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THE REV.^d JOHN CLOWES, M.A.

SERMONS
ON THE
PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS,
AND ON
SEVERAL OTHER IMPORTANT SUBJECTS
OF
CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE,

PREACHED IN THE
PARISH CHURCH OF ST. JOHN,
MANCHESTER,

BY THE REV. J. CLOWES, M. A.

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AND LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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TO THE
CHURCH - WARDENS, SIDESMEN,
AND THE REST OF
THE CONGREGATION
OF
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, MANCHESTER,
THIS VOLUME OF SERMONS,

Written originally for their instruction, and now first printed, in the spirit of devout prayer that it may be instrumental in promoting their eternal interests, is **RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED** by their affectionate Pastor,

JOHN CLOWES.

Warwick, February 6th, 1828.



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ERRATA.

Page 5, Line 6, after *which* read *took their lamps, and*
 Page 155, line 9 from the bottom, for *presentnd* read *presented*.



ON THE

PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS.



SERMON I.

ON THE VIRGINS TAKING THEIR LAMPS, &c.

MATT. XXV. 1. *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom,*

THESE words form the beginning of a parable, commonly called *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, as it was delivered by the GREAT SAVIOUR for the instruction and edification of His Church, or people, in all future ages. They are the beginning therefore of a short and sententious way of speaking and teaching, by which that GREAT SAVIOUR was accustomed, under the cover of external imagery, derived from external and natural things of this world, to convey the sublime and spiritual lessons of the ETERNAL TRUTH, of which He was the bright manifestation, organ, and parent in this lower world. For by a *parable* is meant a *comparison* made between things, which bear, in their respective states, a similitude to each other, and

by that similitude may serve to illustrate more clearly the meaning of the person who makes the comparison. Such a similitude, in many instances, may exist between the natural objects of this world, and this in such a manner and degree, that the nature and character of one natural object may be applied, in the way of comparison, to explain and make known the nature and character of another. It may exist also between the natural objects of this world and the spiritual objects of another world, since both worlds having the same common origin, viz. the **ETERNAL WORD**, and being thus the creation of the same **GOD**, there is every reason to believe that between them a certain agreement, harmony, or what may be termed correspondence, has been established, and this of such a nature, that the visible objects of this lower and natural world may be applied to express the invisible objects of the higher and spiritual world. **JESUS CHRIST** accordingly adopts this mode of expression, as may be seen from all His parables, but from none more clearly than from that, to which I am desirous to call your present attention, viz. the parable of the *Ten Virgins*.

May I then bespeak your patient hearing whilst I endeavour to unfold the sublime lessons of spiritual and saving wisdom, involved in the whole and

every part of this instructive parable! And may the DIVINE SPEAKER, by His HOLY SPIRIT, impress deeply on all our hearts it's most important and blessed contents!—I shall begin with the words of my text, “*Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which went forth to meet the bridegroom.*”

These words resolve themselves into three distinct points of consideration,

- 1st, What is meant by the *kingdom of heaven* ;
- 2ndly, Why this kingdom of heaven is *likened unto ten virgins* ; and
- 3rdly, What we are to understand by these virgins *taking their lamps, and going forth to meet the bridegroom.*

In regard to the *first* of these points, it is evident from the revelation, which the ALMIGHTY has been pleased to make respecting Himself and His eternal kingdom, that *heaven* is the blessed abode of those who love and fear Him, as *hell* is the miserable abode of those who reject his love and fear. This blessed abode, called *heaven*, is distinguished also by the appellation of a *kingdom*, because the term *kingdom* implies *rule and government*, and thus, when applied to *heaven*, signifies and announces the rule and government of GOD. But the rule and government of GOD is the rule

and government of His Infinite Love, Wisdom, and Power, and hence we may conclude, that wheresoever, or in whomsoever, this rule and government prevails, there is *heaven*, whether it be found amongst angels above, or amongst men below. JESUS CHRIST accordingly announces the *nearness* of this kingdom to the inhabitants of this lower world, [Matt. iv. 17. Mark i. 15.] and even declares concerning His followers, that it is *within* them, [Luke xvii. 21.] with the blessed view of instructing us, that GOD is ever present with His children in the deep centre of their own bosoms, earnestly intent on the establishment of His own kingdom of love, of wisdom and of power, in their penitent and believing hearts. We are not therefore to suppose that *heaven* is *distant* from us by any measure of space, and thus that it is removed beyond the sun, the moon and the stars of this natural world, but we are rather to suppose that it is as *near* to us as we are to ourselves, and that it may be found even *within* ourselves, whensoever we will there look for it in the true spirit of evangelical faith, repentance, and obedience.

