes, to impart to him the knowledge of divine truth, to quicken him by the power of his grace, and to render him an instrument of extending the triumph of that gospel he had once rejected and despised. He travelled far and wide, proclaiming the glories of the Cross. With the Jew he reasoned from Moses and the prophets, and laboured to convince him that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah promised to his fathers. The Gentile he entreated to renounce the worship of idols, and to learn from Him in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in a present evil world. The philosopher he reminded that the wisdom of man was foolishness with God, and that Christ Jesus was at once the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation. And the humblest of the poor he encouraged to embrace the gospel, by assuring them that God had chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. At Rome, the seat of imperial government, and the mistress of the civilized world; at Athens, the abode of learning and science; at Corinth, the mart of trade; and throughout all the cities and provinces of Lesser Asia, this indefatigable ambassador of Christ carried the glad tidings of peace and salvation, and laboured with unwearied earnestness to win souls to his divine Master. He rose superior to toil, privation, and danger; and even the terrors of death could not shake his pious purposes, and holy resolution. "Behold," said he to the elders of the church at Ephesus, "I go, bound in the spirit, unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me; neither count I myself dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Towards every christian convert he felt all the tenderness and affection of a brother, instructing him in the knowledge of divine truth, warning him of danger, encouraging him in the path of duty, comforting him under persecution and distress, preparing him for the

endurance of still heavier trials, and cheering him with the prospect of that rest that remaineth for the people of God. "We were gentle among you," says he, "even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel only, but our own souls also, because ye were dear to us. For what is our own hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." The spirit of the great Apostle of the Gentiles burnt with a pure, a bright, and a steady flame in the hearts, and governed the lives, of the primitive confessors of our holy faith. The torch of persecution, and the fires of martyrdom, could not shake the steadfastness of their adherence to the cause of Christ, nor chill the fervour of their zeal for the honour and glory of his name. Even in the darkest ages of popery, Jehovah raised up holy men, who revived the dying embers of piety in the souls of their countrymen, and taught them to look beyond outward forms and ceremonies to Him who is the way, the truth, and the life, and through whom alone we can hope for mercy, or obtain grace and salvation. Shall I speak to you of a Luther and a Melancthon, a Calvin and a Knox? the fathers of the Reformation, and the indefatigable supporters of the purity of christian doctrine, the simplicity of christian worship, and that christian sanctity of character which alone can render the soul meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. I might remind you of all these wise and intrepid men who, in our own beloved land, engrafted that plant of renown, and watered it with their blood, under whose peaceful shade we are now permitted to repose. I might tell you of our Bostons, our Willisons, our Haliburtons, and our Guthries, and many other distinguished individuals, who, in after times, were as lights shining in a dark place, holding forth the word of life; men of God; workmen who needed not to be ashamed, and whose writings have powerfully contributed to preserve the knowledge and practice of vital Christianity, both in the mansions of the wealthy, and in the lowly tenements of the poor.

Many of you can recollect the pious and affectionate pastors who, in your early days, delighted to encourage your inquiries

into divine truth, and to teach you to remember your Creator and Redeemer ere your heart was deeply tainted with guilt, or corrupted by the ensnaring influence of an evil world; who encouraged you to approach the sacred table of communion, and told you of the power, the grace, and love of the Saviour of sinners, and who, in every future period of their lives, were your faithful friends and advisers, your guides in difficulty, your comforters in sorrow, the helpers of your faith, your purity, and joy.

I cannot minister among you this day without bearing on my mind, with feelings which I will not attempt to describe, the pious labours, the holy lives, and the peaceful deaths of my own venerated and beloved parent, and of one who was to me the kindest and steadiest of friends—a second father. Long and faithfully did these good men labour in this place in word and in doctrine, and sincerely and ardently were they attached to each other, and to you. They both had learned to fear the Lord from their youth up. They made choice of the office of the ministry from love to Christ, and zeal for the interests of immortal souls. They spoke because they believed; they declared to others those truths which were the consolation and joy of their own hearts. They delighted to minister, not only in the sanctuary of their God, but from house to house, in the chamber of affliction, and around the bed of death. And as life hastened to a termination, and eternity disclosed itself to their view, they declared their firm faith and unshaken confidence in those truths which they had so long and so earnestly pressed upon the attention of their hearers and expressed the joy they felt in quitting this mingled scene of guilt and woe, and entering into the mansions of the just. The one, with his dying breath, exclaimed, None but Christ! None but Christ! The other left it as his last request, that his beloved flock should be assured of the delightful persuasion he experienced, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, should ever be able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Well may every one who now hears me exclaim, Let me live the life of these saints of the Lord, that my

latter end may be like theirs. Yes, my brethren, they have indeed received the reward of their labours; they have been admitted into the presence of that Master whom they adored and loved; and, having turned many to righteousness, they now shine as the sun in the firmament of heaven.

My hearers, I enter this day upon the sacred duties which I have undertaken with a deep sense of my own inferiority to those who have preceded, and to him who is united with me in the labours of the christian ministry in this congregation. I feel how greatly I need direction and assistance from above. Yet I am encouraged when I reflect upon the promises contained in the Word of God, that as our day is, so shall our strength be; that the grace of the Saviour shall be sufficient for his people, and that his strength shall be made perfect in their weakness. And I look with humble hope for the fulfilment of these declarations, when I recollect the goodness of my heavenly Father towards me when employed in his service in another station of the church; the affectionate regard and attention I have uniformly received from my hearers; and the measure of success, (small though it be,) with which my ministrations have been attended. I earnestly desire to know the will of God; to feel its influence upon my own heart; and to declare it to you with fidelity and affection. While, I trust, I shall ever be preserved from keeping back any part of revealed truth, or sacrificing my convictions of duty to gratify the prejudices, the taste, the errors, or the vices of either the rich or the poor, the learned or the illiterate, I yet most sincerely desire to obtain the esteem and love of my hearers; because I may thus find a more ready access to your hearts, and produce a more salutary influence on your lives. I shall experience the highest pleasure in co-operating at all times with my much respected friend and colleague, whose able and affectionate labours you have long enjoyed, in every scheme which may appear prudent and practicable, for communicating religious instruction to the young, for awakening the careless, for affording consolations to bereaved and afflicted mourners, for increasing personal religion, and for promoting habits of

domestic piety and devotion. To you, my brethren, we look for encouragement and support. The office-bearers of the church, parents, masters, and all who are invested with influence and authority, must unite with their pastors in works of faith, and deeds of love, if real good is to be effected in our parish and congregation, and if the honour and glory of Christ is to be advanced in the midst of us. Am I my brother's keeper, is the language of a selfish and worldly heart; but to seek the profit of many that they may be saved is one of the most unequivocal proofs of a regenerated mind. We ask from you not merely your labours, but also your prayers, in our behalf—your fervent, importunate, and believing supplications at the throne of grace. It has often and justly been remarked, that a praying people generally ensures a faithful and successful ministry. If we are in darkness, it may cause the light of divine truth to shine upon us; if we are in error, or sin, it may recall us from our wanderings; if we are walking in the way to Zion, and encouraging others to enter or pursue it, it may increase our alacrity and zeal—and to yourselves it is the best preparation for the exercises of the christian Sabbath, and the most effectual means of carrying the impressions that have been excited in the sanctuary into the scenes and transactions of ordinary life. The hour is fast hastening on when both we who minister, and you who hear, must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to render an account of the manner in which we have discharged our duties to God, and to each other. Sacred and endearing is the tie which binds us together. May it never be dissolved through the ceaseless ages of eternity! May we all stand on the right hand of our Judge! May we all receive from him that best of applauses, Well done, good and faithful servants; enter ye into the joy of your Lord! May the services of the sanctuary below be exchanged for the nobler employments of the temple above; and may we at last unite with one heart and one voice in offering our ascriptions of praise to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever! Which, may God, of his infinite mercy, grant, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Extract from a Sermon preached by the Rev. PETER BROTHERSTON, Minister of Alloa. Published by WILLIAM WRYTE & Company. Edinburgh: 1832.

*"Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—
MATTHEW xi, 28.*

THOUGH all are involved in guilt, and laden with iniquity, all are not aware of it. Many are so ignorant of the spirituality and extent of the divine law, that they are not sensible of having violated it in every precept. They say with the young man in the gospel, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." Others are conscious that they have in many instances transgressed; but still they think that there is as much good in their conduct as will compensate for all the evil; and that at all events, God is too merciful, strictly to mark, and rigorously to punish, their shortcomings and failings. They are therefore at ease, and say unto themselves, "Peace, peace." But when the mind is in some measure enlightened, when the character of God, and the extent and spirituality of his law are perceived, when the commandment is applied with power, and the man takes home the charge of guilt, he sees that he has offended in every thing, and he says, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I cannot look up: they are more in number than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me: How shall I escape from the wrath to come?" And in many cases the burden of conscious guilt is so overwhelming, that the soul chooses strangling and death rather than life. And surely these may be considered as weary and heavy laden; they are bowed down under a sense of guilt, and they tremble under the apprehension of coming wrath. Such the Saviour contemplates with peculiar interest. They are particularly addressed in the words of the text, and they are in a great measure prepared to comply with the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I have still to mention, on this part of

the subject, that the genuine people of God, who have already come to the Saviour for rest, and who have been delivered from guilt and condemnation, are not overlooked in the invitation before us. In many respects they still labour, and frequently they groan, being burdened.

Such persons have come to the Saviour, and at the foot of the cross they have laid down the burden of guilt that pressed heavy on their souls, and there is now no condemnation unto them. And while they continue cleaving to the Saviour, and exercising faith in him, as having borne their sins in his own body on the tree; they will have no forebodings of wrath to come, but will be rejoicing in the hope of eternal life. Yet, while they continue here, they will find that they are not exempted from labour and toil, from trouble and distress; nay, it is the Saviour's express declaration, "In this world ye shall have tribulation." And this declaration has been verified in the experience of the people of God in all ages. They are no more exempted than others from sickness and poverty, reproach and vexation, disappointment and fear. These are not now visitations of wrath; they are not a part of the curse of the broken covenant; they are sent for their good; and they are, in reality, expressions of divine love. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." And since they have come to the Saviour, while they are not exempted from the labour and toil incident to humanity, they have entered upon a work that requires diligent exertion, and sometimes hard labour. They have to resist against sin; and though it is God that worketh in them, they have to work out their own salvation even with fear and trembling.

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| SERMON by the late Rev. W. H. MARRIOTT, A.M., Edinburgh. |

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST;

A Sermon by the Rev. GRAHAM MITCHELL, A.M.,

Minister of Whitburn.

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."—PSALM lxxviii. 18.

THE Jewish economy was manifestly typical in its grand outlines of that clearer dispensation, which in the fulness of time, ushered into the world "the hope and consolation of Israel." The perusal, accordingly, of those types, which were shadows of good things to come, can hardly fail to impress the mind of the christian reader respecting their design as being appointed emblems of a greater and more efficient sacrifice; and this circumstance is placed beyond the possibility of a doubt, when we find it fully illustrated in the epistle to the Hebrews, where the sacred writer proves that they were emblematical of that decease which was accomplished at Jerusalem, which brought in an everlasting righteousness by virtue of the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord, the first begotten from the dead. Careful, however, ought we to be of attempting, as has been too often done, to apply passages as a prophecy or a type, not clearly warranted from the divine record—the effect of which, in many cases, has been, that men have substituted the reveries of imagination for the truth of God, and a shade of uncertainty has been cast over those portions of revelation which show forth, in the most unequivocal manner, the Messiah who was to come. There can be no risk, however, of falling into this error, where the types or prophecies are shown in the New Testament to have been fulfilled in the person and work of Christ; and therefore there can be no doubt that the words of the text relate to his ascension; for we find that they are quoted by the Apostle in his epistle to the Ephesians, in reference to that grandest of

Vol. L.—No. 32.

all events in the annals of time, or perhaps in the records of eternity. Understanding the words of the Psalmist as descriptive of Christ's ascension to heaven, and its consequent results, I purpose, in dependence on promised aid, to speak of the nature of the ascension of our Lord—of the capacities in which he ascended—of the enemies over which he triumphed when he led captivity captive—and, finally, of the beneficial effects of so important an event as the ascension of the Lord of Glory and the Prince of Life. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

I. The nature of the ascension, "Thou hast ascended on high." The Redeemer of men came out from God, and went to God. Yet he ascended not immediately from his grave to his throne. Since it was love the most intense for the souls of men which led him to leave for a season the glory which he had with the Father ere the world was, to take upon him the garb of humanity, to live on this earth, and to die and be buried in the darkness of the sepulchre, we need feel no emotions of surprise that he ascended not *immediately*, but returned for a little to the world, the scene of his labours and love, to satisfy men of the truth of his resurrection, as well as to enlighten, confirm, and solace his bereaved and dejected disciples:—not that he was constantly, but only by times, employed, during the few weeks he was upon earth between his resurrection and ascension, in instructing his little flock concerning the things of his kingdom.

But where he was, or went to, during the intervals of his gracious visits after his return from the grave, it is not for us to determine. This is one of those secret things which belong only to the Lord our God; and the silence observed on this point by the inspired writers who have drawn the portrait of him in every scene, ought to check that presumption which would decide upon matters "above what is written." Cheering, however, it is for us to know that the divine records have given us every satisfaction as to the fact of our Lord's ascension from the earth, and also whither he ascended. This will appear, if we consider what was typified and predicted in the Old Testament, and likewise what, in the New, is recorded to have taken place when he ascended to that holy uncreated light in which he dwelt from eternity. Now, the ascension of our Redeemer was clearly typified of old in the office of the priesthood. The high priest, ordained as he was from among men, to offer both gifts and sacrifices, when he went into the most holy place, wore upon his forehead a golden plate engraven like the engraving of a signet, Holiness to the Lord; while, at the same time, he bore on his breast the names of the children of Israel, written in precious stones, for a perpetual remembrance before the Lord. How strictly this represents, we need not say, our glorious High Priest, who, through the worth and efficacy of the vicarious sacrifice he offered up, presents at this hour in heaven the names of all his people; and whose sacerdotal office, they have the satisfaction to remember with ceaseless admiration and gratitude, is of the highest kind, being after the "order of Melchizedek," who, in reference alone to his priestly character and office, is said to have been without beginning of days or end of years; for he was made, in his order as a priest, like unto the Son of God. Nor is it in the office of the high priest alone we find the ascension of our Lord typified, as confirmed in different portions of the New Testament; the grand event is equally shown forth by the bearing in of the ark, which, you know, was designed as a representation to mortals of the divine presence. The priests and Levites who bore up this symbol of Deity demanded, in the most celestial strains, admission into the tabernacle: they proclaimed aloud, in a language more than

human, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in." The Levites within the tabernacle, on hearing this demand, inquire for whom it is made, and who is this King of Glory? The ark is then triumphantly borne in, and deposited in the sacred place. If any thing can typify the ascension of Jesus, the only ark of safety, and in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, it must be this striking symbol, whereby attendant angels, who are spirits, and his ministers, who are as a flame of fire, are represented by the Spirit of prophecy as standing at the portals of eternity, demanding admission for the mighty God and Prince of Life. Twice is the inquiry made, who that man can be on whose behalf such a claim is made, and twice the answer returned, "The King of Glory—it is the Lord strong and mighty—it is the Lord strong in battle." The ascension of our Lord being manifestly typified in these two memorable instances to which we have just briefly adverted, you are now prepared to ask whether so important an event has been the subject also of prophecies. Surely it must! otherwise we cannot well conceive how it could have been said that Jesus, after his resurrection, began at Moses and the prophets, and expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself; nor why it is affirmed that the apostle Peter argued with the Jews what God had spoken by the mouth of all his prophets since the world began—prophecies which, though made in different ages and regions, all bear on the same grand object, and which, when drawn together, like so many scattered rays, form a luminous constellation of evidence, which shines the brighter the longer and nearer it is contemplated. Even the evidence from single prophecies is quite irresistible. Can any thing, for instance, be more clear and satisfactory than the prediction concerning our ascended Lord, where the prophet points out the very spot from which he actually did soar above this perishable orb, "His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives: which is before Jerusalem, on the east?" Or can any thing be more convincing than the prediction of the King of Israel respecting the Messiah who should spring from him, who speaks of his divine character and ascension to the realms of light rather like an apostle than a prophet;—

"God is gone up with a shout; the Lord with the sound of a trumpet: the Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool; thou hast ascended on high, leading captivity captive, (a number of captives), procuring gifts for men, even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them?" The predictions, also, of Zechariah and Daniel are very strong: "The breaker is come up before them; they have broken up, and are 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." "I saw," says Daniel, "also in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came up with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days; and they brought him near before him; and there were given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed." Enough, we trust, has now been said upon the point to prove that the ascension of the Messiah was, of old, both typified and predicted. And that these have been completely verified, we have farther to observe, is abundantly clear, from what is so copiously narrated in the New Testament on the nature of the ascension. Is it not said by the sacred writers that he was seen "go away;" that he passed through the heavens, and that he ascended into heaven; that "he ascended far above all heavens;" that "he became higher than the heavens; that he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high—angels, principalities, and powers being made subject unto him?" Now, these declarations, describing one and the same act, must, of course, be understood in reference to his *humanity*. It were absurd to imagine that his divine nature could be understood: for it fills all space—heaven and earth. It is infinite, and it is omnipresent. Of course, then, it was his holy human nature that ascended, and human nature was then glorified, and supremely exalted above natures that were even never tainted with imperfection or pollution. "His divine nature cannot be circumscribed. The heaven of heavens cannot contain him." "For though we should take the wings of the morning, and see unto the uttermost parts of the earth

or sea, even there would his hand lead us and his right hand uphold us." Certain it is, therefore, that it was the *human nature* of Christ that ascended from the Mount of Olives to the throne of glory; that it was the same body to which his human soul was united; which was born of Mary, and which suffered under Pontius Pilate. And we may presume that the same parts of matter composed it at that hour as before he came under the temporary dominion of death and the grave, though, indeed, it is impossible for us to imagine what may be the peculiar qualities of his new glorified body, seated on the mediatorial throne, and which may have been produced through the energies of that mighty power by which he subdued all things to himself, as the governor of the Church and world. "He had now offered the sacrifice for the guilt, and all that remained for him, according to the office he assumed, was to present it within the veil." Man's redemption was now completed, so far as in this world it could be. He now behoved to be solemnly inaugurated and crowned on the throne of glory, seeing that, for the joy that was set before him, as man and mediator "he endured," says an Apostle, "the cross, and is now sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;" and his body not being omnipresent, it must now be confined to that holy and delightful place called heaven, or heaven of heavens, where dwell the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect.

Having now shown what was typified and predicted in the Old Testament, and the completion of the same as recorded in the New, it will be of some moment, we conceive, to look still a little more minutely to the evidence of this grand fact, of Christ having, in our nature, visibly ascended up on high. It appears that there were given to a competent number of witnesses, of the greatest moral worth, the highest of all proof—ocular demonstration. For although it does not appear that any of the disciples saw Jesus at the precise moment of coming out of his grave—for this act had taken place so very early in the morning as the rising of the sun—yet the most indisputable evidence was given both of his resurrection and ascension into heaven, by his continuing on the earth for the space of forty days, and by his being seen rise from the earth by

those who were alike incapable of deceiving others, as of being themselves deceived. Did he not ascend in the presence and full view of his disciples, who, so far from having any temporal object in view, had nothing before them but persecution, and torture, and death? Were not two messengers from glory, arrayed in white, sent to bear testimony to the fact, that the same Jesus who was seen go up into the cloud, did actually ascend to heaven? Need we also remind you that Stephen, Paul and John, were each permitted to behold him in his ascended state; that to every age, and to us at this hour, there is exhibited a living and standing demonstration of the great fact of which we are speaking, by the dispersion of the Jews, as well as from the Gospel of the Son of God, which condemns the practices of a world lying in wickedness, being preserved and transmitted down to us, through the long period of eighteen centuries, in the face of all the opposition received from human power and talent to its celestial truths? Strong and conclusive is the evidence left us, that the Saviour returned to his native heavens. Neither in a secret or sudden manner was he removed from the presence and sight of the spectators. In a gradual manner he rose from the earth. It was not like the prophet who was snatched away to heaven suddenly, when there appeared in the firmament chariots of fire and horses of fire; for when Christ ascended up on high, it was by his own unborrowed wings, for to him belongs all power both in heaven and earth. In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. It was impossible, therefore, that gravitation, or any law in nature, could restrain the inherent energies of the Prince of Life. Indeed, his ascension to heaven just accorded with the many other manifestations he had formerly given of his divinity. Already he had made his walk on the billows of the deep. He had silenced the winds by a word of his mouth, and so soon as he had said, "Peace, be still, there was a great calm." He had electrified with life the withered arm, and converted disease into the freshness and bloom of health. He had disinherited the grave of its prey, and restored to sorrowing hearts dear departed friends. And he had recently, too, by his strong arm, burst asunder the gates and strongholds of death, and brought forth along with him many of the

bodies of his saints, as the trophies of his triumph. And after such exhibitions of his divine power, shall we wonder or question his personal ability to ascend to glory, to secure for his people that happiness which nothing can resemble, nothing can exceed, unless it be the felicity and bliss to which fallen humanity is now restored. Contemplate now in thought the solemn moment, O Christian, of thy Lord's ascension; and can you refrain from adopting the sentiment dictated by inspiration, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly to yonder mountain and be at rest." It is true that there were no convulsions in nature to correspond with the magnitude of the event; still, what must have been the feelings and associations of his disciples in seeing him restored, again about to leave them? he, whom they had lately feared, had become the perpetual prisoner of the grave; he, in whose side, and hands, and feet, were still to be witnessed the marks of the dismal conflict, in which his garments were dyed in blood, whilst many floods could not abate or quench his love for that world which hated him. Only conceive of him, surrounded by his few chosen friends, for the last time, eager to improve the few remaining moments. Conceive of those anxious looks, and still more anxious hearts, whilst eagerly inquiring about events, after their beloved Master would be withdrawn; and above all, contemplate and admire him, their Lord, who, with that nobleness and benignity peculiar to himself, replying to their inquiries, assuring them that at present it would not be befitting in him to open up the map of God's extensive plan. "Wilt thou," said the disciples to Jesus, "at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" "It is not for you," replied he, "to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put into his own power." At the same time, he lifted up his hands and blessed them, and while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and a cloud received him out of their sight. Could we imagine ourselves to be present at a sublimer scene than was then displayed on the Mount of Olives; to have beheld our Redeemer, in the very act of blessing, with grace in his countenance and glory in his eyes; to have heard his consoling words flow as the refreshing dew; and amid the calm of evening to have seen him rise from the hill, where his presence and devotions had rendered even the desert

sweat, and the solitary place to rejoice and blossom as the rose; while we beheld his disciples gazing up into heaven just as we would do after a friend who has left us for a foreign land. It was at such a moment of interest that that cloud, which, perhaps, was the symbol of the divine presence, into which he entered, withdrew him in silence, going beyond orbs unseen, to the bright sanctuary of eternal repose, to intercede for and bless his people, and to lead them into the fold of eternal safety. "Sing, then, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; let every mountain and forest rejoice, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

In the second place. We shall now consider the enemies subdued, implied in the Redeemer's leading captivity captive. To ascertain this, we have just to reflect what are the great adversaries of man? what first broke up close communion with God but sin? what but the entrance of sin introduced death? and what but sin and death, under the righteous administration of heaven, could have been followed with such punishment of such a nature as we are taught to conceive of hell, which is not said to be prepared for men, but only for the devil and his angels? Sin, death, and hell, are the three combined enemies which stand in array against the transgressors of the divine law; and these are the enemies over which our sinless Substitute gained a complete triumph when he ascended to the glory and holiness of heaven, leading his captives. But how did Christ take away sin, our most formidable foe? Anciently, the two methods most usually adopted to *redeem* a captive were, either by taking him by force, or by paying a ransom. Both these ideas are included in what Christ performed in redeeming us from the curse of the law, and from the master under whom we had suffered ourselves to be taken captive. Whilst he paid the penalty to justice for our violations, he destroyed those tyrants that had usurped a dominion over his people, that they who had been sold under sin might, through faith, be entitled to receive the righteousness of God in him. It is true that sin itself is not yet extirpated under the divine government, for it is still permitted to reign even over them who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression; still, from the irrecoverable blow given to it by the hand of

the Redeemer, a way is opened up for its final and perpetual destruction, for he has reconciled all things to himself, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth; so that every thing is completed requisite for our ultimate restoration to the likeness, and enjoyment, and communion of God. In this view, it holds true that he took away sin by the sacrifice of himself. In doing so, it has been well observed, that of all the wonderful things which constitute or are intimately connected with the dispensation of grace, perhaps there is none of which we have so inadequate a conception as sin, its essential deformity and most fatal tendency. When we talk to a careless liver, of the guilt of his ordinary conversation in the world, and describe sin in the fearful language of the Bible, we seem to him as dreamers. Even the most humble and advanced Christian finds it difficult to fix in his mind such a sense of the sanctity of God's law, and the terrible profaneness of violating it, as corresponds in any tolerable degree with the measure of these things in holy writ; yet, certainly, it most nearly concerns us to appreciate them justly. Now, it is impossible to conceive of any truth so calculated to penetrate us with a just horror of sin in general, and with the deepest confusion for our offences, as the doctrine of the Cross. It stamps on evil a character of darkness and horror, which no tongue can utter. It bears in its amazing mercy the most awful testimony to the majesty and justice of God; and while it pours gladness into the bosom of the penitent, speaks death to the presumptuous rebel. It was truly a vast and accumulated load that was laid upon the Holy Sacrifice, when he sustained the transgressions of a ruined world. Yet he sunk not under this seemingly overwhelming burden, as he would have done could the law have charged him as being a violator of it, or having the least taint of pollution. But, qualified by nature in every way for his mighty undertaking, he not only paid an adequate ransom for our liberation, but subdued those enemies who had held us in sovereign bondage, triumphing over even principalities and powers. "When he led captivity captive, he overcame a world lying in wickedness." He loosed the prisoners from their bonds. He proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that were bound. He raised his people for

ever from all that they might have had reason to fear or to flee from, as bringing them into the captivity of sin, delivering them at once from the dominion as well as the penal consequences of sin, whilst he opened up for them the gates to glory, honour and felicity; that as sin had reigned unto death, so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. "The sting of death, indeed, was sin, and the strength of sin was the law, but thanks be unto God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, since Christ has delivered us from sin, it necessarily follows that he has also rescued us from the final and complete dominion of death, for it is clearly revealed that the wages of sin is *death*. People of all characters, ages, and conditions, it sweeps away with a resistless and unsparring hand. Its ravages are every-where felt and seen. Nature shrinks from this appalling, unsparring foe, who assails alike the cottages of the poor and the palaces of kings. But this great and universal devourer has been encountered by one who has taken from him his sting, so that these remarkable and sublime words have now been realized.—"When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." "Blessed be the Lord God who hath swallowed up death in victory." Separate from Christ and his merits, death is still the most terrible of all terrible things. But it loses its fearful aspect under the shadow of His wings who has the keys of the invisible world, of hell and death; and who has to all believers turned the very shadow of death unto the light of the morning. To you who are the friends and followers of Jesus, death, when contemplated with the eyes of faith, has no more the aspect of a dreaded foe, but of a friendly messenger; it is your deliverer from bondage, your passport and translation to life, your greatest gain; so that neither death nor life, things present nor things to come, shall separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord, who, with a propitious ear, heard the groanings of the prisoner, and loosed those appointed to death. Now is fulfilled what ancient prophets foretold respecting his victory over death, "I will ransom them

from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction!" What would the generality of people not give to the man who could find out some complete remedy for death, and permit them to enjoy an immortality upon the earth? But a boon infinitely more valuable has been already bestowed by our ascended Lord; of whom it is said, he hath **ABOLISHED DEATH**, dethroned him from his tyrannical empire, destroyed his sting, his terror, and penal consequences. Our Redeemer has in fact given such a decided and fatal blow to this last adversary, that he has no power to inflict the least hurt on the believer in Jesus, either on his soul or body; for though, according to the divine appointment, the dust must return to the dust, the body shall be raised in power as a member of the mystical body of Christ, whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not *possible* that he should be holden of it. Having by virtue of his death and resurrection taken away sin, which was the sting of death, he must still reign in the capacity of Mediator until he has put all his enemies under his feet—and the last of these, which will be completely and for ever destroyed, is death; after which our Representative and Priest shall deliver up that mediatorial kingdom of which he took the possession, when in our nature he ascended up on high, leading captivity captive. But it was not death alone over which he triumphed. When he paved the way for its final overthrow, he at the great hour of victory obtained a still higher achievement, "for through death he also destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." It is impossible, then, to conceive that the issue of his conflict could have been more triumphant and complete. Our Surety was indeed wounded in the struggle "in the hour and power of darkness." Still, whilst the great adversary bruised his heel, Christ bruised his head; so that he who was the prince of this world, and is called a murderer from the beginning, who had the power of death and was the executioner of it, was, at the hour of Christ's triumph, in effect completely vanquished—"for when Christ ascended up on high, he led captive sin, and death, and hell."

But much of the force of the expression, *captivity captive*, as applied to the ascen-

sion of our Saviour, will be lost, unless we take into view an interesting allusion which it is admitted the Apostle of the Gentiles had in his eye, when he quoted the words of the Psalmist, in reference to his exalted Lord. "Conquerors, upon the return of a victorious army, appeared before the senate, and obtained the honours of a triumph." Then the victorious general, we are told, seated in a splendid chariot, surrounded by the soldiers whom he had led to conquest, approached the imperial city, amid universal acclamations. The gold, the silver, and the precious gems of which the enemy had been despoiled, were carried in procession; the cities they had taken, the rivers they had crossed, the provinces they had conquered, were exhibited in emblematical representations; and the captive chiefs of the kings and princes, taken prisoners, were dragged in chains at their chariot wheels. But infinitely more interesting and sublime were the triumphs of the Son of God, when the captives of the mighty were taken away, and the prey of the terrible delivered; when, leading captivity captive, he spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them openly.

II. We shall now point out the capacities in which our Lord ascended. He ascended as the Forerunner, and as the Merciful High Priest of his people. Now Christ in the character of our forerunner, hath gone into heaven, and unlocked its gates to every believing penitent. A forerunner is, of course, a relative term, and has a reference to persons coming after. "I go," said our Saviour, accordingly, to his disciples, "to prepare a place for you;" and one of the sacred writers speaks of him as having gone as our forerunner within the veil, even unto heaven itself, to "*appear for us* in the presence of God," just as an advocate in court *appears* in the name of those whose cause he takes in hand. It was not, then, on his *own account* our Lord ascended up on high. It was not in an individual capacity. It was as the second Adam—the Lord from Heaven—the Head and Representative of all his people and members, in all places and times. In his ascension, therefore, our nature was exalted to an extent beyond what it had ever been, for our glorious Forerunner is in heaven as both God and man in two distinct natures in one person, for ever. He sat down at the right hand of God, which destina-

tion has been regarded as the highest place of honour and dignity that a sovereign can confer. Now, when our exalted Head went from earth to heaven as our forerunner to his Father's throne, it was just as if he had carried up, in a vast cloud, the mighty throng of men of every age, and throughout every region over the globe, that are his children, to participate with him in the pure, permanent, and unmingled enjoyments—to shine "as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Hence, at present, it is said of them, "that God hath raised us up together with Christ, and hath made us to sit with him in heavenly places." One most glorious effect, then, of the ascension of our Lord is, that he has gone to prepare a place for us; and if he has gone to prepare a place for us, he will come again, and receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also. But there is another capacity, in which he ascended, than forerunner; he went to execute his priestly office, to make intercession for his people. He is represented, in his glorified state, as having a golden censer, with much incense, which he offers up, with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne; and the smoke of the incense, which came up with the prayers of the saints, ascends up before God out of the angel's hand. The sacrifice being now offered of expiation, he is now presenting it, within the veil, for our justification, and the acceptance of our persons and services. Whether he intercedes vocally or not, does not appear to be revealed. Yet we are by no means to imagine that his intercessory work is carried on by prostration, or strong cryings and tears, as when the man of sorrows. He pleads the merit of his atonement; and the continual exhibition of this propitiation before the mercy-seat is the ground of his intercession for transgressors, and which conveys to his people a purchased right to eternal salvation. Not that we mean to say that his intercessions for us are with a view to induce the Divinity to exercise toward us the riches of his compassion. No. His name is Love, and he is equally interested on our behalf. Be assured that there is any thing but unwillingness on the part of a reconciled God to receive us graciously. The intercessions of his Anointed One are with no other view than to render the exercise of his tender mercy and compassion compatible with the glory of his

law and his perfections. It was for no other purpose he condescended that his Beloved should, for a time, empty himself of all his glory. How important is the capacity in which Christ now acts, as the great High Priest whom "the Father bears always." Believers, be induced to look to him as clothed in human flesh, as touched with a feeling of your infirmities, as he who has compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way; and as that all-sufficient sacrifice, whose blood never loses its power, and who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him; for, as an inspired writer assures us, "he triumphed in himself," in his own power and strength, as mighty to save. The exercise, then, of Christ's priestly functions is another effect of his ascension into heaven, by which is secured the conversion of sinners, and the comfort and salvation of all his people.

Lastly, We shall proceed to consider the effects of our Lord's ascension into glory and majesty, when he gave gifts to men. Doubtless, the first and most important benefit attending the ascension of Christ, was his sending down, according to his promise, the Holy Ghost. Expressly did he assure his disciples, that it was expedient for them that he should go away, and that if he did not, the Comforter would not come unto them. It was told them also that the Holy Ghost was not then given, because Christ was not yet glorified. Not that they were thereby given to understand that the Holy Spirit was never at any time imparted until sent by Christ, as the evidence of his return to the Father; only that he never was given in the same manner, and his gifts and operations to the same astonishing extent. Under the former dispensation, it is well known he communicated himself to the human spirit in dreams, visions, and voices, and thus holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Shortly, also, after our Lord's return from the dreary domains of death, he breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," as a proof and pledge of his still more rich and glorious communications after their Lord would be withdrawn. For during his personal abode here, he taught them only such things as they could bear. Accordingly, Christ observed to them, "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot hear them now." It was after his return to the heavens they were to receive rivers of

living water, springing up into everlasting life. Jesus being himself anointed with the oil of gladness, he shed down part of his unction on his followers, as the first and great act of his kingly authority. The disciples waited at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, which would make up for the want of the Redeemer's bodily presence, seeing that the most astonishing gifts were to be conferred in honour of his coronation. Without the least dubiety or limitation, he had declared to his disciples, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence," which happened just ten days after his ascension to glory. How different, we may remark, was this pledge from the hesitation and obscurity employed in the language of Elijah to Elisha, respecting the receiving of a portion of his spirit after he himself should be seen no more. Just before he was carried up to heaven, amid the striking signs in nature that were exhibited, Elijah said to his fellow-servant, "Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee." Elisha said, "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." And he said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if thou see me not, it shall not be so." But vastly different was the way in which our Lord assured his disciples of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This divine person, who was to proceed from the Father, was to testify of him, and, as a paraclete or advocate for Christ, was to guide them unto all truth by his miraculous gifts and sanctifying graces, and to convince a guilty world that had rejected him, of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Having founded a Church on earth, to be a lasting memorial of himself and his religion, he promised to be with it always, even unto the end. Over it he exercises an invisible government by his Spirit, and over that part of it which is militant here on earth he has appointed a government of discipline for the perfecting of the saints—for the edifying his body till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. With this view he gave different gifts and graces. He gave some apostles, endowed with a spirit of wisdom and revelation—some prophets, who foretold future events, at the same time that they held, it appears, the apostolic office,

—some teachers well instructed in the faith—some workers of miracles, as raising the dead—some only the gifts of healing—some helps to those who assisted in the public devotions, and were messengers to the different churches to set in order the things that were wanting—some the discerning of spirits, to know whether they were of God for the government of his church—some the gift of tongues, to teach people of different nations, to convince unbelievers, and be a sign for them, on which account was given them a knowledge at once of fifteen or sixteen different languages, without any aid from human instructors—some only interpreters, or the interpretation of tongues, for general edification and comfort. Though there were thus a diversity of gifts, they were all of use to the body of Christ, the Church, which he purchased with his own blood. Now it was expressly declared, that when the Spirit of Truth, the author of these different gifts, was come, he would guide the Apostles unto all truth—that he would show them plainly of the Father—that he would open their understandings—that he would teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance. In this way would they speak, with a wisdom which all their adversaries would not be able to gainsay; all which, we learn, was minutely accomplished. Inspired with the word of knowledge, they would henceforth comprehend what, it appears, they could not while their Lord was with them—the different parts of the Old Testament, its types, allegories, the law and the prophets; for the mystery which was kept secret for ages and generations was now made manifest, through the influence of the holy Messenger and Vicegerent, who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. Hence we find corrected the erroneous apprehensions they had about their Master's dying and rising again, his gospel being preached unto the Gentiles, by which the middle wall of partition was finally and for ever broken down. With such advantages the Spirit was thus to bear witness beyond the water and the blood, which bear witness also. And since he was to be the greatest witness of the truth of the religion of Jesus, in regard to his resurrection and ascension, it is not to be really wondered at that there are such awful denunciations against reviling and blaspheming the Holy Ghost, the advocate for Christ's

return. Indeed the knowledge which he conveyed to man, was such as was beyond the compass of celestial spirits before the throne; for they can only look into the things of our salvation, and these matters have been revealed unto the churches, to the intent that by them might be made known unto principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God. But how were these miraculous gifts imparted? We find that they were given to the primitive Christians in one of two ways. This was either immediately by the Spirit falling on them, or by the laying on of the hands of the Apostles. The first occasion on which these gifts were conferred, was on the Feast of Pentecost, which, you know, was appointed to be the morrow after seven weeks from the Passover, that is, fifty days. It was on this festival that the sheaves or first-fruits of the harvest were offered to the Lord, and on this festival, by the Holy Spirit falling on them, were given the **FIRST-FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT**; for we are assured that three thousand souls were offered to God and the Lamb, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, as a kind of first-fruits of his new creatures in Christ Jesus. This was the most glorious era of the Church. Formerly the Holy Ghost was given only to the Jews, but now to all flesh; for, as declared in the Acts, to the Gentiles also was imparted this gift. These miraculous gifts were necessary for the proof of Christ's ascension, and for the establishment of Christianity; and to these alone, and not to any natural and secondary causes, we are to attribute its rapid progress in so short a time through the whole of the then known world. These extraordinary means are now withdrawn, having served the purposes intended. Yet the sanctifying influences, which are infinitely more important, are to be permanent and influential in the church to all its genuine members unto the end of the world. The extraordinary means, being only temporary, were not necessary for salvation. The sanctifying influences are perpetual and indispensable to all who shall be saved from the wrath to come. Upon these the Holy Ghost acts as a spirit of conviction, for he convinces of sin, and the weapons he wields are not carnal, but spiritual, to the pulling down of strongholds, every high imagination, and every thing that exalteth itself against God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of

Christ. It is his peculiar office in the economy of grace to take of the things of Christ, and show them to the soul in all their magnitude and worth—to sanctify us wholly, restoring the divine likeness, and leading us to the day of redemption, by which he brings his subjects under the influence of holy principles and dispositions; for the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance, against which there is no law, because these are the very things the law requires. Nor is it alone as a spirit of conviction and sanctification, but also of consolation. Hence he is called the Comforter. Blessed are they who are under his guidance. He helps their infirmities. He bears witness with the spirits that they are the children of God, and the joy of the Lord is their strength. But whilst he is the author of conviction and consolation, he does not fail to impart to them necessary direction to guide us into all saving truth—to teach his children, with all their hearts, to say Abba, Father—to ask those things which are agreeable to the mind and will of God. He works in them both to will and to do. And in all these things the Spirit reveals nothing contrary or opposed to the written word, and this divine agent is to be obtained, not in the neglect, but in the constant, conscientious observance of all the means of grace. If ye seek, ye shall find—if ye knock, the door shall be opened to you; for God has promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask. "Ask, therefore, Unto you, O men, I call! Behold, I stand at the door."

APPLICATION.

1st, Has Christ so gloriously triumphed over his own and his people's enemies? Never be discouraged or intimidated by your spiritual foes, but aim to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. What though your enemies be many, and subtle, and powerful, your temptations and trials heavy and reiterated; remember that He that is for you is greater than all that can be against you; and who is he that can harm you so long as ye are followers of that which is good? Believers, ye need not fear, even although the earth were removed, and the hills were cast into the midst of the sea, for there is a river whose streams make glad the city of our God. And since your leader has in your name conquered, all that is necessary is to live in daily and hourly dependence on him as

your head; to take unto yourselves, according to his command, the whole armour of God, that you may stand firm in the evil day; and if you studiously aim to be kept from all occasions of sin, and pray to be preserved when you are tempted by the world, the devil, the flesh, he will make you more than conquerors; for in every temptation he will make a way wherewith ye may be able to escape. Be not discouraged, then, by your spiritual adversaries, knowing that your Redeemer has already led them captive, so as to prevent them from ever doing you any real injury; and who can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord.

2d, Seek, also, daily, more and more to set your affections upon heaven; "for if ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Beware lest any inferior object in the world so entwine itself around your affections as to dethrone him from your souls "who died for your sins and rose again for your justification." Dearly beloved, if you live in the spirit, walk in the spirit, abstaining from those fleshly lusts which war against the soul; having your conversation "or citizenship in heaven, whence you look for the Saviour." Give him, and none else, the throne of your souls, for he will not deign to occupy any meaner place; and never forget his striking and decisive declaration, "he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me."

Finally, This subject should lead all of us seriously to inquire whether we know any thing of that most important gift which Christ ascended to bestow—repentance towards God; "for he is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and the remission of sins." Never was there a louder call to penitence than at this present moment, when God is whetting his sword and making it drunk with the blood of his enemies. Jehovah is sounding an alarm in the ears of a slumbering and dying world, by those judgments which are now desolating the land, designed to induce the inhabitants of the world to learn righteousness. Unless, then, they repent, they shall die in their sins. Yet, if you return unto God, God

will return unto you. His ascended Son is able to save you to the uttermost; and, O what mortal finger can draw the line to point out what God's uttermost is! Encouraged, then, by the riches of that grace which Jesus ascended to bestow, "awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life." Trust not to-morrow;—arise the day, and whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it, and do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest. Nor is it a sinful world alone that is thus warned and called to lie low at the footstool of our exalted Saviour in penitence and dust; for God hath declared, that he hath not only a controversy with the nations, but he says, I have a controversy with mine own people, "for their forgetfulness of his presence, their ingratitude for mercies and privileges, and their insensibility to his judgments." Reluctant to chastise, God exclaims, "How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim, and how shall I smite

thee, O Manasseh, for my repentings are begun already." He tells his people, who will not discern the signs of the times, to learn a lesson from the inferior creatures: "Behold the stork in the heavens knoweth her season, and the turtle, and the swallow, and the crane, observe the time of their coming; but my people doth not know, my people doth not consider." Turn unto God, then, with your whole souls, in mourning and lamentation, each saying, "O that my head were as waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep for my transgressions, and the trespasses of His people, who was enabled to give them repentance and remission." Then shall you look forward with confidence to the storms of death and judgment, and hail at length the appearance of the great God, your Saviour Jesus Christ, in the clouds of heaven coming with power and great glory. Come then, Lord Jesus, come quickly! why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS UNDER THE PRESENT DISPENSATION OF PESTILENCE;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, EDINBURGH,

By the late Rev. WILLIAM HENRY MARRIOT, A.M.

(ABRIDGED.)

"Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet."—HAB. iii. 5.

THINGS animate or inanimate, which affect the welfare of mankind, are not spontaneous agents, to a mind impressed with a sense of God's all-controlling providence; but instruments wherewith the Lord of the universe doth his pleasure. Every thing is considered as set in motion and actuated by Him, working His purpose, and obedient to His will. All things, visible and invisible, are in some way subservient to the designs of Him, by whom and for whom they were created.

Even what we call the evils of human life, afflictions, calamities, disappointments, losses, diseases, are his ministers, and hence the remarkable phraseology employed in the text. "Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet."

There now exist peculiar reasons for drawing your attention, my brethren, to these views. For a long course of years men have been regarding one of the petitions in our liturgy as antiquated and superfluous:—"From plague, pestilence, and famine, good Lord deliver us." But now they have heard that the pestilence is gone forth,

and that it is nigh, even at the door. Recognizing as we do, in this grievous scourge, not a fortuitous evil, but a visitation of Divine Providence, we are called upon to consider what effect the prospect before us ought to produce on our minds. That persons living in sincere communion with God's holy Church, and reposing their faith and their hopes in the promises of God in Christ, should be overwhelmed by any overpowering terror, is not a thing to be desired, or likely to produce good effects of any kind. A state of terror and excessive agitation is not a state of sound religious feeling. Theological writers there certainly have been who seem to have imagined, that it would be good for men ever to be under impressions similar to those which Israel felt of old, when all the people saw the thunders, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking. But the continued prevalence of such excitation is not salutary. Were it so, God, who freely provides for his people all things necessary to their soul's health, would so order the course

of things in this mortal life, that the mind should perpetually be pressed down by this sensation of overwhelming dread. But our heavenly Father acts not thus—it is not expedient for us: it rather tends to godliness that we should habitually be tranquil and cheerful in our disposition and feelings. It is not under violent agitation of mind that men are in truth most devout. Their ejaculations and exclamations may then be louder and more frequent—they may be more ready to say unto their Redeemer, *Lord! Lord!* but they may be very far from the consistent faith which evidences itself by its fruits, and produces a well-grounded hope in life, and a strong consolation in death.

Therefore, my brethren, as your pastor in Christ Jesus, I desire not to excite—I desire not to perceive any such vehement perturbation and confusion of spirit in any of you. What then? Are we to assume the levity of the children of this world—are we to make light of the evil that is around us—are we to turn away our thoughts from the contemplation of it by a variety of pursuits and pleasures, or by catching at every trivial circumstance which may seem to warrant the hope that this plague will not come near *our dwellings*? No, my friends; this would be very far indeed from a desirable or Christian frame of mind. We would have you serious, though not terrified; we would have you under a solemn though not under a dispiriting sense of the condition in which we stand; we would have you to walk like men who know not in what hour the summons may reach them, Prepare to meet your God. Be more regular, then, and instant in your devotions. Slight not the holy table of the Lord: it is often spread for you—approach it often. Meditate more upon the things that concern your everlasting peace. “Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live,” is a warning which our infirmity renders applicable at all seasons as well as this.

These things attended to, my brethren, be religiously cheerful, and commit the keeping of your souls to God. You do not suppose that a believer in Christ Jesus dies accidentally by some strange and fortuitous chance? He dies at the time in which it is expedient for him to die, beyond which it would not be for his real happiness to live; and the period of his departure is fixed to a moment by a Lord of wisdom and mercy

infinite. If it were for the advantage of any of those who have put on Christ, and yielded themselves his servants, to be removed hence to-morrow, they would be removed by Him that has a favour unto them; and if it were not for their interest—if their trial were not yet perfected, their purification from earth not yet sufficiently advanced, they would continue to live during the Lord's good pleasure, though pestilence raged with all its fury around them. Therefore, Christian, why should thy soul be cast down—why should it be disquieted within thee? Let the unbeliever be of doubtful mind—he knows not why or wherefore God keeps him in life or removes him out of it. Let the unreconciled tremble: he has before him only a fearful prospect of judgment to come. But if you are Christians, all things work together for your good; and whether your existence be now drawing towards its last sands, or whether it be the will of God that it be prolonged many years, you are alike cared for by your unfailing guardian. Health is blessed to you—sickness is blessed to you—life is blessed to you—death itself is blessed to you. Harm cannot touch you—peril cannot overpower you—the Most High shall deliver you from the snare of the hunter, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall defend you under his wings, and you shall be safe under his feathers. His faithfulness and truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid for any terror by night, nor the arrow that flieth by day, for the “pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day.” Thus, my Christian friends, would I have you affected, even in the contemplation of that angel of destruction who has stretched his hand over the kingdom, and yet heareth not the command of the Almighty, Cease! It is enough! But are there no breasts in which we should desire even perturbation and dismay to be wrought by the vision of impending peril? Yes. Would that fear may waken in all, who have not yet become acquainted with Christ, a slumbering conscience, and apprehension stimulate them to ask what they must do to be saved—drive them from their morning potations and their Sunday revellings, and bring them within the sound of a revelation, which tells not only of mercy for them that seek mercy, but of wrath laid up against the day of wrath.

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SERMON by the Rev. MICHAEL WILLIS, A.M., Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. Dr. JOHN BROWN, Edinburgh.

Price 2d.

THE PECULIAR PRIVILEGES OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST,

A SERMON, PREACHED ON SABBATH, OCTOBER 21, 1832,

By the Rev. MICHAEL WILLIS, A.M.,

Minister of the Secession Church, Kenfield Street, Glasgow.

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.—2 CORINTHIANS i. 21, 22.

THE religion of the believer is not a thing professed by him as an uncertainty. He is able to give a reason of the hope which is in him, though with meekness and fear. "The sceptic may wrangle, and the mocker may blaspheme, but he knows that his confidence is not misplaced, by an evidence that, to their minds, is indeed incomprehensible, but to his own, is overwhelming, irresistible, and divine." How beautifully is this sentiment expressed by the Apostle in the preceding verses!—"As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea," that is, sure, infallible, and to be depended on. For, says he, all the "promises of God are in him yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us." And the like character of stability that belongs to the Word of God, belongs also to his works, especially his work of grace in the soul. It is God's work, and it is worthy of him. It speaks for itself, or is manifested by a peculiar and indubitable evidence, so that the Christian, when his faith is in proper exercise, or when the Spirit of God shines upon the grace of his own implanting in the soul, is enabled to say in triumph, as one resting upon a divine foundation—"He who stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

Let us consider the Christian's privileges here described, in the order in which they are mentioned in the text:—

VOL. I.—NO. 39.

1. "He who stablisheth us with you in Christ," says the Apostle, that is, stablisheth us and you in Christ, is God. This supposes, as you may see union to Christ by faith, for that is the beginning of the enjoyment of every new covenant privilege.

(It is when we unite with him that we are justified, adopted, and sanctified; the last blessing being ours in part as soon as we are united to him, and our growth in sanctification being promoted by influences derived from him as the head of the body—the Church.)

Our justification is perfect at once. There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. Their perfect freedom from condemnation is founded on Christ's perfect righteousness, which, once imputed to us, remains on us for ever. We are established in him as to the ground of our peace, firmly and immovably, so that though, as to the comfortable knowledge of his interest in Christ, there may be a variety in the Christian's case and frame, his *state* in Christ remains always the same.

But the *stablishment* may be understood in reference to sanctification as well as justification. He is introduced by union to Jesus, into communion with him, in all the fulness of his grace. He receives the sanctifying spirit by degrees only, it is true, but as the grace of holiness is purchased for him by the blood of Christ, it is sure to him; and, laid up in Jesus as his head, it cannot be lost. It is not committed to his keeping. He receives it as he needs it. But the promises of God provide surely and infallibly for its season-

2 K

able communications. Believers are the preserved in Christ Jesus. They have access by faith into the grace wherein they stand; and by the intercession of Jesus, and the reasonable supply of the Spirit, they are enabled to be active in the life of faith, and in the exercise of holiness. They are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. They are strengthened in the Lord, and enabled to walk up and down in his name.

2. "Anointed us," says the Apostle, one of the most honourable and most valuable of the Christian's privileges. It marks strongly, also, his union to Christ, and conformity to him. The name Christ, we ought to know, signifies anointed. The name Christian, denotes that believers also are anointed. How? By the same Spirit with which Christ was anointed. To him, he was given without measure—to them, in measure. On his head, as the great High Priest, it was poured copiously, as on Aaron's of old, running down to the skirts of his garments. On them sprinkled, as the other, the common priests, were sprinkled. God, even thy God, it is said of the Redeemer, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Ye have, says the Apostle to Christians generally, an unction from the Holy One whereby ye know all things.

Now, what purpose did the anointing of Christ serve? It served to mark him the appointed and approved Saviour. It also qualified him for his great work, in replenishing his human nature with all needful gifts and graces. It made him joyful, for it was the oil of gladness. It beautified him, and made him to shine in all the beauties of holiness. It perfumed the garments of his human nature, according to that beautiful address to the Messiah in the 45th Psalm—

✧ "Of aloes, myrrh, and cassia,
A smell thy garments had."

In other words; having descended from heaven to earth, and clothed himself with the vestments of a human nature, yet so enriched with all heavenly graces was the holy humanity that did assume, that the God was easily discernible by the spiritual beholder in the man Christ Jesus; the only begotten of the Father was beheld among us, full of grace and truth. Oil, even in its common use, beautified the countenance, and it is a suitable emblem of health, and of vigour, and of excellence; but the holy oil of anointing was peculiar,

it was reserved for sacred use; the Israelites were forbidden to compound any thing like it. A happy symbol this of Christ's pre-eminence in all things, and also, as regards the fellowship of his people with him, of their peculiar character and privileges. On the chosen and called alone is the Spirit bestowed; in the peculiar people only are the blessed effects of his presence visible; and how wonderful are these effects, and how incapable of being produced by any other cause or agency! Grace makes their faces to shine in some resemblance to Jesus. Grace imparts to them a spiritual and heavenly fragrance. It softens and subdues, and yet strengthens them. As the oil of gladness, it gives them an inward peace and joy. As precious eye salve, it illuminates their understandings, enabling them, as by a new sense, to apprehend spiritual things.

This last idea seems very particularly to be intended. For the believer's establishment in Christ had just been mentioned; and we learn elsewhere, (1 John ii. 27,) that on the anointing of the Spirit, as the means of their supernatural and effectual illumination, the stability of Christians depends. "The anointing which ye have received of him," says the apostle John, "abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." This was the Apostle's confidence with respect to those believers, at a time when great endeavours were made to seduce them from the faith. *The anointing abideth.* Once instructed by divine and effectual grace, the power of the truth continues for ever to be felt. The mind never altogether loses the savour of spiritual things. Its convictions can never be totally eradicated. How vain, accordingly, all the efforts of earth and hell to overturn the confidence, or extinguish the love, of the heaven-born and devout soul. The Christian, weak in himself—the unlettered Christian, little capable of giving a reply to every cavil of the unbeliever, still, though he may lose the battle of argument, loses not his hold of the truth. He knows it is no lie. He experiences its influence deep in his soul. All the engines of infidelity are insufficient to counterwork the work of God!

3. A privilege closely connected with these others is the *sealing* of believers: "Who hath also sealed us," says our

text. As the Holy Spirit is the anointer, or the anointing, so he is also the seal, according to that statement in the epistle to the Ephesians, (1st chapter,) "After that ye believed in Christ, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."

Some refer the *sealing* to one distinct operation of the Spirit, others to his presence and inhabitation in general. The meaning of the expression may be so far collected from the phrases immediately preceding and following, as well as from the common uses of a seal among men. The Apostle is setting forth the ample security of the Christian's great interest, as being established in Christ, anointed; and, in very natural connexion with this, he adds, sealed, that is, to the day of redemption. Just as men seal, by way of securing and authenticating, property and deeds, so does God, by the Spirit, seal his people—set them apart—distinguish them from others—and make evident to themselves, as in part also to those around them, their peculiar character, and distinguished happiness. It is not inconsistent to understand this more generally, of all that communion of the Holy Ghost, which the Christian enjoys by faith, and also, more strictly, of certain of his higher operations; for, even by his illuminating, and quickening, and sanctifying influences, as well as by his comforting presence, does he distinguish those who are Christ's, and spiritual, from those who are of the world, and sensual, *not having the Spirit*. The apostle Peter, in vindicating the common right and privilege of Gentiles with Jews, selects this, however, as the grand point in which true believers among either are made to differ from the rest of mankind, (Acts xv. 8,) "God bare them witness, *giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us*; and put no difference between us and them, *purifying their hearts by faith*." It is true the Apostle says to the Ephesians, "After that ye believed, ye were sealed," which warrants us, in a strict sense, to apply the term to the work of the Spirit, not so as to include the work of faith; and it is clear, indeed, that, to the Christian's own comfort and assurance, he is not sealed till after he has believed. He must be a Christian before he discerns in himself the marks or tokens of a Christian. Still, however, faith itself is just one of these marks, or tokens; and, even in the very production or infu-

sion of this first principle of his spiritual life, has that blessed agent been stamping him with the impression and character of a child and heir of heaven—the mark and token of God. By the first, as well as by the ulterior operations of the Spirit, is he sealed *really*: it is after the Holy Ghost has taken up his gracious abode in the heart, and manifested his presence to his consciousness, that he is sealed to his satisfaction and comfort. More strictly then, may we understand the term before us, not of the work of the Spirit generally, but of the light he casts on his work; not of his setting the mark of God upon him, but, at certain seasons, making that mark more distinctly legible, and enabling the Christian, beyond all doubt and uncertainty, to understand and to feel it.

The sealing of believers, like their anointing, has been happily illustrated by reference to the Saviour, of whom it is said, "Him hath God the Father sealed." The sealing of Christ was the communication to him of the Spirit in all his fulness, and the evidence thereby given to him of the presence and approval of the Father who sent him. He bore the proper impress of Heaven's Great Ambassador. Men were inexcusable in not discovering it. The consciences of many, even among his enemies, witnessed to it. He was justified in the Spirit. He was declared to be the Son of God by the Spirit of Holiness.

So does he manifest the justification, the adoption, the election to eternal life, of all his people, even by giving them of the same Spirit. "Hereby we know that we dwell in God, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

I might here show, as in truth these very passages demonstrate, that the Holy Ghost is given to be present with believers, not only in his influences, but by a mysterious personal inhabitation. How high the honour! How wonderful that grace which it manifests! But the idea specially before us is, that by that blessed Spirit they are set apart for God, and by Him they are assured of being so set apart.

It may be asked, Do we not thus too found the anointing and the sealing of Christians together, since we understand both of the Spirit? We answer, Of Him both must be understood; but not to the

confounding or blending them with one another. He is considered under different views; and it only argues the excellency of his gifts and graces, that no one representation sufficiently characterizes the benefits believers have by his presence. They are anointed with him, to denote more peculiarly his light, and effectual teaching, and their spiritual beauty and fragrance, as adorned and sanctified by his graces. They are *sealed*, to denote his witness and their security.

And, 4. Still, as following out the same ideas, and making them somewhat more complete, it is added, "And given the earnest of the Spirit in our heart." "He is the earnest," says the Apostle to the Ephesians, "of our inheritance;" not only the seal, marking us for the inheritance, our token for heaven, but himself the earnest, in that our fellowship of the Holy Ghost, and our experience of his light, love, and joy, is the very beginning of heaven. It is implied, that the Christian's happiness is chiefly future; but something of heaven is to be enjoyed on earth. What a sublime view does this give us of the Christian's privilege, even while here below! And how does it go to show, that God is indeed willing that the heirs of promise should have abundant consolation—that they should not want the clear knowledge of their destined happiness—the joys of full assurance!

And here, again, what is said is both capable of being understood of the Spirit's grace and operations more generally, and of a certain peculiar enjoyment of the communion of the Holy Ghost more particularly.

For even the man who is comparatively a stranger to the joys and triumphs of the Christian life, to those near and realizing views of God and of glory, which may be compared to the grapes of Eschol, or the sight from Pisgah of the promised land, yet, if an intelligent Christian, is warranted to regard that flame of divine love, which is lighted up in his breast, as the commencement of that love to God of which the saints in glory shall for ever be full, and which, as experienced by the happy souls in Paradise, will be one principal part of their everlasting heavenly bliss. Surely their purity of conscience and heart is just that perfect conformity to the God-head begun, which, in a higher degree, will be the perfection of their nature, and their highest honour and ornament.

Their pleasure of good works is allied to that—a pleasure of the same kind with that which shall be felt in doing the will of their Father in heaven, in his more immediate presence. He who is living to God, has begun to live in heaven. He has the foretastes of that feast above in his communion of love and obedience below. But the first-fruits of the Spirit, enjoyed in more blessed moments, given, however, rarely, to many of the overcomers by faith, even during the days of their pilgrimage,—given to them as their choice refreshments, their oil and wine after their battles and victories,—given as the dainties of heaven, in the banquet-house of his ordinances, to his serious and spiritual worshippers—when the Spirit of Glory and of God resteth upon them—when faith is already turned into sight, and their joy is made to abound as a river, yea, as a river overflowing its bank,—in such moments of spiritual communion as these, in which Christians have been known to cry out, "Lord stay thy hand"—unable to bear more of the weight of that glory which our natures must be perfectly changed to bear in its entirety,—surely *then* especially they have had the earnest of the inheritance given them; not only heaven in hope, or even in the assurance of hope, but heaven in enjoyment,—a joy unspeakable, and full of glory—of the same kind with, and only inferior to, the highest delights of the Church triumphant.

(Improvement of the subject.)

I congratulate Christians on such choice privileges—such honourable distinctions. Happy, indeed, is the people that is in such a case as this!

What remains but that I call on Christians to take the comfort of it. Deny not the grace of God. Do not, by unbelief, by sloth, or by untenderness of practice, lose the actual enjoyment of the comforts provided for you. Your union to Christ introduces into a blessed communion with him. Rooted and grounded in him, nothing can move you. Taught by the Spirit, no sophistry of the unbeliever need bewilder you. Sealed—marked by God, possessing the token of his favour, why still hang in doubt and fear? and especially if you have been enabled sometimes to read that token, having sometimes gotten even the earnest, why doubt the constancy of God's love, his faithfulness to his promises, in short, your final welfare?

But I must remind you both of the

necessity of cherishing the Spirit, and the danger of grieving, and partially, at least, quenching (him; yes) that Spirit by whom ye are sealed. By pride, by covetousness, by carnality, you will grieve him, and forfeit the joys of his presence.

Rather, by active communion with Christ, invite his influences, that you may increase and abound both in your holiness and comfort. Ye are anointed for God—ye are set apart for him. Let it appear that the anointing of your God is upon you—that that holy oil, as of old, is on your ears, your hands, your feet, by the devotedness of your lives, by your readiness to learn and do in all things the will of God. Be separated from the world lying in wickedness—ye are priests unto God. Draw near to him in all his ordinances, and especially value that ordinance, now in our near prospect, which God has signally honoured as a sealing ordinance, and where he has often given to the sanctified their most intimate and satisfying communion with himself. And as you would be sealed there indeed, give yourselves to prayer—earnest prayer, for that Spirit whose work it is, and who is himself the very oil of anointing—the seal, the earnest of heaven.

In fine, I recommend to those who have not yet seen their need of receiving the Holy Ghost, not sought the honour of his abiding with them, no longer to remain satisfied without such a blessed privilege. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If your chief joys are those of an earthly kind, surely he is not dwelling with you as yet.

Yet you must have observed how all

the spiritual benefits of Christians centre in the Spirit. He is indeed the great promise of the New Testament, as the promise of Christ was that of the Old; and, therefore, if strangers to his operations and to his grace, you are strangers to all religion. Every thing is by Christ, and through the Spirit—our peace, our consolation—in short, our salvation.

Is not your indifference, then, on this subject a melancholy sign?—and if any of you feel as if His presence and operation, because an inexplicable mystery, were therefore an absurdity, I warn you of this, as an affecting proof that your minds are not brought to the submission and obedience of faith. And let me not conceal from you that, till your thoughts, your ideas, your tastes, are thoroughly changed, there is no evidence of yet having obtained through mercy the title to the kingdom, and character of citizens of the kingdom.

But I remind you, ere I close, that you have every encouragement to seek the Spirit. He is a Spirit in promise. He is promised not in sparing terms. He is promised even to the foolish and to the scorner. Only seek—only turn to the Saviour. "Behold I will pour out my Spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you." "If ye, being evil, know to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Jesus has ascended to shed him forth, "and the promise is to you and your children, and to all them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Amen.

THE PREVENTION OF SIN A GREAT BLESSING;

A SERMON, PREACHED ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY, 26th OCTOBER, 1832,
IN BEHALF OF THE EDINBURGH YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY FOR RELIGIOUS, MORAL, AND
INTELLECTUAL IMPROVEMENT,

By the Rev. JOHN BROWN, D.D., Minister of Broughton Street Chapel.

"And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand."—1 SAMUEL XXV. 32.

Among the endlessly diversified causes of the uneasiness to which man is exposed in his intercourse with society, their is, perhaps, none, not necessarily implying crime in the sufferer, which produces more poignant anguish to a generous mind than

unmerited contempt. Contumacious treatment from those we have never injured, and, still more, from those on whom we have conferred numerous and important favours, is very difficult to be borne with patience, and is in danger of agitating

with resentful feelings, even that mind in which religion and reason have succeeded in all but annihilating the influence of malignity and selfishness, and in producing a habitual tranquillity, which the ordinary accidents of life are scarcely capable of disturbing. An unmerited affront is apt even, in such a mind, to produce a tumult of passion, during which the voice of reason and of religion speaks unheard and unheeded, and the coolest and most considerate of men are in danger of being hurried away by the impulse of resentment, and of listening to the suggestions of revenge. We have a very striking illustration of the truth of these remarks in that portion of sacred history which is connected with the passage I have this night chosen as the subject of discourse. David, the son of Jesse, destined afterwards to fill the throne of Israel, with so much honour to himself and advantage to his people, had been driven from court by the malignant jealousy of Saul, and, along with a few faithful attendants, whom his adverse fortunes could not force to desert his interests, he sought and found shelter in the wilderness of Paran. In the neighbourhood lay the possessions of a noble and wealthy Carmelite, whom Providence had blessed with affluence, but who was cursed with a narrow mind and sordid soul. His numerous flocks lay far from his habitation, and were constantly exposed to the ravages of wild beasts, who roamed in the forest, and to the more ruinous depredations of the marauding tribes of Arabs, who then, as still, were accustomed to traverse those regions in quest of spoil. David and his men were as a wall of defence to his herds and his herdsmen; and, though labouring under great inconvenience, and with difficulty obtaining the necessaries of life, they assiduously abstained from injuring the property of Nabal, and chose rather to solicit, as a gift from his generosity, what they might have claimed as a debt from his justice, or what, without consulting Nabal at all, they might have seized as their prey. At the time of sheep-shearing, a period in all countries of remarkable festivity, when mirth abounds, and rural hospitality is displayed in all its profusion, David sent a few of his followers to make known to the wealthy Carmelite their necessitous situation, and put him in mind of the favours they had conferred upon him, and might still confer upon him, and

to obtain from him a supply to meet their present exigencies. The message was couched in the most respectful, though, at the same time, in manly language; but the jealous heart of the churlish Carmelite was an equal stranger to courtesy and compassion. The necessities of these men excited in him no sympathy, and the favours they had conferred upon him awakened no gratitude. He refused their reasonable request; and not only refused it, but, adding insult to injustice, he repelled the bitterness of their disappointment by the sarcastic taunt with which he communicated it to them; "Who is David?" said he, "and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away, every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?" The young men returned immediately, and communicated to their leader the result of his message to the wealthy Carmelite. It produced the effect which might have been anticipated, on a man of a high spirit and generous mind—it excited extreme indignation and resentment. Rising in the fury of his rage, David commanded his men to gird on every man his sword, and marched from the wilderness, with a determination that the churlish Carmelite should pay dear for his sarcastic gibe, and of not merely punishing Nabal, but of exterminating his family. But He who sits in the heavens, and, unmoved, not merely surveys, but guides the apparently ungovernable tide of human passion and affairs, graciously interposed, and prevented the execution of this wrathful determination, which might have plunged David into guilt, as well as Nabal into ruin.

Abigail, the wife of Nabal, was distinguished by prudence and good understanding, as much as her husband was by churlishness and folly. Having learned, from one of the servants, what had taken place between David's men and their master, and perceiving at once the fearful hazard in which he had involved not merely himself, but the whole of his property, and the lives of the whole of his dependants, she immediately adopted such measures as seemed best fitted for averting the impending danger. Preparing presents much more rich and expensive than David had presumed to seek or expect, she set out to the wilderness to meet David, and

endeavour to allay that resentment which ought never to have been raised. Not far had she proceeded, before she obtained abundant evidence that she had made use of no unnecessary haste, for, at no great distance apparently from her own habitation, she met David and his men advancing in martial array, and firmly determined to teach him how dangerous it was to heap insult upon favour, and to convert benefactors into enemies. The good feeling and sense manifested in the statement made by Abigail to David, produced its appropriate effect on the kind, though irritated, mind of the Jewish chief. The tumult of faction was hushed—reason and religion were allowed to utter their voice, and were carefully attended to; and the master principle of his mind was beautifully displayed. Forgetting, as it were, all recollection of the dangers or insult heaped upon him—losing all sight of the contemptible and unworthy character and conduct of Nabal, he is entirely occupied with the amazing escape he had made, and the kindness of Divine Providence in delivering him from precipitating himself over the precipice of pride. He burst forth into an animated expression of thanksgiving to God, and to Abigail, through God's mercy, in preventing him carrying into execution his guilty purpose, and involving himself in that law of Jehovah, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Who shall forgive a man if he shed the blood of man? "Blessed," said David to Abigail, "be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand."

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." My design, in the remaining part of this discourse, is to inquire what is the permanently practical instruction which this portion of Scripture history is intended to convey to us, and to endeavour to impress that instruction on your understandings, your consciences, and your hearts. I apprehend, then, that the permanently practical instructions intended to be taught us by this interesting portion of sacred history, are the three following:—

That the prevention of sin is a great blessing; that God is the author of this blessing; and that his sovereign kindness should be gratefully acknowledged by all on whom it is conferred. In conferring this blessing, God usually employs the instrumentality of human agents; and grateful acknowledgment is, therefore, due to them from those who, through their means, are prevented from committing sin. After illustrating these three important particulars, obviously arising from our text, I shall conclude by pointing out what, I trust, before that time, will be apparent—the bearing these have on the meeting that now attends, to give countenance and support to the praiseworthy Society lately formed in this city, having for one of its objects the prevention of sin.

The first important practical instruction suggested by the words I have chosen for discourse is, that the prevention of sin is a great blessing. David, my brethren, a wise and a good man, in the passage before us, gives solemn thanks to God for having prevented him from committing sin. There is no way in which a considerate, pious man can mark more distinctly the sense he entertains of the importance of a thing, than his making it the subject of prayer when he wants it, and the subject of thanksgiving after he has received it; and it will not be difficult to make it distinctly apparent to every mind, that the estimate David formed on this subject was a just one. Let us turn our attention for a little to two things: in the first place, to the state of the sinner's mind when he is prevented from sinning; and, in the second place, to the consequences, direct and certain, or ultimate and probable, that would have resulted from the commission of sin which has been prevented.

Let us, then, attend to the state of the sinner's mind, at the time when he is arrested in his guilty career, when sin is prevented. The state of the sinner's mind at that time, my brethren, is one which, but for experience and observation, we would have declared to be utterly impossible in a reasonable being. It is a state which, we would have said, could be the result of nothing short of madness, and indeed it is a proof of what may be termed moral insanity. What is the state of the mind, at the period when the sinner is prevented from executing his purpose? Why, the man is resolved to violate the divine law; the rebel has his weapon in

his hand, and is just about to hurt it at the Most High. The mind, at the period when the sinner is prevented from executing the guilty act that he is resolved on, is in actual determined rebellion against God. This state of resolute determination to do what is wrong, originates in a variety of causes. In some instances, it originates in ignorance and error. The person is determined to do what is wrong, and what he ought to have known to be wrong; but so ignorant is he, that he is not aware that what he is about to commit is crime; nay, in some cases so completely deluded is he, that what he conceives really dutiful is indeed criminal. Such was the state of mind of Saul of Tarsus, when he was prevented from committing the sin on which he was resolved—the imprisoning of the Christians of Damascus. He thought he might do any thing against Jesus of Nazareth; nay, he would have counted even the putting the Nazarenes to death doing God a service. At other times, this state of mind originates in strongly excited propensities and passion triumphing over the principles of reason and of conscience, carrying, as it were, all before it, putting the mind into such a state, that it is scarcely capable of thinking of any thing but the object of its depraved inclination, and the means of accomplishing its guilty purposes. The mind is thrown into such a state as to be morally incapable of examining the question, whether the course on which it has entered be reasonable, wise, or right; and the sinner seems to be as morally incapable of standing in his guilty career to deliberate and reflect, as the stone bounding down the mountain's brow is physically incapable of arresting its own progress. In other cases, we find that this state of mind is not produced so much by evil propensity mastering, as by evil inclinations seducing, reason, bringing over reason to its side, blinding for a season conscience. I have no doubt that this, to a very considerable extent, was the case with David in the circumstances in which he is brought before us in this piece of history. I have no doubt that he thought within himself that he was acting a noble and becoming part—that he was doing that which at once regard to justice and his own honour demanded—that the very part which so brave a warrior as he should act, was to pursue and oppress the proud Carmelite who had thus dared to injure

him. There is still another variety of this state of mind, which appears in a more dreadful aspect than any of those we have yet contemplated. This resolution to violate the divine law is not unfrequently an obstinate determination to do at all hazards what we know to be a violation of the divine law. A person would be disposed to say, it is impossible that men should ever arrive at such a height of impiety and madness as this. But we know that men do arrive at this height, and not uncommonly. This was the case with the Jews in Egypt, when, in opposition to Jeremiah's expostulation, they distinctly avowed their determination in these remarkable words, "As for the words that thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto them, but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth." I believe this state of mind is not often avowed; but it does not follow, on that account, that it is not often felt. This is the worst variety of this state of mind which a responsible being can cherish; but it is obvious that all the varieties of it, in whatever they originate, are such as from the influence of which every serious reflecting man must account it a great blessing indeed to be delivered. Now, it is quite plain that the prevention of the sin has a tendency to lead to this result: it arouses the man from lethargy and inconsideration, and compels him to hear, to think, and to reflect; it arrests him in his progress, and gives him at once a motive and a provocative to consider; it dispels, for a short time at least, the fumes of moral intoxication, and renders him capable of forming a just determination as to his future conduct. All this may be, nay, often is the case. True, the prevention of one sin, instead of doing in every case what it ought—leading to the abandoning of all sin, not unfrequently, through the depravity of the heart—the evil principle retaining its hold, notwithstanding the means used to dislodge it, leads to a more resolute determination to have at all hazards the sinful gratification in which, in the particular instance, it has been disappointed; but it is quite plain, that the prevention of sin is in itself calculated to answer a different purpose—to break in on this state of mind, to turn the mind in an opposite direction, and to deliver the man from the influence of a state of feeling that is carrying him

on from God to hell. Surely, if these statements are true, there can be no doubt that the prevention of sin is a great blessing.

But the truth, that the prevention of sin is a great blessing, will become still more apparent, if, turning from the state of the sinner's mind at the time sin is prevented, we allow ourselves to rest on the consequence, either direct, or necessary, or ultimate and probable, which would have resulted from the sin, if it had not been prevented. Every sin, my brethren, just because it is a sin, just because it is a violation of the divine law, brings the individual who is guilty of it, under the divine displeasure, and exposes him to that wrath of God which the law threatens as the punishment of its violation. And oh! who knows the power of Almighty anger! We must measure the extent of infinite power; we must fathom the depths of infinite wisdom; we must count the years of eternity, before we can answer that question. According to God's fear, so is his wrath. There is a time coming, when a man may bitterly regret that single sin, the commission of which exposed him to the doom, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." There exists the expression, "an insulated violation of the law;" but I believe there is no such insulated violation. It is the property of sin that it grows and multiplies. Every sin leads to another sin, and another, and another, in a countless and endless series. There is no saying what may be the consequence of a single violation of the divine law, and, of course, what is the amount of benefit that may be conferred on one individual in the prevention of a single sin. How often has a wretched individual, when expiating his offence by death on the scaffold, casting his eye through a long series of crimes committed through a long continued series of years, looked back to his first violation, and, in the bitterness of remorse, said, "Oh! if that had been prevented, I had never been here!"

When a sin has once been committed, there are but two alternatives: either the sin will be punished, and in that case the sinner must perish, or the sin will be pardoned, and in that case the sinner shall be saved. In either of these alternatives, the prevention of sin would have been an incalculable benefit. Let us first

suppose the sin committed, that the sin will be punished, and that the sinner must perish; and oh! let us recollect—for it has an important bearing on the leading object in view—that this alternative is the more probable of the two. When the sin has been once committed, there is a far greater probability that it will be punished than pardoned. Is it that God is not ready to pardon? Is it that he does not delight to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin? Is it that the blood of Jesus cleanseth not from all sin? No. It is not for want of mercy on the part of God, nor of merit in the atonement of Christ; but every sin has a tendency to harden the heart of the sinner, and lead him farther and farther from God, making conversion, and, therefore, forgiveness, less and less probable, and confirming the statement, that if a sin has once been committed, there is a far greater probability that it will be punished than pardoned. It is not unfrequently recklessly said, and much more recklessly thought, by the sinner, Well, if I must go to hell, there is no help for it; a few more sins will not greatly aggravate my misery. Let me have all the satisfaction from sinning, if I am to be eternally punished for it. Ah, my brethren, the season is coming when he will estimate things by a different rule! There is no question that all the punishments of another world are eternal; but there is, at the same time, if I may use a familiar expression on a subject so awful, nothing like wholesale punishment under the moral government of God. Every man shall receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or evil. I believe that, in the present initiatory period of divine moral government, every sin is, in some measure, punished even here; and from the passage I have quoted, it is plain that every sin shall have its adequate punishment in the world to come. Some are to be beaten with many stripes, others with few. There may be, there will be, an immense difference between the pain that is endured, eternally endured, by those who are equally inhabitants of hopeless misery; but even to prevent that miserable individual who shuts himself out of heaven and happiness, and consigns himself to endless destruction, from the commission of one crime, is no ordinary benefit; for to prevent that crime is to diminish his misery for ever and ever. Had the crime

been committed, justice would have rendered him capable of enduring the punishment due to him, and justice would have inflicted it. It is plain, therefore, that in this alternative of the sin being punished, to be prevented from the sin is great gain.

Look to the other alternative; the sin is pardoned, and the sinner is saved, and this is the alternative that, when contemplating the violation of the divine law, seems not the more probable of the two. We come to the same conclusion here, that to be prevented from committing sin is a blessing of incalculable value. I do not lead into a track of illustration, referring to this simple fact, that the individual sinner is not the only person interested. There are other moral beings interested; and though he himself might ultimately escape from the tremendous consequences of his sin, there is no saying how far the sin of other immortal beings may be involved in his. But I confine myself to the case of the sinner himself. In medicine it is an axiom, that prevention is better than cure; and surely in morals it is also one, that innocence is better than reformation. There is, indeed, no such thing as absolute innocence in this world of guilt and of misery; but so much as there is of preventive sin, so much is there of comparative innocence. God often does bring good out of evil; but God, with all his omnipotence, (I speak it with reverence,) cannot strip sin of its ruinous circumstances. Were that possible, it would go to counteract all the purposes of his moral government. The prevention of a sin may produce consequences that may materially affect the individual during the whole of his life. There is no question that the sin of David, in the matter of Uriah, was freely pardoned, and much deplored; but he reads his history with little attention, who does not see, that vengeance was executed on him for that sin; and that that sin, more than all things put together, interfered with his comforts. Happy, inconceivably happy, the man whose transgression is forgiven; but happier still the man who has been prevented by a gracious God, from violating the divine law, and who is secured from the danger that is consequent upon that violation. He has saved all that putting to shame, and regret, and self-condemnation, which, in every right constituted man, shall always be combined with the consequences of our having violated the will

and the law of God. This may suffice for the illustration of the first principle, that the prevention of sin is a great blessing.

The second observation is, that God is the author of this blessing, and that his sovereign kindness should be gratefully acknowledged by all on whom it has been conferred. David traces his being prevented from sinning, directly to divine aid. Most men, neglecting David's circumstances, would have seen nothing of God in the whole affair. Most men would have thought, that Abigail's meeting with David, was an exceedingly fortunate thing for all parties; but not one religious sentiment or emotion would have been excited on the occasion. How true it is, that man is often without God, even when God is with him. If ever there was a man who set God always before him, David was he. The first thought that occurred to David's mind was, what blessing he had received in the prevention of this sin; and the second was, that he had received it from God; and the third is, To him be all glory. God is the author of the prevention of sin, in two ways: it is by the arrangements of his providence, that those events take place by which sin is prevented; and it is by the influence of his Spirit, that these events are rendered effectual for the purposes they are intended to serve. We see this illustrated in the case before us. The prevention of the sin on the part of David, was connected with a great variety of circumstances apparently accidental, but which were all regulated by a wise and good Providence, and made to bear on this particular object. Had Nabal's wife been as proud and foolish as her husband, or had she been a few hours later in receiving the intelligence with respect to David's intentions, or had she taken some other road to meet David, in all probability his wrathful purpose would have been carried into execution, and he would have been plunged into the guilt of, it might be, involving Nabal and his family in ruin. All Abigail's eloquence might have been used in vain; David might still have remained under the influence of irritated passion, and, in spite of the obstacles thrown in his way, might have frustrated Nabal's force; but through the divine influence, the means used were rendered effectual for serving the purpose. David felt that the hand of God was there, and that it was there in mercy; and the hand of God is as really present in mercy in

every case where sin is prevented—it is a manifestation of sovereign kindness on the part of Jehovah. Recollect what we have said on the state of the sinner's mind, when arrested in his career, with respect to the certain and probable consequences of his being allowed to go on, and then you will see that the favour conferred is no unimportant one, and that the Divine interposition is a gracious interposition. To be delivered from sin, is far more than to be delivered from excruciating pain, from fatal disease, or even from death itself. It is, indeed, a manifestation of sovereign kindness, to arrest the individual in his mad career. Is he not properly an object of the divine mercy? Think of the wayward rebel moving onward, led by his own self-blinded mind, and hardened heart, first into sin, and then into hell! What can induce Providence to interfere in such a case, but sovereign kindness? what, but the feeling expressed in these remarkable words "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion?"

These remarks throw a new light on human life. They make some of apparently the most unimportant events of our life become the most important, and render some of the most disastrous events the greatest blessings that ever could have befallen us. When a man is prevented from committing sin—and who has not often been prevented from committing sin?—the hand of God is always about him, and in mercy about him. Perhaps you were in danger, at one time of your life, of giving that place in your heart to a creature that is due only to the Creator, and God removed that relative, or friend, that you was in danger of making an idol, and produced such a vacuum that you were glad to have recourse to supreme fulness to have it filled up. You were in danger, perhaps, of trusting in uncertain riches, and God prevented this, by giving these riches wings, and making them flee away. You were in danger, it may be, of yielding to those youthful lusts which war against the soul, and God prevented your sin by chastening you, and making you say, Surely the hand of God was there in mercy. Such sovereign kindness demands grateful acknowledgment, and not only shows us, that many of the dispensations of Providence have a benignant character, which wear a very different aspect to our minds, but

that much that we think unimportant, has indeed an awful solemnity in it. Every dispensation of Providence calculated to prevent sin, is an intervention to pull you back from the very brink of a precipice, to save you from punishment and from hell. Oh, will you not make a right use of such warning? Will you again, under the influence of evil propensity, hasten to the verge of perdition? He may not always stretch out his hand. He may not again stretch out his hand. He may say of men, If they are joined to their idols, let them alone—if they will perish, they must.

The third remark is, that in conferring the blessing of the prevention of sin, God usually employs the instrumentality of human agents, who are also entitled to the gratitude of those who, through their means, are prevented from committing sin. David, primarily and principally, gave thanks to God, but not to God alone. He pours a benediction on the head of Abigail, the instrument of divine agency, who, by her wise persuasives, had prevented him from carrying into execution his awful purposes, and plunging himself in guilt, it might be in ruin. God is always the author of the prevention of sin. This is important. It is just a variety of the great general truth, that all things are of God, that he works all things according to the counsel of his will, and that every good and perfect gift comes down from heaven. But God ordinarily makes use of sundry means, and operates in a great variety of ways. Sometimes he employs no human agency, and, so far as we can perceive, no created agency. There are cases when the sinner, resolutely bent on violating the law of God, is just about to put forth his hand to commit the sinful deed, when it is withdrawn by an influence he cannot understand. The thought of judgment, death, and hell, is suggested to his mind in a way he cannot account for, but which shakes his resolution, and prevents him from carrying it into effect. In other cases, God makes use of human agency, but acting quite unconsciously so far as the prevention of sin is concerned. How frequently have great crimes and their dreadful consequences been prevented, by an individual making his unlooked for and unwished for appearance, just at the critical moment when that individual was at the time (and it may be, till the time he goes into the other world) utterly unconscious of the purpose his appearance at that moment had

served, in the wise and holy government of God. But more frequently God makes use of the conscious agency of man for the purpose of preventing sin. He did so in the present case. He did, by the arrangement of his Providence, lead Abigail to adopt the very means best fitted to the purposes for which they were designed, and rendered these means effectual. This is God's most ordinary method. It is very often by the wise advice of christian parents, or ministers, or friends, that men are prevented from committing sin on which they had resolved; and in every case where means are used to prevent sin, and where these are effectually used, a heavy debt of gratitude is contracted to the human instrument as well as to the divine agent. A man has some gratitude to a physician, by whose advice he has been prevented from contracting a dangerous disease, which would have hurried him to the grave, though the physician all the while is merely the agent of Him in whose hands are all our days: and surely there is something very wrong with the manner in which men estimate benefits, when it does not make them feel far more for Him who prevented them from incurring guilt than from contracting contagion. Look what a striking demonstration we have of the madness that is in the heart of man, in that, while we can scarcely meet with one who is not grateful to the physician for what he does to ward off disease from his frame, means cannot be used, in very many cases at least, to prevent men from sinning, without being resented as injuries and insults! This must not prevent us from following our course. Even though in but a few instances we meet with that grateful acknowledgment David made to Abigail, this is more than recompense for the number that disappoint us; and we know, that if we act from a principle of genuine love to God and man, we will in nowise lose our reward.

I have thus illustrated the three important practical instructions naturally suggested by the passage. In conclusion, I shall endeavour to point out to you the bearing those statements have on the interests of that praiseworthy institution, to promote whose important objects we are this evening met. You are all acquainted with the principles and plan of the Society. One of its leading objects, and which, in my mind, gives it its peculiar character, and much of its high importance,

is the prevention of sin. The Edinburgh Young Men's Society may be justly described as a moral mutual assurance society. It is an association of beings in the most interesting of all seasons of life—that season in which temptations are most numerous and strong—that season in which, it being the season of the formation of habits, it is a matter of the last importance that sin should be prevented. It is an association of persons for the express purpose of being useful, for the express purpose of guarding each other against the temptations and the pollutions that are in the world; and, with the most amiable and interesting benevolence, they take under their charge the interests of the youth of this city at large, and of that most interesting portion, which is continually pouring into it, in prosecution of business and education, who, deprived of the guardianship of parents and friends, are peculiarly exposed to folly and sin, which, in every quarter in a great corrupted city, are lying in wait for them. The one leading object of the Society is, to become fellow-workers with God in this department of his merciful dispensations, the prevention of sin; and surely, therefore, no enlightened philanthropist can help wishing them hearty success. They aim also at promoting one another's intellectual, moral, and spiritual improvement. With these objects, the present race of young men may do more for the cause of God than any that has gone before them. The means they propose are well fitted to gain the purposes they have in view, and cannot be employed without producing very great good. I cannot conclude without recommending the institution to those young persons who may not yet have enrolled themselves among its members. It would be a great satisfaction to my mind, that the young men connected with my own congregation were associating among themselves, and affiliating themselves to the parent institution. I scarcely know any way by which they could at once better consult their own real improvement and the advantage of society. May the blessing of that God who sent forth Abigail to keep back David from sin, and rendered her means successful, bless this infant institution, and make it the means of greatly diminishing the mass of human guilt, and of augmenting the aggregate of human knowledge, and religion, and worth! Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER, 1832.

No. 34.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN GORDON LORIMER, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT RENWICK, Edinburgh.

Price 2d

**ON THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS TO THEIR OWN LAND,
AND CONVERSION TO THE FAITH OF CHRIST.**

A SERMON, PREACHED IN ALBION ST. CHAPEL OF EASE, ON SABBATH EVENING, JULY 1, 1832,
FOR THE GLASGOW SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE JEWS,

By the Rev. JOHN GORDON LORIMER,

Minister of St. David's Church, Glasgow.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again, the second time, to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim."—ISAIAH xi. 11—13.

You are all aware of the object of our present meeting. I have been requested and prevailed upon, though surrounded by many much better qualified, to preach the annual sermon in behalf of the Glasgow Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. In fulfilling this engagement it seems natural and desirable to make choice of a subject which is directly connected with the Jews. The claims of other Societies may be advocated without much special reference to their object; but the arguments in behalf of this Society, are, like the people themselves, peculiar, and the subject requires a peculiar treatment. Nor is this the less called for, that there seems to be no little indifference felt, and misapprehension entertained, as to the Jewish cause, considered as a whole. There is much connected with the Jews which would supply us with an important and interesting theme of contemplation—there is little, indeed, connected with their history and prospects which might not be so improved—but the theme to which I would at present restrict your attention, is their future conversion to the faith of Christ, and restoration to their own land. This theme is a very pleasing one—much more pleasing than many parts of their history. The acquisition of it will tend to enlarge our acquaintance with Scrip-

ture, and, I trust, it will be found not inappropriate to the benevolent object of this meeting, but fruitful in motives and encouragements to induce us to contribute to the christianization of so remarkable a people.

None, I presume, need to be told who the Jews are: all, even the least informed, are pretty well aware of their origin and history. By the early reading of the Scriptures, they are introduced to our knowledge at a tender age; we frequently read of them in maturer years, nay, as faithful students of the Scriptures, they are continually brought before us in some aspect of their character or history; we often hear of them from travellers and others, and sometimes we behold a few of this people with our own eyes. Many men, who care nothing about religion, and would do little to change the religious state of the Jews, are interested in them as suitable and affecting subjects of poetry and history; and, through the medium of these, impart that interest to others. In this way, there are few, I believe, who have not a better general idea of the past history and present character of the Jews, than perhaps of any other people. The very singularity of the Jews—their standing out, in all important respects, from every other nation under heaven, renders

the knowledge of them deeper and more memorable. On these grounds, it may not seem necessary, nor is it so, to enter into any enlarged accounts of them. We take for granted, that you are acquainted with the past and present state of the Jews. We shall only give such a brief and general sketch as may recall your previous knowledge, and better fit you to contemplate their future prospects.

You will remember, then, that, after God had made trial of the dispensation of diffusing the knowledge of divine truth generally among all the families of the earth, though the wickedness of man proved the inefficacy of this plan, he, after the Deluge, to show the sovereignty and freedom of his grace, selected a single individual from the heart of an idolatrous family, and constituted him and his posterity the objects of his favour, and the depositors of his truth. Abraham and his descendants, through Isaac, are the favoured individuals. While all the world is left for ages in spiritual darkness, to prove the universal depravity of human nature, and the need of redemption, these individuals are blessed with special protection, and promises, and revelations, and institutions, and are enriched with blessings temporal and spiritual. In order to try their faith, and exercise their graces, and elevate their characters, and make them indirectly the authors of spiritual good to others, their earthly lot is a very chequered one; in punishment of their sin and disobedience, it is now and then a suffering one. At one time, they are nearly consumed with famine; then they are slaves; next they wander as outcasts in a wilderness; ere long they enter the land which has been prepared for them as triumphant conquerors, the envy and the terror of the surrounding nations. Fresh communications are received from Heaven; more stable institutions are founded; direct intercourse with God is upheld; the prophetic word respecting the great Redeemer of the world is enlarged and brightened. Still does this favoured family, now swelled into a nation, prove the power of the same depravity which reigns in the Gentile world around, by ever and anon rebelling against God, in spite of warning, and expostulation, and judgment. Their history is the history of the richest blessings conferred—partially enjoyed—speedily abused. It is the history of obedience,

disobedience, and deliverance, in successive and most varied forms. At length, when many difficulties and many wars had passed away, and the national prosperity reached its height, ten of the Jewish tribes, in punishment of sin, are carried captive to Assyria; and from that captivity they have never returned to the present hour—proclaiming in their doom God's hatred of sin, and determination to punish it. The two remaining tribes, after a various experience—now repentant, now rebellious—after long making proof of the power and mercy and forbearance of God, and proclaiming these attributes abroad to others, are visited with a similar captivity. They are carried to Babylon, and for seventy years retained there. At the expiration of the appointed time, they are most wonderfully restored; their temple is rebuilt; their religious character is improved. They successfully contend with their enemies; and, in righteous retribution, those enemies are themselves punished for afflicting God's ancient people.

The day of the long-promised Messiah draws near. The prophecies, often repeated, become clearer and more numerous as their fulfilment approaches. There is a pause in the book of prophecy, and a pause throughout the world; and, amid universal and excited expectation, the Son of God, the Mediator of mankind, descends. Every prediction is fulfilled—every type meets its antitype; but, strange to tell, the Jews receive and acknowledge not the claims of their King. In bitter disappointment and malignant envy they, with the exception of a small, but sufficient, class of witnesses from their number, reject him. They hate, and scorn, and persecute, and calumniate him, from his cradle to his grave; they actually crucify him, and pray that his blood may be upon them and their children. Their prayer is heard. They continue to oppress and persecute the servants and Church, as they oppressed and persecuted the Master and the Head; and, in forty years, agreeably to the prophetic warnings, Jerusalem, their beloved city, is destroyed—their temple levelled with the dust—all their distinctive religious institutions and privileges swept away—multitudes of them slain and crucified, after the manner of Him whom they crucified—multitudes enslaved, and all dispersed and scattered to the four winds of heaven—sometimes

denied even the privilege to visit their native land, and weep among its ruins. Ever since the period referred to, down to the present moment, the Jews have been exiles and wanderers. They have had no political existence among the kingdoms of the earth—they have been scattered in all countries, even the most distant—they are to be found in all climates and states of society.

And in all lands the *treatment* which they have received has been substantially the same. In righteous punishment of their awful crime, they have been made a proverb and a by-word, till their very name is a reproach. They have been spoiled, and oppressed, and massacred, by Heathen, and Mahomedan, and Roman Catholic, and nominal Christian—they have been ground to the dust for ages, and that often by nations who knew not their sin. Their history is one uniform history of suffering, and oppression, and despoliation, unrelieved by one solitary exception, softened only somewhat in these latter days by the progress of society, and the humanizing influences of the Gospel; and yet, in a great measure, this treatment has been unprovoked on the part of the Jews. False pretexts have often been got up to shelter the aggressors. The Jews have often been accused of crimes which they never committed, and of which their persecutors knew that they were innocent; but this only proves more clearly and impressively that the judgment is from God.

And while the Jews have been thus scattered and persecuted, they have continued to preserve themselves separate from all other people. There are instances of men being worn out by persecution, and of their sentiments dying with them—but the Jews have never been so worn out. In spite of all the fires of persecution, they are probably at this moment as numerous as ever—they have adhered to their peculiarities in all ages. Though, consulting their safety, it would have been politic to drop their distinctions, and be absorbed in the surrounding mass of nations—though they often seemed to be on the point of losing their separate existence—though they had the strongest temptations to coalesce with others—though they gained nothing by their religion but suffering, and might have exchanged it for one that would have brought them honour and wealth—though, at one period, they

might easily, and with little sacrifice, have united with the Mahomedan power, and not only saved themselves from oppression, but gratified their revenge upon others—though the absorption of the ten tribes shows that there was nothing in their natural character to prevent them mingling with others, and being lost among them,—yet, in spite of all these things, the Jews have preserved their separation, and gloried in it as a distinction, rather than been ashamed of it as a disgrace. Scattered, yet preserved, they have, in this respect, stood quite alone through the lapse of centuries. There is no similar case amid Assyrians, or Greeks, or Romans, or Goths, or Europeans. There is no similar case in the history of the world, and there is no explaining what has happened, on human or ordinary means.

And what is the state and character of the Jews now? With a few exceptions, too inconsiderable to be mentioned, they are suffering at present the same treatment to which they have been subjected for the last 1800 years. Still are they oppressed and persecuted in many countries—still are they despised and reproached in all. And how has this affected them? Has it softened, and purified, and refined their character? Has it convinced them of their sin? and have they, by experience, been driven to repentance and obedience, and to the acknowledgment of that truth which they have so long disowned? No. Persecution has often—I may say, always—improved and elevated the moral and religious character of Christians. The primitive Church flourished through the blood of martyrs. But the persecution of the Jews has only served to rivet their prejudices, to degrade their character, and make them worse than before. Not suffering for truth—having no ennobling object before them—bearing the judgment of God, without his blessing—their bitter experience has done them no good.

Intellectually considered, the Jews are miserably low, and can boast neither of literature nor science. They are grossly ignorant even of their own Scriptures—hardened in infidelity and the worst errors—most puerile and superstitious in their religious observances—notoriously enslaved to the world—addicted to many immoralities, yet, without, boasting of the proudest self-righteousness. Such has been, and such continues to be, the general

character of the Jews. Having lost all reasonable hope of the world to come, they have abandoned themselves wholly to the pursuit of this; and it has moulded their character accordingly. But, with all this, though their history has been so perverse, and worldly, and rebellious, so hostile to the will of God, they have not frustrated him in his purposes. They have not lived, and sinned, and suffered, for no end. We might be apt to think so, and that God had been disappointed; but no. In every age, they have been his witnesses. They have, in their history, illustrated and proclaimed the providence of God. They have all along declared, and continue to declare, his unity. They prepared the way for the coming of the Son of God, and contributed essentially to the evidence of that event. They were the depositaries—the guardians—the authenticators of the Old Testament Scriptures. They proved and proclaimed the shocking depravity of human nature, and the method of salvation through an atonement. They are the type of God's people in every age. In their rejection, they have been the means of exhibiting God's insufferable hatred to sin, and his awful justice; and, in their restoration, they will be the means of proclaiming universally the faithfulness of God, his fidelity to his promises, and the exuberance of his mercy; thus making a living, and visible, and most impressive demonstration of the most prominent perfections of the divine character.

But we are anticipating what more properly belongs to another part of the discourse. We have seen the past and the present state and character of the Jews; and now a very interesting question arises, What is to become of these men for the future? They are neither so inconsiderable in numbers, nor so commonplace in circumstances, that we should feel indifferent as to what the result may be. Are they to continue the same in the future that they have been in the past, and as they are at present? Are they to descend to the day of judgment, the same scattered, despised, oppressed, ungodly, rebellious, worldly, incorrigible people, that they have hitherto been? Is there to be no favourable change, either upon their temporal or spiritual condition? Are body and soul to perish without hope—one generation following another in misery and degradation? Doubtless, this is what

the Jews, and all sinners deserve. Their abuse of privilege is such, that no punishment is too severe for them; but is this what is destined for them?—can we only commiserate their irretrievable fall?

Supposing that the men of the world had the destiny of the Jews at their command, and could accomplish for them whatever they willed, what would they do? They would probably think it enough, to lighten and improve their earthly condition; they would (if it did not seem unfavourable to the commerce of the world) seek to amalgamate them with other nations; perhaps, they would even think it desirable, that they should be collected together into one country, and speak one language. But, though something for their good might be accomplished in this way, Scripture contemplates much more. God has revealed it as his purpose, that the Jews shall be preserved as a distinct people—shall be restored to their own land—shall embrace the faith of the Gospel—and shall be signally blessed and honoured, both as regards their temporal and spiritual estate. This is a very delightful prospect, and how do we establish its reality?

There are various considerations which would lead us to anticipate this event—much which seems to prepare for it; and there are, besides, the distinct announcements of the Word of God upon the subject. We have to remember, then, that the past history of the Jews has been very remarkable, more so than that of any other nation which has been: they have been remarkable in their origin—in the miraculous events which befell them—in their separation—in their preservation—and in their punishment. Every part of their history is wonderful. This would lead us to expect that their future history should be remarkable also. We generally find this to be the rule of Providence. There is a correspondence and consistency in God's dealings with any one subject. Now, the restoration and christianization of the Jews would be thus remarkable, and of a piece with his other dispensations towards them. It would not be so wonderful that they should continue to be punished as they are at present—that would be an ordinary case of moral retribution; but that they should be restored and converted, in spite of so many obstacles in the way of both, how singular!—that they should be

honoured in those respects in which they have been most dishonoured, how remarkable and how worthy of the other wonderful events of the Jewish history!

Again, we have to remember, and it strengthens the foregoing consideration, that the Jews are *capable*, by the events supposed, of adding much to the illustration of God's glory. The grand design of all that has been created, and which is brought to pass, is to manifest the divine glory. By God's dispensations towards the Jews, that glory has been already strikingly illustrated. There is not an attribute which has not come in for a measure of praise; but the capacity of illustrating the divine perfections by the Jews is not exhausted by what has already taken place. It is easy to see that they are susceptible of bringing God a much larger revenue of glory than they have yet brought him; and by no events, humanly speaking, would that glory be more beautifully displayed, than by their restoration to their own land, and to the faith and obedience of Christ. In accomplishing these events, there would be a mighty manifestation of power and wisdom, forbearance and compassion, not to speak of truth. The very length of time that the Jews have lain under the curse of God, and the severity of their punishment, and the mystery which overhangs their condition and prospects, would render their deliverance, and consequently the manifestation of divine glory, more illustrious when it came. The greater the previous darkness, the brighter and more grateful the coming light. Thus does there seem to be good reason, so far as God himself is concerned, why he should interpose in behalf of Israel.

Think, again, how much God has already done for them. With God, and indeed with wise men also, the past is a pledge of the future; and how large is the honour and the goodness of which he has made the Jews partakers in former times! How did he single them out from the nations, and dignify their ancestors with the name of his friends, and make special revelations to them, and work special miracles for them; deliver them from Egypt; put them in possession of Canaan; uphold a succession of prophets among them; send his own Son, and, as to his human nature, make him one of their nation and number! And can it be believed, that, after all this, God will stop short, and do no more for the

Jews? will he allow them to live and die in their wretchedness and alienation? will he treat them now as if he never cared for them before? When all the Gentile world is to be christianized, are the Jews alone to remain unbelievers? When all is moving forward to a happy change, are they alone to stand still—are they to be an exception of wo amid universal rejoicing? To say the least, it would be very strange, considering God's revealed character, were he to allow the Jews to remain for ever in their present condition. It would be against all analogy: it would be leaving his work incomplete. In God's works there is generally a large measure of compensation. This applies to grace as well as to providence. The Gentiles, after being long excluded, have been admitted to the privileges of the christian Church. The Western quarters of the world, after having long been enveloped in spiritual darkness, have been enlightened with the Gospel, while the East, once highly favoured, has been abandoned to darkness; and so of many similar cases. Now, the Jews have been so long alienated from the Church of God, that, on the principle of providential compensation, we might expect them to be ultimately brought in. Their suffering has been no common suffering, either in severity or duration. It has been wonderful in both respects. They are not like poor neglected slaves, who never knew any better treatment: they were once very differently regarded and honoured—the most favoured of God's children. And surely, then, we would expect that they were not to continue always what they are; that, in the future, some balance, some compensation, awaits them for their present depression; nay, that the compensation will be glorious and large, as the depression has been deep and protracted.

Then we must remember, that the actual circumstances of the Jews at present, betoken a propitious change. Dark and hopeless as their case seems to be, there are circumstances in their feelings and condition, which intimate that at least their temporal state shall be improved—that they shall be restored to their own land. The Jews themselves expect that one day they shall be restored; and this expectation is not the vague idea of a few individuals, got up as a refuge from present pain—it is the prevailing idea of the Jewish nation in every age, and it is

persevered in, in spite of the hardest experience which should damp and destroy it. So strong is the impression, that many Jews, when dying, make provision that their bodies, and those of their friends, shall be buried in the land of their fathers; and some repair thither in the decline of life, that they may lay their bones within the borders of Canaan, in the full expectation that one day that land is to be inhabited by, and to form the sepulchre of, their children.

Then we have to consider that the Jews are visibly separated from all other nations. This was predicted of them, and it has been strikingly realized. However mixed up with others, they have always been a distinct people, even more so now than when they dwelt apart in their own land. It is of no moment to inquire how this has been brought about; whether by the nature of their religious institutions, or by the peculiar interposition of God. The fact is certain; it is also a continued fact. The Jew is not reckoned, nor does he possess full political privileges, in the countries in which he sojourns. He is treated as a stranger in all. Often he lives in a separate district in large towns—a district appropriated to Jews. In character and habits, and even outward appearance, he is readily distinguished; associating and intermarrying only with his own nation. Now, what is the object and use of this remarkable separation? There must be some design in it. Possibly to make the punishment fall more heavily upon the sin of the Jews; but this will not explain the whole. It will not explain the continued distinction, now that the punishment is becoming less severe. There seems to be no way of explaining it, but by believing that some great and wonderful event awaits them in the future; and what can that be but their restoration and conversion? It cannot be their amalgamation with other nations, for this would not be very wonderful. It would not be worthy of so singular and protracted a separation; and besides, were this what was contemplated, we would expect that there should be some approach to amalgamation now. On the other hand, if the Jews are to be restored to their own land, there must be a separation, and that continued from age to age, otherwise they could not be known to be Jews when they return. And for the same reason, if they are to be

converted, and so made the instruments of spiritual good to others, a separation is desirable, nay, necessary, because it will make their conversion the more striking and proclaimed, and so the more useful.

These things all point to the restoration of the Jews; and then they are heightened in force when we consider that in their pursuits and mode of life the Jews are eminently a moveable people. They are the most moveable people on the face of the world. They count no country their home. It is their business to travel from country to country. They are not tied down to fixed pursuits, such as those of agriculture, which cannot be readily parted with. Even in Poland, where they are most numerous and stationary, they are chiefly engaged in trade and commerce, and cannot be prevailed upon to engage in any thing else. As a whole, they are most remarkable as dealers and exchangers in money—their property is convertible in the easiest manner. They are, so to speak, upon the wing—they could change their abode at a moment's warning.

And if, from the Jews themselves, we turn to the land of their fathers, we find it in a condition above all others most apt and likely to change masters. It is very partially inhabited—inhabited, where there are a people, only by the wandering Arab, almost as migratory as the Jew. The government is fast hastening to dissolution. It is the interest, humanly speaking, of no great or powerful nation to hinder the establishment of the Jews in Palestine. It is rather for their advantage to promote it. The Jews are sufficiently able to purchase the land with money, were this the stipulation. There is no country which has more the appearance of waiting for an inhabitant—no country which it would be easier to appropriate; and, perhaps, there is no period at which these aspects of it are more striking than at the present. So much for the presumption of reason and fact. They are pretty strong—they are sufficient to give force and courage to many schemes of human enterprise; but, however plausible, they are not sufficient on which to rest religious faith and practice.

We must now betake ourselves to the *Scriptures*, and see what they declare upon the subject under consideration; and, on entering this field, the first thing which strikes one is, that there is no passage of

Scripture which declares the final rejection and abandonment of the Jewish nation. Amid all the severity of the language which is applied to the Jews, and that is not small, there is no pronouncing their case hopeless. There is always, whatever the interpretation may be which we put upon the language, some softening, and qualification, and intimation of a change. Now, supposing it to be an established part of the plan of Heaven, that the Jews, as a people, were finally to perish in unbelief, is it possible to imagine that, among the many threatenings and curses, there would have been no distinct announcement to this effect?—assuredly not. But we have much stronger evidence than this, which at the best, is but negative. The Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testaments, overflow with allusions, and prophecies, and declarations respecting the future restoration of the Jews. There is scarcely an Old Testament prophet who is not full upon the subject, and the ten tribes as well as the two arc represented as being destined to be restored, though the event to human apprehension would seem much more arduous and unlikely.

The Scripture revelation on this subject is so enlarged, that it is impossible to do more than select a very few passages, and the same remarks which apply to them, will be found to apply to many others. One of the first things which arrests our attention in perusing the Scriptures with a view to this question, is the multitude of passages where the land of Canaan is promised and given to Abraham and his posterity for ever, and for an everlasting inheritance, and for an everlasting possession. Now, it is well known that the two tribes did not actually inhabit Canaan more than 1500 years, and the ten tribes not more than half that period. Unless, then, it be intended that both should inhabit the land for some lengthened period in the future, the promise and declaration of God have failed; and who can for a moment credit this? It is no answer to say, that such language is figurative. There is no intimation where the passages occur that this is the case. The assumption is gratuitous, nay, the language to which we refer occurs in plain passages, which give no countenance to figure, where figure seems to be out of place; at least, this remark applies to many of them.

Then there are a multitude of passages which distinctly declare, that the Jews shall be restored to their own land. Take, for instance, the promises of God by Moses in the 26th of Leviticus, where, after declaring in the strongest manner the dispersion of the Jews by the Romans, it is added, "that, if they confess their iniquity, and turn to the Lord, then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham, I will remember, and I will remember the land"—evidently alluding to the promise of the land of Canaan given to the Patriarchs; and, in the same chapter, it is declared, "And for all that, notwithstanding all their sins, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away; neither will I allow them to destroy them utterly, and to break them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God." This is introduced subsequent to the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, and must be regarded as pointing to a happy change, both in their temporal and spiritual condition.

So, again, in the 30th of Deuteronomy, it is declared to the Jews, "When all these things have come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call to mind, among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return to the Lord thy God, and obey his voice with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion on thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee, and will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers." Here both a spiritual conversion and a temporal restoration are most distinctly marked, and neither were accomplished by the restoration from Babylon, for this embraced, comparatively, but a small number; nor did these possess the whole land, far less were they all turned in heart to the Lord. It is impossible to understand this, and many other passages, figuratively—a figurative restoration to a particular country seems almost unintelligible.

(To be concluded in our next.)

THE DUTY OF COMMEMORATING THE DEATH OF CHRIST;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, LOTHIAN ROAD, EDINBURGH, ON THE SABBATH EVENING PRECEDING THE DISPENSATION OF THE SACRAMENT,

By the Rev. ROBERT RENWICK,

Minister of the United Secession Church, St. Bernard's, Edinburgh.

"*This do in remembrance of me.*"—1 Cor. xi. 24.

AMONG mankind there is a great variety of character, talent, and attainment. We always find that those who are wise and prudent never feel a disposition to engage in any thing of great importance, without previously counting upon the difficulties that lie in the way of the practicability of gaining the object they wish to acquire. This is a principle that appears to be in all the calculations of a wise and prudent man. The scholar does not devote his days and nights to the acquisition of the varied literature of the time in which he lives without remembering, before he sets out on his venturesome course, that there must necessarily be much toil, difficulty, and painstaking, submitted to by him, previous to the possibility of rising to eminence in any literary department. Hence he spends his days and nights so as they shall issue, in all probability, in rendering him, if not distinguished, at least useful, in some of the departments of life in which he may be called to minister. A builder—a wise builder, always counts the costs before he undertakes the rearing up of that superstructure that shall stand for ages, as a monument of his art, as well as especially useful for some of the relations of life, whether of a social or of a religious character. The merchant has no idea of running hazards to aggrandize himself, without counting upon all the previous difficulties that may be in his way; and it is after he has brought his mind to submit to the utmost possible risks, that he traverses vast oceans, visits distant continents, submits to the various influences that may be produced by a variety of climate, atmosphere, and soil, in endeavours to accumulate the riches of a foreign land, and to bring them safely home, that he may engage in all the legitimate traffic belonging to a country of which he forms a part. And if these be principles interwoven with all the reckonings of men in regard to temporal affairs and social occurrences merely, we shall come to the conclusion, that a principle of equal prudence

will distinguish the minds of all those who are avowedly attached to the cause of the Redeemer, and wish to be prepared for engaging in any of the peculiar solemnities of our holy religion. I have no doubt, that if any of us were to be favoured with an audience of the monarch of these realms, whom we are disposed much to admire and esteem, from his sincere desire to promote the best interests of the country over which he presides, we would be vastly on our guard as to our apparel, and as to the mode in which we would conduct ourselves in the presence of royalty. But when a minister of Christ comes before us, and apprizes a christian auditory that next Lord's day is to be peculiarly appropriated, and that we shall have an opportunity of coming immediately into the presence of the King of heaven, and taking our seats at that table of festival and delight prepared for all the redeemed, surely it becomes us, on the principle of a right and moral calculation, to endeavour to ascertain whether we are ready or not ready for such a distinguished honour. And that we may be the better qualified for such a spiritual privilege, and such high enjoyment, we hear a voice from heaven addressing us this evening, preparatory to the solemnities of next Sabbath—"This do in remembrance of me."

In directing your attention to the subject of this discourse, there are several topics that naturally arise before the view of the mind, and that are connected with the command we are now to consider; 1st, we have to inquire, What is the duty we are to perform? 2d, How are we to perform this duty? 3d, What is it more especially about Christ we are to remember? And, lastly, we have to advert a little to the advantages to be derived from the proper recognition of the duty now required of us.

First, we have to inquire into the duty here particularly enjoined, "*This do in remembrance of me.*" And we know, my christian brethren, that the duty we have

before us in the course of Providence, is the commemoration of the death of the Lord Jesus, on a sacramental day. This is a duty which has been recognized by the Church in all the periods of her history. The apostles, the compeers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who immediately succeeded him in his ministry, were at due pains in the proper recognition of this important duty. We are informed, in the Acts, that when they met on the first day of the week, they broke bread; and the probability is, that in the earlier ages of Christianity, the Lord's Supper was more frequently dispensed than it is now. This duty has been attended to by all the worthies that have lived in the intermediate ages, elapsing from the apostolic period down to the present moment. And in the most perilous times of our own country, when the nation was convulsed with civil war, the worthies that then lived in the land, notwithstanding the difficulties that lay in their way, availed themselves always of an opportunity of attention to this solemn injunction, laid on them by their Lord and Master. When the pious covenanters were deprived of their opportunities, they met in some sequestered spot, or in some solitary vale, where the voice of psalms, and of prayer, and of the preacher, added a peculiar solemnity to the scene. The death of the Lord Jesus was, even in these circumstances, commemorated with peculiar solemnity, and with peculiar felicity; and until the final consummation of all things, we are assured that the same ordinance will be kept up in the Church; for the very words of the institution assure us of this most important truth: "Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." And the Lord's death will thus be shown forth until he come again, by those generations of future times, who are to succeed us, when we shall be sleeping silent in the tomb.

What is it that we are to do in this case? To commemorate the death of Christ. Who is Christ? Is he not recollected with admiration and delight? This we do not—this we will not deny. The material

universe, in all its varieties and departments, is an existing monument to the memory of the Lord Jesus; "for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."

So long as the sun shines, we will have a memorial to the honour of the Redeemer, for he created the sun. So long as the worlds continue to revolve around the sun, we will have memorials of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Redeemer, for he created all worlds. So long as the moon walks in brightness during the stillness of night, we will have a memorial of the Redeemer, for she is of his appointment and creation. So long as the stars which appear scattered athwart the hemisphere of the sky sparkle in their order, we will have a memorial of the Redeemer, for it was he who appointed them their place, and ordered their movements. So long as the seasons succeed one another in their alternate and periodical revolution—so long as we have the spring, with all its softness and beauty—so long as we have the summer, with all her diversities and charms—so long as we have the autumn, with all its exuberance and fulness—so long as we have the winter, with all its tempests and storms, will we have living memorials of the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Lord Jesus. And amid the vastness of his providential care—amid the vastness of that moral mechanism on which he proceeds, where we have a wheel within a wheel, surpassing our weak imaginations to scan, under his superintending agency—he will bring order out of confusion, light out of darkness, and joy out of sorrow. And in the general arrangement of nature and providence, while the sun continues to revolve, there will be memorials of the wisdom and power of the Redeemer. This we cannot—we will not deny. But we, this evening, in this holy institution, which, we trust, we will have an opportunity of observing next Lord's day, have a memorial of the Redeemer, peculiarly his own. And, with reference to this institution, he says, addressing us this evening from that throne which he occupies, "This do in remembrance of me."

When we recognize this institution with all its obligation lying upon us, we ought to take a retrospective view of the past history of the Church: and to remind you

that this institution was by no means unanticipated, or stands by itself, let me call to your remembrance the Passover, long ago appointed by God, to be observed on that night immediately preparatory to the emancipation which was enjoyed by the Israelites, who, like their fathers, had been under the vassalage of a succession of Pharaohs, in the land of Egypt, for about five hundred years. This ordinance was appointed, in the early history of the Church, as an emblem of that holy institution we have under our review. There was a lamb slain. That lamb was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. There was blood shed, and blood sprinkled on the lintels and door-posts of the children of Israel, that the destroying angel might *pass over*—hence the name of the institution; and this blood, and this sprinkling, was an emblem of that blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel; and this paschal lamb was roasted, and not sodden; it was roasted with fire, eaten with haste, with unleavened bread, and with bitter herbs; and all the varieties of it had reference to the institution, which the Apostle calls our Passover. The Apostle, aware of the prepossession of the Jews in favour of their own ancient system, immediately attacks them on their own ground, and tells them, as it were, not to be so conceited in regard to their famous feasts; for, says he, we have a Passover as well as you, and a far better. "Christ," says he, "our Passover, is sacrificed for us. Let us, therefore, keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and of truth."

Secondly, the important duty to which we have now been adverting, must be rightly performed. "This do in remembrance of me." And in regard to the proper performance of this duty, much might be said as involving preparatory exercises, inseparably connected with the exercises themselves, which are peculiar to all God's people on sacramental occasions. I say, much might be said with regard to preparatory exercises. Here we are to examine ourselves, to prove ourselves, to know ourselves, whether Christ be in us or not—lest we be reprobates. And if you consult the question, in our excellent Shorter Catechism, What is the duty of them that worthily partake of the Lord's Supper? you will have a complete answer to all the preparatory circum-

stances. In order to be prepared by the grace of God for this important service, we must be satisfied as to our knowledge to discern the Lord's body, as to our faith to feed on the Lord's body, as to our hope and joy, and all the other christian graces, which must exist in our hearts and be in exercise, before we can render unto God a pleasing sacrifice on such an interesting occasion. You are certainly aware, that there are thousands in the southern part of the world who have gross and mistaken apprehensions in reference to the sacrament—the offering up, as they term it, of the mass. They have the conception that, upon all such occasions, there is a fresh sacrifice offered up unto God for the purpose of taking away sin. Now, our knowledge of the matter must be so complete as to put us at once in possession of the fact, that we have only the memorial of the great sacrifice already offered. The atonement is to be recognized by us as once for all. What we read in the epistle to the Hebrews, should be enough to satisfy us upon this subject:—"Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." "By one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Now, his one offering was quite enough to take away the sins of the world; and when we have an opportunity of encompassing the holy altar, and of receiving broken bread and wine as memorials of his love, we have an opportunity, not of presenting to God a propitiatory offering, but of recognizing the power, the efficiency, the necessity of that offering already made.

Having thus, then, made a remark or two regarding that preparation which is thus antecedent to the solemn duties before us, how are we to contemplate the holy institution itself? with what emotions of mind? with what feelings? With admiration—with gratitude. In the whole circumstances of it, we have admirable illustration of the perfection of the Deity; and, hence, it is often called the Eucharist—the very word signifying most grateful and thankful feelings on the part of those who partake of it. We are to observe the injunction with most grateful feelings, and our gratitude is not to terminate in any one of the persons of the Trinity exclusively, but in all, because they have all their special relationships assigned in the economy of our salvation. We are to be

grateful to the Father, the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation; for it was in his bosom from everlasting that the scheme of redemption originated. We are to be thankful unto the Son, because he was just as willing, by the power of his almighty arm, to put this scheme into execution as his Father was to devise it. We are to be grateful to the Spirit, because his agency is just as necessary as that of the Father, or of the Son, to bring home to the hearts, and consciences, and feelings of all those who profess this attachment to Christianity, these blessings purchased at the expense of blood—of blood divine. And thus our thanksgiving fastens itself, not on the Father exclusively, not on the Son exclusively, not on the Spirit exclusively, but upon the united Trinity, who has manifested all power, and glory, and mercy, and love, in the completion of that plan of salvation which angels have desired to look into, and which will be the ground of their admiration and delight, and of all the ransomed property of the Redeemer, world without end.

We are to consider this solemn duty before us upon another principle altogether—as a time of special communion with the saints. And what communion is, I cannot tell you. It is too subtle, too refined, too ethereal, too spiritual, for any human powers to tell what it is. There is a reciprocity of the highest and holiest feelings subsisting between the creature and the Creator, the redeemed, and the Redeemer, which bids defiance to all exposition. There is a resemblance here, on the principle of analogy, between this and light and heat in the natural world. Philosophers are not able precisely to tell us yet what light is. They know the cause of light, and the source of light, and the effects of light, but light itself they can almost scarcely speak of. It is too subtle, too refined, too ethereal for their apprehension. And, on the same principle, there is a difficulty in the ideas we entertain as to heat. Philosophers are not able to tell us what it is. A most enlightened philosopher, not many years ago, completely embarrassed the powers of his own intellect, and that of others, when attempting to speak on this subject. We know the cause of light and heat, but farther than this we cannot go; and there is something like an analogy subsisting between these materials of the natural world, and the holiness, and the pure cha-

acter of our communions in the spiritual world. With regard to the communion, we can say much about its cause, its accompaniments, its consequences; but the thing itself is too refined, too subtle, for our exposition, or our commentary. We shall only know it in part now, but more fully afterwards, when admitted before the throne of the eternal God, and when our disembodied spirits shall burn, like cherubim and seraphim, before the throne and the Lamb for ever and ever. We can know somewhat of it merely from the language of good men. We find that such men say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." And I find another man, after his mind had been the dupe of incredulity, as soon as his faith got right, thus exclaim, "My Lord, and my God!" And I can tell you, that the Church, and these individuals, in their turn, enjoyed a holy communion with the Redeemer; but what that particular communion was, I cannot tell.

In the third place, "This do in remembrance of me," leads us to inquire more particularly, What is that about Christ we are to remember on such solemn occasions? We are to remember his love. O, yes, my friends, if there had been no love burning in the bosom of the Redeemer to our ruined world, he had never suffered, he had never died. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Now, this love of the Redeemer is to be particularly remembered by us in all its spirituality, in all its disinterestedness, and in all its various characteristics. You are to remember its sovereignty; for, in its sovereignty, he passed by angels, and fastened his love upon you and upon me. You are to remember its freedom: it overleapt, as it were, every possible barrier lying in its way; like a mighty torrent coming from the mountains, increased by rapid showers from heaven, it swept all before it. You are to remember its unmerited character. We could never have procured this love; and one of the grand peculiarities of the gospel is, that the mercy and grace of God are utterly incapable of being merited. Our salvation

must be exclusively of grace, or of works. There is no intermediate pathway. If it be of works, then our salvation is no longer of grace; if of grace, then it is no longer of works. There is an utter impossibility, therefore, of compromising the principle. It cannot be that of works, therefore it is of grace. And this grace we recollect, as the sovereign, and the rich, and free, and unmerited grace and love of the Lord Jesus, and there never was a time when this grace was so fully manifested before the Church, as when God's people sit at a sacramental table—as when they are partaking of the elements of bread and wine, in the exercise of faith—as when their hearts are excited with all their feelings in piety and godliness, to look up to the throne of the Eternal, and to anticipate blessings yet of a higher order still, at that table that shall never be uncovered; at that table where Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob are sitting; at that table over which the Lord Jesus himself specially presides; at that table where all the fathers of the Church, and all martyrs, and all confessors, and all apostles, and saints, who have gone before us, are occupying their places. And if we are rightly employed on earth, we will have fond anticipations, earnest longings after that immortality which awaits us in a better world. And there are times, notwithstanding of the emotions with which we are bound down to our friends and country, when we will say, in due submission to the authority of God, we have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far, far better.

I am now, in the last place, to advert a little to the advantages which are especially to be enjoyed when we are rightly discharging the solemn duty which is inculcated upon us, "This do in remembrance of me." And these are various. By the grace of God we shall fare liberally next Sabbath in our several churches, when such an opportunity shall be granted unto us. We have in our view all the blessings of the new covenant; and, to speak with

a figure, when we are rightly exercised on such solemn occasions, we are introduced, as it were, into the paradise of God—we take our stand at the foot of the tree of life, which bears all fruits, and bears them every month; and the leaves of that tree are for the healing of the nations—we have an opportunity of grasping the tree, as it were, and of shaking it, and bringing down its fair and immortal fruit for our enjoyment. But, dropping this figure, we have all the blessings of the new covenant presented to our view, emblematical and sacramental. Are we not poor guilty creatures?—here we are reminded of the blood of the Lord Jesus, that takes away all manner of sin. Are we not heart-broken creatures in this world, on account of the many calamities inseparable from our ruined condition on earth?—here we have peace, and joy, and consolation; and the same Redeemer who commands us to do this in remembrance of him whispers in our ears, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye believe in God; believe also in me." Do we find ourselves still unhappy, notwithstanding all the toil and labour we submit to, in order to approximate nearer the moral standard of perfection?—in this case, there is large influence poured out from on high to make us liker himself—to make us readier for dying, and more and more meet for the enjoyment of the inheritance of the saints in light; and beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we shall be all changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. But we enlarge not, believing that you are able to anticipate us. And let it be your prayer to God this evening, that, in the ensuing solemn sacramental season, we may all have, in our several churches, communion and fellowship with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. May God bless his word, and to his name be all the praise. Amen.

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No. 35. | SERMON by the Rev. JOHN GORDON LORIMER, Glasgow. | Price 2d.
SERMON by the Rev. Dr. BURNS, Paisley.

ON THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS TO THEIR OWN LAND,
AND CONVERSION TO THE FAITH OF CHRIST;

A Sermon, preached by the Rev. JOHN GORDON LORIMER, Minister of St. David's Church, Glasgow.—Concluded from p. 405.

PASSING from Moses to Isaiah, what a clear and striking passage is that contained in our text. There is no doubt that the people here spoken of are the Jewish people, for they are expressly distinguished from the Gentiles in the prophecy; and it is not less clear, that the period spoken of is the period of Messiah, for the chapter contains one of the most illustrious predictions of the coming of Messiah; and the deliverance from Babylon cannot, with any propriety, be denominated by God setting his hand the second time to recover his people; and many names are given of the countries where they are scattered, which is much more descriptive of the second captivity than of the first. Indeed, no language could be more clearly descriptive of a national restoration to their own land. It seems expressly intended to exclude every other interpretation. It will not do to say, that their conversion to the faith of Christ is all that is intended: that doctrine is clearly taught in other passages, and it may be in the last clause of our text, in this passage; but this is manifestly not the great doctrine. Spiritual conversion is not confined to one place, which is the idea attributed to restoration in the passage; it is common to all countries and climates. And in the 33d of Jeremiah, God expressly speaking of his people, says, "Behold, I will bring health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth; and I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel to return, (here even the ten tribes are spoken of,) and I will build them as at first." And then, in the same chapter, speaking of the days of the Branch of righteousness, it is declared, "In those days shall Judah be saved, and
Vol. I.—No. 35.

Israel shall dwell safely," thus marking, when we combine the verses, the national restoration and spiritual conversion of the Jewish people.

There is no passage, however, more striking upon this subject, than the vision of Ezekiel, contained in the 37th chapter of his prophecy—the vision of the reurrection of dry bones. We ought to read the whole of the chapter; but I am afraid that your time will not suffice. Though it is not at all improbable that the restoration here spoken of primarily referred to the restoration from Babylon—as in many of the works of God there is a beautiful analogy, so that one is the earnest and the picture of another—yet, with all this, it is abundantly clear, that nothing less than the ultimate restoration and conversion of all the tribes is contemplated. We are expressly told, that the whole house of Israel is intended to be described by the vision; and the terms of the prophecy will not suit a more restricted application, for the return of the Jews from Babylon was comparatively small, and those who returned were not all converted in soul, and their prince could not be said to reign over them for ever, and the opposite of these things is contemplated in the vision.

And then the imagery employed is most admirably descriptive of the state and character of the Jews. Once they had been alive to God, but now they were dead; they were bones, and dry bones; not only without the life of religion, but hostile and aversive to it. They were scattered bones—no longer a nation, but limb separated from limb—scattered about like bones in a churchyard, or on a field of battle. So opposed are the Jews to a spiritual change—so unlikely are they to become the subject of it, that it is asked,

God as it is fitted and intended to be. - It would not be so wonderful, that the Jews in a converted state should return to Palestine, as that they should return in the character of enemies, opposed to God, and opposed to the prophecy, yet still over-ruled in will to accomplish God's designs; and when we think that the whole intention of God's dealings with the Jews is to manifest the perfections of his character, the order supposed is the more probable. And then, in the vision of Ezekiel, before life is communicated to the dry bones, there are various preparatory movements of considerable importance described as taking place. There is a shaking and uniting of bone with bone, and a coming up of flesh and sinews, and a covering with skin, all before any breath is imparted, which would well describe a national restoration in an unconverted state. And the same idea seems to be conveyed in the 12th of Zechariah, where Jerusalem is said to be inhabited in her own place, even in Jerusalem, and to be the object of God's providence and protection against enemies, before the Spirit of grace and supplication, making the inhabitants new creatures, is represented as descending. But, though the national restoration should precede the general conversion of the Jews, that is no reason to relax our diligence about the latter; for our great duty of labour remains the same, whatever may be God's purposes; and, though the nation may not be converted, there is no reason to believe that many individuals may not be converted ere the restoration takes place.

Another interesting point, connected with the subject which we have been considering, is the *time* when the restoration and conversion of the Jews is to be accomplished. The order is interesting—still more so is the time; but here also we must confess our ignorance, and speak with diffidence. There is reason to believe that the time is *near*. The amount of interest and labour which has been called forth among Christians, during the last twenty years, in behalf of the Jews, is unprecedented in their history. More has been done, and is doing, than has been attempted since the days of the apostles. Within these few years, the gospel has been preached at Jerusalem, where it has not been preached for centuries. If the Jews are destined to return to their own land as Jews, and not as Christians, there seems

to be a necessity that they should return soon; as, from the operation of various causes, the softening—and the changes which are taking place among them, those would be danger, if long persisted in, of their losing their distinctive character, and being assimilated to surrounding nations; in which case, neither their restoration nor conversion would be so visible, nor the fulfilment of the prophecy so conspicuous.

Then there seems reason to believe that the restoration of the Jews is intimately connected in Scripture with the fall of Antichrist, and shall immediately follow it. Popery has, through her idolatries and corruptions of Christianity, and savage persecutions of the Jews, been, in all ages, one of the most formidable obstacles to the conversion or restoration of the Jewish people. She has been their worst enemy, both for body and soul. Now, as we know that her days are numbered—that the one thousand two hundred and sixty years of her darkness must be drawing to a close, so we may expect that, in the same proportion, the restoration of the Jews is near. The fall of Popery will not only remove a great obstacle out of their way, it will supply the Jews with the most striking proof of the divine truth of Christianity. It will show them the admirable connexion between the prophecy and the fulfilment—between the threatening and the punishment. And it will, at the same time, be the means of showing them what true Christianity is, separated from every error.

These views accord with the distinct intimations of prophecy. Jerusalem is to be trodden down until the times of the Gentile apostasy are fulfilled, and no longer. In the book of Revelation, the song of joy and triumph which is sung over the destruction of Babylon, or the Antichristian church, is a Hebrew doxology, sung by Jews—the doxology is nowhere else found, and the Jews are specially distinguished from the twenty four elders and four living creatures, the representatives of the converted Gentile church. The scene is laid in Heaven, and the chorus of the song, Hallelujah, is in the Hebrew tongue. An examination of the prophecy leaves little doubt that the great rejoicing company are Jews, and that the Hebrew doxology has been employed to mark their restoration to the Church of Christ. It may be added, that the prophecy has never yet received its

full accomplishment, in which the representatives of various nations are described as taking hold of the skirt of a Jew, and saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you; and this intimates that the Jews are to bear a part in the instruction and conversion of the Gentiles; consequently, their own restoration must precede this; and as the conversion of the world is represented as being contemporaneous with, and immediately subsequent to, the overthrow of Antichrist, so the evidence is the stronger, that the restoration and conversion of the Jews is at hand, at least is not afar off, or at a discouraging distance.

The next point which merits our notice, and we can speak of it with greater certainty than the others, though necessarily in a very hurried manner, is the great advantage—the *blessed consequences*—which will flow from the restoration and conversion of the Jews. These consequences are far more glorious than we can conceive, or than have ever been realized in the history of the Church of Christ. Never has the time been when Jew and Gentile were members of the Redeemer's church at the same moment, or, at best, it did not exceed thirty years. Hitherto there has been division, but then there shall be union.

To the Jews themselves, the change will be a great and a happy one. It will be a termination to their dispersions and their wanderings—their reproach, and sufferings, and persecutions. It will be an end to their ignorance and prejudices—their irreligion and infidelity—their worldliness, their immorality, and hatred to Christ and to Christians. It will be a fulfilment of the earliest and most delightful prophecies. It will be the season of pardon and holiness, and spiritual worship, and spiritual illumination. It will be the season of gratitude, and strength, and vigour, and hope—all in their warmest and brightest forms. It will be the season of heavenly affections and ancient espousals—the joy of the long-lost prodigal restored—a reversion to the blessedness of Canaan—a brief preparatory foretaste of the blessedness of heaven. The change shall be glorious to compensate for past dishonour. According to the depth of the degradation, it shall be the largeness of the mercy and the joy. The Jews shall not only be happy and blessed in their restoration and conversion—they shall walk first among the

christianized nations of the earth—they shall be looked upon as the elder born—they shall be restored to the pre-eminence which they enjoyed before, and none shall be offended. All shall rejoice in their exaltation; "And thou, O tower of the flock! the stronghold of the daughter of Zion! unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion, the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem."

Nor shall the restoration and conversion of Israel be of advantage only to themselves; it shall be of the utmost advantage to the Gentile nations—to the world at large. In every age, the Jews have been of use to others; they have been their pioneers and instructors; nations have been benefited just as they have held intercourse with them. What they have been in the past, they are destined to be in the future. There are many ways in which we would expect them to be of use to others: their restoration to their own land, and conversion to the faith of Christ, will be a most illustrious proof of the divinity of the Gospel. It will spread abroad universally the evidence of its truth; it will strike Mahometans, and Heathens, and nominal Christians, with astonishment; it will silence every objection, and put to shame all the scorn of infidelity. And then we may expect that the Jews will become the most admirable missionaries of Christianity. They were so in primitive times, and there is no reason why they should not be so again. Their very character as wanderers, the hardships and oppressions which they have endured, a sense of the amazing mercy which has been vouchsafed to them, will all, with God's blessing, form them into the noblest missionaries—will raise up a nation of St. Pauls. In the meantime, the Gentiles already christianized will, from God's dealings towards the Jews, be led to stronger faith, and warmer love, and more adoring gratitude; to brighter hope, and redoubled prayers, and a more devoted obedience. And this state of things will come in admirable time to strengthen the zeal of the Jews. A holy rivalry, in the good work of diffusing the knowledge of the gospel, will be provoked between the two parties, and kept up; they will stir each other up to jealousy, like runners in a race, and the glory of the millennial days will be hastened.

Nor are these mere expectations or speculations, however natural and pro-

table: they are borne out by the views of Scripture. Various are the passages which intimate, in no doubtful language, that the conversion of the Jews holds an important connexion with the conversion of the Gentiles, and that they are to bear a part in carrying it forward; that until the Jews are christianized, there is to be comparatively little spiritual conversion among the Gentiles. The most striking passage to this effect, is the celebrated one in the 11th of the Romans, "Now, if the fall of the Jews be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? for if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the reconciling of them be, but life from the dead?"

From this we learn, that the rejection of the Jews was the occasion of the calling of the Gentiles to the Church of Christ; and if, argues the Apostle, the rejection of them be accompanied with so much good, how much greater will be the good which will attend the conversion of the Jews? The reasoning is beautiful and strong. The Apostle does not tell us how great the spiritual advantage to the Gentiles will prove. He asks how much more—implying that he cannot declare it aright, that it is too vast to be estimated; and so he concludes by telling us, that the change itself, and the joy which it will awaken in the world, will be like that which would be produced by one being raised from the dead. We can conceive no change to be greater, or more joyful than this. What joy would be called forth, were a dead city, a dead nation, to arise to life? What would be the feelings of spectators and relations? And what, then, will be the joy called forth over the resurrection of a world of dead souls? To enable us to enter in the least degree into the noble views of the Apostle we must bear in mind, what is the good which has accrued to the Gentile world from the rejection of the Jews. We must remember all the thousand indescribable blessings, direct and indirect, which have flowed forth upon the world from Christianity, for the last 1800 years—the countries which it has civilized, the souls which it has saved; and then remember, that all this is but the fruit of the fall of the Jews, and from it endeavour to estimate, What must be the fruit of the fulness of the Gentiles?—how immense and inconceivable!

There is yet another advantage which will attend the restoration and conversion of the Jews; it will promote the glory of God, and that in a most wonderful manner. This is so evident from what has just been said, that it needs no farther illustration. Just think what an illustration of power, and providence, and fidelity, and goodness, there will be, in safely gathering together and establishing the Jews in their own land, in spite of all difficulties and opposition in the way! What an illustration of the truth of Christianity—the faithfulness of God's providence—his patience and forbearance in his treatment of sinners! What an illustration of his condescension, and mercy, and omnipotence, in the conversion of the hardened and unbelieving Jews! What a proof of the virtue of the Saviour's blood—the efficacy of his intercession—of the power and compassion of the Sanctifier! What an illustration of the mystery of God's providence and sovereignty; saving the worst; making the longest continued rebellion a step to the highest honours; converting the most aged and incorrigible apostates into the very instruments of christianizing others; and decking the crown, which they would fain trample in the dust, in now and unheard-of splendours. By no supposable history of men, or nations, could God manifest more of his glory, or to greater advantage.

The last important point which we have to consider is, *the means* by which the restoration and conversion of the Jews are to be accomplished. We have seen the order, and the time, and the blessed consequences, and now we are anxious to know the means. The very interest of the former points makes us the more anxious about this. It is a point which peculiarly concerns and comes home to ourselves, and happily we can speak with considerable certainty regarding it—with more certainty than, in the present state of our knowledge, we can speak of many other points. It is not improbable that, in carrying into effect the restoration and conversion of the Jews, God may see meet to employ supernatural agency. The case of the Jews is so very peculiar, and so many of the great events in their history have been indebted to special interpositions—such as the deliverance from Egypt, the entrance into Canaan, the deliverance from Babylon, and destruction of Jerusalem—that we would not wonder

that this should be the case in the future. The shaking among the dry bones, preparatory to the imparting of spiritual life in the valley of vision, may intimate as much; and perhaps this may explain various Scripture hints as to the future history of the Jews, which otherwise it would not be easy to explain. Supernatural agency, too, will solve many of the difficulties which at first sight may be started, and which are started against the literal restoration to, and abode of the Jews in their own land. But while all this is admitted, we must not forget—for it is an important truth—that the restoration and conversion of Israel is to be brought about, under God, chiefly by human instrumentality.

This is what might so far have been anticipated, and what is confirmed by the express announcement of Scripture. Even where God most visibly interposed in ancient times in behalf of the Jews, he always made use of human agency. The deliverance from Egypt was miraculous, but still, through the medium of Moses, human agency was employed so far as it could extend; and what has been in the past we may believe will be in the future. It would not be safe or desirable that man should be released from his duty to man, and so even where God works most conspicuously it is our duty to work also. There is no room—apart from sin—for remissness and inactivity in the Jewish cause.

But there is more than this. Scripture clearly teaches, that human agency is to be the greatest instrument in the conversion of the Jews. The Prophet Jeremiah is commanded by God to go to the north, where the ten tribes lay scattered, and to proclaim to them these words: "Return, thou backsliding Israel, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you," and so forth. And in doing this, what was he required to do, but to act the part of a missionary? And in the vision of Ezekiel, the prophet is commanded to pray to the Spirit of God under the emblem of breath, or wind: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live!" It was in obeying this command in the exercise of prayer that the bones arose and lived. And what was this, but prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit? The apostle Paul, again, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, declares that there is a thick veil hung over the minds of his unbelieving countrymen when they

read Moses and the law; which veil, he assures us, shall be taken away; and what does this imply, but that the word of God, through the teaching of the Spirit, is to be a great means of their conversion, and therefore must be carefully circulated amongst them? And, lastly, the same Apostle, in the eleventh of the Romans, informs us that the Jews at present remain in a state of unbelief, that through your mercy, that is, the mercy of the Gentiles, they also may obtain mercy. And what is the meaning of this? what is the meaning of the mercy of the Gentiles, but the money and the resources which, out of a principle of holy compassion, the Gentiles put into operation for the spiritual welfare of the Jews? Thus do the Scriptures point to missionary labour and prayer for the Spirit and the circulation of the Word of God, and pecuniary contributions, as forming the chief part of the agency which is to be employed for the conversion of Israel. And what are these, but the means which faithful men have employed, and are employing, in this great and good cause at the present day?

But I must now very shortly advert to the Society, whose claims have brought us together this evening. The object of that Society, you all know, is to promote Christianity among the Jews. And after what has been said as to the means by which this is to be accomplished, namely, by the instrumentality of men, under the blessing of God, it is not necessary for me to detain you with any lengthened observations. One would think that so clear a case would preclude the need of any observations at all; but the truth is, that there is a very great amount of misapprehension and error, and consequently indifference, entertained upon the Jewish cause, especially in Scotland, and, from the smallness of the subscriptions in Glasgow, I fear that this great city cannot be exempted from the charge of languor too.

The reasons of this are manifold—the comparatively small number of Jews—their peculiar position, standing out from all other men, and so disturbing the flow of natural sympathy—the worldliness, and wickedness, and obstinacy of their character—the strong prejudice and suspicion of insincerity which attach to their profession of Christianity—the small comparative amount of what has been accomplished for them—the frequent

disappointment and failure of the Jewish converts—the diversity of the interpretation which has been given to the prophecies belonging to the Jews, and the little study which is given to them at all—the apparently hopeless loss of the ten tribes—mistaken notions of what are the Divine purposes respecting Israel, and the dread of interfering with these purposes—the difficulty of seeing how the Jews can be collected from all countries, and restored to their own land.

These and similar considerations have all tended to create an indifference and insensibility to the spiritual interests of the Jews. It were not difficult to answer them separately, and to show how unwarrantable is the feeling and the conduct which they have called forth; but we shall rather, by way of balance, remind you of many considerations on the other side, which, in addition to those motives which should always influence us in christianizing the soul, whether that soul belong to a Jew or a Gentile, should peculiarly interest us in the christianization of the children of Israel.

We should consider that the Jews are God's ancient people—that in themselves they are considerable in numbers—that we owe a vast deal to them—that they have been the authors and guardians of the Scriptures, the depositaries of many of the great truths of Revelation, the benefactors of the world—that they have suffered most severely, and for a very protracted period, and that we have borne our share in the infliction—that they are the objects of the deepest compassion, inasmuch as their character is so worldly, and deceitful, and degraded, and their future punishment must be so much the more severe—that they hold an important connexion, as instruments, with the salvation of the Gentiles, and that little can be expected in this field until they themselves are christianized—that Christ and his apostles were much interested in their salvation previous to their declared apostasy, and that less cannot be expected after the apostasy has taken place, and been so long persisted in—that we enjoy peculiar advantages in reasoning with the Jews on the subject of Christianity, inasmuch as they acknowledge the divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures, and are pretty easily accessible through the medium of our own language—that in these latter days no little has been done, and is

doing, for them—that there is a considerable change in the public feeling towards them, and that they are treated with much more kindness—that, on the other hand, they have met and encouraged the kind and christian exertions which have been called forth in their behalf—that there have been, and are, as many pleasing symptoms of progress and success among them as in the circumstances might have been expected—that their conversion is clearly predicted, and shall certainly be accomplished—that it will prove peculiarly honouring and glorifying to God when it comes—and that there is every reason to hope that it may be near, and that the present shakings and convulsions among the nations may be designed to hasten it.

We should consider, too, that, as we value self-interest, it becomes us to exert ourselves in behalf of the spiritual welfare of the Jews; that, as no people or nation have ever oppressed them without suffering for it, so there is reason to believe that those who comfort and christianize them shall be peculiarly honoured and blessed, and that it is specially befitting and most desirable that Great Britain, which, in point of religious privilege, may be regarded as the successor in modern days of the ancient Israel, should be eminently distinguished for her labours in this glorious field.

Let me, then, earnestly exhort you to lend your prayers and pecuniary contributions, and general interest and assistance to the Glasgow Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews. We do not ask without reason. The object contemplated is one of peculiar interest, and importance, and glory. It is not the mere restoration of the Jewish people to their own land. However patriotic that object might be, and however pleasing to the benevolent mind, we could not, amid the manifold and more pressing spiritual claims of mankind, urge this plea very strongly. It would be comparatively a small matter that the Jews went back to Canaan, and were established within its borders tomorrow, if their minds were to remain in their present state of alienation from the faith and love of Christ. Poets and phil anthropists might rejoice, but Christians would continue to mourn. Their national restoration, however, is not our chief object, nor is it so much within our province. Our great desire, and labour, and prayer is to christianize their minds—to make them new creatures—to restore them to

the favour and image of God, and carry them in triumph to the heavenly Canaan.

No object can be more noble than this; and, in the use of appointed means, it is within our reach, and it will not retard the temporal restoration of Israel by an hour, and the channels of labour are already provided, and there are pleasing signs which strengthen and encourage us in the proper application of them. There is every thing to warm and excite—there is nothing to damp and discourage, and, though there were, there is enough, and more than enough, on the other side, to compensate for and master every discouragement.

Awake, then, to interest and zeal in the cause of Israel. Give your minds to the study of their case. Investigate the prophecies regarding them—investigate their present condition—cast away all indifference—pray, and labour, and contribute for their spiritual good. Treat them as fellow-immortals—treat them as friends—treat them as benefactors—repay the benefits which they have conferred upon you, and upon the Church of Christ, approve yourselves the true children of Abraham, the true brethren of Paul, men of the same spirit with those whom you claim as your patterns and glory.

THE CHARACTER OF HEROD ANTIPAS;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF PEEBLES, ON SABBATH FORENOON
AUGUST 12, 1832,

By the Rev. Dr. BURNS,
Of Paisley.

“Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.”—MARK vi. 20.

We cannot imagine a greater contrast than that which is presented to us by the two characters which the words of our text bring before us: Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee; and John the Baptist, the harbinger of our Lord. The former, proud, overbearing, and despotic; the latter, meek, humble, and unassuming. The one, profligate in principle, and living in tame subjection to appetite and passion; the other, pure in principle, chaste in feeling, and regular in his whole deportment. Herod, arrayed in the splendours of royalty, and surrounded by a crowd of interested flatterers, whose fulsome adulation he delights to receive; John, clothed in the coarsest and simplest attire, dwelling remote from the busy haunts of men, and looking to God and not to man for the meed of approbation.

In these two men we have presented to us a contrast the most affecting, between all that is estimable and lovely in character on the one hand, and all that is detestable and disgusting in it on the other. And yet, striking as is the contrast between the two, we find that there was a peculiar kind of influence exerted by the holiness and by the consistency of the one, over the profligacy and the immorality of the other. Herod, with all his vices, and with all his proud magnificence of sense, was by no means an indifferent spectator of the con-

sistency of John, or of the holiness which distinguished him; and even amid the splendid decorations of royalty, and the crowds of listening parasites who frequented his court, the voice of the plain reformer reached his ear and touched his heart; for we are told in the words before us, that “Herod feared John;” he held him in deserved veneration; and the ground of that veneration was, that “he knew him to be a just man and an holy;” a man of strict integrity and unblemished character. “He observed him;” that is, he paid him the most marked attentions: “and when he heard” his plain and powerful preaching, he was so taken with it, and so deeply impressed by it, that he was constrained by its moral influence upon him, “to do many things” that were substantially right and beneficial to his people. Nay, more—all this powerful impression was accompanied with a high degree of moral pleasure. The constraint was not forced. The influence exercised upon his mind was not mechanical—for we are told that “he heard him gladly.” He felt a high emotion of delight in listening to John; and this led him to do more readily what conscience told him to be right.

After all this powerful impression which was made on the mind of Herod by the personal character and by the preaching of the Baptist, we are mortified to find that

the wicked king was not prevailed upon to renounce the dominion of even *one* beloved sin; and that in consequence of a rash and unlawful vow, he was induced, even against his own convictions, to reward the fidelity of the Baptist, by sending an executioner to behead him in the prison! The voice of the blood of this holy martyr cried for vengeance on his murderer, and it reached the ear and the conscience of the wicked king; for when he heard of the miracles of Jesus, he exclaimed, "It is John whom I beheaded, he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." The image of the departed saint stood up in solemn array before him, and he trembled on his throne. But, ah! like Felix, he refused to hear the voice of instructive warning; and he put away from him the heavenly admonition. He lived "without God," and he departed "without hope." By his own brother Agrippa, he was accused of high treason to the Emperor, and was, for this crime, deprived of his vicereignty, and banished for life to Lyons, in Gaul, where he, and Herodias the partner of his crimes, lingered out a miserable existence of poverty and contempt for a few years, and at length came to a miserable end. "The wicked is *driven away* in his wickedness." The contrast between the characters of Herod and John receives its finishing stroke in the manner of their respective deaths. The one, calm and serene, welcomes the summons of removal, and, after a short interval of pain, finds himself translated into the paradise of God: the other, after a life of vice and wretchedness, is seized by the grim messenger, and dragged before the dread tribunal of his offended Judge. The one, like Elias, his great prototype, may be said to have been conducted to heaven in a chariot of fire: the other, like Judas, who betrayed the innocent blood, "went to his own place."

Such are the interesting particulars with which the words of our text stand connected, and the *character of Herod Antipas*, as thus unfolded in the sacred page, is replete with the most valuable instruction.

I. How *mysterious and complex* is the *character of man!* In one and the same individual, what a variety of qualities, seemingly the most opposite, are sometimes found combined! Extremes the most remote are seen to meet in one point, and the same person who seems at one time to love and to delight in what is good, is found

at another time, not very far distant, to be the slave of the vilest passions, and the patron of every licentious indulgence. Herod, listening with gladness to the preaching of John, marking with cordial approbation the fair consistency of his character, cherishing towards him the sentiments of veneration and esteem, and, in compliance with his admonitions, performing many acts of royal clemency and kindness, appears a very different being indeed from Herod, the proud and licentious governor of Galilee, living in tame subjection to the vilest of passions, resenting a faithful but mild reproof by the cruel imprisonment of the heavenly reprover, and gratifying the malignant enmity of a wicked woman, by coolly shedding the blood of the very man whom he had so lately venerated and esteemed. *And yet*, the individual is one and the same; and the varieties in his character are to be accounted for by a change of circumstances, and by the influence of that latent depravity which these circumstances call forth.

We speak of the mysteries of nature, and the contemplation of these mysteries is at once pleasing and profitable. But the mysteries of *human character* exceed them all, and the contemplation of these is not the least useful of those exercises in which the mind and the heart are called to engage in their pursuit of real improvement. We must not judge of a man's character from a first impression, nor from a view of it, however accurate, in one situation, or at one time only. Nor, in seeking to know the mysteries of *our own* character, must we satisfy ourselves with a distant and superficial examination of it. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Our great desire, nevertheless, should ever be, to know something of "the plagues of our own heart;" "the sins which do most easily beset us;" to ponder the secrets in "the chamber of imagery," which are within us; to place ourselves in various situations and attitudes, and to watch the discoveries which *these* may bring out;—looking, meanwhile, for guidance, to Him who "searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the children of men." "Know thyself," was the great lesson of the Grecian sage; and so important did it appear, that nothing short of a heavenly descent was claimed for it. "Know thyself," is the grand primary lesson of the great instructor of mankind, who "knew

..... was in man," and he who hath truly learned this lesson, is a most hopeful disciple in the school of Christ, and hath already "become wise towards God."

II. How strong is the *impression* which *real* excellence of character is fitted to make, even on the minds of wicked men!

In piety, enlightened and sincere; in openness and candour, combined with wisdom and discretion; in benevolence towards men, and elevated devotion towards God,—in these, and in similar constituents of a truly good character, there is a dignity, a loveliness, and a grace, which attract the notice and command the veneration even of the licentious and immoral. Herod was a man of profligate character, dwelling in the midst of multiplied enticements to sinful indulgence, and gratifying the appetites and passions of corrupt nature without restraint; and yet, with all his abandonment of principle, and all his immorality of practice, "he feared John and observed him." There was *something* about the holy man which arrested his thoughtless mind and compelled his admiration; and those very excellencies, to which his own character presented only one affecting and finished contrast, commanded his respect, while they failed to produce the desire of imitation. The secluded inhabitant of the desert, contemplating all the luxuries and all the amusements of the gay world, and frowning with a just severity on the very scheme of life which Herod assiduously pursued, is, nevertheless, beheld by him with attention, and listened to with respect and awe. The contrast, in point of station and of place, was great; and yet a prince, possessed of that external pomp which dazzles the imagination, and pleases the taste of the lovers of this world, marks with deep interest, and with *something like* cordial attachment, the humble missionary of truth, the unobtrusive teacher of a virtue by far too pure for his estimate of character, the obscure and indigent reformer of those very public morals which he was rendering from day to day still more corrupt by his influence and example; and what is remarkable, it was for *this very* reason too, "because he was a just man and an holy," that he was thus beheld and listened to by Herod with admiration and interest.

The fact, as thus stated, while it gives us a very exalted idea of the intrinsic excellence of the Baptist's character, shows us, at the same time, the peculiar value

which attaches to *personal holiness*; not the formality of the Pharisee—not the cold and defective morality of the mere worldling—not the assumed stiffness of the hypocritical pretender; but the dignified and consistent piety of the man who has been taught of God, and has largely imbibed the spirit of his divine Master—the rectitude and the holiness of such a man as the Baptist, "who walked with God," and on whom this high and justly merited eulogium was passed by his heavenly Lord—"He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light."

III. We learn from the character of Herod before us, that a man may go far in his admiration of what is excellent in religion, and in the character of its professors, while he remains utterly *destitute of the spirit of true piety*.

"Herod feared John," and he no doubt conferred upon him many tokens of his regard; and he "observed" his consistent and holy conduct with deep interest. More than this, he descended from the proud eminence of his throne, and laid aside for a season his regal robes, and mingled with the humble attendants on the public ministry of the Baptist. He heard him with satisfaction, and even with gladness; he felt a peculiar glow of pleasure while he listened to his faithful and eloquent discourses; he admitted him into the familiarity of personal and familiar intimacy; and, in compliance with his public and private instructions, he was prevailed on to "do many things" substantially useful—perhaps to give freedom to his slaves, or perhaps to mingle greater clemency with the rigour of justice; or it may be, to give alms on a scale of greatly extended beneficence. What may have been the *precise extent* of that moral influence which was thus exerted upon him, it is impossible for us to say; but it is plain that such an influence was exerted on the mind of Herod, and that the result was, to a certain extent, salutary. Such was the weight of John's instructions, and the excellence of his character which accompanied them, that the tetrarch of Galilee, in many parts of his behaviour, submitted to them, and was directed by them in his private and in his public life.

Thus far may a man go, while his heart remains corrupted and depraved. Isaiah speaks of some in his day who "sought the Lord daily, and delighted to know his

ways, and forsook not the ordinances of God, and took delight in approaching to him," (viii. 2,) while "their hearts were hard, and they went after their covetousness." Ezekiel describes the professing people of God in these affecting terms:—"They come before thee as thy people cometh; they sit before me as my people, and they hear thy words; but they will not do them: and lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and that can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they will not do them," (ch. xxiii. 31.) Paul speaks of some who "were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come," and who yet "fall away," (Heb. vi.) And a "greater man than all" has set before us a class of persons "who hear the word and receive it with joy; but, having no root, they for a while believe, and, in the time of temptation," apostatize from the faith, (Luke viii. 13.) A certain measure of knowledge may be conveyed to the understanding—a powerful impression may be made on the feelings of the heart—a strong resolution may be formed to "cease to do evil, and to learn to do well;" and there may be a partial reformation effected on the life; and yet there may be no real, no decided, no permanent change of habits and of character. The heart may be thus deceiving itself by its own corruptions. Satan may have transformed himself into an "angel of light." The semblance of religion may have been mistaken for its reality. Convictions may have been confounded with a real conversion unto God; and the unhappy subject of these convictions, and of this partial reformation, may, after the fever of the first excitement is over, return to his former course with more avidity than ever, and "become tenfold more the child of Satan than before." "O Judah! what shall I do unto thee!—O Ephraim! what shall I do unto thee! for your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

IV. The character of Herod teaches us the danger of yielding to favourite sins.

David speaks of a man's "own transgression;" and Paul speaks of "the sins which doth more easily beset us;" and the history of the world exhibits, in melancholy detail, the awful effects which have resulted from men refusing to surrender their own favourite passions, or to renounce "the

sin which doth more easily beset them." In the case of Herod, sensual indulgence was the sin in the practice of which he was habitually living. John, with that fidelity which became him as a preacher of righteousness, administered to him an honest and pointed rebuke—told him of the awful criminality of his conduct—and warned him of the imminent danger to which he was exposed, of losing his soul for the sake of cherishing and of satisfying unlawful desire. The reproof was not taken in good part. It was resented with a fierceness which we could have little expected in the man who had "feared John, and observed him, and heard him gladly." Up to the date of this home reproof, all went on smoothly and pleasantly, and Herod was flattering himself in his own eyes "that all was well, and that there was no need of any radical change in character or in conduct;" and John might have retained the good graces of the licentious monarch, and might have shared still more largely in his expressions of kindness, could he only have left things as they were, and allowed Herod to retain his illicit connexion with Herodias. But John was too faithful to his God, and too anxious for the spiritual welfare of the unhappy king himself, to allow the sin to pass unchallenged. He discharged his conscience—and he had comfort in doing so, even although it was at the expense of his life.

We see in all this, that the great bar which stands in the way of the salvation of men, is the avidity with which they cling to their beloved sins; that the most zealous and pointed preaching of truth will be readily tolerated and even waited on with pleasure, so long as it does not touch upon favourite indulgences; that general reproof, addressed to large assemblies of sinful men, may be listened to without one emotion of displeasure; but that the moment we say with Nathan to David, "*Thou art the man!*" that moment the scene is changed, and all the wrathful passions of the heart are kindled into a flame. The very same instructions to which Herod had listened with great delight when addressed generally to all the hearers, when they came to be pointed particularly against the criminal pursuits in which he was engaged, excited in his mind only hatred and disgust. His admiration of a lovely character was not sufficient to produce a desire of imitation; and the feelings of delight with which he

listened to the able and faithful preaching of John, were found to be perfectly consistent with the indulgence of a favourite evil passion. *They all gave way* when brought into direct competition with his beloved propensities. Men will very readily praise a character of distinguished goodness to which *their own* affords a finished contrast; but so soon as *that contrast* is distinctly noticed, its characteristic lineaments exhibited, and their own sins pointedly exposed in the light of that excellence which is contrasted with them—*then* the feeling of pleasure is changed for one of disgust, and their former admiration of lovely and excellent character is found to have been nothing more than a beautiful and pleasing theory.

We must not form an estimate, either of our own character, or of that of our neighbour, from the mere impression which abstract representations make upon the mind. We might look to the active influence of truth and of principle in subduing evil passions and governing the conduct in life. It is the great design of the Gospel to renew the heart, and to change the current of its feelings and its habits. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The prayer of every seriously anxious mind should be, "Cleanse me, O God, from secret faults: keep me back from presumptuous transgressions; and let no iniquity have dominion over me." The test by which the reality of grace in the heart is to be tried, is the victory which it has gained over beloved sins. "I was alive without the law once, but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." "Oh! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

V. In fine, the history of Herod should teach us the danger of trifling with serious impressions, and of acting contrary to conscience.

The practical impression which was made on Herod's mind by the preaching, and by the example of John, was unquestionably designed by God to bring him to a serious sense of sin—a humbling review of his character—and a decisive change of life. And it became his plain and obvious duty to cherish and improve that impression. Did he promptly and sincerely act on this principle? No—he set it aside,

as he quenched the rising flame; or he strenuously refused to follow out the impression; and fatal was the result. Let us take heed lest we be found trampling on those good impressions which conscience, or the Spirit of God, may have made upon us. Every funeral that passes, solemn and slow, along your streets—every visit which disease and death makes to the circle of your families and friends—every Sabbath, as it brings its affecting memorials to your view—every season of holy communion with God on the mount of ordinances—every touch which conscience gives to your inmost feelings—every call which the ministers of the sanctuary address to your interest and your hearts—are so many instruments which God is pleased to put into operation for securing the well-being of your noblest part. They are so many faithful monitors; and, when duly attended to and cherished, they will be productive of lasting benefit. Our duty is, to listen to the call which is addressed to us—to bow to the verdict of conscience—and to carry into practical effect the impression which may have been made, and the resolutions which may have been formed. Herod clung to his beloved lust; and, in mistaken compliance with the rash vow, perpetrated one of the most enormous of crimes. We are told "he was exceedingly sorry;" and, no doubt, the reflection, that he had put away from him the heavenly admonition, and had imbrued his hands in the blood of the innocent and holy reprobator, may have embittered all his feelings, and spread the dark mantle of despair around his future days. "The worm that never dies" gnawed his vitals, and "the fire that shall never be quenched" was already lighted up within him. "Wo to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." "Thou shalt mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!" Prov. v. 11—13. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. vi. 7, 8. Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 1ST DECEMBER, 1832

No. 36.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES BEGG, A.M., Paisley.
SERMON by the Rev. DANIEL DEWAR, D.D., Glasgow.

Price 2d.

CHRIST'S LAST CHARGE TO HIS APOSTLES ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN LADY GLENORCHY'S CHAPEL, EDINBURGH, ON MONDAY,
NOVEMBER 5, 1832, BEING THE DAY AFTER THE DISPENSATION
OF THE LORD'S SUPPER,

By the Rev. JAMES BEGG, A.M.,

Minister of the Middle Church, Paisley.

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."—MARK xvi. 15.

WHEN our Saviour uttered these words, he had finished his work on earth. As the eternal Son of God in human nature, he had lived a life of misery, and died an ignominious death—nailing to the cross the hand-writing of condemnation, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness. At the end of three days, he had shaken off the robes of mortality, and come forth, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. For forty days in his risen humanity he had mingled with his disciples, explaining the mysteries of the Old Testament Scriptures, and speaking of the things which pertained to his kingdom. And now, before leaving this world, and passing within the veil in this glorified humanity, to appear in the presence of God for us, he had come solemnly to give them his parting admonition. They were to act as his representatives on earth after his departure. The destinies of a world of ruined men were, as far as man was concerned, to be committed into their hands—the cause which had been contemplated with deep interest from the foundation of the world by angels, and patriarchs, and prophets—which had brought the eternal Son of God from Heaven, was now to be intrusted to them. An event had taken place at Jerusalem, in which every son of Adam on the wide surface of the earth was interested, which was to bring unnumbered multitudes to Heaven, and thus greatly to influence the records of eternity. And Christ, looking steadfastly upon the faces of his chosen followers, and thinking of the multitude

of sinners which then thronged this miserable world, and of the countless generations, then unborn, who afterwards were to be blessed by his salvation, uttered these most emphatic words—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

It becomes you, my friends, when retiring from this sacred feast, to look back with gratitude to the origin of your Christian privileges, and hopes, as well as forward to the duties which you are bound as Christians to discharge. And, clearly, it was only because Christ uttered this commandment that you, in this distant island of the sea, and upon whom the latter ends of the world are come, have been permitted to sit down at a communion-table, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and it is for the same reason now, that not *we* only, but *you*, as the sworn disciples of Jesus, are bound in your several situations to help on the triumph of the everlasting Gospel, by endeavouring to save many souls from death, and thus to secure that object to accomplish which Christ lived and died, and now sits in glory at the right hand of God.

Let us then consider—

I. This commandment itself.

II. The persons by whom Christ designed it to be obeyed.

1st, The commandment itself is, "Preach the Gospel, in all the world, to every creature."

The Gospel to which our Saviour referred, speaking generally, consisted of a series of joyful statements, which had become true in consequence of his death. For example,

man had fallen, and been driven out from the paradise of God. It had been the eager inquiry of all the thoughtful in every age, how he might again be restored to happiness. Christ had come to set open the gates of Heaven, and to proclaim that every repenting sinner might freely enter in. The law of God had been broken, and the conscience of every man warned him that his Creator was offended by his iniquity and had in reserve for him a fearful punishment. Christ came to endure that punishment in his own person, and to proclaim that every man to whom the word of salvation was sent might everlastingly be set free from condemnation; and by the agency of the Eternal Spirit, sent forth by the same Saviour, might be freed from every taint of depravity, and made meet to join the glorious Society of Heaven. A mighty spirit of darkness had been suffered to enter our world, and had gone abroad over all its inhabitants, leading them captive at his will. Christ came to bind this evil spirit with chains, and to set his prisoners free; "he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross." Above all, every child of Adam was doomed to experience a fearful death—the sentence of Heaven had gone forth—the souls and bodies of men were to be rent violently asunder—the one sent away before the judgement seat of God, the other consigned to the cold and silent grave. The pale horse and his rider, who had marched into our world after sin, were to call at every dwelling, and their summons none might disobey; but Christ came to disarm this hideous enemy, and to make that gloomy doorway, if we may so speak, through which all men had to pass from off the stage of time—and from which they all shrunk back with horror, not knowing what might be beyond—the joyful entrance, through which the Christian pilgrim might pass with singing "into fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore."

Such are some of the facts which constituted *more peculiarly* that Gospel, or those glad tidings, which the disciples of Christ were commanded to proclaim. But it is the greatest possible mistake to suppose, that these glad tidings consisted of any *one series* of truths collected from the word of God. The whole truths of Scripture constitute the Gospel; and our Saviour was preaching it, as certainly when he explained to his disciples the extent and purity of the Law of

God upon the mount, as when he declared, "that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." He that would limit the truths which the messengers of Christ were appointed to teach to a few favourite statements, must imagine that it was unnecessary for the Almighty to reveal as much as he has done; "whilst all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, and instruction in righteousness," &c. It is from the union of truths contained in the whole Scriptures, that the happiness of a Christian arises; and as the apostles *obeyed this command* by declaring all the truths of the *Old Testament*, as well as those more peculiar to the New, so that man alone is to be regarded as preaching the Gospel still, who, laying aside his own favourite conceits—his chosen and approved of texts—takes up the whole word of God, and boldly proclaims to his brethren every truth which he finds there plainly stated—explaining whatever is difficult—clearing whatever is doubtful—making evident the truth, and harmony, and glorious suitableness of all. "To the law and to the testimony, if any man speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in him."

Such are the truths themselves, which Christ commanded his disciples to proclaim. But we intended chiefly to call your attention to the places where, and the persons to whom, the apostles were to address them. They were to preach in *all the world*, and to every creature.

By long habit you have become familiar with this statement, and therefore it is of the more importance that you should be made to perceive, that when it was uttered originally, it formed an era in the history of Christianity, and must have been listened to with wonder by those to whom it was addressed.

Previously to this period, the Jews alone had been the favoured nation—the posterity of faithful Abraham, to whom pertained the glory, and the adoption, and the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and all the promises. Judea had been the land of promise and of hope. All the prophets had lived and died there. In looking back from where we now stand over all the nations of antiquity, we behold a varied scene, multitudes sunk in grossest barbarism, others boasting of their civilization, and realizing, what some are now eagerly long-

ing for, "an age of mere human reason, without any light from on high to guide their feet into the way of peace; and, in the language of another, it was "an age of blasphemy and of madness,"—a thousand gods were worshipped—under the *very garb of religion*, men avowedly indulged in the most degrading iniquity—the dark spirit of Pandemonium seemed to have breathed over the wretched population. Judea was the only fair spot on the moral surface of the world; there alone a race of men dwelt who worshipped the only Creator of heaven and earth. They possessed a law written by the finger of God—the Almighty answered their prayers in living voice from between the cherubims. In the *midst of them* the lamp of sacred truth was placed, and its light shone into all their dwellings, as did that of heaven before into all the tents of Goshen, whilst all the other inhabitants of the world sat in the midst of a worse than Egyptian darkness, which made even a *sinful* prophet to exclaim—"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy dwellings, O Israel. As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river side, as trees of aloes, which the Lord hath planted." Their city was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth—their temple was adorned by the collected wealth of nations—it was the object of universal wonder, and thither multitudes annually flocked from every nation under heaven. The earth itself seemed upheld in existence only for the sake of the Jews—its other inhabitants were only, as it were, servants and tributaries to them. Riches, and honour, and length of days, crowned the posterity of faithful Abraham. Their enemies feared them; their friends admired and envied their happiness. For "the Lord of Heaven had chosen Zion—he had desired it for an habitation—that was his rest—there did he stay—he abundantly blessed her provision—he satisfied her poor with bread—he clothed her priests with salvation—he made all her people to shout aloud for joy."

And it is to be kept clearly in view, that even after Christ appeared to explain all the mysteries which were hid under this strange economy, he still confined his regards exclusively to this favoured nation. He was born of a daughter of Canaan. In the land of Judea he wrought his heavenly miracles, and spake as never man spake. From the prayers of every other nation he

turned away with indifference, saying, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and give it to dogs." And when he originally sent forth his seventy disciples, he straitly commanded them, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." If such also had been this last commandment of Christ, what had become of us who were destined, in these latter days to live in this distant island of the sea, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel—strangers to the covenant of promise? We must have all lived without comfort, and died without hope.

But it is a truth to be deeply impressed on your minds, and diligently taught to your children, that when Christ died, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. It was destined that the wall of separation should from that time forth be broken down. An era was now arrived, in which we were all deeply interested. The system of exclusion was at an end. From that city in which stood the temple of God, the monument of the Jews' peculiar privileges, the word of God was to go forth to men of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people—all were to flow into the church—every island, every continent, every inhabitant of the world was to hear the glad tidings of salvation—these were to be proclaimed from sea to sea, and from the river to the end of the earth. And, therefore, our Saviour, standing at Jerusalem, in the midst of his disciples, gives this command, which was to regulate their future exertions. They were not to remain in Judea, although there they were first to proclaim the truths of Christianity—not to tarry in any city after they had delivered their message to its inhabitants; they were to go onwards into all the world, bearing the lamp of sacred truth into all the dark recesses of heathenism, shaking to the dust all the temples of idolatry—converting, if possible, a whole world to the faith! Ethiopia was to stretch out her hands to God. The distant islands of the sea were to ring with gladness at the news of this salvation. Men were to be blessed in Jesus—all nations were to call him blessed.

It was not all at once that the disciples of our Saviour could perceive that such was his message. They were themselves the

children of Abraham, and had always been taught to regard the Gentiles as inferior. And they stood amazed at the declaration, that all distinctions of nations had for ever vanished away, and "that Jew and Greek, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, were now all one in Christ Jesus." And therefore we find them lingering about Jerusalem, and labouring to convert the stubborn Pharisees, till by visions and statements their prejudices were dispelled, and they were induced to go forth from the limits of that favoured country, and become the heralds of salvation to the uttermost ends of the earth.

It was the intention of God, from the foundation of the world, to work out a great redemption, which would be available to all the children of men. And the Jews were only depositaries of the truth until the fulness of time was come. A whole world was in revolt against God, and all its inhabitants were exposed to punishment—all stood in need of forgiveness—all of comfort—all of salvation. And Christ made a propitiation, not for the sins of the Jews only, but "that he might gather together in one the children of God everywhere scattered abroad." It was important that this fact should be universally proclaimed. The Gospel of Christ was interesting to every human being; every other religious creed, except the Mosaic, which was in substance the same, proceeding from human ignorance, had been uncertain, incomplete, perverse. This alone was glorious in evidence, universal in application, and destined to be stupendous in result; for it was to spread peace and joy throughout ten thousand families of Adam's guilty posterity—to make earth again the habitation of purity, and to fill the courts of Heaven with unnumbered multitudes of blessed and adoring spirits, who should come out of every nation, and every tribe, having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Before leaving this part of the subject, it may be necessary to advert, for one instant, to a mistake into which some have lately fallen, of supposing that, because the Gospel was commanded to be *preached to every creature*, all men's sins must needs have been forgiven in consequence of the death of Christ; for, say they, "what other glad tidings could the apostles possibly address to *every creature* fitted to inspire with comfort? If something positive was not

done for every one of the children of men by Christ, how could the apostles preach to *each of them* the Gospel?" To this we reply, that a statement, far short of that supposed necessary by these objectors, might have been full of comfort to all the children of men; and, therefore, deserve to be called glad tidings. It must be comforting to every man to know, that he is not sealed over to hopeless condemnation—that it is *possible for him* to have his sins forgiven, and his nature sanctified, and to be admitted into the glorious inheritance of the saints in light—nay, that if certain conditions are fulfilled, such will, without any doubt whatever, be the blessed result. It would be cheering to all the prisoners throughout this land to know, that by doing something within the power of each, they would all instantly feel their fetters drop off, and be set at full liberty. Now, a statement amounting to *this*, the commission of Christ warranted his disciples fully to make. They could go into all the world, and say unto every creature—Not, Your sins are forgiven, and ye shall be saved, for secret things belonged only to God; but, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. No matter of what colour—no matter of what age—no matter of what nature, their sins may have been, though the cry of them should have gone up to heaven, and disturbed the very peace of the Sanctuary above. To every human being, the apostles of Christ could say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And such is still the privilege of all the ministers of the Gospel. He that would say more intrudes into those things which he hath not seen—preaches a different gospel from that proclaimed by Christ—requires his brethren to believe what *may not be true*, and ought evidently to be discouraged by all who wish well to the cause of truth. The Gospel is unalterable—it cannot be enlarged, and it ought not to be diminished. Like him from whom it sprung, it is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

II. We proceed, in the second place, to consider the persons by whom this commandment was designed to be obeyed. "Go ye into all the world," &c.

The law of Moses had been given by the ministration of angels; but the Gospel was to be preached by human agency. The words of our text were originally addressed to the eleven apostles of Christ,

and they left them not at will to dispose of their after existence, but assigned them this as their duty, to be His witnesses in Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost ends of the earth.

The task was undoubtedly highly honourable; for in accomplishing it, they were associated with angels and with prophets—nay, possessed the highest distinction to which mortal man could aspire, that of being "fellow-workers together with God." And one would have imagined that it was no less honourable than pleasant; for they were sent to deliver a glorious message, and one in which all the children of men were deeply interested; and, therefore, we would have imagined, that as they passed from house to house, and from village to village, working miracles and proclaiming the Gospel of Peace, all would have poured out their wondering and admiring inhabitants to receive them with transport, as messengers from God; and that their progress throughout the earth would have been accompanied with a tide of joy, like that which filled all the land of Canaan when the silver trumpets of jubilee did sound. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that publisheth good tidings—that publisheth good tidings of good—that sayeth to Zion, Thy God reigneth!

But a nearer examination will convince us, that in the way of all this there were many difficulties. If our Saviour had appeared in visible majesty, and in the face of day destroyed the god of this world, and set up his own throne at Jerusalem, from which he was to dispense blessings visibly—then the task of his disciples had been easy—to go into all the world, and call upon all its inhabitants to behold and rejoice in their God. But the Messiah of whom they had to speak, had appeared only for a little time, and then vanished away. His life had been obscure—his death ignominious, and the objects which his disciples had to accomplish were directly in the face of the feelings and interests of worldly men. Prejudices the most powerful had to be overcome—ignorance dispelled—the might of enemies brought down to the dust. The palaces of haughty kings and the temples of idols were to be entered boldly by these fishermen of Galilee—men were to be called upon to abandon this world, with its pleasures and vanities, in exchange for a paradise of delights, the fame of which they had only heard with their ears; and by declaring

truths, which, to the wise, and the scribe, and the disputer of this world, were ever to appear foolishness, hundreds of thousands of the members of our race were by them to be brought to Heaven. Besides, the apostles themselves, at the time when thus addressed by our Saviour, were but ill qualified in every respect for the task assigned them. Besides being ignorant, one of them had thrice openly denied his master—the rest had all in the time of need forsaken him, and fled, and "hid themselves in an upper room in Jerusalem, for fear of the Jews." And were these the men who were to go forth, and boldly endeavour to convert a world to the faith of a crucified Saviour, though in every city bonds and imprisonments awaited them? No doubt God thus designed to make the weak things of the world confound the mighty; but they must first tarry at Jerusalem, until they were endued with power from on high. It was only when the Holy Spirit descended in his majesty that their ignorance vanished, that they became bold and eloquent in defence of their Master's cause, and that their weapons were felt to be mighty in pulling down the strongholds of sin and Satan. It was only when this divine Comforter accompanied them in all their journeyings, and wherever the apostles preached, opened the hearts of many to listen to the things which were spoken, that multitudes were everywhere converted to the faith, and that the light of truth shone into many an understanding, which had remained dark even under our Saviour's personal ministry, for the Spirit was not then given, because the Son of Man was not then glorified. It was only when the Comforter descended, that the plant, to use a Scripture figure, which the Lord's right hand planted in Judea, sprung up to a glorious maturity, and became a great tree of universal renown, having its leaves for the healing of the nations, and shaking abroad its prosperous fruit, like the cedars on the top of Lebanon. In plain language, then it was that these twelve apostles overcame every opposition, and everywhere dispelled the darkness of idolatry, by spreading the healthful influence of Christian truth, making many commit to the flames the false gods they had worshipped, the books which they had admired: their line went through all the earth, their words to the end of the world, "so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."

But the apostles were not always to exist, though the stream of time was to run on, and generations of men, one after another, were to rise up in ignorance of these great truths of Christianity. Death was gradually to snatch them all away; and, therefore, we must conceive of our Lord, as in these words addressing those who, after the apostles, were to rise up in his name, as the instructors of their brethren. Christ had provided that there should be pastors and teachers in the church till the end of time. It would, indeed, have been fearful, if truths so precious, and in which all men were ever to be so deeply interested, should ever have been concealed. And, therefore, the apostles committed them to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also; and thus it has continued, down to this hour—thus it will continue, till time is no more.

This admonition, therefore, is also addressed to every minister of the Gospel, and is to this effect:—that he shall endeavour, above all things, to promote the knowledge of the truths of Scripture, the salvation of immortal souls; that he shall reckon every man's salvation of infinite importance—rich or poor, learned or unlearned; and that, in season and out of season, he shall struggle to carry multitudes of his brethren to heaven. But it is not the express words of Christ, so much as his intention, that we are bound to consider: and we are anxious to impress upon your minds the truth, as we are not addressing at present ministers so much as private Christians, that the ministers of the Gospel were only designed to be leaders of the people, in this great endeavour to spread abroad amongst mankind the knowledge and the influence of Christian truth; and that you all are bound in your several situations to suppress ungodliness, and to endeavour to bring sinners to God. During the days of his flesh, our Saviour said to one, who was certainly not an apostle—"Go home, and tell thy friends what great things the Lord hath done for thee." "And," saith the Apostle James, "brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." We ask you not to preach in public the Gospel, but friends may stir up each other, parents may influence their children, and the whole world is made up of families; and, surely, when the politician

is so zealous, travelling from city to city, that he may spread abroad his favourite theories—when the emissaries of Satan are in every city, in every street, in almost every house, spreading wickedness, and every evil in its train, amongst our thoughtless population—it is not too much to expect, that those who seat themselves at a communion-table should do something to promote the glory of that Saviour, of whom they call themselves the disciples. In the whole course of your lives, what have you done to promote this great object? The Scriptures declare, that every Christian should be a fellow-worker together with God; and instead, therefore, of suffering your Christianity to evaporate in empty wishes, and still emptier forms, you should come boldly forth—make it evident to the world that you are in earnest—that you wish to banish sin from the earth, and secure the salvation of multitudes of your brethren.

Such truths as these are seldom recognised; and it is awful to behold in this the flagrant inconsistency of Christian men, who seem to dream that the whole zeal of the Christian church ought to be bound up in the ministers of religion, and exhibited by them alone. Surely, if a man is a Christian at all, he believes that those only who are renewed by the power of the Gospel in the Spirit of their minds shall be saved hereafter—that all ungodly sinners must perish and that for ever. Thousands of such are seen every day around us; and Christians know that they have the means of their safety within their reach—that time is flying swiftly away, and yet they will not put forth their hands to help. Nay, when others obey the Almighty's plain commandment, we may often find these baptized Christians looking on with cold indifference, perhaps misrepresenting their motives, and endeavouring to ridicule their efforts. Oh, my friends! there is a fearful day of reckoning approaching, when God will separate for ever his servants from those who served him not; and then it will appear, in the gaze of an intelligent universe, that these men, in the midst of all their professions, were only whited sepulchres, with a name to live, whilst they were dead. "Curse ye Mevros," said the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

It is awful to think of the unnumbered multitudes on the surface of the earth, who know not the Gospel of the Son of God. But it is more awful still to see around ourselves—in our very streets—our own brethren going on in thoughtless iniquity. Many thousands in the streets and lanes of this city never enter the house of God at all—are open heathens in this noonday of Christianity. Many thousands more have a name to live, whilst they are evidently dead. We maintain, that no man can be a Christian at all, who feels no interest in this great and growing evil—who never makes one effort to bring the one class within the sound of the Gospel, or to stir up the other to a sense of their fearful hypocrisy and danger. Let his pretensions be never so great—let him go the heartless rounds of Christian duty never so accurately—this is the grand touchstone of his sincerity; without it, he is but as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal—a mere player on the stage of time—deceiving himself and his brethren, though Christ he cannot deceive; and it is dreadful to think of the time when he must be stript of his disguise, and receive his fearful punishment in the presence of a surrounding awe-struck universe. “Bind ye the unprofitable servant, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The same object which Christ endeavoured to accomplish, viz., the salvation of human beings, from perdition, should be aimed at by every minister—by every member of the Christian church. To bring it about, all their united influence should be employed—no cost, no efforts, should be spared. And, at such a time as this especially, when infidelity is so bold, and men seem almost to have forgotten that there is a God who judgeth in the earth—when men’s eyes are turned away from the things which belong to their eternal peace—and the voice of Christianity is well nigh drowned amidst the great clamour which has arisen in the land—when the very ministers of religion are seen deserting their altars, not that they may preach the Gospel more effectually to their thoughtless brethren, but that they may eagerly join in the fray—whilst, meantime, ignorance and open profligacy are prevailing rapidly at our very doors—and distress in a thousand forms is bearing down our wretched population—and pestilence is stalking in the midst of us—and death is carrying away

its thousands to the judgment-seat of God—we say, it is surely at such a time as this, that it especially becomes Christians to shake off their lethargy, and to rally round the standard of truth and holiness. It is when the armies of the enemy multiply and are bold, not merely that the chief captains and leaders should be active and intrepid, but that every individual Christian should do what in him lies to add multitudes to the ranks of the armies of the living God, all gathering together, as with one soul, to the contest, and fixing their eyes steadfastly on that glorious leader, who invisibly leads them on to war. Surely, if all the Christians who exist upon the earth, few and despised though they may seem, would only make our text their watchword, and unite in one determined effort to convert human beings, remembering that the Spirit of God is still as present and as omnipotent as of old, the dark ranks of Satan would fall back dismayed, and the powers of hell would be shaken in all their strongholds. If multitudes heard and obeyed the Gospel, iniquity, as ashamed, would stop its mouth, and all would do homage to Him who is Prince of all the kings of the earth. Then, and not till then, in spite of all the dreams of foolish and impious men, might we hope to see the day arrive, when this earth shall cast off the curse under which it has groaned so long, and when we shall hear no more of the mustering of armies, the hurry and the mad onset of infuriated men, the garments rolled in blood, the fearful death struggle, and the breathless expectation of outlooking nations; for men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks—they shall hang the trumpet in the hall, and study war no more. They shall be led out with joy and peace—the mountains and the hills shall break forth before them into singing—all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn, the emblem of strife, shall come up the fir tree—instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree—unto the Lord it shall be for a name and an everlasting sign, which shall not be cut off.

And there are more glorious inducements than these. Do you desire to wear hereafter the crown of glory? the palm of victory? to enjoy the companionship of angels and glorified saints? Promote with all your might the enterprise of Christ. Swear at this altar, before you depart from this house of prayer, that you will be good

soldiers of Him who sitteth at the right hand of God, labouring to strengthen the hands of the ministers of truth, and to bring many souls to heaven. Time hastens to a close. Eternity opens—the end of all things is at hand—the Judge standeth before the door.

Be up and doing, whilst it is day—the night cometh, in which no man can work. And who can tell what joy unspeakable shall be the result of your saving many souls from death, and presenting them all a shining throng before the throne of God—

to swell the ranks of the Redeemed—to swell the glorious anthem of eternity? “They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars, for ever and ever.” —“Well done, thou good and faithful servant! thou hast been faithful over a few things: I will make thee ruler over many things: enter ye into the joy of your Lord.” May God impress these truths upon your minds, and teach you to act under their influence, and to his name in Christ be the praise. Amen.

THE DUTY AND THE REWARD OF CHRISTIAN FIDELITY;

FAREWELL SERMON PREACHED IN THE TRON CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY, 18th NOVEMBER, 1833,

By the Rev. DANIEL DEWAR, D.D.,

Principal of Marischall College, Aberdeen.

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—REV. II. 9.

THE Christian life is represented as pleasantness and peace, productive of present enjoyment, and leading to future and eternal blessedness. In every condition of life, the pious Christian has consolations and sources of happiness which the world knows not of, and of which it cannot deprive him; and in the depths of affliction, he has the cheering hope of a glorious immortality. Yet ought it not to be forgotten, that the Scripture exhibits the Christian to our view, as a soldier engaged in an arduous conflict, which needs steady perseverance, and which requires all the excitements to courage and fidelity which the Gospel supplies. He is constantly beset with enemies, numerous and powerful, who know how to employ the seductive temptations of the world, either to entice into a deviation from the path of duty, or to discourage and depress the mind in the discharge of it. It is necessary, therefore, that he put on the whole armour of God, and be encouraged to prosecute the warfare by that mighty leader, who himself was made perfect through suffering, and who promises to bestow on all his faithful followers a crown of life. In the text, we have a command, “Be thou faithful unto death,”—and a promise, “and I will give thee a crown of life.” In the first place, we shall consider the command, “Be thou faithful unto death.” Christian fidelity, in the full and comprehensive acceptation of that term, includes all Christian excellence, as it not only adorns, but sustains and perfects the character. It relates to the testimony God has given us—to the care which claims our obedience—to the talents intrusted to our charge, and to the duties that in consequence devolve upon us—to the courage that the Christian character requires; and in regard to its continuance, it extendeth unto death.

In the first place, Christian faithfulness relates to the testimony God has given in his word. Christian fidelity demands that we regard as an invaluable privilege—that we retain unmixt with error, as it comes from God, the same in all ages and in every country—the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. Other knowledge may be useful, but this is the direct communication from God, acquainting us with his rich compassion towards us, in not sparing his own Son, and, with the grace and condescension of Him who has assumed human nature, voluntarily made himself a sacrifice for sin, that he might restore us to the moral dignity and real blessedness of the life and immortality which the Gospel has brought to light. This system of revealed truth we are to make the subject of habitual study, and the source of our chief consolation—it is to be the director of our conduct through life, a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path, till we have finished our course. We are to labour to have a full and comprehensive understanding of the whole counsel of God, of all the truths of the glorious Gospel, in their just proportion and proper connexion, that we may readily discern the errors that are opposed to them, and be capable of marking them with our disapprobation. Above all, we are to guard against holding the doctrines of the Gospel in unrighteousness, in unrenewed and un-sanctified hearts, or in converting them to themes of mere speculative controversy, productive only of angry dispositions and unprofitable lives. Fidelity to the truth of God requires that we make an open, though an humble, confession of it. To this, its intrinsic excellence, its vital importance, its admirable adaptation to all the wants and miseries of men, entitle it; and its author disclaims as his disciples, those who refuse this confession

In regard to his word, or to himself. "Whoever," says he, "will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me; whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." To this public avowal of the truth, a duty which the people of God discharge in their successive generations, the world is indebted for the preservation and light of the Gospel; and solemn and impressive is the obligation which devolves upon us personally, to convey, by our open and constant acknowledgment of adherence, this precious blessing in all heavenly lustre to the ages to come. However retired our situation, or however circumscribed the sphere of our influence, we are bound to pronounce, by our profession and conduct, that we are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, convinced that it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, that we count all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus, and are willing to suffer deprivation of all things that we may win Christ. In the performance of this duty, our Lord requires that all his disciples should be faithful unto death.

In the second place Christian fidelity relates to the claims of the Saviour to our obedience. His benignity and excellence render him worthy of the love and homage of all created beings; but he has won to himself a title to the gratitude and obedience of mankind, by assuming the character of Redeemer—by suffering as their surety—and offering himself a sacrifice to God in their behalf. He claims, on those grounds, a cordial reception, a willing homage, and practical obedience from every human being. From this obligation to one to whom the Gospel is addressed can possibly be exempted; for if any one love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he is deserving of being accursed. His disciples, who profess to have received him, are bound to persevere in the fidelity of their obedience to him—they are to revere all his sayings, to imitate his spirit, to imitate his example. They are to be faithful to him as their great High Priest, by making the atonement of his cross the ground of their confidence, to the utter renunciation of every other ground of hope, and by looking to him, as ever reconciling us unto God, without imputing to us our trespasses. They are to honour him as a priest and a king, to whom they owe the homage of their hearts, to whose authority in every case they are submissively to bow; and by the constraining influence of love to him, they are to observe all his commands, and to live, not to themselves, but to him who died for them, and rose again. It is by a patient continuance in well-doing, by a firm adherence to Christ through evil as well as through good report, that they prove themselves the willing subjects of their exalted Lord. Our obedience to him must be at once perpetual and universal, extending to all the duties he has enjoined, and continuing amid all the trials and temptations of our earthly

pilgrimage. When the enemy would persuade us to turn away from him—when temptation would lure us from the Captain of our salvation—when the indolence and remissness to spiritual exercises, natural to man, would often be a hinderance to our fidelity—let us hear his animating voice, saying, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

In the third place, we are to be faithful in the exercise, and in the improvement, of the talents entrusted to our charge. All our powers and opportunities of promoting our own personal holiness, and the good, spiritual and temporal, of mankind, are represented in Scripture as talents committed to our care by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is hereafter to require an account from all his servants of their stewardship. The talents are, of course, various; but the gracious reward is to be proportioned, not to their number or extent, but according to the principle by which we are influenced in their use, and our diligence in their cultivation. Unto one he gave five, unto another two, unto another one; to every man, according to his several abilities. The opportunities afforded us of reading and of hearing the word of God, of observing the ordinances of religion, of becoming wise unto salvation, are privileges of a high order, conferred upon us by the distinguished goodness of God, and for the right improvement of which we are all deeply and personally responsible. To all of us some talent is committed by which we may promote the good of others, and extend the kingdom and glory of our Lord. To some are entrusted external possessions, by the wise and benevolent use of which they are a blessing to their neighbourhood, and instrumental to the cause of God. Others are distinguished by rich mental endowments, to which, by persevering study, they are making continual accessions, and by which, by humbly consecrating them to the service of the cross, they may be eminently conducive to the advancement of the divine glory. Or are you in possession of influence and authority, arising from the weight of your character in public estimation, or from the official situation you hold in society? Let these be diligently employed in discountenancing sin and error, in spreading truth and righteousness, in encouraging the peaceful and industrious, in maintaining and extending the blessings of pure and undefiled religion. To parents are given the means and opportunities of extensive usefulness. Are those of you who sustain this relation bringing up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, endeavouring to impress their hearts with a sense of his loveliness and glory, and to entice them to make choice of him as their Redeemer and to be willing to consecrate themselves to his service? Even those who move in a humbler sphere have talents committed to their charge; and do such of you embrace every opportunity of doing good to others, by diffusing the blessings of the Gospel around you, and recommending that divine Saviour in whom you have found peace

and safety? Is this love of Christ of such constraining influence, that it teaches you this entire consecration of yourselves to him? Then, whatever your situation, and whatever your talents, be they two, ten, or one, you have the approval of your divine Master: be not, therefore, weary in well-doing; be diligent and persevering in your obedience, encouraged, amid all your difficulties and trials, by the assurance that your labours shall not be in vain in the Lord. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises."

In the fourth place, we are to be faithful in exercising the courage which the Christian warfare requires. It is in this acceptance of the expression, that fidelity is enjoined by the words of the text. The allusion is to military life, and to the obedience due from a soldier to his general, leader, and commander—he must never, through treachery or cowardice, desert the banner he has sworn to defend, nor refuse to follow the order of his general. In like manner, the members of the church at Smyrna, in common with all Christians, have enlisted under the banners of the cross—professed obedience to the King of Zion—and are under obligation to persevering fortitude and fidelity in his service. They are in the midst of tribulation, and are exposed, for Christ's sake, to poverty and persecution; but are encouraged to hold on the way, in the full confidence of being more than conquerors, through him that loved them. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne. It is in this language that our Lord addresses all his professed disciples. Ye are now in the scene of action, exposed, it may be, to hardships, trials, and suffering; engaged in an arduous contest with sin, Satan, and the corruptions of the world; and require all the courage which the hopes of the Gospel inspire, that you fall not into error, and stand fast in the faith. Your great Lord and Leader, while he points out the path to glory, cheers you on to victory by his own example, warns you of dangers and trials, and supplies the patience and fortitude necessary to overcome. But have you not voluntarily enlisted under this banner? Have you not solemnly sworn your engagement to obey whatever and wherever he commands you? He has said that you ought, under his guidance, to bid defiance to his enemies; and that you ought to continue, with undaunted courage, firmly and steadfastly to maintain the conflict, though surrounded by devils and death. This he demands, as the condition of his acknowledging you in that day, "when he will judge the world in righteousness." "Whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory

of his Father, with the holy angels." "Fight then, the good fight of faith." Amid your trials, be encouraged by the promise of your divine leader. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

I remark, in the last place, that Christian fidelity is to be continued unto death. The full period of the service which Christ demands, is to extend from the time that we cordially embrace the Gospel, and enlist under the banners of the cross, to the close of our earthly career. Beyond that, neither knowledge, nor wisdom, nor device, is to be of any avail, in retrieving the interests that have been before neglected. Death is the period of man's probation, and fixes immutably and for ever his condition and his abode. Nothing short of death, however, can ever disqualify us from giving glory to God, or from being useful to men. We may be under bodily weakness, or under the infirmities of old age, but this need not prevent us from showing to all around us the obligations of the Gospel, or its influence in subduing the temper, and in promoting peacefulness, patience, and resignation, and the hope of everlasting glory.

The trials and afflictions we endure, when rightly endured, furnish us with capabilities of usefulness, which we could not otherwise have possessed, enabling us to counsel the inexperienced, to comfort the sorrowful, and to encourage the brethren in the good work of love. Though unvisited, by Divine Providence, for our accustomed vocations here, the obligations to glorify God, by implicit submission to his will and word, remains. Think not, then, that years of laborious exertion in the service of your Redeemer, will warrant you in retiring from the field, and in sinking into indolence. While activity remains, your Lord commands you to use your powers for him, and to do zealously, and with all your might, whatever your hand findeth to do, in advancing his cause. Even when the activity of your powers is gone, through disease or age, you are still to use whatever means or opportunities remain, in the faithful service of your Saviour and your God. You will thus, at the close of life, be able to say, "I am now ready to be offered; I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing."

We now proceed to consider, very shortly, in the 2d place, the promise of gracious reward expressed in the text—"I will give thee a crown of life." As the soldier of ancient times was animated courageously to brave danger and death, by the prospect of obtaining, as an honorary reward for his services, a crown of laurel; so Christ's disciple is here cheered, amid the toils and difficulties of his course, by the promise of a crown of life—a crown of glory, which fadeth not away. He is to be invested with the ensign of royalty—being made a king, as well as a priest, unto God, and

to be put in possession of a kingdom, in which to enjoy supreme and immortal felicity. All the faithful followers of Christ, in the end of time thus honoured, were seen in prophetic vision by the Apostle John—a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, having washed in the blood of the Lamb, stood before the throne, clothed in white robes, and, in token of their triumph, with palms in their hands. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat: for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." How glorious is the prize which the Saviour thus holds out to each of his followers! It is a crown, in comparison of the value and grandeur of which, all the insignia of earthly royalty are worthless as the dust. He knows, from personal experience, the trials and sorrows, the toils and the difficulties, of the service he has assigned to them; for, though the Son of God, yet learned he obedience by the things he suffered; and, having been tried in all things like as we are, he can sympathize in all our distresses, and soothe us when tempted. With what diligence, zeal, and persevering fidelity, did he work the works of him that sent him while it was day; forgetting no duty, discouraged by no difficulties; losing no opportunity, but continually engaged in doing the will of his heavenly Father! It is he who cheers you onward to victory and to glory; it is he who charges you to be faithful unto death, even as he himself was; to imitate him in zeal for the glory of God; in devotedness to his service, in constancy in duty, in diligence and perseverance in all well-doing. And surely your gratitude and affection are sufficient to induce you to consecrate yourselves, and your all, to his praise; you cannot refuse obedience to his command, fidelity to his cause, who has redeemed you to God by his blood. In serving him, you know, from experience, that there is a present, as well as a promised and future reward. He points, to his faithful followers, the way to the crown of life, to strengthen them for the warfare in which they are engaged. He is ever present to counsel, direct, and succour; and, amid depressing difficulties and discouragements, he animates with the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for you; my strength is sufficient for your weakness; bear up a little longer, and all your future toils will for ever cease, and I will give you a crown of life." Have we not all reason for saying, "I will go on in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us." Your divine Lord will give the promised crown of life to the weakest of the followers who is faithful unto death. He who does not break the

bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, will look not to the circumstance of men having worn rich diadems or coronets, nor to the variety and splendour of the gifts with which they are endowed, but to the principle of love itself, and from the regard to his glory by which they were distinguished. To many myriads unknown to fame, whose dearest ties on earth were severed by the hand of violence, and who died faithful to their Redeemer, amid all the reproach men heaped upon them, will he give a crown of glory—a crown of righteousness he will bestow on them. Ought not these considerations to encourage and strengthen those who, though faint, are still pursuing; who, though weakened, disheartened, and almost despairing of obtaining the prize, cannot cease to cling for hope and life to that Saviour whom they love? Consider what you must be to have this glorious reward. You are to receive it if faithful to death; but you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh. The time cannot be far distant. Let your lins, therefore, be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is far spent—the morning of immortality is at hand. During the few fleeting hours that are to intervene before that blessed morning, let us redouble our diligence—let us become still more zealous and watchful, "Always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord."—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Ever keep in view, also, the circumstances in which this crown shall be conferred, and the glory and happiness which its possession secures. It will be worn the moment after the conflict has ceased. It will be given before all the family of God, and where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither any more pain, the former things having passed away. But should we forget, in conclusion, the doom that awaits the unfaithful—a doom, not for the abuse of talents merely, but for their neglect. "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into utter darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." It is not only the loss of a crown of life in the kingdom of glory that is to be suffered, but the endurance of everlasting separation from the presence and favour of God, in those regions where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Let it be the great concern of each of us to escape this fearful award of ungodliness and unbelief. Wherefore, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, that an entrance may be ministered to you abundantly in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And now, as connected with this congregation, in parting with you, I have scarcely any thing to say of myself. I feel deeply my

responsibility to God for the stewardship with which, during thirteen years, he has intrusted me. If I have been enabled, in any measure, to discharge it aright, I give to God all the praise. I have the less regret at resigning the charge, that I have good grounds for the hope, that an able and effectual minister of the Gospel will be appointed to succeed me. The Magistrates of Glasgow have been honourably distinguished by their disinterested conduct in the discharge of their very responsible duties, as patrons of churches in this city; and we are assured, that the gentlemen now in office are not less disposed than their predecessors to fulfil the trust reposed in them in a way most beneficial to this Christian community. May the Lord direct them to choose, for this congregation, a minister who will be able, faithfully, to preach the Gospel, and to stand courageously in its defence. Be firm, my friends, in your adherence to the Church of Scotland, of which you are members. When

her enemies are combined against her, it is surely the duty of her friends to be united, and active, and faithful in her support. "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 unto your souls." Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Peace be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces. Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let us pray that mercy and peace be multiplied to all the children of God. Be diligent in observing all the means of grace. Be often supplicating at the throne of grace. Read the Scriptures with lively faith in all their authority, and with love to Him whose words they are. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Improve aright its hallowed hours. Never forsake the sanctuary of God's house. Build yourselves up in the most holy faith. My believing friends, let me add, in conclusion, Pray for us. Now, I commend you to God, and the God of love and peace be with you. Amen.

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SATURDAY, 8TH DECEMBER, 1832.

No. 37.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN HUNTER, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM SMART, Paisley.

Price 2d.

**ON THE DANGERS TO WHICH THE YOUNG ARE EXPOSED FROM
THE ENTICEMENTS OF SINNERS;**

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY,
25TH NOVEMBER, 1832, IN BEHALF OF THE EDINBURGH YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY,

By the Rev. JOHN HUNTER,

One of the Ministers of the Tron Church Edinburgh.

My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."—PROV. i. 10.

YOUTH is the most interesting and important period of our moral probation for eternity. In it the young begin to be freed from that parental authority and discipline, which restrain them from the practice of vice, and give a general tone to their sentiments and conduct, in which their own inclinations and choice have but little share. They are then called, in some measure, to think, to judge, and to act, for themselves. They enter on the wide theatre of the world, unaided by that superintending care and ardent love, which had hitherto guided them in every time of perplexity and doubt, and guarded them from every danger to which their virtue was exposed. Now, the principles which had been early instilled into their minds, are to be brought to the test of trial. They have arduous and difficult duties to perform—they have powerful and seductive temptations to resist; and on the course of action they pursue at this critical period, their future character and destiny may, in a great measure, depend. I readily admit, that even the most profligate youth may hereafter be awakened, by the sovereign power of divine grace, and introduced, by penitence and faith, into the family of God; yet still, it cannot be denied that early conversion is the best, perhaps the only security, for a holy life, a happy death, and a blessed immortality. In the morning of our days, vice has not yet made its deepest inroads upon our intellectual and moral constitutions; the enmity of the human mind towards its Creator, has not assumed its most malignant form;

the natural propensities, our strong and violent passions, may be more completely regulated or controlled, and the linements of a new and divine nature more easily impressed on the understanding and the heart. Influenced by such sentiments and feelings, will the good man raise the eye of faith and of holy desire, to that Divine Being, who alone can preserve his beloved children from falling, and with all the warmth of parental tenderness, labour, ere they quit that endeared abode where they have already experienced a Father's care and a mother's love, to impress upon them lessons of wisdom and piety, and to prepare them for entering, with respectability and usefulness, on the busy scenes of active life. This appears to have been the chief end for which the book of Proverbs was designed by its royal author; and no portion of sacred Scripture seems better adapted for affording instruction, and communicating salutary reproof and warning to the young. It exhibits an accurate acquaintance with the various windings of the human heart, and with those mazes of error, which, in early life warp the understanding, corrupt the principles, and debase the conduct. Often have these Proverbs been employed by parents, for fixing salutary and important lessons on the minds of their offspring; and no advice which this book contains, can be of higher importance than that which I have selected as the subject of our present meditation. Let me then, my young friends, solicit your serious attention, while, with all the affection of a

father, and of a friend, I remind you of some of those arts by which sinners will entice you from the paths of duty to violate the sacred laws of your God.

In the first place, you may be exposed to the baneful influence of bad example, to the force of ridicule, and to the power of persuasion. Even in the bosom of the most pious family, the young cannot remain entirely ignorant of evil. They perceive the germs of it in their own hearts; they behold the exhibition of it even in the comparatively virtuous circle in which they move; they are taught it in the invaluable records of divine truth, and read it in every page of secular history, and in the daily occurrences of human life. But while, even at this early period, they have tasted of a portion of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of evil, yet still its poisonous influence is, in a great measure, counterbalanced by the affectionate counsels, the salutary warnings, and the good example of the parents and the friends who are dear to their hearts. Seldom, however, are they permitted long to remain in these tabernacles of the righteous; for they have their chief associates among the dissolute of the earth, whose society they will, in all likelihood, relish. It may be, that the providence of God is now casting their lot in very different scenes. They are called, perhaps, to live under the same roof with young persons of the same age, and engaged in the same pursuits with themselves, who are entire strangers to every act of sacred duty—who hardly ever peruse the volume of inspiration—who speak of the most sacred subjects with the most unbecoming levity—who dare to profane the blessed name of Jehovah, or to utter oaths of imprecation against their fellow-creatures—who habitually violate the duties of the sabbath, and are frequently debased by injustice or falsehood, or by habits of intoxication or impurity. Even where the principles of the divine life have not been implanted in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, but where an individual has enjoyed the advantage of a religious education, it is impossible to be brought into immediate contact with dissipation and profligacy, without deep emotions of repentance and horror. The youthful mind feels that they are opposite to reason and divine revelation; it contrasts them with the cheerful piety which prevailed in

the paternal home, and it firmly resolves to act a wiser and a better part. Soon, however, the young are taught by dire experience, that "evil communications corrupt good manners." They do indeed clearly perceive the distinction between right and wrong—between sin and holiness, but they no longer feel that horror and disgust which open and unblushing wickedness, and even irreligious and impure conversation, once so powerfully excited in their minds. They have not, indeed, learned to imitate the conduct of the ungodly, to stand in the way of sinners, and sit in "the seat of the scornful;" but their reverence for all that is holy, and their admiration of all that is good, have been greatly weakened, and piety, appears rather as one of the adjuncts of a virtuous character, than as the only source whence all pure and genuine morality must proceed; and now it is that their companions begin to deride their strict adherence to the external ordinances of religion, to laugh at what they are pleased to call their sanctimonious demeanour, and to represent them as fanatics, enthusiasts, or hypocrites. If these arts are unavailing, they next have recourse to the winning influence of kindness—they profess that it will afford them satisfaction, if for once they will taste of the same forbidden pleasures of which they have partaken, and their compliance they represent as a test of their friendship and affection. As these arts succeed, they ply them with new arguments and entreaties; and, looking with mildest aspect, and going about them with all the eloquence they can command, they rest not satisfied till they have lured them to the performance of some act which they feel to be in direct opposition to the voice of conscience and the law of God.

In the young mind, the principle of curiosity is generally strong and powerful. It longs to become acquainted with new objects, and to enter into new scenes; it is apt to be too confident of its strength, and fearless of danger; it has not been taught to shun the beginnings of evil, and to keep that strict guard on itself which is the surest protection of virtue. How often do we behold the young looking, without apparent displeasure and awakening fear, at those whom they secretly despise, and sacrificing, at the shrine of the world's love, principles and habits associated with every godly affection and holy feeling, and

which they know to be connected with their present usefulness and their everlasting happiness. It may be, my young friends, that some of you are at this moment exposed to the temptation I have described, and on the verge of that dangerous precipice which is ready to engulf you in all the perdition of guilt and misery. Stand, I entreat you, ere it be too late. I call not on you to abandon the world and renounce its society. No. The wheat and the tares must grow together till the harvest; and the righteous and the wicked must mingle together in the same transactions of business, and may even be associated in the same domestic circle. But shut not your eyes to the magnitude of the danger to which you are exposed; say not with Hazeel, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" Remember that there is within you an evil heart of unbelief, that is ever ready to depart from the living God. Be not hurried into the commission of sin from that inconsideration which refuses to enquire into the path of duty, and which marks not the consequences of actions. Think it not to be a commendable quality, or a sign of an amiable temper, that we cannot refuse any request, while we know it to be injurious to ourselves, or subversive of the best interests of Him who made us. Oh! shrink not from your duty in consequence of the contempt of fools. Remember that God is not ignorant of the recesses of the heart, that he is acquainted with every word of the lips, and that the most secret actions of your life are recorded in the book of his remembrance. Bringing the principles, the precepts, the encouragements of Christianity to bear on the common duties of life, carry them with you into the avocations of business, and into the society of the giddy or the gay—carefully scrutinize the operations of your own minds—strip off the disguises by which self-partiality conceals them from your view, or changes their real character—set a watch on the door of your lips—shut the beginnings of evil—let the perfect character of the Saviour be continually present to your thoughts, and his life continually present to your souls—learn to distrust yourselves, and to live in the faith of Christ—let your souls ascend to God in fervent prayer in the enlightening, sanctifying, and strengthening influence of his Holy Spirit, and never, oh! never, forget

the solemn words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."

A second temptation by which sinners endeavour to entice the young and inconsiderate into the path of vice, is by setting before them splendid and seductive representations of the riches and enjoyment with which it is accompanied. The young are now entering on the serious duties of human life. Reason teaches them that they are bound to cultivate their talents, and apply both the powers of their body and the faculties of their mind to such subjects as may enable them to pursue and secure for themselves the means of subsistence, and to obtain situations of respectability and usefulness. Revelation confirms this in the strongest and most explicit terms, and often have they been reminded by parents whom they love, that "The hand of the diligent maketh rich," but that sloth bringeth to want. It is, however, no easy task to combine activity in business with fervour of spirit in serving the Lord; and multitudes, having heard the word, receive it with joy, whose religious convictions and impressions are afterwards completely destroyed by the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches. They who, having embarked in life, bring themselves, by the influence of conversation and example, to consider affluence as the highest created good, delight to think of opulence, honour, and distinction, and of adding house to house, and field to field. They anticipate the period when they shall be placed in a very different sphere from that in which they are now called to move, when they shall exercise authority, possess fame, and be permitted to enjoy the various gratifications which wealth and luxury afford; and it may be that they indulge even the thought that they will then be able to requite the obligations of worthy parents and friends—to supply the wants of the poor and the afflicted—and to promote the interests of knowledge, religion, and virtue. Indulging in these fancied dreams of worldly greatness, while they labour with unwearied industry for that meat which perisheth, they quickly become forgetful of that meat which endureth to everlasting life. Like

the thoughtless beings with whom they now associate, their first and last thoughts are directed to the world; and they sacrifice duty to interest, imbibe principles opposed to the purity and spotless simplicity of the christian faith, and adopt maxims which they once abhorred. They now become careless about overreaching their neighbours, or indulging in petty fraud—they flatter the great and the powerful—they scruple not to utter falsehood for selfish ends—they cannot afford time for self-examination, secret prayer, or reading of the Scriptures—and not unfrequently a large portion of the Sabbath is devoted to the summing up of accounts, concluding bargains, and preparing for the transactions of the ensuing week. The love of money is the root of all evil, which some have coveted after they have embraced the faith, and thus pierced themselves through with many swords. It was this that induced Judas Iscariot to betray our blessed Lord; and it is this which has often led to treachery, cruelty, robbery, murder, and almost every crime that has stained the annals of our guilty race. Beware, then, lest Mammon become the god you serve. Remember that, while thus the principles are corrupted, the feelings debased, and the conduct vitiated, all the schemes you have formed may be also completely disappointed, and that you may be taught by your own experience that "riches make themselves wings, and fly away, as an eagle towards heaven." The happiness of beings does not consist in the abundance of what they have, but in contentment, which is itself a feast. Can all the power of Alexander, can all the wealth of Croesus, appease the wrath of God—mollify the stings of a guilty conscience—assuage the agonies of disease—give health or strength to a debilitated frame—save from the darts of the king of terrors, or deliver from the miseries of hell fire? No. You know, and will readily acknowledge, that it cannot. Oh! then, be not led away by these wicked adversaries, who care neither for your souls nor for their own, and who have never yet learned the force of that solemn interrogatory—"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

But I have also said, that the love of pleasure, as well as riches, has ever

proved one of the most successful means of enticing young men into the path of vice. There are multitudes of young men that care not for riches, and have not the slightest desire to mount the ladder of ambition, but pleasure is the enchanting sorceress whose powerful spell they are unable to resist. Many are her worshippers, whom she wiles in the most attractive forms. I readily admit, that our religion is not the enemy of innocent pleasure, and is the friend of cheerfulness; it expects not from the young the gravity of age, but that sobriety of mind, and that chastened joy, which become a rational and accountable being. There are, however, many fascinating amusements common in the world which are destructive of the love of God in the soul of man—utterly inconsistent with that reverence for the Deity, that awe of his name, that veneration of his Word, that purity of heart, that correct and exemplary deportment, without which Christianity is a form without substance, a shadow without a reality, a name to which no character or being is annexed. There are other pleasures less criminal in their own nature, but attended with injurious effects to our spiritual and eternal interests, which lead the mind from the pure fountain of excellence; encroach upon those hours which ought ever to be sacred to retirement and devotion; give a distaste for the private pleasures of domestic life, and are attended with the pomp and the glory which are too apt to engender those habits of lightness and frivolity of mind which unfit for the discharge of this life, while they prevent or retard our preparation for a better, and, it may be, become, stepping-stones to the gratification of those fleshly lusts which war against the spirit, and end in the utter ruin of both soul and body. Let me, then, adopt the words of Solomon—"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." All the beauties of nature, my young friends, are unveiled before you; there is no branch of science from which your religion excludes you; you may innocently and usefully cultivate the various arts of civilized life—you may peruse the page of history—you may engage in those exercises that give vigour to your bodies, and elasticity to your minds—you may enjoy all the charms of social intercourse when guided by holy and virtuous principles

—and you may cherish all the sensibilities of your nature, and taste, in rich abundance, the refined luxury of doing good. And are not these enjoyments of a far preferable kind to those to which sinners entice you? The former are the handmaids of religion, the latter the enemies of genuine godliness; the one calculated to lead your thoughts to the Author of nature, the Giver of all good, the other to estrange you from him, and sink you lower and lower in the scale of intellectual existence. Avoid, then, the wicked, and their ways, resist their delusive arts. “O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.”

A third method by which sinners entice the young to the commission of vice, is by concealing its native deformity, and sedulously endeavouring to diminish their impressions of the danger with which it is attended. “Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.” Now this is the very course by which the wicked at first delude themselves, and then deceive others. Earnestness about the salvation of their souls, they represent as the wild ravings of enthusiasm; pride, in their vocabulary, is considered honourable, and humility a mark of weakness or ignorance; intemperance receives the mild epithet of conviviality, and seriousness is considered inconsistent with that vivacity of spirit which ought ever to pertain to youth; revenge is termed a proper regard to one’s character and reputation, while meekness and patience, and forgiveness of injuries, expose the individuals who exhibit them to all the artillery of ridicule, or to all the contempt with which a coward is uniformly viewed. Bring these maxims to the test of reason and Scripture, and you will at once perceive that they are founded in error, and are incapable of rational defence. Nay, I strongly suspect, that at the very time you are reckoning upon them, you are aware that they will not bear to be scrutinized, and that the morality which opinion has sanctioned must appear to have no foundation in truth, and be utterly subversive of improvement and happiness of mind.

But then, it may be, that your irreligious companions allege, that God himself has implanted certain appetites in our nature, and that surely it is not contrary

to his will, that we should follow their dictates. Observe, my young friends, that every one of these appetites and passions are in themselves innocent, useful, and even indispensably necessary to our usefulness in this world, and that it is their perversion only that is criminal—and this will of Deity is clearly understood from the light of nature, for we uniformly perceive their moderate indulgence attended with pleasure, and their inordinate indulgence with pain and remorse. Hunger and thirst prompt us to seek that food or those viands which are necessary for the prolongation of life, and the goodness of the Creator is manifested in satisfying these instinctive cravings; but gluttony and intemperance weaken and enervate the frame, and produce incapacity for thought and business, and mental imbecility or temporary insanity. Habits of business produce gain, but then the immoderate desire of gain inspires the mind with corroding cares, anxious fears, and that continual anxiety and dread which poison the cup of human bliss, and often render life insupportable. The desire of ease and pleasure was implanted within us to recruit our spirits, and invigorate our frames, when exhausted by the duties of life; and the many sources of happiness with which the bountiful Author of our being has so liberally gifted us, afford proof of his constant care and love. But pleasure is not to be our business but our recreation; for no sooner do we devote our time and attention to it, than it ceases to afford gratification, and is uniformly attended with satiety and disgust. Any of you may extend these observations for yourselves; and apply them to the various instinctive propensities God has given us, and you will see that all is good that comes from the great Architect of the Universe, and that it is human corruption alone, that renders our intellectual, our moral powers, instruments of guilt or misery. Then you may be told by some, that our nature is so weak or infirm, that it is utterly impossible to resist the influence of temptation, or to counteract its powerful tendency to evil. But let me ask you, would you consider this a sufficient excuse for exempting an individual from the punishments which have always been affixed to the commission of an offence? If, indeed, it was proved that he was under mental derangement, or acted under the impulse of force, he would at once be declared free from moral guilt;

and the infliction of punishment upon him would be deemed utterly unjustifiable; but the case is widely opposite, if it be found that his intellect was perfectly sound, and that the deed was voluntary. It is no apology for his crime, that he was impelled by what he called a strong and irresistible propensity to do what he did. No! the evil inclination itself, would be deemed the very essence of his crime. Now, apply this to the relation in which we stand towards God. We cannot deny that we possess powers of body and of mind, admirably adapted for the duties our Maker has called us to perform. We are, it is true, naturally inclined to do what is wrong, but every man, when he does what is wrong, is aware that he ought to have refrained from doing it. It is a perversion of the will that prompts him to evil, and this renders him guilty in the sight of that Being who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men. But still farther to render unbelieving man utterly inexcusable, and to afford every assistance to all who desire to obey the law of God, the Almighty has promised the influence of the Holy Spirit to work in them both to will and to do of his own good pleasure, to restrain and eradicate the vicious propensities from their nature, and transform them into the glorious image of Him in whom perfection dwells.

But there is yet one other argument by which sinners entice the young and the inconsiderate, to act unworthy of their rational and immortal nature. They tell them, that God is a Being of boundless mercy, that thousands and tens of thousands of his creatures are still more guilty than themselves, and that it is impossible to suppose he will doom the helpless worms, whom his own hands have formed, to all the misery of everlasting punishment. God indeed is merciful, and it is because his compassions fail not, that you are still in the land of the living and the place of hope. But remember, oh! remember, I entreat you, that God is also just and holy, and will not allow sin to go unpunished. The attribute of infinity belongs to his justice and his holiness, as well as to his goodness and mercy. Would you be persuaded of this, behold the scenes of nature—there you see much to please the senses, to captivate the imagination, and inspire the heart with delight. The

awful attributes of Divinity are also fearfully manifested in the rolling thunder, which fills every mind with awe; in the whirlwind and the storm, which scatter desolation all around; and in the mighty earthquake, which in a moment destroys the most magnificent city, and plunge the inhabitants into an unseen, but eternal world. Consult, again, the dictates of conscience, and it will tell of the purity of him who formed it, and whose vicegerent it is in the human breast, and in the agony of present remorse it will point to the still more exquisite misery of the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched. Read the page of history. It contains a striking record of the judgments of the Most High, and there you may perceive, in characters the most deep and indelible, that while righteousness exalteth a nation sin is the reproach, and will ultimately prove the ruin, of any people. Raise your eyes to Calvary, and there you will view, in the cross of Jesus, the most awful exhibition that was ever manifested to an intelligent creation, that Jehovah is a sin-avenging God, and that even while he is willing to pardon the penitent sinner, he will not allow guilt to escape unpunished. Yes, my young friends, the dying agonies of the Son of the Highest, attest this truth in a manner that may well cause the heavens to be astonished, the earth to wonder, and every human being to tremble, before the throne of the mighty Sovereign of the universe. And even in the book of God, and upon every page of it, you meet with the solemn declaration, that the ungodly shall not elude the judgment of their Creator, but that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all they who forget God. O then, my young friends, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Flee, then, without delay, to the Saviour, whose sacrifice can wash away all the stains of your past guilt, whose righteousness is your only covering when you stand in the presence of him who inhabiteth eternity, and whose Spirit must create you again to good works, ere you can be permitted to enter the gates of the New Jerusalem, and to participate in the exalted enjoyment of its blessed inhabitants. Amen.

THE DUTY OF FOLLOWING PEACE WITH ALL MEN;

A SERMON PREACHED AT GREENOCK, IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, BLACKHALL STREET, IN REFERENCE TO CERTAIN CONTENTIONS WHICH PREVAILED IN THAT CONGREGATION,

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"Follow peace with all men."—HEB. xii. 14.

ALL the doctrines of the Gospel are doctrines according to godliness. A doctrine which does not lead men to God cannot come from God. If, therefore, any man professing to believe the Gospel lives an unholy life, that man has not believed unto salvation. The faith which does not purify the heart is not the faith of God's elect. We accordingly find, that all the inspired writers are careful to exhibit the practical character of the doctrines which they teach. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. ii. 11—14. And we find also, that all those who have believed through grace are careful to maintain good works. Upon their works, as a ground of acceptance with God, they place no confidence; but upon good works, as evidences of acceptance with God, they place the highest value. "As he who has called them is holy, so they are holy in all manner of conversation." In the passage before us, a peaceable disposition and a holy life are inculcated by the highest authority, and are represented as essential branches of the Christian character. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Before proceeding to the illustration of the text, I would remark generally, that peace with God, through the faith of the Gospel, is essential to the production of that peaceable disposition which the text recommends. It is said of men in a natural state, that they are hateful, and hate one another, and that the dark places

of the earth are the habitations of cruelty. Much, indeed, has been written respecting the peaceable dispositions of nations not favoured with the Gospel; but it is sufficient at present to remark, that what has been said of the peaceable dispositions of heathen nations, are either wilful misstatements, or malignant misrepresentations. Those who are not at peace with God cannot long be at peace with one another. The reign of the Gospel must be universal before the reign of peace can be universal; and as men are naturally enemies to one another, they are also naturally enemies to God. The carnal mind is enmity against God; but Jesus Christ came to make peace between God and man by the blood of the cross. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, all who are at peace with God, are under peculiar and strong obligations to follow peace with all men, and they are the only persons who feel those obligations, and act under their influence. Are you then reconciled to God by the blood of the cross? you are the very persons who are addressed in the text, and who, by the authority of God, are enjoined to follow peace with all men. If you are what you profess to be, you cannot turn a deaf ear to the word of the Almighty. Give me your attention, then, while I endeavour,

I. To explain the text; and, II. To enforce the doctrine which it contains.

I. Attend to the explanation of the text, "Follow peace with all men."

I. Consider, in the first place, the object which you must follow—peace with all men. All believers in Christ are the children of peace, and therefore, as far as is possible, they must live peaceably with all men. They are unwilling to quarrel with any man, even with a wicked and profane man. They would, if possible, be at peace with all the world. Even to

the man who has insulted and injured them, they are desirous to be reconciled. But if they are to live peaceably with all men, they are under peculiar obligations to live peaceably with their brethren in Christ. They are the children of the same Father, they are bought with the same blood, they are sanctified by the same Spirit, they are heirs of the same inheritance, they are travelling to the same home, and surely they should not fall out by the way. Whatever contentions may prevail in the world, surely there should be none in the family of God. "Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

What is it that constitutes the misery of hell? It is the total, the everlasting absence of peace. Evil spirits and condemned souls are, without exception, the enemies of God, and, though sharers of one common misery, their misery is continually increased by their hatred to one another. In that dreary region, anger, and strife, and hatred, and malice, have established an everlasting reign. Not one feeling of friendship is experienced throughout the vast assembly. And what is it that constitutes the happiness of heaven? It is the perfect and everlasting reign of peace. There the God of peace dwells, there all the children of peace are assembled; peace resides in every bosom, beams in every countenance, and spreads its glories over the whole celestial world. Look into a family where peace dwells. Upon all the members of the family the blood of peace has been sprinkled; the language in which they address one another is the language of peace, and the sentiments which they cherish are sentiments of peace, and every morning and evening they consecrate themselves to the service of the God of peace. Look into a congregation where peace dwells. In all the religious and social intercourse of the members of the congregation, in all the public services of the sanctuary, one sentiment of kindness and brotherly love predominates, and spectators are compelled to say, "See how these Christians love one another." It is peace in the Church that makes the Church resemble heaven. Let the house of worship be the most splendid which human hands can rear—let the congregation be composed of all that is attractive in wealth, all that is venerable in rank, all that is

respectable in learning—yet if the peace of God is not in it, it is a cage of unfeeling birds, and its sweetest music is not better than the howling of dogs. On the other hand, let the place of worship be the meanest hovel, let the congregation be composed of the poorest of mankind—yet if the peace of God reigns in it, it is the glorious habitation of the blessed God; it is a faint but fair representation of the happiness of heaven. The peace of the Church is at once her strength, her beauty, and her glory. If, therefore, the absence of peace spreads darkness over the place of punishment; if the presence of peace sheds a glory over the heavenly world; if peace in families is so lovely; if peace in the Church makes it resemble heaven—be ye lovers of peace, and follow peace with all men. I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

2. That peace which we ought to cultivate sometimes flies away. That peace often departs from nations cannot be denied; that it often flies away from families, is equally evident; and that it is not always found in the Church, is a matter of deep and bitter lamentation. When peace departs from nations and from families, we fondly imagine that it will be found in the house of God—in the house of the God of peace. But with such expectations facts do not correspond. In the Church of Christ, many unholy contentions exist; even the sons of God have waged war with one another. It was so in the church of Corinth; it has been so in every succeeding age; and it is so at the present day. Such contentions are not novelties in the churches of the Secession. I need go no farther than the congregation which I am now addressing, for an illustration of the statement which I have now made. Into the causes of the departure of peace from among you, I am neither disposed nor qualified to enter. I impute blame to no individual, to no class of individuals; I simply state the fact, which you all acknowledge, and which, I hope, you all deeply deplore, that peace in this congregation has for some time been a great stranger. Many of you can look back to a very different state of things. You can recollect the time when the brethren all

dwelt together in unity, when, in your private and social intercourse, you enjoyed much happiness in one another's company, and when, on the Lord's day, one sentiment of affection predominated in every heart. There was no difference of opinion, no angry words, no angry looks, no alienation of affection: you loved your common Lord, and for his sake you loved one another. Your communion Sabbaths were days of special delight, days of peace, days of gladness. You had fellowship one with another, and your fellowship was with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

But a most unhappy change has taken place. Those days of gladness, of peace, of brotherly love, have disappeared, and when, or whether they shall return, is matter of great uncertainty. I would encourage the hope that you are all grieved for these divisions of Reuben, and that the healing of these divisions would impart happiness to you all. There are indeed some men so strangely constituted, that strife and contention are the very elements in which they live. To such persons, peace is an object of dislike. If they do not find contention, they will soon make it. Such children of Belial are the very pests of society, and of the Church. They are continually casting firebrands, arrows, and death. When they come into a congregation, they are like the devil coming into Paradise. Their motto seems to be, "The more mischief the better sport." To this class of persons, I fondly hope, you do not belong; but still the melancholy statement is true, that peace has fled from you, and that you are in a state of hostility to one another. You do not dwell together in amity. In the estimation of those around you, you are biting and devouring one another. O how unlike you are to what you once were—how unlike you are to what you should be! "There are that raise up strife and contention."—Hab. i. 8. "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. The wisdom that cometh from above is first pure, then peaceable." John iii. 16, 17.

3. When peace has departed, it must be followed: "follow peace." Some imagine, that if they had no hand in driving peace away, nothing is required from them to bring it back again. But though the driving away of peace from a congregation

may have been the work of a few, it is the duty of all to endeavour to bring it back again. Others, again, say, We will not prevent the return of peace, we will sit still and wait for its return, and when it comes, we will give it a most hearty welcome. This is well so far as it goes, but it is not enough. All who love peace are bound to follow peace, and the faster it flies from them, the more rapid and the more earnest must be their pursuit of it. The chief inquiry is not, How was peace banished from among us? but the chief inquiry is, How shall peace be restored to us? Peace is fled; it must be followed and brought back. But what is it to follow peace?

In the pursuit of peace there must be mutual forgiveness. I have already stated, that into the causes of the departure of peace from among you I am neither disposed nor qualified to enter. But you will permit me to remark, that there may be faults on both sides. This is the case in almost every contention that takes place in the Church of Christ. Now if you admit that there may have been faults on both sides, it is most unwise to spend time in inquiring either who was first in fault, or who was most in fault. The duty, the immediate duty of all is forgiveness—hearty, instant forgiveness. And indeed, if there is an individual who needs no forgiveness, he will be the very first to grant forgiveness to others. The man who is most backward to forgive, is uniformly the man who most needs forgiveness. And, indeed, why should we be so backward to forgive one another? Be it so that we have been provoked, and insulted, and injured; that those provocations, and insults, and injuries have been of long standing, and have often been repeated, are these reasons why we should refuse to forgive one another? Have we not provoked, and insulted, and injured, the great God of heaven ten thousand times more frequently than our bitterest enemies have provoked, and insulted, and injured us, and do we not expect forgiveness from God? But if we do not forgive men their trespasses, will our heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses? Will it not be presumption and impiety to ask forgiveness from God, if we refuse forgiveness to others? Wherefore, "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away

them you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Eph. iv. 31, 32. Have you obtained forgiveness of God? then you will reckon it both your duty and your privilege to forgive others. "Proud and haughty scorner is his name who dealeth in proud wrath." Prov. xxi. 24. "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression." Prov. xix. 11. Is it then your desire, your prayer, to bring back peace to your congregation? begin the great and good work by a cordial forgiveness of one another.

And be it remarked farther, that this forgiveness must be frank and hearty, and open. The heart must forgive as well as the lips, and the conduct must bear testimony to the forgiveness of both. To say we forgive those who have trespassed against us, while we shun their company, and look upon them with averted eyes, is only to deceive ourselves. In this matter, good men have often greatly erred. They have really forgiven in their heart, but their looks betoken no forgiveness. Now, when you forgive your brethren, there must be frankness, and openness, and cordiality in your looks and conduct, that they may be made to feel, that your forgiveness of them is both real and hearty. Look at them as brethren, speak to them as brethren, act towards them as brethren.

In the pursuit of peace, you must sacrifice your feelings, your prejudices, your angry passions, and even your interests. Peace is a great blessing, it is the greatest of blessings. It is a blessing which gives a higher value to all other blessings. It is a blessing, without which, other blessings cannot be enjoyed. The absence of it poisons every other enjoyment. If we are at variance with one another, this unholy feeling will extend itself into our most serious thoughts and services; it will pollute and freeze even our prayers. If a minister is at variance with his people, he will experience the baneful influence of this feeling, both in his closet and in the pulpit, both when he is preparing for public duty and when he is engaged in preaching the Gospel of peace. And, if a people are at variance with their minister, the private duties of the Sabbath will be poisoned with it; and when they come into the house of God, though their minister has the wisdom of

Paul, and the eloquence of Apollon, they will neither be instructed nor pleased with his ministrations. And if a congregation are at variance with one another, religion cannot prosper; all the graces of the Spirit will languish, and even the trees of righteousness which the Lord hath planted will in a great measure become barren. Now, what sacrifice is too costly to banish such a state of mind as this? Who would not gladly and immediately, bring his prejudices, and passions, and feelings, and interests, and offer them as a sacrifice upon the altar of peace. To many, such sacrifices are painful and difficult. All the proud and angry passions of our natures, rise up against them. But the question is not, Is it painful, is it difficult? But the question is, Is it duty? If it is duty, we have nothing to do with its difficulties, but to overcome them; nothing to do with its painfulness, but to submit to it. The price may be reckoned great, but think of the greatness of the blessing purchased by it.

Indeed, to preserve peace, and to restore peace when it has been lost, every thing must be sacrificed but a good conscience. To buy even peace with the sacrifice of conscience, is to buy it too dear. But then we ought to recollect, that conscience is often pleaded in matters where conscience has nothing to do. When a man says, My conscience will not suffer me to do this thing or the other thing, he ought very often to substitute the word passion, in the place of conscience, and to say, I am too angry, too wrathful, too unmerciful, to make the sacrifices which the peace of the Church requires. Often has it happened, that men have spread discontent, murmuring, complaining, strife, and suspicion, and every evil work over a congregation, and all the time they have been talking of their consciences. They have been doing the devil's work, and doing it diligently and successfully, when they have tried to persuade both themselves and others, that they were doing the work of God. Blessed are the peace-makers; and blessed especially are those who make the greatest sacrifices to maintain, or to restore peace.

In the pursuit of peace, every thing must be avoided which has a tendency to prevent the return of peace. The grounds of difference should be buried in perpetual oblivion. To talk about your past

differences, to endeavour to find out who was first to blame, or who was most to blame, must tend to retard the return of peace, or to fright it away again, when it is returning. Even angry, discontented, suspicious looks, must be avoided. A man can fight with his eyes, as well as with his tongue, or with his hands; as, therefore, there must be hearts of love, and actions of love, there must be also looks of love. When you meet with one another, when you talk with one another about the affairs of the congregation, or about the common affairs of life, let the language of peace flow from your lips, let the sentiments of peace beam from your eyes. A scornful look often does more mischief than an angry word; and an affectionate look often does more to restore peace than either words or actions.

In the pursuit of peace you must abound in prayer. In almost all cases, differences of opinion in congregations have been preceded by neglect of prayer. The exhortation, Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, has been forgotten; or if the words have been on the lips, there has not been a corresponding sentiment in the heart. Peace, like every other blessing, is to be obtained by prayer. If it is your desire, then, to bring back peace, you must abound in prayer. For this purpose, there must be prayer in the closet. When you enter into your closet, to pour out your heart before God, and to ask from him the blessings suited to your circumstances, forget not to pray for the peace of the congregation. There must also be prayer in the family. When you have gathered your families about you, and bring them before God to bless them, pray for the peace of the congregation. Never rise from your knees, without giving this matter a prominent place in your family devotions. And especially, I would recommend prayer meetings to be established, for the express purpose of praying for the peace of the congregation. Is it possible, think you, that persons associated together for the purpose of praying for the return of peace, can rise from their knees, and immediately give place to the spirit of contention. The spirit of prayer will subdue the spirit of strife. Contentions cannot long exist in a praying congregation. Be assured of it, if you neglect this important duty, your contentions will not only continue but increase; your prosperity as

a congregation will perish, and you will become a by-word and a reproach in the christian world. But if this duty is diligently and fervently performed, the cloud that has gathered over your prospects will dissipate, and it will again be said of you, Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is, to see these brethren dwelling together in unity.

II. The great duty of following peace might be enforced by many considerations. Consider,

1. The authority of God enjoins this duty. "Follow peace with all men" these are not the words of Paul, but the words of the living God—of that God in whom we live, and move, and have our being. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. God hath called us to peace. The fruit of the Spirit is peace. Be at peace among yourselves. Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless—the sons of God without rebuke. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body." Col. iii. 12—15.

These are the commandments, the exhortations of Jehovah. And will you venture to act in opposition to them? Is God's favour nothing? Is God's anger nothing? Will ye provoke him to jealousy? Remember that his eye is ever upon you. He examines your hearts, your words, your looks, your actions. Were God in his glory visible to your bodily eyes, would you dare to contend with one another? But do not his eyes see, and his eye-lids try the children of men? If, therefore, you desire to enjoy the favour of God, which is life; or if you dread the anger of God, which is perdition, follow peace with all men.

2. Consider the Master whom you

profess to serve. One is your Master, even Christ. Is he not the Prince of Peace? Has he not made peace by the blood of his cross? Is not the Spirit whom he sends to dwell with his people, and to teach them, the Spirit of peace? Is not his Gospel, which you all profess to believe, the Gospel of peace? How, then, comes it to pass, that you are not at peace among yourselves? How comes it to pass, that you are biting and devouring one another? Are you promoting the honour of Christ? Are you promoting the cause of Christ by these unseemly and disgraceful contentions? Have you not found out, that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God? Oh! how careful should the followers of Christ be to avoid contention, and to follow peace! Bethink you, I beseech you, of the sin which you have committed in your contentions with one another, and of the reproach which you have brought upon His cause, who is the Prince of Peace.

3. Consider the injury which you do to the principle of voluntary churches, by these unseemly contentions. The adherents of patronage in the church, urge its necessity, because, they say, if congregations are left to themselves, in the choice of a minister, they will never agree, but contentions and strife will arise in them, to the disgrace of the Church of Christ. Are you not, in your present circumstances, giving countenance to this reproach? Are you not showing, that it is well founded? Think you, the adversaries of voluntary churches, are inattentive observers of your present state? Nay, verily. They are narrowly examining your conduct, and they are founding upon your present contention, an argument in favour of patronage in the church. Will you give them this advantage? Will you thus do what you can to destroy the very principles upon which your church is founded? I hope better things of you. But if better things are to be expected, they must immediately be set about. You must

begin this night, this very moment, to study the things which make for peace. Every angry sentiment must be subdued, every kindly disposition must be cherished; and whatsoever is unfriendly to the return of peace, must be banished from your hearts, from your words, from your looks.

4. Consider that the hour of death is coming. Disease and death are among you; and how soon they may enter your dwellings, and number you with the dead, is wisely and kindly concealed from you; but this is the very reason why you should immediately begin to follow peace. Would it be a comfortable thing, if death were to surprise you in the midst of your contentions? Let me suppose a case. You this evening attend a meeting of the congregation, and instead of following the things that make for peace, you give way to an angry contentious spirit; but before the morning sun shines upon you, you find yourself stretched upon the bed of death, and about to appear before God in judgment. Is not this a possible case? And would the recollection of your contentions afford you any comfort on the bed of death? You cannot die comfortably, if you are not at peace with all mankind. Hasten, then, in pursuit of peace, and give yourselves no rest, until you have overtaken it, and brought it back. Your late venerated and beloved pastor was uniformly a man of peace. How is it, then, that into his congregation, so long and so faithfully cherished by him, the spirit of strife has entered, and has prevailed, and still prevails? It is well that that which takes place on earth, cannot disturb the rest of heaven. Though, therefore, your late pastor may know what is going on among you, his happiness will not be diminished; but if you would follow the example and the instructions of him, who through faith and patience, is now inheriting the promises, "follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

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ON MORAL DISCIPLINE, OR THE ANALOGIES BETWEEN YOUTH,
CONSIDERED AS A STATE OF PREPARATION FOR MANHOOD,
AND THE PRESENT LIFE FOR THE LIFE TO COME;

A SERMON

By the Rev. JOHN SINCLAIR, A.M., PEMBROKE COLLEGE, OXFORD,
Minister of St Paul's Episcopal Chapel, York Place, Edinburgh.*"No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*—LUKE xi. 62.

We are taught in Scripture, to regard this world not only as a state of *probation*, but of *discipline*; not only as a course of *trial*, to ascertain our fitness for another life, but also as a course of *preparation* to acquire that fitness: a school in which certain tastes, and sentiments, and habits, are to be formed, and certain capacities matured, by which we are to become, as St. Paul expresses it, "worthy of the Lord," or endowed with "meekness for the inheritance of the saints in light;" or, according to the expression in the text, "fit for the kingdom of God"—suited to its moral excellence, as well as ready for its spiritual occupations and enjoyments. One branch of this general qualification, or *fitness*, is here, by our Lord himself, distinctly brought before us, viz., firmness and consistency of character—a kind of moral courage, which, having undertaken a great object, pursues it constantly and perseveringly, without looking back.

Our present purpose, however will be, not merely to confine our reflections to this one particular branch of fitness for heaven, but generally to examine the whole subject of moral discipline, showing its analogies with that natural discipline, by which men are prepared, in this life, for their several pursuits and occupations throughout society. The analogies between infancy, as a season of education for riper years, and the present life for the life to come, are various and important. On this occasion, we shall illustrate four

only of the most remarkable and interesting points of correspondence between the state of a child in preparation for manhood, and of man in preparation for eternity.

- I. Both kinds of discipline are necessary.
- II. Both are often painful and mysterious.
- III. Both admit of no delay; and,
- IV. Lastly, Both are frequently ineffectual.

I. Let us, then, begin with the consideration of the first analogy, viz., That the discipline in both cases is *necessary*.

A child, on his first production into the world, is by nature totally incapable of the pleasures and pursuits of manhood. This incapacity pervades equally his physical, his intellectual, and his moral constitution. In each of these respects, he must be properly qualified, by a series of changes, and developments, before he can undertake the business of maturer years. His body must be brought, by long continued nourishment and exercise, to manly strength and consistency. His intellect must, by observation, instruction, and reflection, be gradually ripened and matured. His moral faculties, at first wholly dormant, cannot be roused to full activity, till he comprehends sufficiently the relations in which he stands, both to his Creator and to his fellow creatures, together with the duties which those relations involve. This unfitness of childhood for duties and occupations to which it has not yet been trained or disciplined, is very forcibly and

distinctly remarked upon by St. Paul, in an illustration familiar to every scriptural reader, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

Similar to this, my brethren, would be the unfitness of man for a crown of glory in the kingdom of God, were he not prepared by the intermediate probationary discipline of the present life. He is as unqualified, without such preparation, for the employments of the blessed in heaven, as a child is for those of full grown manhood upon earth.

This incapacity, first of all, is *physical*. His body is of such a structure, as to be incapable of *enjoyment*, or even *life*, in an abode wholly different from that which it now inhabits, and for which alone it is naturally adapted. Hence, alluding to our present bodily constitution, as gross, imperfect, and unsuitable to the heavenly state, the apostle says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." For the removal of this unsuitableness, proper methods and opportunities are appointed, by the Divine Author of our frame. Certain processes of gradual transition must be undergone. Life, death, the grave, and the resurrection, are all of them but so many stages in our progress, each of which prepares the body for the next that follows, and all of which prepare it for immortality. The language of St. Paul is here again illustrative of our statement. He compares the dissolution and reconstruction of our bodies, to the several changes of a seed—dead, withered, decomposed, and afterwards reviving, with other properties, as a plant. "That which thou sowest," he says, "is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be. So also is the resurrection of the dead: it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. The

first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord (from heaven). As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality." The changes here described, as being necessary to create fitness in the body for inheriting the kingdom of God, correspond precisely with our progress from the weakness and imperfection of childhood, to the strength and full proportions of mature age.

Thus far the necessity of a *physical* improvement or alteration has been examined. The same necessity may be inferred, respecting the developments of the understanding. Some analogy seems probable, between the intellectual growth of the infant mind, and the intellectual preparation of man for the society of superior beings in the world of glory. On this subject, however, we have not the same degree of scriptural information as has been given us respecting the advancement and glorification of the body. St. Paul seems, indeed, to touch upon some mental change, as necessary for our adaptation to the mortal state, where, comparing our degrees of knowledge in this life, with our improved knowledge hereafter, he says, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then, (that is in the mature immortal state) face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." To what height of intellectual stature the human mind may ultimately arrive, is impossible for our present limited capacities to conceive. It would be as absurd for us to describe the latent powers and faculties which may be unfolded, in our exaltation to celestial existence, as it would be for a child to estimate the depths of reasoning with which the future philosopher will pursue his calculations.

We now come to the most important respect in which discipline, temporal and spiritual, is necessary, and in which the state of childhood is again analogous to that of Christian probation. There is necessity, as we observed, for a *moral* preparation, as well as for the physical and intellectual. And the momentous distinction, which gives superior interest

to this moral progress, is, that it can, to a great extent, be effected in the present life. Much depends upon ourselves. We cannot, indeed, by the mere exertion of our will, prepare our bodies for a glorified condition. Neither can we raise our intellect to angelic eminence; but with respect to virtue and religious conduct, fitness for heaven is, by the grace of God, within the power of us all. Although, as our Lord declares, we are unable, "by taking thought, to add one cubit to the stature of our bodies;" and although we find ourselves still more unable, "by taking thought," to expand our minds into a comprehension of all mysteries, and of all knowledge; yet, "by taking thought," we are able, through the wisdom and benevolence of our Creator, to make continual approaches, *morally*, towards fitness "for the kingdom of God."

This fitness, now to be explained, corresponds exactly with the moral training which prepares the heart in childhood for the duties of more advanced age. The child, without such moral training, could not be trusted. To be admitted safely into society or domestic life, he must acquire previous habits of obedience, docility, and submission to authority—habits of justice, truth, and charity—habits of attention, industry, and self-control. These moral requisites, it must be obvious, are yet more indispensable for admission into the society of celestial beings. Man, considered here below, in the infancy of an immortal existence, must be trained to higher degrees of moral excellence, in proportion to the pure and holy character of that community above, which he aspires to. His aim is to dwell with God—to be for ever with his Redeemer—to join the company of Heaven. In order to dwell with God—in order to be happy in communion with him, by the exercise, throughout eternity, of praise for his perfections, and of thanksgiving for his mercies, *piety* must have been habitually cultivated in this temporal, this initiatory state. In order to be fitted for social intercourse with the purest and holiest of created beings, united in the bonds of perfect spiritual affection, without the smallest taint of envy, hate, or selfishness, the Christian aspirant must have first subdued, in his course of earthly fellowship with his brethren of this world, the influence of every baser passion, and

must have made some progress in the attainment and in the practice of that "charity which never faileth."

Let, therefore, my brethren, this all-important truth, the necessity of piety and charity, or, in one word, of holiness, with a view to fitness for the kingdom of God, be continually present to your minds. Beware of superficial and inoperative Christianity. Add to your faith virtue. Remember, that besides a *title* to future happiness through the merits of your Redeemer, you must be *moreover qualified* to enjoy that happiness. Besides being *redeemed* and *justified*, you must be *sanctified*. You must read, and learn, and study the word of revelation, and put your knowledge into practice. This knowledge and this practice must not be partial and variable, ostentatious and pharisaical, but must be consistent, progressive, universal, and sincerely influencing your dispositions, tastes, and feelings. Destitute of these qualifications, the claimant for heavenly blessedness will be found wanting, however plausible his pretensions, and, like the individual in the text, will be unfitted for God's kingdom.

2. A second circumstance of analogy between childhood considered as introductory to riper years, and the present life regarded as preparatory for the life to come, is, that the discipline in both cases is often *painful and mysterious*.

A child, placed under wise and prudent guardianship, is subjected to treatment often grievously irksome to him, which he is quite unable to account for at the time of its infliction, however useful or necessary he may eventually find it. His appetites are under troublesome restraint—his passions under severe control or suppression. His mental faculties are forced into application which he finds distasteful, and considers useless. His patience during sickness is grievously tried by the use of remedies to which he would prefer the disease, and which he finds himself incapable of understanding; or perhaps in health, his manners, looks, words, and gestures, must submit to watchful and vexatious superintendence, of which no account or explanation is satisfactorily given. Above all, his sinful tendencies, engendered by hereditary corruption, his selfishness, his pride, anger, or obstinacy, must be checked and overcome. Reproofs, remonstrances, and ever

chastisements, must be reiterated, which he cannot possibly reconcile with parental kindness and indulgence. At length, however, he attains to manhood, and is presented with a very different view of things. The mystery clears up—the painful discipline is accounted for—his complaints and repinings at the severities of education are discontinued. He perceives their importance and necessity; he confesses that a contrary system of neglect, or of unlimited indulgence, would have either brought him to an untimely end, or have presented him to the world an object of mingled pity and disgust, diseased and infirm, ignorant, headstrong, and unteachable, a burden to himself, and a nuisance in society.

Analogous, my brethren, to this wholesome process of education and tuition, and not less painful nor less mysterious is the discipline by which, in this world, our Heavenly Father prepares his moral offspring for the world to come. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Similar, also, to the murmurings of childhood are the sentiments of doubt, and suspicion, and distrust, excited by the unsearchableness of his judgments. The misfortunes, and casualties, and vexations of every kind, incident to humanity; acute and lingering diseases, losses, hardships, and privations, infirmity and bad propensities within, and from without bad example, wicked suggestions, and the provocations of injustice, of treachery, of oppression; the facility, above all, of acquiring evil habits, and the difficulty of removing them; these various evils, under God's providential government, present to our maturer years an aspect not less revolting and incomprehensible, than in early days the restraints and corrections of our childhood. In the gloom of adversity, we are visited with disquietudes and searchings of heart in respect to the design of our Maker in creating us, and to the prospect of our future destiny. We are tempted, at such trying seasons, to allege that greater tenderness and indulgence should be expected from God; and that a course of life, less imbittered by suffering, and less exposed to snares and hazards, would be more compatible with our relationship as children of the universal father.

We ask, in ignorant impatience, Why subject us to discipline at all? If discipline is to "fit us for the kingdom of God," why not at once create us in that state of fitness? Why not at once communicate the character which, by a painful process, is now slowly and uncertainly matured?

The best reply to such interrogatories, my brethren, would be to put into the mouth of a child the corresponding questions:—Why, before entering into commerce with the world, he is placed in a preparatory condition, and is not rather born at once in man's estate, with all his powers, bodily, as well as mental, in their full development? To these questions of impatient youth, the answer of his instructors is obvious. "You would, in that case be as completely unqualified for the life of mature age, as an idiot; the most solitary recluse, after a life of separation from mankind, brought suddenly into society, would be better able to conduct himself. The novelty of your situation would distract you with astonishment, apprehension, curiosity, and suspense. A long period would elapse before you would so far be familiarized with yourself and with the objects around you as to engage in any rational pursuit. Your language (suppose you capable of speech) would be offensive from your want of habit in adapting it to the taste and sentiments of others; your manners, for the same reason, would be rude and forward, impetuous and insupportable. Your ignorance, too, of every useful art, joined to your inaptitude for acquiring knowledge, would render you incapable of earning your subsistence. In every valuable respect, you would come forth into society a helpless creature, unformed, unfinished, utterly deficient and unqualified for that mature condition into which you rashly thrust yourself, without the requisite information and experience.* The incapacity we have just described of a supposed human agent attempting to engage in human affairs, without the natural preparation of childhood and of youth, may illustrate what we have reason to believe would be man's unfitness, without the discipline of a previous life, for the society and occupations of heaven." Such an intruder into the heavenly mansions would find himself as awkward and unprepared, and as incapable of comfort or enjoy-

* See Bishop Butler's Analogy.

ment, as if he had been born full grown into the present world.

However painful, then, my brethren, however mysterious the discipline to which we are subjected in this life, let us place implicit confidence in the wisdom and goodness of our Heavenly Father. The tendency of all the sorrows and privations that we can suffer, is to foster in our hearts the very dispositions, the very fitness, which we must cultivate for the kingdom of God. Adversity, as St. Paul informs us, not only *tries* but *produces* virtue; not only *ascertains* our capacity for eternal happiness, but *increases* it. "Tribulation *worketh* patience; our light affliction, which is for a moment, *worketh* for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Indeed, our whole argument for resignation under the painful and mysterious discipline which prepares, or (as I would rather phrase it) educates us for heaven, may be summed up in the words of the same apostle to the Hebrews—"Furthermore, we have had fathers of our own flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits and live? for they, verily, for a few days chastened us, after their pleasure; but he, for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

3. The third analogy to be considered, has reference to procrastination, namely, that as growth in childhood, and progress towards man's estate, must be begun immediately from the hour of birth, so also our preparatory discipline for immortality *admits no delay*.

The infant is no sooner born than he begins to breathe, to take food, and to perform whatever vital functions are essential to his nourishment and preservation. No long time elapses before his nature prompts him to that activity and restlessness so remarkable in children, and so importantly contributing to their growth and advancement. As soon as his tongue is able to articulate, his boundless curiosity, amidst a universe of entirely new objects, invites him to ask continual questions, by which not only his faculty of speech is perfected, but his understanding ripened and informed. These, and many other processes, mental and corporeal, the new formed human creature begins in infancy without procrastination, and carries on without intermission through the several stages of

childhood and of youth; taking daily food and exercise, and by new inquiries, adding daily to his stock of knowledge, till he reaches manhood, and then, at length, in the full maturity of all his faculties, is admitted to the intercourse, employments, and pleasures of rational society. But this progress, physical as well as intellectual, unless commenced at the proper period, would be attended with constantly increasing difficulty, and would at last become impossible. Thus, if the child should not begin at once, and regularly continue taking food and exercise, his body would either perish, or be stunted in its growth. If he neglected practising in early life his faculty of speech, the organ would soon lose its pliability, and become unfitted for articulation. Or if, farther, he should omit to use this faculty for purposes of inquiry, if he should delay all study and observation during infancy and youth, while his memory is retentive and his habits susceptible of improvement, the powers of his understanding, thus continually dormant, and never called into waking exercise, would every day become more sluggish, and be at last incapable of development.

These simple and acknowledged facts, with regard to the present life, should lead us naturally to anticipate corresponding facts in connexion with our discipline, preparatory to future immortality. That discipline, to be successful, must be early: to be effectual, must not be delayed. The difficulty is augmented rapidly by each successive act of procrastination. Our evil habits and propensities are daily more confirmed the longer they continue in operation. Our vicious practices strike deeper root into our nature, our resistance to the impressions of religious truth becomes continually more inveterate. Familiarity produces indifference, until at length, as years advance, and old age draws on, a change of character is almost hopeless, and then follows death, which extinguishes all capacity of farther growth or progress, and renders change of character impossible. The best practical deduction from the foregoing statement is powerfully made by Solomon—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." This life is the only time allowed us to prepare for the next.

No second opportunity can be hoped for. As, my brethren, there is no state granted to man of second youth, in which the errors of the first might be redeemed; so after death, there is no second life on earth, in which we might commence again the race of immortality. "As the tree falls, so must it lie." Delay not, then, preparations which are indispensable—preparations which every day are more difficult to be made—preparations which cannot at last be made at all.

4. There remains one more analogy between infancy, as an introduction to manhood, and the present life, as introductory to life eternal, viz., that this preparatory discipline is, in both cases, *often ineffectual*.

Of the children born into the world, a very small proportion ever reach maturity. The far greater number are, by various causes, brought to an untimely end; perhaps by inadvertency and folly of their own; perhaps by the violence and oppression of others; perhaps by accident, by sickness, or by premature decay. The same observation may be extended to the lower animals, and still more forcibly to plants, the seeds of which are in so many ways exposed to destruction, that we can scarcely find one seed escaping among the millions which fall away and perish. These millions appear absolutely lost and wasted, so intent does nature seem on bringing one plant to maturity, as to think the loss of any number for that purpose comparatively insignificant. And yet those seeds or germs which are prematurely destroyed, and those which happen to attain full growth, were at first created, equally and indiscriminately, capable of the perfection at which so few arrive.

Facts like these, my brethren, within the knowledge and observation of every human being, suggest a question the most awful that can enter the human heart. Does the spiritual world present similar phenomena to what we have here remarked in the natural? Is there in the case of man, considered as an immortal being, any thing analogous to the profusion and apparent waste exhibited in the works of nature around us? As the seeds of plants are designed for vegetable life, so is man designed for future happiness. Is that design often frustrated? Are there many who never reach the perfection for which they were created, and who are finally

rejected as *wast* for the kingdom of God? In short, *are there few that be saved?*

In making answer to this question, the conclusion to which we must arrive, whether we look around us in society, or consult the oracles of God, is most appalling. We see few appearances warranting a belief, that the discipline to which men are subjected in this world produces the effects intended; on the contrary, we discover fearful indications that the present state, so far from eventually proving a school of virtue, proves to the greater number, through their perverseness, an actual school of vice. Circumstances calculated for their moral improvement; circumstances calculated to produce in them dispositions fit for heaven, seem rather to have an opposite effect, and to strengthen them in sin. Prosperity, instead of exciting gratitude to God, inflames self-confidence. Adversity, instead of working acquiescence in the divine will, confirms impatience and irritability. The contemplation of other men's distress, makes more impenetrable the heart which ought to have been softened. Increased acquaintance with religious motives, continually withstood, turns half compliance into habitual opposition.

These alarming reflections are rendered more alarming by corroborative statements in the word of God. We all are well acquainted with the solemn admonition of our Lord, "Many are called, but few are chosen." We all know what he added in confirmation of that often repeated warning, "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land, but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the days of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." To the same effect is elsewhere the declaration of Christ, "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Of the same fearful import is the language of the apostles, "Though the number of the children of Israel," says St. Paul, "be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved." And St. Peter, as a caution against sluggishness and indifference, points to the ark of Noah *wherein few, be*

observes, *that is, eight souls*, were saved from the waters, when an entire world was overwhelmed.

Understanding these texts in the mildest sense which they admit of, we find them tremendously significant. They more than warrant our assertion, that as a child, though certainly designed to attain the natural perfection and maturity of manhood, often fails of reaching it, and comes to an untimely end; so, in like manner, man, considered as an immortal being, under discipline to prepare him for the perfection and felicity of heaven, falls short of heavenly blessedness in numerous and terrific instances, and is ruined, finally, totally, irretrievably.

There is, however, one most important distinction to be carefully kept in view, namely, that the failure of the child in reaching manhood, is often caused by circumstances which he neither can prevent nor control; whereas the failure of the man to attain eternal life, is always caused by himself—by his own folly, his own negligence, his own perverseness. Everlasting happiness is offered to the acceptance of all: the trials and temptations incident to the present world, are designed to mature in us that character which shall qualify us for the next. The assistance, above all, of the Holy Spirit, the author of all holy desires, is vouchsafed us, that we may pass through those trials

and temptations with success. "The Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." If, therefore, we reject, or if we fail to profit by the precious gift, the fault is in ourselves.

Are we, then, my brethren, persuade that salvation is thus difficult of acquisition, and thus at the same time within the reach of all, and do we, after all, neglect our means of grace? Do we attach but little value to the institutions of religion? Do we rest contented with moderate attainments? Are we slow, careless, indifferent, or vacillating?

Be instructed, O wavering Christian! by the counsel of your Redeemer. *Strive*—exert every faculty you possess, *to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek—that is, shall use some feeble efforts to enter in, but shall not be able.* First, secure a *title* to future happiness, by believing on the name, and relying upon the merits, of the Son of God, and then proceed with strenuousness, with courage, with perseverance, under the guidance of God's Spirit, in the discipline of holy preparation. Be *STRENUOUS*, for you see that weak endeavours are unavailing. Be *COURAGEOUS*, for God will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able. Be *PERSEVERING*, for "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

CHARACTER OF THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED NOVEMBER 11, 1832,

By the Rev. PETER NAPIER,

Minister of the Chapel of St. George's in the Fields, Glasgow.

"And they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."—Acts iv. 13.

It appears, from unquestionable facts, that there is something in the character of strict virtue, and genuine piety, which, if it cannot gain the esteem, can, at least, generally command the respect, of the profligate and ungodly. The veneration which Herod felt for John the Baptist, and the awe which Felix experienced in the presence of Paul, his prisoner, are both remarkable instances of this; and a third case, not exactly similar, indeed, but no less decisive, is presented to us in that part of the early history of the Christian church,

to which our attention is invited by our text.

The apostles Peter and John had just performed a miraculous cure on a lame beggar, who had been accustomed to sit daily at one of the principal gates of the Temple asking alms. The report of a fact so wonderful, and so well attested, soon spread throughout the city, and a vast multitude, impelled by curiosity, immediately flocked to the spot, that they might see the men who had done this astonishing thing, and hear from themselves some

account of their power and their principles. With alacrity and promptitude the apostles embraced this favourable opportunity for promoting their master's cause, and endeavoured, by the strongest arguments, first, to convince the people of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, and then to instruct them in the nature of repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and all the other important doctrines with which the fact of the resurrection of Christ was inseparably connected.

While they were thus occupied, a body of priests and Sadducees, accompanied by the captain of the Temple, came upon them; and, for the purpose of deterring them from promulgating doctrines, which they could so ill endure, they arrested their persons, and hurried them to prison.

There they were kept till next day, when the supreme council being assembled, they were brought into the midst of them, and sternly questioned by what name or power they had done that cure, which was now so much the subject of conversation throughout the city. To this question, Peter, being filled with the Holy Ghost, replied with so much composure, dignity, and energy, as struck the minds of the rulers with an irresistible impression of astonishment and awe. They knew that the men who now stood at their bar were unlearned men, and of a private station in life, and yet they perceived in the manner of their address, and in their whole deportment, so much wisdom and prudence, intrepidity and propriety, as raised them far above the level of ordinary characters. They saw they differed greatly from persons in the same rank and circumstances of life with themselves, and the only way in which they could account for that difference, was, by recollecting that they had been with Jesus, that they had been the friends and followers of that distinguished individual, whose conduct, the bitterest of his enemies could not impeach, and whose fortitude, the most daring acts of cruelty and injustice could never overcome. To the influence which his instructions and his example had left upon their minds, the priests and Sadducees naturally and justly ascribed that remarkable dignity of demeanour which those two men now exhibited. "And when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them

that they had been with Jesus." I purpose to consider what were some of the principal virtues that on this occasion distinguished Peter and John, as followers of Jesus, that we may learn what character becomes us as members of his church, and as persons who have recently enjoyed the privilege of communion with him at his table.

I. I observe, in the first place, that a peculiar trait in the characters of those good men is, the boldness with which they confessed Christ in the presence of his enemies.

I mention this first, not only because the open and decisive avowal of a religious profession is a duty of the greatest importance, but because it was the very thing that appears chiefly to have excited a strong degree of reverence for the apostles, even in the breasts of those haughty and tyrannical men, before whom they stood as culprits. Scarcely can any situation be conceived more trying to virtue, or more calculated to put fidelity to the test, than that in which Peter and John were now placed. The fear of offending superiors, the risk of encountering reproach and ridicule for the sentiments they maintained, and the danger of undergoing disgrace and punishment for the doctrines they were concerned in promulgating, were temptations to swerve from the truth, or at least to disguise their attachment to it, which required no ordinary degree of resolution to withstand. Now, in a situation of such difficulty, it is of importance to observe how they conducted themselves. Did they deny any fact they had hitherto asserted, or depart in any one particular from the principles they had hitherto avowed? Did they, through fear of giving offence, or of provoking displeasure, shun to make as full and explicit a declaration as they had done before, of the aggravated guilt of the rulers and people of Israel, in crucifying the Lord of Glory? Did they hesitate to avow that God had raised him from the dead, and exalted him to the highest glory in the heavenly kingdom? Or did they fear to tell the hated and humiliating truth, that there was no possibility of obtaining salvation but through faith in his name? No. We find that with equal sincerity, boldness, and plainness of speech, did they now make such declarations before the most learned and illustrious men of their country, as they had lately done at the porch of the Temple to the multitude that

assembled, many of whom, probably, were but little superior to themselves in respect of rank, education, and knowledge. They made no attempt either to conceal the truth, or to soften the apparent harshness of its features. The consideration of their own reputation, ease, and safety, was not allowed to interfere for a moment with the honour of the masters whom they served; and the one desire of their hearts was, that Jesus might be glorified by them, whether by life or by death. Now, whence did this noble, self-denying, and heroic spirit originate? Solely, we answer, from the experience which they had of the love and grace of their Saviour. They had been with Jesus from the beginning of his public ministry. They had heard, with unmixed delight, the gracious words which fell from his lips. They had witnessed the numberless miracles of mercy which he daily wrought. They had seen the moral glory of his character, and felt the constraining influence of his grace and love. He had affectionately chosen them as his disciples, and they had openly acknowledged him as their master. Rather, therefore, would they now forego every comfort which the world could offer—nay, rather would they willingly undergo disgrace, and torture, and death—than deny the Lord that bought them with his blood, or bring dishonour on the worthy name by which they were called. And surely, brethren, if we also may be said to have been with Jesus—if we have enjoyed communion with him by faith—if we have esteemed it a privilege to enter the gates of his sanctuary, to be numbered among his disciples and admitted to his table, the decisive conduct of those holy men, in holding fast the profession of their faith, should be regarded by us as an example worthy of the closest imitation. Our circumstances, indeed, are different from theirs, our difficulties are less numerous, and our dangers less formidable. Happily, we live in a period when the church enjoys rest from external violence, and in a country where the governors and judges, instead of being combined against the cause of Christ, are strenuously engaged for its support. Protected by lawful authority, we meet together in the house of prayer for the purpose of worship, or of preaching repentance and salvation in the name of Jesus, while none dares to disturb or make us afraid. But though we are not in danger of being dragged before tribunals

of justice, like the apostles, to give an account of our religious opinions, or of our deeds of Christian benevolence—though we are not called, like many in those primitive times, to resist unto blood, in striving against sin, yet it must not be supposed that, even now, a consistent and zealous adherence to the Christian faith can be maintained without much firmness and fortitude. We live in a world that lieth in wickedness—a world, the maxims and the manners of which are often not only different from, but in direct opposition to, those which, as Christians, we are required to observe and to follow. From the ungodly world, then, we must come out, and be separate. We must, at whatever risk, shake ourselves free from the contaminating influence of its pleasures and its society. We must, without hesitation or reserve, renounce and reprobate all those courses which we know to be unbefitting the disciples of a Holy Saviour, and the expectants of heavenly bliss; and without consulting the opinions, or conforming to the conduct, of others, we must adhere as closely as possible to that line of duty which conscience, enlightened and regulated by the word of God, dictates and approves.

If, for example, we know it to be our duty, not only to deny all ungodliness, but to live in the habitual performance of religious exercises; if we know that we are required to observe secret prayer, to maintain the worship of God in our families, to search the Scriptures, to sanctify the Sabbath, to reverence the sanctuary, and not to forsake the assembling of ourselves for public worship, as the manner of some is, these things we ought to observe and do, without any regard to what may be said or done by others around us. Neither the example of the great, nor the authority of the learned, nor the practice of the multitude, should have any influence in turning us to the right hand or to the left, from the path in which our Lord and Master hath enjoined us to walk.

It is very evident, however, that a course of life so opposite to the course of the world, demands no small measure of self-denial and fortitude, because it can hardly be maintained, without attracting the notice, and even provoking the contempt, of the many, who do not enter into our views, nor act upon our principles. Some may treat us with disdain, as though we

were beneath their notice; others, from a worse spirit, may misinterpret our motives, and speak evil falsely of our conduct. The learned may sneer at the doctrines of our creed; and the dissipated and the gay, may wonder at the moping and melancholy kind of life—as they would term it—we choose to follow. Many who are wise in their own conceit, will either openly laugh at us, for the folly and extravagance of our religious opinions, or secretly profess to pity us as well-meaning, but weak-minded enthusiasts. Thus, brethren, the more nearly we conform to the holy precepts and heavenly example of our Lord, the greater measure of opposition or oppression from the world, may we expect to receive. But if we have been with Jesus, let us neither be ashamed nor afraid. This is just what he hath given us reason to anticipate; "for if ye were of the world," saith he, "the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. But be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world; and ye know that it hated me, before it hated you."

If the men of the world perceive in you a boldness of this kind, in confessing Christ; if they see you preferring the testimony of a good conscience, and the approbation of a good God, to all the honour that cometh from man; if they find, as the Sanhedrim now found, in the case of these two apostles, that neither fear nor favour can induce you to obey man rather than God, they will be constrained to respect the principles from which such conduct flows, and thus you may leave such an impression of the worth and importance of real religion upon their minds, as may contribute, under the divine blessing, to their effectual conversion and salvation.

II. But I observe, in the second place, that in combination with fortitude, Peter and John exhibited, on this occasion, much of the *meekest and gentlest of Christ*, and thereby evinced that they had been with Jesus.

Man is naturally proud, irritable, and vindictive. When injured in his person or reputation, he wishes to be avenged on the aggressor; and if retaliation be impossible, he cherishes malice and resentment in his heart. But as one of the most important of the moral duties which our

Saviour inculcated, was: *patience under provocation, or the forgiveness of injuries*, we may be satisfied, that in almost every case, where a disposition so opposite to the unrenewed nature of man is manifested in any remarkable degree, the evidence is good of the person having been with Jesus. Thus it was with Peter and John on this occasion. By the rulers of the Jews, they were treated in a most undeserved and unjustifiable manner. Without the shadow of a crime being alleged against them, they were dragged to a prison; and for an act of singular kindness and compassion to an unfortunate fellow-creature, were compelled to stand like felons before a court of justice. And this was done, not only for the purpose of intimidating them, but with the base design of destroying their reputation, weakening their influence, and sinking them as much as possible into contempt, in the estimation of the common people.

Men unconscious of guilt, must have felt an injury of this description very acutely; and the first and natural impulse of their minds, in consequence of it, might be, to set their persecutors at defiance, to give way to violent declamation against their cruelty and tyranny, or to preserve such a morose and sullen silence, as should mark the scorn and detestation in which they held men so utterly devoid of honesty, generosity, and piety. This they might have done—nay, in all probability, this they would have done—had they not been with Jesus, and distinctly remembered how he endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. But with the words and the example of him before them, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; and when he suffered, threatened not, but meekly committed himself to him who judgeth righteously—every resentful passion was expelled from their breasts, and the one emotion which reigned within was an emanation of pity for the wilful ignorance and obstinate prejudices of their enemies. Accordingly, we observe them, not only treating their judges with all the reverence and respect due to their rank and office, but, in the spirit of true benevolence, earnestly endeavouring to persuade them of their danger, in continuing to reject the Saviour whom they had crucified, and inviting them to him as the only way to happiness and Heaven. The example, brethren, is fitted for ourselves, and may

afford a test of our true character. It is impossible to live long in the world, and take an active part in the ordinary business of it, without meeting with many disagreeable and vexatious circumstances. Although the great proportion of mankind may be honourable, disposed to do unto you, as they would wish you in like circumstances to do unto them; and though you may occasionally meet with some noble instances of pure generosity and disinterested benevolence, yet it is more than probable that offences will come even to the most prudent and wary. The proud may treat you with contempt; the busy tattler may defame your character; the rapacious and covetous warding may grasp at your property; and in a thousand other nameless ways you may be treated so harshly and undeservedly, as will be grievous to bear. But if you have indeed been with Jesus, then will the same meek and lowly spirit be found in you that was also in him. Legal methods for obtaining redress for great wrongs, and security from threatened malice, are as open to the disciples of Jesus as to others; and I am not aware that the Gospel, either in its spirit or letter, prevents us from availing ourselves of them, in circumstances where they may really be required; but certainly the disposition to forget and to forgive any provocation, however great, and to testify our forgiveness in the most open and unequivocal manner, is, at all times, an indispensable duty. "Bless them which persecute you, bless and curse not." "Recompense to no man evil for evil; but if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. And thus shall men take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus, and that you have learned of him, who was meek and lowly in heart." I go on to observe—

III. In the third place, that another virtue which the apostles exhibited on this occasion, and which brought them into notice as disciples of Jesus, was their zeal for the glory of God, and their love for the souls of men.

The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of disinterested benevolence and love. Wherever it really exists, it checks the opera-

tion of every selfish principle and envious feeling, fills the heart with the most ardent desires for the happiness of fellow creatures, and urges to unwearied exertion in any cause connected with their spiritual and eternal interests. Those who are strangers to the grace of God, are generally quite indifferent, as long as their personal comfort is not affected, whether the cause of truth or error should prevail in the world. They can contemplate, without one emotion of pity or regret, the abounding impiety and profligacy of the wicked around them; and they can listen, without any feeling of interest or delight, to the most pleasing accounts of the success of the Gospel, and the triumphs of the cross. Very different, however, are the feelings of those who, having been with Jesus, have an experimental acquaintance with divine things, and know the grace of God in truth. They so justly appreciate the importance of the divine favour, and form so true an estimate of the worth of immortal souls, that they cannot allow themselves to be regardless of the condition and conduct of their brethren of mankind. The moral state of the world is to them an object of the deepest concern, and in proportion to the flourishing or decaying interests of true godliness, do they feel the exultation of hope, or the depression of sorrow, in their minds. Thus it was with the two apostles who are referred to in our text. Like the Master whom they served, they went about doing good, and embraced with pleasure, every opportunity that presented itself of speaking a word in season, to the various classes of persons, with whom they happened to have intercourse. Whether they were at liberty or in bonds, they were equally ready to declare unto perishing sinners, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. Whether they stood in the midst of an admiring multitude at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, or in the midst of prejudiced priests and Sadducees at the bar of the Sanhedrim, they seemed to have but one object at heart, viz., that of convincing those whom they addressed of the error of their ways, and of bringing them to the knowledge and love of that Saviour whom they had wickedly rejected and crucified. The glory of the person of Christ, the grace of his character, and the greatness of his salvation, were subjects on which their own minds always dwelt with interest, and to which they delighted on every

proper occasion to direct the minds of others. If we have been with Jesus, let us go and do likewise; let us think much of his grace and love, and be ever ready from the good treasure of our hearts to bring forth good tidings. Let us, however, be careful to combine wisdom with our zeal, and prudence with our piety, lest we be found to injure the cause we are anxious to promote. It is not necessary that we should proclaim, as it were, from the house tops, that we have been with Jesus; or that we should assume such a sanctimonious garb and demeanour, as to prevent us from mingling with general society, without frowning on every action; but it is requisite that on all occasions we should honour the Gospel which we profess, and never be ashamed or afraid, when an opportunity occurs, to recommend it to the attention of others, earnestly, affectionately, and perseveringly. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell what he hath done for my soul."

IV. And now we observe, in the fourth and last place, that another virtue which distinguished Peter and John on this occasion was kindness, or compassion towards the afflicted.

In going up to the Temple at the hour of prayer, their course was arrested, by the petition of the lame beggar, who lay at the gate asking alms. From him, they did not, with cold and unfeeling selfishness, turn away their eyes. They did not, like the priest and the Levite in the parable, pass by on the other side; nor did they come up to the place where he lay to trouble him with idle and useless questions respecting his past life, and the manner of his being reduced to his present dependent and distressed condition. They did not merely give him a look of compassion or a word of commiseration, and pass on; but though poor themselves, they wished to do him all the good that was in their power, by directing him to the Physician of value, who was able to do for him above all that he could ask or expect. "Silver and gold," said they, "we have none, else would we

gladly bestow a portion to promote thy comfort, but such things as we have, we freely offer: In the name of Jesus of Nazareth—arise and walk."

If we have been with Jesus, we will certainly evince the reality of our communion, by having much of the same mind with them. We shall be humane and charitable, ready to distribute, and willing to communicate of the good things which God in his providence may have bestowed upon us. If we are indulged with a plentiful share of wealth and worldly substance, and have every thing in possession that can supply our wants or administer to our comfort, let us show our relationship to Christ, by our regard for our brethren. While we feel the enjoyment of nourishing food, and warm clothing, and convenient accommodation, and kind friends; and are grateful for such blessings to the bountiful dispenser of all good, let us not forget the situation of the many sons and daughters of misfortune around us, who, were it not for the sympathy of the good, and the assistance of the benevolent, would be left in the world, friendless, destitute, and helpless. Let us think of the many whose most laborious efforts can scarcely procure for themselves and their families a very scanty supply of the necessaries of life; let us think of those who once supported themselves, by the earnings of an honest industry, but whose arm is now unnerved by age, whose spirit is broken by misfortune, whose strength is worn out by disease, and who are left to drag out the remainder of their wearisome days in the anguish of bodily trouble, aggravated by the privations of the deepest poverty. Let us remember that it is written, (Psalm xii. 1—3,) "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

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SATURDAY, 22^D DECEMBER, 1832

No. 39.

SERMON by the Rev. DAVID DICKSON, D.D., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. N. MORREN, A.M., Greenock.

Price 2d.

**THE CHARACTER AND BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO DIE IN
THE LORD;**

A FUNERAL SERMON ON THE DEATH OF THE REV. WALTER BUCHANAN, D.D. ONE OF
THE MINISTERS OF THE CANONGATE, PREACHED 10TH DECEMBER, 1832,

By the Rev DAVID DICKSON, D.D.,

One of the Ministers of St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh.

"And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."—REV. xiv. 13

THIS is indeed the epitaph of the saints. It is an inscription prepared for their tombs, not by the art of human composition, at the instance of partial friends or flattering admirers, but by the pen of inspiration itself, at the command of a voice from heaven. We may be certain, therefore, that it tells us nothing but the truth; and have no reason to think it overcharged; for it comes to us with, "Thus saith the Spirit of the living and true God." And, oh! how interesting, how cheering, how delightful is its import! It announces the conversion of a curse into a blessing; it publishes immortality; it declares death to be the entrance into life; it brings heaven, as into the very chamber or spot where the stroke of the king of terrors is seen or felt.

Who does not naturally revolt at the thought of death? Who can look, without shuddering, at the ghastly aspect of a lifeless corpse? Who can refrain from the tear of sorrow, when the pulse of life ceases to beat in the breast of a friend—when the sound of the once endearing voice is heard no more—when the eye that beamed with intelligence and love, no longer meets the kindred glance that lighted up its fire? And is even the Christian a stranger to such emotions? No, my friends. His heart is strung like the heart of others, and he feels as a man, though he should have good hope, through grace, concerning those whose loss he mourns. And how often does he shrink

from the prospect that is before himself, when, in his turn also—and he knows not how soon—the scenes of mortality shall close around him, when his body shall be mingled with the dust of the earth, and his spirit shall return to God who gave it. He stands as on the brink of the grave, and darkness and uncertainty are beyond it; his faith begins to fall—his hope wavers—his joy and peace in believing are for a season diminished—he doubts, and fears, and trembles. But at once to comfort him respecting those who have been removed from his presence, and to dispel the gloom of despondency that was settling on his own mind, the voice from heaven—reaches his ear, that commanded the beloved disciple in the isle of Patmos to write, saying, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

There can be little doubt, that this declaration has a primary and principal reference to those martyrs who have sealed their testimony with their blood; and, as seems probable, from its connexion with the series of prophetic visions described in the context, more particularly to the martyrs under the scourge of Papal persecution. The uniform tenor of Scripture, however, as well as a multitude of similar passages, which might easily be adduced, sufficiently warrants the

application of it to the condition of all, in every age and in every situation of life, who have obtained, or may hereafter obtain, that "eternal life" which "is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And, thus understood, I shall, in explaining it, endeavour, by divine assistance, to illustrate the views which it gives us,

I. Of the character of those whose future condition it pronounces to be blessed; and,

II. Of the circumstances in which their blessedness is represented as consisting.

Let us attend, then, in the first place, to the view which the text gives us of the character of the persons whose future condition it pronounces to be blessed. And here I observe,

I. That they are those only who die in the Lord. And what, my brethren, let me ask you, does this imply? Think of what it includes; and, that you may clearly understand it, consider what is the foundation on which alone, according to the Gospel, the hope of a sinner for eternity can be securely built. This is a point on which our all of happiness, in the world of spirits, depends. Surely, therefore, it is too important to be regarded with the callous indifference of mere spectators, when we have an interest in it the deepest that can engage our thoughts—an interest, compared with the magnitude of which, every solicitude, as to the world and time, sinks into absolute nothingness. On what, then, must our hopes for eternity rest, if we would not have them disappear like a dream, and leave us without hope, when we most require its support. "Other foundation," says the Apostle, "can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Here only is firm footing.

Here is solid ground: all, all is sand besides.

In the hour of health, when the last enemy is thought to be at a distance, men may buoy themselves up with the fancied merit of their own excellencies and virtues, and delusively imagine that these cannot fail to secure for them a title to heaven. But when the moment of trial approaches—when their grasp of this world begins to be loosened—when they feel the sentence of death to be within themselves, and discover their Judge to be at hand, nay, even at the door—it is not the recollection of a well-spent life that will afford them settled comfort, or joyful hope.

A well-spent life, do I say? What is it that passes in general under this appellation? It is the virtue of the world, and not the holiness of the Gospel. It is negative excellence alone, confined to abstinence from particular vices, or to the practice of a mere external morality, founded not in love to God and to Christ, the only source of true Christian virtue, but in constitutional feeling, or accidental circumstances, or social connexions, or temporal interests—a covering which, when removed, unveils a heart that has always been estranged from God, and a life that is no more the life of a Christian, than an inanimate portrait is a living man. And, when death comes, unless sensibility is lost and conscience seared as with a red hot iron, the veil is torn off: and what is then to be seen and felt? What, but deformity instead of beauty, sin instead of holiness, guilt instead of merit, the ruins of happiness instead of "a building of God eternal in the heavens?" That God, who had been forgotten, is beheld, in all his alarming attributes of justice and holiness, frowning from the skies. That law, which had been dishonoured, is heard issuing its tremendous curse. The Saviour, who had been neglected or despised, is seen about to ascend his tribunal of judgment: and the presence of death is convulsively realized as being at once the wages and the punishment of sin. Viewed in the light of these truths, and weighed in the balance which they establish, the once fondly-cherished hope that rested on personal merit, vanishes into air; the prop that had been clung to, totters and falls; the passage to the grave becomes the fatal entrance into irremediable despair. And this, my brethren, is no picture of fancy, but the reality of fact, that has been ten thousand times over most fearfully experienced. Oh! then, beware, I beseech you, of trusting to such a broken reed, which, when leant on in the hour of trial, will pierce the soul with "the pains of hell," no less than with "the sorrows of death."

To place our dependence on the unconditional mercy of God, is not less delusive and dangerous; for this is in fact, to strip the Supreme Being of every attribute but one. It is to form to ourselves an imaginary deity, having no assistance but in our own fancy, and then to expect from a nonentity, that which we feel we do not dare to hope for from the true God. To "the workers of iniquity," so all who will not

be indebted for salvation to the means He has himself appointed, our God is declared to be a consuming fire. Alarming and awful thought to those who "will not come to Christ that they may have life;" for, while "the wages of sin is death, eternal life is the gift of God," only "through Jesus Christ our Lord." He only was able to redeem us from the curse of the law—that curse which involves in it not only temporal, but spiritual and eternal death. Through his all-perfect righteousness alone can we be justified, and accepted before God. In him only have we "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin, according to the exceeding riches of the grace of God." His death, as the divinely appointed and accepted sacrifice of propitiation for the sins of the world, is the only ground on which we can securely rest our expectations of that eternal weight of glory, which is hereafter to be revealed. This, therefore, and this only, is the rock of strength and salvation, against which the very gates of hell shall not prevail.

Those, accordingly, whose condition at length the voice from heaven proclaims to be blessed, cling to this as the "anchor of their soul, sure and steadfast." They have received it as "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." It is on this truth or fact, so interesting and precious, that they desire to rest their every hope. From this all their consolation springs. By this all their joy is inspired. It is to this that they look when the grave opens before them, when the cold pressure of mortality benumbs their bodies, and warns them that the hour of departure is nigh, and even when the last sigh which they shall heave is escaping from their already motionless and deadened lips. Yes! whatever has been the diversity of their circumstances in the world, whether they have been rich or poor, whether prosperous or afflicted; whatever may be their age, whether youth, manhood, or old age; whatever may be the characteristics of the summons that calls them into the world of spirits, whether it be unexpected and momentary, or preceded by many days or months, or even years; of warning; and whatever be their state of mind, whether it be peaceful, or joyful, or triumphant, or only trembling as between war and peace—the death of the Son of

God, who died that they might live, is that on which their hope and confidence, their strong desire of eternal life alone is placed; and relying on which their confidence is not disappointed, and their desire is more than fulfilled. For, thus saith the "faithful and the true witness, the first and the last, He that liveth and was dead, and who is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death," "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."

2. Those whom the voice from heaven proclaims to be blessed in their death, have been distinguished for their resistance of sin and temptation. They are accordingly, represented in the text as "resting from their labours," or, as the original word signifies, from their toils and struggles—a representation which necessarily implies, that they have been subject to difficulties and trials, during their earthly pilgrimage. And is not the life of christian faith and godliness, by whatever number of years and days it may be measured, a life of constant warfare? Yes, it is a fight that must be incessantly sustained against numerous, and insidious, and powerful enemies. It is a race, in running which every weight and every easily besetting sin must be laid aside. It is a course that must be pursued with ardour and perseverance to its very close, whatever exertion it may cost, whatever vigilance it may require, whatever sacrifices it may demand.

Need I speak, for instance, of the struggle that must be maintained against unbelief—that radical principle of all evil, which leads to a departure from the living God, and which, though mortified in the believer by the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, through means of the word of truth, is only mortified in part so long as mortality is not swallowed up of life. To check this spirit in its very rising, accordingly, is the only effectual way to escape the spiritual weakness and pollution of which it is the latent but powerful spring. And yet, how often does the Christian, through remissness and self-security, allow its streams to flow without interruption; bearing down all his better resolutions, and hurrying him along with impetuosity and unresisting force, till the alarms of danger awake him from his slumbers,

and rouse him to provide for his safety before it be too late? And then he is made to feel that it is indeed "a bitter thing to sin against God"—to relax the vigilance that ought never to be remitted—to lose sight of those realizing apprehensions of the presence of Jehovah, and those constraining views of the love of Christ, which he should habitually cherish—and to suffer his impressions of the world to be weakened or destroyed.

Or need I speak of that indwelling corruption—that law in the members warring against the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus—that body of sin and death which he carries about with him, and which unbelief knows well how to take advantage of to his hurt? His passions must be controlled; his former evil habits must be subdued; his affections must not be permitted to grovel on earth, but be raised to the things that are above; his will must be directed and governed by the will of God and the self-denial of the Gospel; his whole character, as well as heart, must be brought under the practical influence of the doctrine and grace of Christ. And is there nothing of difficulty, nothing of struggle, nothing that demands watchfulness and exertion here? Ah! my friends, even with all the aids of imparted grace, there is a resistance to be encountered in this warfare not easy to be overcome—an exertion that requires the whole vigour and strength, even of the renovated soul, to be put forth and sustained in action.

Or need I farther speak of the temptations which the Christian is called to avoid, when this is in his power, or manfully to face and successfully to resist, when necessarily exposed to them; temptations arising from the situation in which he is placed among his brethren—from the elevation or the dependence of his condition—from his enjoyment of affluence, or his experience of poverty—from the expected or the long-continued smiles of outward prosperity, or the sudden or protracted gloom of adversity—from the ensnaring suggestions of health and strength or the depressing power of sickness and debility—from the influence of worldly connexions, company, or pursuits, which insinuate their poison in the most unsuspected forms, and by the most gradual processes; temptations to pride or servility, to extravagance and vanity, or to discontent or dishonesty—to ingra-

titude and self-confidence, or to peevishness or distrust of God; temptations to indulge in sensual pleasures, or to impatience and despondence—to undue compliance with the manners of the world, or to unchristian separation from its society.

These are some, among the innumerable sources of temptation against which the Christian, according to his peculiar circumstances and condition, during his course of faith and holiness, should ever be on his guard; and which he must be continually labouring, in the wisdom and strength of divine grace, to avoid or to resist, and with the "armour of righteousness," on the right hand and on the left, successfully to brave and overcome. This accordingly, is the good fight that is fought by all "who die in the Lord," and who are declared, by a voice from heaven, yea by the Spirit of God himself, to be blessed when they die. Yes! my brethren: It is only as being good soldiers of Jesus Christ, that we can ever expect to share in the triumphs which he, as the Captain of Salvation, has already obtained over sin and death, and hell. I have still to observe,

3. That those who are pronounced to be blessed when they die, have been equally distinguished by their good works. For of them it is said, that "their good works do follow them"—a declaration which obviously supposes that these works have actually been performed. These are, their works of faith, and their labour of love.

Is the faith of the Gospel at variance with the morality of the law? Let the explicit declarations of the word of truth—let the character of this faith itself—let the conduct of those who "with their heart believe unto righteousness," answer the question. "Do we then make void the law through faith?" says Paul, "God forbid! yea, we establish the law." "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And what is the character of christian faith? It is a faith that has for its objects the exceeding sinfulness of

sin—the inflexible justice and unspotted purity, no less than the sovereign mercy and unparalleled love of God, especially as manifested in the wondrous death of his only begotten and beloved Son—the necessity of the influences of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify, as well as to sustain and comfort the soul—the duty of unreserved, and unlimited, and unvarying obedience to the whole law of God—and the absolute impossibility of being prepared for heaven without the possession of that personal “holiness, without which,” it is solemnly and irrevocably declared, that “no man shall see the Lord.” These are the objects, or truths, which christian faith embraces, and the firm persuasion of which is interwoven with the understanding, the conscience, the affections, the desires, the habits, and the hopes, of all who receive the knowledge and love of the truth, that they may be saved.

Look, accordingly, to the genuine Christian, who through “sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth,” is in some measure what he professes to be. Is he idle, or disorderly, or intemperate, or dishonest, or deceitful, or malicious, or revengeful, or hard-hearted, or ungodly? On the very contrary, even in the present times, when the sword of open persecution is sheathed, he is often reproached and reviled: and for what does he suffer the scourge of tongues? Is it for such traits of character as those that have now been described? Oh no! but for the sternness of his morals—for his unbending resistance to the maxims, and follies, and vices of the world that is lying in wickedness—for his scrupulous preference of conscience to present interest—for his alleged meanness in bearing the pressure of injustice without attempting to retaliate—for his being a man of prayer, and faith, and holiness. He is diligent in business, upright in his dealings, given to truth, forbearing and forgiving in spirit, kind and generous according to his means and opportunities, benevolent towards all men, conscientious and devout towards God. His works are works of usefulness and love. He may not have much in his power; but the talents which he possesses, whether they be many or few, whether more extensive or more limited, in their influence, he desires and endeavours to consecrate to the service of God and his fellow-men. Nor is it with him a matter of doubt, or of cold

calculation, whether he should instruct the ignorant, reclaim the vicious, relieve the poor, succour the helpless, support the weak, comfort the afflicted, or seek to promote the salvation of the world, when he has the means, however small, by which he may attempt the accomplishment of one and all of these unquestionable, though frequently difficult, and sometimes even painful duties. He is solicitous, in short, to be always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Now, this, though no doubt mingled with much imperfection, is the character of those to whom alone the kingdom of heaven is promised and secured. These are the works that are a preparation for higher services—works which, as the fruits of christian faith and hope, “shall in nowise lose their reward.” They are attended with conscious satisfaction and blessedness on earth, and they will not be forgotten at the resurrection of the just. For thus did the voice from heaven instruct the beloved disciple to write, concerning those who die in the faith, having fought the good fight and done the will of their Father in heaven, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

This leads me to illustrate, as was proposed,

II. In what the blessedness of those who die in the Lord is here represented as consisting. And,

1. They immediately rest from their labours. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord *from henceforth*, (i. e. from the moment of their death:) yea, saith the Spirit, *that they may rest from their labours.*” “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord *from henceforth!*”—Precious and consolatory truth! How does it chase away the dream of the unscriptural materialist, who insinuates or insists that the soul shall sleep between death and the resurrection, alike inactive and inconscious, as the body that is dissolving into dust; while, with equal power, it puts to flight the fiction of superstition, invented to gratify the avarice of antichristian priests, who teach their unhappy votaries that there is an intermediate state of probation and suffering, through which even the righteous must pass, before they

can enter the gates of the heavenly Sion. Precious and delightful truth! It assures us, in consonance with the language of our Lord to the penitent thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise;" in consonance with the desire of the Apostle, "to depart" from the body, "and to be with Christ, which is far better;" and in consonance with the anxious wishes and hopes of all who look forward to a blessed immortality, that, to the saints, death is neither the interruption nor even the suspension of life, but the beginning of a new and a nobler life—a life of purity and happiness, which shall have neither interruption nor end for ever.

Yes! my christian brethren, we are not left to sorrow as those who have no hope, concerning either ourselves or others, "who die in the Lord." We look, it is true, with mournful and weeping eyes, to the cold, and motionless, and speechless, and lifeless form of the once animated body which the monarch of the grave has seized on as his prey. But these feelings—though natural, and not unlawful to be indulged, if they do not rise into murmuring, or sink into despondency—when unduly given way to, become selfish in the extreme; for it is the outward frame alone, of those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, that is the prisoner of death. Their better part, their immortal spirit, has indeed taken its flight from its tenement of clay; but we are under no uncertainty as to the state into which it has entered. It has escaped from the bondage of corruption and the burden of mortality, and has gone to the God who made it, to the Saviour by whom it was redeemed, and to the Spirit by whom it was sanctified, during its earthly sojourn.

Look, accordingly, to the deathbed of a Christian, and realize the scene which it actually presents. The chill dews of death are on his countenance; his hollow eye is sunk in darkness; his quivering lips emit no sound; his trembling pulse has ceased to beat; his last sigh is drawn; he lives no more on this side the grave. But see whether his departed spirit has gone, and how he lives never to die again. While watching till his final struggle is over, and in the very instant that it is closed, his soul, disrobed of its material vehicle, wings its way to the place of the blessed. Its flight is shorter than a moment. Before we can speak, or

almost think, it is in the presence of the Lord; and it leaves behind it, on the bed where we are performing to its mortal partner the last offices of kindness and love, all that was weak, and sinful, and painful, and perishing, to be conscious of them no more. No unbelieving thought any longer distresses it; for its faith is not only perfected, but exchanged for the full vision of all the objects on which it was fixed while on earth. No starting fear, even for a moment, shoots athwart its feelings, or brings so much as a shade of apprehension over the bright canvass of its prospects; for its very hope is turned into enjoyment, and infinitely more than realized. No remains of indwelling corruption cause it to heave a single sigh of repentance or regret; for its body of sin, as well as of death, exists no longer. No worldly affection draws it down from heaven to earth; for earth, with all its entanglements, occasioned by its objects and its cares, are to it as if they had never been. No temptation approaches to seduce or assail it; for it is in the presence of God, and "in His presence evil cannot dwell." No ungodly companions wound or grieve it; for around it are none but kindred spirits, and these are "the spirits of just men made perfect." No cloud of affliction ever descends on it, either to disquiet or to darken it; for in heaven, where it lives for ever, there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor any more pain. Its every struggle, its every difficulty, its every trial is over; and perfect enjoyment, the enjoyment of God and the Lamb—of devotions kindled into seraphic rapture—of praises that emulate the hallelujahs of angels—of services the purest, the most ennobling, the most transporting, without weariness, or pain, or intermission, or end, are its portion and its delight. Sin has fled from it for ever, and holiness is at once its glory and its bliss.

Is it so, my friends? Then, surely, "blessed" in truth, "blessed" beyond expression, "blessed" far beyond what we can at present conceive, "are the dead who die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours." Why, then, should we give way to immoderate sorrow when they are removed from our poor earthly society, or even torn from our fond and endearing embrace? Would we, indeed recall them to endure again the hardships and perils of this state of sin and sorrow?

—would we have them to exchange perfection for imperfection, or life for death? Rather let us rejoice that they are already in glory, and be solicitous, through faith and patience, to inherit those promises on the full possession of which they have entered before us. Yea, rather let the prospect which awaits ourselves, if we also shall die in the Lord, incite us to greater diligence in avoiding and resisting the corruptions that are in the world through sin, that we may have nothing, as it were, to do, when the signals of our own departure from the land of the living are made to wave over our heads, but joyfully to wait and long for the salvation of God, entering without a fear on the rest that remains for his people in heaven. But I must hasten to remark.

2. That the voice from heaven likewise assures us, that "the works of those who die in the Lord shall follow them." This accordingly is another ingredient in their blessedness. That this is intended to carry forward our thoughts to the period of our resurrection, cannot admit of a reasonable doubt. For it is then that we shall be tried, every one of us, according to his works. And oh! what an interesting day! Then, when the trump of God and the voice of the archangel shall sound, while the Judge, before whose face the visible heavens and earth shall flee away, is descending, the dust of the saints shall start into life. Fashioned like unto Christ's glorified body, by the power of his divine Spirit, their once corrupted and mortal bodies shall put on incorruption and immortality; and, united to their already perfected spirits, shall meet the Lord in the air, and be placed by him on his own right hand, while he sits on his great white throne, having all who ever lived or breathed in the world assembled around him. And thither shall they be followed and attended by their works of faith, and labours of love. Not one of these shall be wanting, overlooked, or forgotten. The smallest gift of charity no less than the largest—the least office of kindness as well as the greatest—the reproof or the instruction, the word of exhortation or the whisper of comfort, whether it had been successful or had even wholly failed, that was ministered in love—the example of conscientious fidelity in duty, or firmness in trial—the usefulness that was attained, or even that which was only intended, but which

unavoidable circumstances prevented from being carried into effect—the contentment in poverty, or patience in suffering—the meekness under provocation, or the forgiveness of injuries—the steadfast faith and consistent godliness amid the temptations, the scorn, or the more violent opposition of the world—every act and instance of all these, and of every other Christian grace or virtue, cultivated or practised during life, shall then and there be brought into view, whether it was ever witnessed or heard of by men before, or was utterly unnoticed or unknown by them. These, as the fruits of the Spirit and of faith, shall be fully revealed at the tribunal of the great day, and be acknowledged by the Judge himself, in the presence of the assembled universe.

And then will their blessedness be full indeed. For it will then be made manifest to the whole creation, that the sentence which introduces the friends of the Lamb into the everlasting abodes of purity and bliss, is not partial but just. Then will the opprobrium which they often experienced from an unbelieving world be for ever wiped away. Then will they appear to have been indeed the "excellent ones of the earth," though like their Master they should have been despised or reviled, or scourged, or buffeted, or even martyred. And then shall the glory of their character, as adorned with the image of God himself, shine forth with a splendour which will strike their enemies with confusion and dismay, fill their brethren around them with admiration and joy, swell their own breasts with adoring gratitude, and attune their lips to join in the strain of the multitude of harpers who raise this chorus of redeeming love, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Nor is even this all. "Their works shall follow them," not only to testify in their favour, but to add to their dignity and their happiness. For though each of the saints shall be perfect, it will only be in their own measure and degree. In proportion

to the extent and vigour of their labours, and the height of their attainments in the life of christian faith and godliness on earth, will be their faculties of enjoyment and their powers of service in the celestial world. "As one star differeth from another" in lustre, so will they; yet not a single cloud shall darken their horizon, nor a single speck obscure the brightness of any one of them; but each in his own sphere, revolving round the Sun of Righteousness, will gradually increase in splendour and beauty, while eternity rolls on. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever;" while God himself shall be "to them all in all."

And, oh! what a motive should such a consideration present, to rouse our sluggish souls, and quicken our lingering steps, in the work, and labours, and patience of the Lord. It should have the power of more than a motive, even the force of an ever-active and ever-abiding principle, impelling us to continue and increase in them more and more; not that self-gratification should be the end we hold out to ourselves, when we think of, and seek to attain, the bliss of heaven, but the dignifying expectation, that through our humble instrumentality—feeble and sinful as we now personally are, but then mighty and pure, through that grace of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which shall then have issued in our being raised to the glories of the divine image, and the beatific enjoyment of infinite love, the anthems not merely of all the redeemed, but of angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, may, along with our own, be made to sound forth more highly, as well as more sympathiously, the praises of that matchless and superabounding grace.

Such, then, is the interesting and animating doctrine of the text—most interesting and animating to all who are now living and labouring, by the faith of the Son of God, in the course of duty and of trial allotted them, while, in this world of imperfection, and change, and sorrow. Nor do I doubt that, from the commencement of our meditations on it, you have been going before me, in specially applying them to the solemn

event, on account of which I have this morning been called to address you. So, I am, most solemn to me, personally, and in some respects still more so than to you are the circumstances in which I now speak of your departed pastor, and my own revered and estimable friend. For not only was he one of my own venerated father's first and most endeared companions, as a fellow-student, while training for their divine Master's service in after life—not only did they, in every subsequent period of their contemporaneous sojourn, till that father was called to enter into the rest of Heaven, live in mutual and undivided affection, and labour together, as well in the faith and fellowship as in the ministry of the Gospel, like brethren whose hearts were knit by ties, which the death of the one* only dissolved for a season, to be re-united, as they now have been, by the death of the other, never again, even for a moment, to be snapt asunder—and not only are the very earliest recollections of which I myself can recall a trace, associated with his name, and person, and character, in the house and at the table, in the family devotions and the pulpit ministrations of that beloved parent; but scarcely had a day elapsed, from the time that I attended his remains to the spot so near us, where they now lie silent and mouldering in the grave, when my other, then only surviving parent, and almost more than mother, was also removed to her everlasting rest.† And what could comfort or sustain me in circumstances so affecting, were I not to rejoice in the undoubting persuasion, that she—whom memory must completely fail me, if I ever forget—is only gone to rejoin the spirit of my father, and my father's friends, and all who, like them, have died in the Lord, in those many mansions of glory above, which Christ has prepared for them that love and serve him, while here below?

Having been early enabled to "give himself to the Lord," your late respected pastor early devoted himself to the work of the ministry; and from his first entrance on it, came forth as a useful and most acceptable preacher of the truth as it is in Jesus. Not long after being licensed by the

* The Rev. Dr. Dickson, senior, died August 2, 1820.

† Dr. Buchanan died on the 6th, and was interred on the 15th; and Mrs. Dickson, senior, died on the 14th inst.

Presbytery of his native city, (Glasgow,) he had an offer from the Scottish Church at Rotterdam which he had hardly declined accepting, when he was chosen to the chapel of South Leith, afterwards so long and ably filled by our late revered father, Dr. Colquhoun. Previously, however, to his induction there, or rather while his trials for ordination in it were only going on before the Presbytery of Edinburgh, a vacancy, occasioned by the death of Mr. Randall having taken place in Stirling, he was, in 1780, appointed and ordained to that important charge. There he continued for about nine years, "giving full proof of his ministry," and edifying by his zealous and faithful services, equally in private as in public, many of the body of Christ. His style of preaching there was precisely similar to that which some, and not a few, of you may still remember it was among yourselves—for the lapse of the seven years, during which he was almost entirely laid aside from pulpit duty, cannot have effaced it from your recollection—plain, perspicuous, affectionate, and evangelical; unfolding the great doctrines and duties of Christianity—if not with the profoundness of thought, or the splendour of eloquence, for which some others might be distinguished—with an appropriateness of illustration, and a chaste simplicity of language, accompanied with an earnestness and unction that were calculated to win their way, and, by the divine blessing, actually did so, in many precious instances, to the understanding and the heart of those who heard him. And when removed, as he was, in 1789, to the charge in this church and parish, from which he has so lately been called away, as he came to it with more than the good-will of many, so he brought along with him a character for ministerial diligence and fidelity, which he was enabled to maintain as long as his health and strength continued in their usual vigour. And how rightly he divided, during that period, among you the Word of life, earnestly pressing the offers of a crucified Redeemer on the young and the old together, and inculcating, at the same time, on all, the absolute necessity of personal and practical godliness to the attainment of present and everlasting salvation, they will not be backward to testify who had the privilege of steadily attending his ministry. Nor did he neglect the private duties of his high calling: on the contrary,

was he not, till his declining health unfitted him, often found in your dwellings, counselling, and instructing, and praying with, as well as for, yourselves and your families? Or, was there a chamber of sickness, or a bed of death, to which he was called, that he ever declined to visit, there to speak a word of admonition or comfort, and there to offer up the prayer of fervour and faith?

Not to speak as yet of his more public beneficence, with what affectionate zeal did he enter into the condition of all who needed or solicited his friendly advice, or exertions; to how many a bereaved widow was he like a husband—to how many an orphan like a father—to how many of the poor a steward of heaven's bounty—to how many helpless and destitute did he stretch out the hand of protection, or obtain places for them of shelter and other means of relief? In him peculiarly was the character of Job exemplified, that "when the ear heard him, then it blessed him; and when the eye saw him, then it gave witness to him; because he delivered the poor, and him that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him, the blessing of them that were ready to perish came upon him; and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." The blandness of his manners, and the kindness of his heart, united to the liberality with which he used the more abundant means and substance, which the providence of God had graciously bestowed upon him, made him a special benefactor to many of our youth who were training to the same service in which he so honourably laboured; and there are not a few surviving—nay, some but very lately entered on their ministerial duties—who can trace, both to his counsels and to his ready loans, or generous gifts of useful publications, suited to their state of mind and the progress of their studies, the decided bias which, under God, they then received towards that personal faith and holy living, of which, as themselves partakers and exemplars, they are now assiduously employed in testifying the importance and necessity to others.

And should, or can, we omit noticing his more public beneficence—his good works, that survive and will follow him? The new place of worship, or chapel, to the erection of which, but a few years after coming into the parish, he was so

peculiarly instrumental, that he may not unjustly be termed its original founder—of which my own ever to be remembered parent was the first minister, and in which so much invaluable and precious instruction, in the things that belong to their everlasting peace, has ever since been provided for multitudes who must otherwise have remained destitute of it; and the school-house, in this immediate neighbourhood, which he bequeathed, or rather conveyed over, to the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, and in which, from day to day, and week to week, hundreds of interesting youths are training up not only in useful human learning, but in the knowledge, and fear, and love of God,—these are monuments of his benevolence which will perpetuate his memory and continue, we trust, to be permanent instruments of incalculable good throughout many generations, long after we, like him, have been gathered to our fathers. As it was, should we forget the interest he took in the Edinburgh, now the Scottish, Missionary Society, in conducting the affairs of which, as one of its secretaries, I had the honour, while comparatively a stripling, of being associated with him—an institution whose object he cherished with such ardent zeal, and the operations and progress, and success of which lay so near his heart, and occupied so much of his time and exertions for several years, experiencing so constantly his wonted liberality of pecuniary support, and above all, the benefit of his devout and earnest supplications at the throne of grace. But what institution was there, let me ask you, connected with either the relief of the temporal wants of his fellow-men, or the communication to them of the spiritual and saving knowledge of divine truth, whether at home or abroad, which he did not encourage by his patronage, or aid by his contributions and his prayers? Generous he indeed was, and liberal beyond many; but he felt that of the good things of this life which he had been given to possess, he had been constituted a steward, and that of a steward it is required that he be found faithful. Nor during the seven years that he was more or less incapable of his former activity, did he cease from the interest he had till then so efficiently taken in such objects and institutions—or become more stinted in his charitable distributions—or less fervent and continued in his prayers on their

behalf; but to the very end of his days, employed every means within his reach, so far as strength and opportunities were afforded him, for doing all the good in his power, whether in regard to the bodies or the souls of his brethren of mankind.

And need I speak of his death—so calm, so peaceful! He indeed “fell asleep.” He tasted not the bitterness of death. And though it was not given him to bear audible testimony, with his departing voice, to his personal reliance on the power and grace of that Saviour, in whom he had trusted through life, and the glory and efficacy of whose cross he had so anxiously laboured to commend to others; in his case, such an oral testimony was in nowise necessary, however desirable it might otherwise have been. He had lived by the faith, and he died in the hope, of the Gospel—gently breathing out his spirit, without a struggle or almost a sigh, into the hands of the chief Shepherd of the sheep. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

Oh! to possess the blessedness of so living, as to be prepared to die in the Lord! Then, whether the bloom that may now be on our countenance, and the strength that is still in our bones, should soon wither and be palsied at the touch of mortality, or should long continue in all their freshness and vigour—or whether the gray hairs and tottering step of age, should already be premonishing us that its deadening hand is about to be laid on us, whatever duties or trials may, yet await us—come when its pressure may, though no tongue of man, or pen of the children of men, should ever record our character, or write an inscription for our tomb, the voice from heaven that reached the ear of the wrapt Apostle amid his exile in Patmos, will as really, though not so audibly, utter concerning us this sentence of final and everlasting felicity: “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”—But, on the other hand, is there not a state and a scene the reverse of these? Ah, yes! my brethren. Hear it, then, ye who need the warning, whatever your profession of religion may hitherto have been. If you live not to Christ, and die not in him, methinks,

however appalling the thought, that there will still be a voice concerning you also, that shall come as from heaven, though it speak only of hell, and be sealed also with the Amen of "Thus saith the Spirit." And what will be its sounds? Cursed are the dead that die not in the Lord: they rest not from *their* trials or sorrows, but only enter on torments and agonies that will ever prey on their immortal spirits, torturing them as with harpies' fangs, and ever increasing their anguish and their woes. "And their works too shall follow them;" but only to aggravate their miseries, in that "great and terrible day of the Lord," when their bodies also, awakened from the slumbers of the grave, and re-inhabited by their already condemned and accursed spirits, shall hear, and receive, and feel this dread and irrevocable sentence from the lips and the hand of their Judge: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh! then, my dear fellow-sinners, while as yet

this sentence and this curse have not gone forth in execution against you, though they are at this very moment impending over your still unbelieving and ungodly, yet never-dying souls, be entreated, by all the power that both the fear of hell and the hope of heaven ought to have over your minds, to look, without a moment's hesitation or a moment's delay, unto Him who alone can save you, even unto Christ, who was given to be for salvation to sinners, the very chief. Take shelter by faith under the covert of his justifying righteousness; place yourselves by the same faith, under the grace of his sanctifying Spirit; and cry mightily, with the prayer of faith in his all-prevailing advocacy, unto God even the Father, who is still waiting to be gracious, that He would heal your backslidings and love you freely, and cause all His anger against you to pass away. For thus only can you escape the certain and remediless perdition, of all who die not in the Lord.

DEATH THE PLAGUE OF SINNERS, AND CHRIST THE PLAGUE OF DEATH;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN ANDERSTON CHAPEL, GLASGOW, ON MONDAY,
NOVEMBER 5, 1832,

By the Rev. N. MORREN, A.M.,
Minister of Grey Place Chapel, Greenock.

"O death, I will be thy plagues."—HOSKA xiii. 14.

It is the voice of our Redeemer! it is the Prince of Peace threatening the King of Terrors—it is the Lord of Life, who dooms Death to destruction.

The attentive reader of the text cannot fail to remark the singular beauty and emphatic force of the language which is here employed. There is no form of death more terrible, or in which it commits more extensive and desolating ravages, than what is termed a plague or pestilence, which is not so much the designation of one particular disease, as the name commonly given to any distemper that is peculiarly malignant and deadly in its character, and wide-spreading, or, as the phrase is, epidemic in its progress. The Jewish people had these visitations of God's providence so much in horror, that the very thought of a pestilence called up the image of the death which invariably

accompanies it; and hence the words *plague* and *death* became synonymous and interchangeable terms. When, therefore, it is here said, "O death, I will be thy plagues," it is as if it had been expressed thus, (and so indeed the passage is translated in one of the ancient versions of Scripture,) "O death, I will be thy death!" Dost thou boast of the havoc thou hast made among mortals by means of pestilence? O death, I will be thy pestilences!

The same spirit and emphasis may be traced in the parallel clause of the verse—"O grave, I will be thy destruction;" for, in the Hebrew language, *destruction* was another name for the *grave*, and is sometimes found joined with *hell*, when that word signifies the separate state of departed souls. "Hell," where are deceased spirits, "is naked before him, and destruction,"

where are deceased bodies, "hath no covering." Job xxvi. 6. "Hell and destruction," subjects so mysterious and inscrutable to us, "are before Jehovah: how much more then the hearts of the (living) children of men?" Proverbs xv. 11; compare ch. xvii. 20. But how speaks the conqueror of death? "O grave, I will be thy destruction;" or, what conveys the same sense, "O destruction, I will be thy grave." Dost thou boast of the many generations thou hast buried and destroyed? I will bury and destroy thee. Does death celebrate his triumphs? does the grave glory in the myriads it has engulfed? I will swallow up both in victory. Death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire. That is my fixed undertaking, my deliberate resolve, and, cost the struggle what it may, I will not change my purpose, nor shrink from its execution, nor ever once repent me of this my promise to my people; for,

From the hand of the Grave will I ransom them,
From Death will I redeem them;
I will be thy pestilence, O Death;
I will be thy portion, O Grave;
Repentance shall be covered from mine eyes.

What, brethren, are the circumstances under which ye are this day assembled? As members of society, ye have your dwelling in a place which is still tainted by the breath of pestilence; but, as members of the Church of Christ, ye yesterday came up hither, out of a plague-stricken and dying world, that you might show forth and signalize that event by which a risen and enthroned Saviour has proved himself death's pestilence, and the grave's destroyer. Such is the view that we propose to take of the text; and we trust we shall not want your devout attention, while we endeavour to illustrate, in succession, the two following points, which we conceive to be involved in it, viz. I. *Death, the plague of the sinner.* II. *Christ, the plague of death.*

I. *Death is the plague of the sinner.* A plague, in the common acceptation of the term in our language, denotes any thing that is troublesome and vexatious; and a

pestilential disease is rightly so designated, because it is peculiarly fitted in its nature to agitate and disquiet those whom it threatens to attack. It is "the overflowing scourge," which, passing through a guilty land, "disannuls covenants with death, and abrogates agreements with the grave. From the time that it goeth forth, it takes hold of the imagination and the conscience; morning by morning does it pass over, by day and by night - and it is a vexation only to understand the report."

Now, we say that death is the grand plague of the sinner: the idea of death is to the sinner a perpetual source of uneasiness and pain. On this point, we dread no contradiction, for we make a confident appeal to every unrepentant, unprepared mortal present. We ask him, if it is not, indeed, too true, that could he only be assured that there is no death before him—could he but persuade himself, that he is never to die, his mind would be relieved from the heaviest of all burdens, and the bitterest gall would be extracted from his cup of earthly enjoyment. The sting of death is sin; and, therefore, the sting, the torment, the curse of a sinful life, is death. That is the sinner's great plague; because, when viewed in its true light, that constitutes the sinner's appointed and appropriate punishment. Call it, if you will, "a debt of nature," it is a most just and lawful debt. There is a harmonious judicial analogy between the two things, as between cause and effect, root and produce, fountain and stream, service and wages. "The wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth it shall die. Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." And every transgressor, who can read his sin in his punishment, will be disposed to say at last, "What fruit had I in those things of which I am now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." In whatever point of view, then, you regard death, you will see it to be the sinner's plague, and more particularly when you contemplate it (as we now propose to do) in connexion with its forerunners, its attendants, and its consequences.

To be concluded in our next.

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SERMON by the Rev. N. MORREN, A.M., Greenock.

Price 2d.

**DEATH THE PLAGUE OF SINNERS AND CHRIST THE PLAGUE
OF DEATH;**

A Sermon by the Rev. N. MORREN, A.M.—Concluded from p. 468.

VIEW death in its forerunners, and it will be seen to be the sinner's plague. Do you ask what we mean by death's forerunners? Every thing, we reply, of suffering and of sorrow that can be endured in this present world; these are all the forerunners of death, for they all tell us of death's approach. Only imagine a world where there is no death, in any sense of the term, and in that world there will be no misery. But when in this revolted world of ours, the decree went forth respecting its guilty inhabitants, "Die ye shall!" they did not expire that instant—No—but they began to die; the seed of mortality took root, and the tree of death, of which they had eaten, instead of the tree of life, speedily yielded them a fore-taste of its last fatal fruit, in the pains and the anguish which, as mortal sinners, they were all their lifetime doomed to suffer. The threatened penalty was inflicted to the letter—"dying, they died." It is even so still. Death having entered by sin, hath passed upon all, for that all have sinned. The feeble plaint of the new-born babe, that which is the first sign of life, speaks of the plague of death. The many cries of infancy, the many tears of childhood, shed, it may be, amidst smiles, speak of the plague of death. The disappointments of youth, the corroding cares of manhood, the debility and decays of age, the attacks of sickness, the exhaustion of fatigue, the petty crosses and unnumbered vexations of daily life, every pang of torment the sinner feels in his body, and every discomfort and disquietude, he experiences in his mind, all speak of the plague of death. Every loss which he sustains, whether of property, or of friends, or of enjoyments of

Vol. I.—No. 40.

any kind, speaks of the plague of death; because every such loss tells him of the last loss that is coming upon him apace—the loss of all here below. And every iota of misery, bodily or mental, in his own history or that of others; nay, whatsoever fails of imparting happiness, will proclaim to the contemplative mind the plague of death; because it tells him of the fact, that had he been in a world without sin, he would have been in a world without suffering, and he knows that wherever sin does exist, there, there will be, there, there must be, death. Now, let this simple idea seize firm hold on a sinner's conscience, and be realized there, and I defy that sinner to relish the highest delights of sense. Behold even the drunkard, who feels the sickening and painful effects of his last night's debauch; or that bloated epicure, whose pampered carcass is an inviting prey to malignant disease; or yonder worthless libertine, who begins to find his constitution breaking down through his shameful excesses; and if even these besotted men have reason enough left to interpret the warnings sent them, to look forward to the end of all, to connect the present consequences of their vices with the final issue—they may go back to their brutal gratifications, but the plague of the coming death, which ever and anon haunts their fancy, shall mar and poison all, like the naked sword suspended by a slender hair over the epicure's head, that prevented him from relishing the richest dainties spread out for his repast. Or if enjoyment there be, it will be the enjoyment of reckless desperation—

Moody madness, laughing wild
Amid severest woe.
9 R

* Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

2. View death in its attendants, when it actually comes in its certain reality, and with all its dread accompaniments, and is it not the sinner's plague? It is true, indeed, that what we are now about to say does not hold good of all who die. Upon some, death descends with almost the lightning's swiftness, and, without any demonstrations upon the out-works of the fortress, is suddenly found in possession of the citadel. It must be admitted, too, that when his approach is more slow and gradual, it is not always to the most guilty sinners that his appearance proves the most appalling. It is of such that the Psalmist strikingly testifies:—"There are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in the trouble of other men; neither are they plagued like other men." Still we say, that, when death is contemplated in its true and proper light, if it is a serious thing to think of death, and to speak of death, it is a most serious and a most solemn thing to die. Let him approach in what form he may, he can never cease to be to the sinner the King of Terrors. There is, first of all, the fear of death—that fear through which even the righteous are oftentimes in bondage. The unknown, or at least untried, and uncertain nature of the journey begets an undefined, indescribable dread, as the time approaches when we must set out. Some may pretend to deride this fear as groundless, extravagant, and foolish, asserting that

Nature makes a death that Nature never made,
And feels a thousand deaths in facing one.

But the feeling must be founded in nature, for it is all but universal; and nothing, indeed, is a more frequent source of disturbance and distraction to the human mind, than the contemplation of any thing mysterious and obscure. Now, what is death but just the grand unfathomed mystery of wonder, and depth, and fear, which lies under life from its beginning to its close? Philosophers may plausibly argue about the uneasiness of dying, and ungenerously maintain that our exit from this world must be as unconscious as our entrance into it. But, after all their fine drawn speculations about a matter of which they absolutely know nothing, the plain stubborn fact remains to stare every living

man in the face, that death is awaiting him and that he knows not what it is to die. In the description which the younger Pliny has left of the agitation produced among the wretched inhabitants of Campania by that eruption of Mount Vesuvius, which overwhelmed whole cities, not the least striking circumstance is, that "some wished to die from the very fear of dying." The truth is, that the dread of death, which all more or less feel, in spite of themselves, is but a modification of that instinctive love of life which man shares in common with the rest of the animal creation; and however much the feeling may at times be deadened, the trembling anxiety of the stoutest heart at the apprehended approach of dissolution, impressively proclaims how deeply it is rooted in our nature, and how well he knew what was in us, who said—"Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life."

But the anticipated terror of death is not its only attendant. It was a death-bed saying of the great and good John Howe, "I am not afraid of dying, but I am afraid of pain."

Around Death, ranged

In terrible array and mixture strange
Of uncouth shapes, and his dread ministers.
Purest, old age, his natural ally
And truest friend; next to him, diseases thick,
A motley train—fever, with cheek of fire;
Consumption wan; palsy half-warm with life,
And half a clay cold-rump; joints torturing gout,
And ever gasping shewn; convulsion wild;
Swain dropsy; swelling asthma; apoplexy
Full-gonad. These too, the Furies come that
Flit in darkness; and the sickness that destroys
At broad noon-day. These, and a thousand more
Horrid to tell, attentive wait; and when,
By Heaven's command, Death waves his-son wand,
Sudden rush forth, to execute his purpose,
And scatter desolation o'er the earth.

But bodily torment, and overwhelming sickness, and convulsive throes and struggles as for life, make up but a small part of the plague of death. There is the keen anguish of forced and final separation from all that is dearest to the soul. To be dragged away—and it may be suddenly and violently—from all the pursuits and pleasures, all the favourite employments, and all the sweet enjoyments of life; to have the near and certain prospect of losing in a moment, all that a man has lived and laboured to attain—of being left with nothing—to forfeit in an instant the accumulated acquisitions of long years—with both hands full to have to drop the hold, and become poorer than the poorest

beggar! "O death! how bitter is the thought of thee" to every man, but most of all "to the man who liveth at rest in his possessions!" Brethren, is this world your portion? Do you feel in it as at home? Are all your good things here below, and is it in them you have all your delight? Then these are the very things that make a death-bed terrible; and the more of these things you have the misfortune to possess, so much the more terrible will your death-bed be.

And, moreover, it is after all this previous conflict that comes the reality of dying. The bitterness of death is not yet past. Tell us, ye mighty dead, what it is to die? Tell us, what are the sensations of the last pulse—the last breath—the last close grapple with the foe? Tell us, how is it that the soul issues from the clay tenement, which it had possessed as its dwelling, and fondly loved as its home? and what are its feelings, as the scenes of a new and unknown world burst upon its view? The dead are silent; they wait us, till we follow and rejoin them, ere long, by the same road. Of what it is to die, we are all this day equally ignorant; but we shall one day know it equally well, when each of us shall have learned it for himself.

We can see, however, that the separation of soul and body, is in many cases an agonizing struggle of intense severity; and we are led to presume that, where the union has been so close and intimate, the human frame must sustain, in the actual passage of death, a shock, of which it could previously have had no experience, and perhaps no conception.

Yet, to the impenitent sinner, all these are but the beginnings of sorrows. That death which has so plagued him in its forerunners—its attendants—its actual reality—becomes most of all his pestilence in,

3. *Its Consequences*—its future and final consequences. We see its immediate consequences as to the body; and how loathsome and pestiferous must that be, which compelled Abraham to say of his once beautiful and beloved Sarah, "Bury her quickly out of my sight!" How degrading and disgusting for man, formerly the lord of the living creation, to have to say to corruption, "Thou art my father;" and to the base worm on which he treads, "Thou art my mother and my sister." The dust then returns to its dust; but

whither goes the spark? To God, the Judge, to stand naked, helpless, alone, at the foot of his righteous tribunal. And what naturally follows on the judgment of an unjustified sinner? What can follow but condemnation? "I looked, and behold a pale horse, and his name that sat upon him was Death, and Hell followed in his train." That which may emphatically be said to crown the King of Terrors, is the second death—the death that never dies. And, if we would be rightly impressed with this view of the subject, let us only represent to ourselves, what would have been really, in point of fact, our condition before God this day, if the sentence, "Thou shalt die," had been allowed to be executed upon our race, in full and unmitigated rigour, without the intervention of an mediator, to stand between them and its eternal consequences? Then, assuredly, all the plague arising to man from the fore-runners, the terrors, the attendants, the reality, the immediate effects of bodily death, would have been overlooked and forgotten, in the dismay and horror resulting from the prospect of nothing but death—constant, perpetual exclusion from him who is life—in whose favour is life—whose loving-kindness is better than life. The worm that preys upon the human corpse dies in its turn; but in hell the worm never dies. The funeral pile on earth is soon extinguished; but in hell the fire is never quenched. There is at once a dying life, and a living death; and they have no rest day nor night; and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever. That is the plague of death, compared with which, all previous and lesser plagues are as trifles, unworthy of thought; for surely to live in perfect and endless misery, is worse than absolute annihilation.

Such, my fellow-mortals, is the plague of death to sinners, and such has it been from the first. No sooner was the forbidden fruit tasted, than the ANGEL OF DESTRUCTION established his throne on the earth, and set out on his career of victory, conquering and to conquer. There have been many extensive insurrections but there has been only one universal empire—the empire of death. There have been many long-lived beings; but show me a reign in history so lengthened as has been the reign of death. It seems as if the only immortal upon the earth were

mortality. This mighty and merciless potentate, having claimed the whole globe as his lawful and undisputed domain, is revelling as usual, in his banquet of blood, surrounded with the dry and blanched bones of his countless victims, and exulting in the anticipation of future conquests; when suddenly, one is seen advancing towards him, in the form of pale and dying humanity, having the appearance of one of death's liege subjects; and he beards the lion-king in his den, and with a voice of thunder, breaks in upon his dream of everlasting empire, with the words, "O death! I will be thy plagues! Too long hast thou reigned to tyrannize over this unhappy race. Know, that in due time thou shalt be scattered and destroyed." "When a strong man armed, keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."

II. *Christ is the plague of death.* Where philosophy can do nothing, and infidelity does worse than nothing, Christianity steps in and does every thing. We might here show, how our Lord Jesus Christ has well earned to himself this most expressive designation, "the pestilences of death" by his complete conquest over death, of all kinds—temporal, spiritual, eternal; how he has satisfied the law, which was the strength of sin, and shall destroy sin, which was the sting of death; how he has converted all the forerunners and attendants of death into friends; how he has changed death itself, the worst thing in the world, into the best, even into unspeakable gain, making the last thing of cursed earth, the first thing of blessed heaven. Instead, however, of dwelling at length on the nature of the Redeemer's victories over death, it is more in accordance with our present plan, to lay before you some of the many proofs of their reality. And we observe, that,

1. Christ showed himself the plague of death, by the full discoveries he made, and the clear instructions he delivered regarding it. Until he appeared, a thick cloud rested on the state of the dead. For besides that the Jewish revelation had but partially benefited the world at large, and independently, too, of the fact, that the original Jewish faith had been grossly corrupted, by the time of Christ's advent—it cannot be denied that, among the

ancient people of God, even in their best estate, there were so many privileges merely outward; so many rewards and punishments merely earthly and temporal; in short, the whole dispensation had so much the aspect of a dispensation only of present good, that it is with some plausibility a distinguished advocate of the Divine legation of Moses has maintained, that the Jews possessed no certain knowledge of the future existence of souls, or the future resurrection of bodies. While we repudiate such a notion as altogether unscriptural, and unworthy of the Jehovah of Israel, it is nevertheless no disparagement of the ancient economy, if we assert in the spirit of the text, that the great triumph over death was to be reserved for the time of the new and better covenant, which was to be established upon better promises. Not the infidel Sadducee alone, but every carnal Jew, who looked no farther than to the enjoyment of Palestine as the land of promised rest, must have regarded the grave which receives the dead body to consume and rot, as the destruction of all future hope to many. But when the Great Teacher appeared, he preached "the kingdom of Heaven;" he said, "I am the resurrection (of the body,) and the life (of the soul.) He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And he that, living spiritually, believeth on me, shall never die eternally." As the Sun of Righteousness, he dissipated the clouds which hung over the tomb—he poured a flood of light on the regions beyond it—he disclosed futurity in all its bliss and in all its wo; and by showing that the soul could live though the body were dead, and that the body should rise again, he plagued, he slew, he abolished death, and brought to light, by his Gospel, life and immortality; that is, the present existence of departed spirits, and their eternal duration, when reunited to the raised body.

2. Christ showed himself the plague of death, in many of the miracles he performed. Are disease and wretchedness the concomitants of death? It was his daily work of mercy to make distress vanish, and to chase away misery. He himself carried off our infirmities, and bore away our sicknesses. But, not satisfied with giving repeated checks to death's ministers, he trampled on the grim monster himself. Death, who often delights in selecting

youthful victims, seizes on an interesting child of twelve years of age. The distressed parent, who had implored the aid of Jesus so long as there was life, sends to intimate to him, that his interference would now come too late. But when is it ever too late for the mercy or the might of our Redeemer? The body is laid out for funeral; but while they all weep and bewail her, he taketh her by the hand, and calleth, saying, "Maid, arise!" and her spirit comes again, and she arises straightway; and so death is plagued. On another occasion, they are carrying to the grave the only son of a widowed mother, when they are met by Jesus; and he touches the bier, and they that bear it, awed by his manner, stand still, and in answer to his summons, the young man sits up, and begins to speak; and he delivers him alive and well to his mother; and so death is plagued. In process of time, however, he dares to lay hold on a bosom friend of Christ, and retains him for several days in his dark prison-house. But Jesus has only to repair thither, and, with a voice well known to death, he cries, "Lazarus, come forth!" and he does come forth; and so death is plagued. Yet these were only single and scattered trophies—the earnest of the grand conquest that was soon to follow; for we remark,—

3. Christ proved himself the plague of death, by his own death and resurrection. These were the chief means and instruments of his illustrious triumphs. He plagued death most of all in the very act of himself dying. Even when crucified in much apparent weakness, he shows his power in quickening and saving dead souls, by taking the penitent thief with him to his glory—yca, and in quickening dead bodies too, for "Jesus, when he had cried with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost; and behold! the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." How wonderful this method of destroying death, by himself becoming subject to it! He came to live as a man, expressly that he might die as a man; and his death was essential to his victory—when he fell, he conquered. The prince of darkness imagined that he had him at length under his dominion, who had so often baffled his designs and destroyed his works. But his triumph is

short-lived; the light of the third morning dissolves the mystery, for it exhibits the Prince of Life bursting asunder death's bands, and leading captivity captive. And then is it known, that by the blood Christ has poured out unto the death, he has expiated the guilt of his people, and secured their eternal redemption; by that ignominious and accursed cross, he has spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it; by that apparent submission to death he has only been pursuing him into his own dominions—has fought him on his own ground, and with his own weapons—has given the last enemy the last mortal blow, and by a wisdom worthy of Deity, through death has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Being raised from the dead, he dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. And while he lives, he reigns; for this end he both died and rose, and received that he might be Lord and Judge both of the quick and dead.

4. Christ has proved himself, and will yet prove himself, the plague of death, by extending to his people all the benefits of his own death and resurrection. Neither in dying nor in living does he stand alone; he appears as the representative of others; and the fruits of his every suffering and sacrifice, his every toll and triumph, he imparts to his believing and beloved people. Are they dead in the eye of law, condemned by its righteous sentence? He has given himself a ransom for them; and there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Are they dead in sin? Then does he quicken to a life of righteousness by the exceeding greatness of that power by which he rose from the dead, and gradually subdues in them the power and prevalence of sin by the might of his living and life-giving Spirit. Are they afraid of the death of the body? But in this as in every other respect, he died for them; he tasted death for them; with a magnanimous devotedness, far exceeding that of the fabled Roman patriot, he threw himself into the yawning gulf. As their high priest he first passed the Jordan of death, to assure them of a safe and easy passage after him. He has been their forerunner through the dark valley; he knows every step of the journey, "the lions' dens, and the mountains of leopards." Need they be afraid to follow

where their Shepherd has led the way, and is waiting to receive them? Guided by his rod, and supported by his staff, may they not triumphantly exclaim, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of deadly shade, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me!" Their bodies must die, but are they to be for ever under the power of death? Not the meanest particle of their dust is the property of their Lord, and he may not lose one iota of his redeemed, purchased possession. They shall not always remain in the hands of death, for Jesus here engages to reclaim them from his power—nay, to annihilate the existence, and the very name of death, as by a burning plague, or a series of devouring pestilences. "For he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet." The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. "My dead men shall live. I will raise them up at the last day." No stranger's hand shall be allowed to interfere with their scattered and sleeping ashes. The Redeemer of the soul shall be the Saviour of the body. The author of their salvation shall be its finisher. He himself shall change the evil body, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. And then shall come to pass the saying that is written, "Mortality is swallowed up in life—death is swallowed up in victory!" The text speaks of all this as *future*, but an Apostle represents it as if "already past." He *hath* abolished death—because all the results of his death are as fully secured as if they had been actually realized. With him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, purpose and execution are the same; and it was when looking forward through the long vista of future ages to the last day of time—when the souls of his ransomed people shall be found quickened, purified, perfected, and their bodies shall be raised, transformed, glorified, and as the immortal Saviour he shall reign over an immortal Church, that foreseeing the travail of his spirit, he was satisfied, and anticipating the full extent of his triumphs,

he exclaimed, "O death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction!" Well may the dwellers on earth respond in grateful accents: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Dying sinners! death is your plague—ye know it! If a messenger from God were at this moment to intimate to you, that you are to die within the next twenty-four hours, the stoutest heart here would quail, the boldest face would gather blackness. But let me plainly ask you, What security have you, that such shall not be your fate? Is not God telling you, by the often-repeated and long-continued visitations of a deadly plague, that the case supposed may peradventure arise to any one of us? You cannot be surer of life to-day, than was he who died yesterday. And, O my friends! treat our Gospel *now* as you may, when death shall come near to you in conscious reality, nothing will *then* be able to afford you solid comfort or satisfying rest, save a believing interest in Christ's death, and a good hope through grace from Christ's resurrection.

Christians! ye who yesterday at his table, professed to seek above all things to know him in the power of his sufferings, and in conformity to his death—be it still, through life, your blessed employment, out of the depths of this world's desolations, to seek unto him who can heal your every plague, soothe your every sorrow, be your light and defence in the darkest times, and turn the very shadow of death into the morning of gladsome day. Make Jehovah Jesus your refuge, even the most high Redeemer your Mediator, and if He cover you with his feathers, and if under his wings you trust, you need not be afraid of the noisome pestilence of darkness, nor the wasting destruction of noon. For while he will permit no real evil to baffle you in this world, with long life in his own happy Heaven will he satisfy you, and show you his salvation. Amen.

I N D E X.

	No.	Page.
ANDERSON, REV. WILLIAM, Glasgow.		
<i>The Recovery of our Lost Sonship</i> —1 John iii. 2.	10	114
BAIRD, the Very Rev. G. H., D.D., Edinburgh.		
<i>On the Judgments of God</i> —Isaiah xvi. 9.	1	1
BLATTIE, REV. ALEXANDER O., D.D., Glasgow.		
<i>The Advantages of Practical Religion</i> —1 Tim. iv. 8.	15	175
BEGG, REV. JAMES, A.M., Paisley.		
<i>Christ's Last Charge to his Apostles</i> —Mark xvi. 15.	21	431
BELFRAGE, REV. HENRY, D.D., Falkirk.		
<i>The Course of the Gospel</i> —Zech. xiv. 8.	8	91
BROWN, REV. JOHN, D.D., Edinburgh.		
<i>Reflections on the Massacre of Ephraim's Children</i> —1 Chron.		
vii. 21, 22.	27	320-325
BROWN, REV. JOHN, D.D., Edinburgh.		
<i>The Prevention of Sin a Great Blessing</i> —1 Sam. xxv. 32.	33	389
BURNS, REV. ROBERT, D.D., Paisley.		
<i>The Spiritual Temple of Jehovah</i> —Zech. vi. 13.	3	29
BURNS, REV. ROBERT, D.D., Paisley.		
<i>The Character of Herod Antipas</i> —Mark vi. 20.	35	416
CARSWELL, REV. WILLIAM, Eaglesham.		
<i>The Love of God to Man</i> —John iii. 16.	16	187
CHALMERS, REV. THOMAS, D.D., S.S.T.P., Edinburgh.		
<i>The Use of the Law</i> —1 Tim. i. 8.	15	169
CHALMERS, REV. THOMAS, D.D., S.S.T.P., Edinburgh.		
<i>The Use of the Law</i> —1 Tim. i. 8.	20	229
CRAIG, REV. EDWARD, A.M., Edinburgh.		
<i>The Lot of Man's Inheritance on Earth</i> —Job xiv. 22.	29	334-337
DEWAR, REV. DANIEL, D.D., Glasgow, (now of Aberdeen.)		
<i>The Care of God over Believers</i> —Luke xii. 32.	6	68
DEWAR, REV. DANIEL, D.D., Glasgow, (now of Aberdeen.)		
<i>The Duty and Reward of Christian Fidelity</i> —Rev. ii. 9.	23	423
DICK, late Rev. JOHN, D.D., Glasgow.		
<i>Reconciliation to God</i> —2 Cor. v. 19.	13	207
DICKSON, REV. DAVID, D.D., Edinburgh.		
<i>The Dangers to which the Young are Exposed, and their Remedy</i>		
—Psalm cxix. 9.	29	343-349
DICKSON, REV. DAVID, D.D., Edinburgh.		
<i>The Character and Blessedness of those who die in the Lord</i> —		
Rev. xiv. 13.	39	457

	No.	Page.
EWING, Rev. GERVILLE, Glasgow.		
<i>On the death and burial of Stephen—Acts viii. 1, 2.</i>	24	288
FINLAY, Rev. JOHN, Perth.		
<i>Christian Obedience—Philip. i. 27.</i>	11	121-142
FORBES, Rev. JOHN, Glasgow.		
<i>The Sin of Overcarefulness concerning Temporal Objects—</i> <i>Philip. iv. 6.</i>	5	49
GEDDES, late Rev. JOHN, D.D., Glasgow.		
<i>Sacramental Address.</i>	10	120
GEDDES, late Rev. JOHN, D.D., Glasgow.		
<i>The Excellency of the Word of God—Psalm cxxviii. 2.</i>	21	247
GORDON, Rev. ROBERT, D.D., Edinburgh.		
<i>The Danger of Formal Worship—Isaiah xxix. 13, 14.</i>	4	37
GRANT, Rev. JAMES, South Leith.		
<i>The Duty and Nature of the Love of God—1 John iv. 13.</i>	7	73
GRANT, Rev. JAMES, South Leith.		
<i>Reasons why Good Men may look forward with desire to the ter-</i> <i>mination of Life—Job vii. 16.</i>	26	301
GRANT, Rev. JAMES, South Leith.		
<i>Our Times are in the Hand of God—Psalm xxxi. 15.</i>	26	306
GREY, Rev. HENRY, A.M., Edinburgh.		
<i>The Character of the Gospel, and the Character and Blessedness</i> <i>of Believers—James i. 25.</i>	2	13
GREY, Rev. HENRY, A.M., Edinburgh.		
<i>Celebration of the Sacrament in St. Mary's Church, Edinburgh.</i>	13	145-157
GUN, Rev. ADAM, A.M., Glasgow.		
<i>The Final Judgment and Ground of Acquittal—Job xxxi. 14.</i>	12	133
HARVEY, Rev. ALEXANDER, Glasgow.		
<i>The Judgments of God Improved—Isaiah xvi. 9.</i>	23	270-311
HUNTER, Rev. JOHN, Edinburgh.		
<i>The Infinite Importance of Salvation—Romans x. 1.</i>	31	366
HUNTER, Rev. JOHN, Edinburgh.		
<i>On the Dangers to which the Young are exposed from the En-</i> <i>ticement of Sinners—Prov. i. 10.</i>	37	433
INGLIS, late Rev. JOHN, D.D., Edinburgh.		
<i>The Beneficial Tendency of affliction—Psalm cxix. 71.</i>	3	25
JOHNSTON, Rev. JOHN, A.M., Glasgow.		
<i>The Purposes which the Transfiguration of Christ was calculated</i> <i>to serve—Luke ix. 28-31.</i>	4	42
JOHNSTON, late Rev. JOHN, Edinburgh.		
<i>The Duty of Observing the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—</i> <i>Acts xviii. 21.</i>	9	103
LOBIMER, Rev. J. G., Glasgow.		
<i>The Difficulties of the Priestly Office—2-Cor. ii. 16.</i>	6	85-106
LOBIMER, Rev. J. G., Glasgow.		
<i>On the Restoration of the Jews to their own land and Conversion</i> <i>to the Faith of Christ—Isaiah xi. 11-13.</i>	34	397-409

	No.	Page
MACFARLAN, the Very Rev. DUNCAN, D.D., Glasgow.		
<i>The Profanation of the Sabbath</i> —Ezekiel xxi. 8.	17	193
MACGILCHRIST, Rev. JOHN, Edinburgh.		
<i>The Glory of Christ</i> —Luke xxiv. 26.	17	199-205
MARR, Rev. DAVID, Edinburgh.		
<i>On the Miraculous Cure of the Leprosy</i> —Luke v. 12—15.	18	212
MARRIOTT, Rev. WILLIAM HENRY, A.M., Edinburgh.		
<i>The Duties of Christians under the Present Dispensation of Pestilence</i> —Hab. iii. 5.	32	388
MARSDEN, Rev. G., London.		
<i>Christ the Hope of Glory</i> —Colos. i. 27, 28.	11	127
MARSHALL, Rev. JAMES, A.M., Edinburgh.		
<i>Scriptural Encouragement to Prayer</i> —Luke xi. 9.	6	61
MARSHALL, Rev. JAMES, A.M., Edinburgh.		
<i>God's Hatred of Sin</i> —Psalm v. 4, 5.	19	217
MITCHELL, Rev. JOHN, D.D., S.S.T.P., Glasgow.		
<i>On the Judgments of God</i> —Psalm cxlvii. 20.	2	18
MITCHELL, Rev. JOHN, D.D., S.S.T.P. Glasgow.		
<i>The Defective Amiabilitys of the Young</i> —Mark x. 21.	27	319
MITCHELL, Rev. GRAHAM, A.M., Whitburn.		
<i>The Ascension of Christ and its Glorious Results</i> —Psalm lxviii. 18.	32	373
MORREN, Rev. N., A.M., Greenock.		
<i>Death the Plague of Sinners, and Christ the Plague of Death</i> — Hosea xiii. 14.	39	467-469
MUIRHEAD, Rev. GEORGE, D.D., Cramond.		
<i>On Near Intercourse with God</i> —Psalm lxxxi. 10.	28	265
MUTER, Rev. ROBERT, D.D., Glasgow.		
<i>The Unchangeable Nature of the Love of God to Man</i> —Zeph. iii. 17.	20	286
M'CRIE, Rev. THOMAS, D.D., Edinburgh.		
<i>The Sufferings of Christ</i> —Mark xv. 25.	5	58
M'FARLAN, Rev. PATRICK, D.D., Glasgow (now of Greenock).		
<i>The Duty of Imitating God</i> —Ephes. v. 1.	21	241
M'NAUGHTAN, Rev. J., Paisley.		
<i>The Glad Tidings of the Word of God</i> —Rev. xiv. 6.	9	97
M'NAUGHTON, Rev. ALEXANDER, Milngavie.		
<i>The Opening Prospects of the Church</i> —1 Cor. xvi. 9.	19	222
NAPIER, Rev. PETER, Glasgow.		
<i>Character of the Followers of Christ</i> —Acts iv. 18.	38	451
PAUL, Rev. JOHN, Edinburgh.		
<i>The Reign of the Lord, a Source of Consolation</i> —Rev. xix. 6.	25	289
PEDDIE, Rev. JAMES, D.D., Edinburgh.		
<i>Lecture</i> —JONAH i. 15—ii. 7.	12	189
PEDDIE, Rev. JAMES, D.D., Edinburgh.		
<i>Sacramental Address.</i>	14	168

	No.	Page
PURDIE, REV. WILLIAM, Libberton.		
<i>Peace with God</i> —Romans v. 1.	80	353
PURDIE, REV. WILLIAM, Libberton.		
<i>Charge to the Pastor and Congregation, on the Induction of the Rev. John Hunter, to the Tron Church, Edinburgh.</i>	81	361
RITCHIE, REV. DAVID, D.D., Edinburgh.		
<i>Love to Christ</i> —John xv. 9.	10	100
RENWICK, REV. ROBERT, Edinburgh.		
<i>The Duty of Commemorating the Death of Christ</i> —1 Cor. xi. 24.	34	404
ROBERTSON, REV. JAMES, (late of South Leith.)		
<i>On the Character of the Friends of Christ</i> —John xv. 14.	24	277
RUSSELL, REV. MICHAEL, LL.D., Leith.		
<i>The Gain of the World, the Loss of the Soul</i> —Mark viii. 36, 37.	28	330
SINCLAIR, REV. JOHN, A.M., Edinburgh.		
<i>On Moral Discipline, or the Analogies between Youth, con- sidered as a State of Preparation for Manhood, and the Present Life for the Life to Come</i> —Luke xi. 62.	38	445
SMITH, REV. JAMES, A.M., Glasgow.		
<i>The Perpetuity and Imperishable Nature of the Religion of Christ</i> —Psalm lxxii. 5.	22	259
STRUTHERS, REV. GAVIN, Glasgow.		
<i>United Exertion</i> —1 Sam. x. 26.	7	78
SMART, REV. WILLIAM, Paisley.		
<i>The Duty of Following Peace with all Men</i> —Heb. xii. 14.	57	489
WELSH, REV. DAVID, D.D., Edinburgh.		
<i>The Happiness of the Redeemed</i> —Rev. xv. 3.	16	181
WELSH, REV. DAVID, D.D., Glasgow.		
<i>The Glory of God in the Mission of Christ</i> —John xii. 28.	29	253
WARDLAW, REV. RALPH, D.D., Glasgow.		
<i>On the Agency of God in Human Calamities</i> —Amos iii. 6.	1	6
WILLIS, REV. MICHAEL, A.M., Glasgow.		
<i>The Peculiar Privileges of Believers in Christ</i> —2 Cor. i. 21, 22.	38	315

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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