But at what an interesting and edifying conclusion are we here arrived! For it is evident that there is not a moment of our lives, in which we have not GOD and heaven and angels ever present

with us, labouring with all the ardency of unlimited love, and with all the light and power of unlimited wisdom, to open and establish in us their own *kingdom* of righteousness, purity and peace. Yet possibly we still complain of our natural disorders ; of the violence of our passions ; of the baseness of our purposes ; - of the blindness of our understandings ; of the infirmities, the defilements, and the miseries which beset us : But are we aware that our remedy is as near as our disease, and that consequently we have no just grounds of complaint ? Are we aware, I say, that the GOD of mercy, manifested and brought near to us in the Divine Person of JESUS CHRIST, is ever waiting, with all the tenderness of a FATHER, and with all the might of Omnipotence, to silence all our murmuring, by removing all our grievances, or to express it in His own words, by *forgiving all our iniquities, by healing all our diseases, by redeeming our life from destruction, by crowning us with loving-kindness and tender mercies ?* [Psalm ciii. 3, 4.] Are we thus aware, that we have nothing to complain of but ourselves, or, what is the same thing, our sins and our follies, our selfishness and worldly-mindedness, which prevent our accepting the kind invitation of our GOD and SAVIOUR, where He says to all His children, “ *Come unto ME all ye*

“*that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,*” and which consequently prevent our entering into the *kingdom of heaven*? For what is the *rest* which JESUS CHRIST gives to His penitent and believing children, but deliverance from all their natural disorders and miseries, by virtue of the admission of His divine rule and government into their hearts, their understandings and lives?

But *secondly*—*The kingdom of heaven*, of which we are here speaking, is *likened*, in the words of my text, *unto ten virgins*. Let us proceed then to enquire what is the ground of this similitude, by considering what is to be understood by *ten virgins*.

In the WORD OF GOD we often read of *virgins*, as of *the virgin the daughter of Zion*, also of *the virgin the daughter of Jerusalem*, &c. inasmuch as by *Zion* and *Jerusalem* is signified the LORD’S church here on earth, by *Zion* the church, or the members of the church, who are more principled in the good of heavenly love, and by *Jerusalem* the church, or the members of the church, who are more principled in heavenly truth, or the doctrine of the good of heavenly love.

By *virgins* therefore we are to understand the members of the LORD’S church here on earth, and

by *ten* the whole of those members ; and since the members of the LORD'S church are what constitute the church, therefore *the kingdom of heaven* is here said to be *likened* unto them. The reason is, because heaven above and the church below *make one*, by virtue of their reception of the same holy principles of life, whether voluntary, intellectual, or practical. For an angel of heaven is not an angel in consequence of any thing of *his own* which he possesses, but only in consequence of the love, the wisdom, and the life which he derives from his HEAVENLY FATHER. In like manner a member of the church here below is not a member of the church, in consequence of any thing which he possesses as *his own*, but only in consequence of the graces, virtues and excellencies which he derives from the DIVINE SOURCE of all grace, virtue and excellence ; in other words, from the MANIFESTED GOD, Whose high and holy name is JESUS CHRIST.

But at what a blessed and edifying conclusion are we here again arrived ! For what can be more blessed, or what more edifying, than to be assured, that so near and interesting a relationship subsists between angels and men ; a relationship grounded not in any worldly considerations respecting the dignity either of natural birth, natural talents, or

natural possessions, but respecting concerns of infinitely higher moment? For are we wise to renounce our sins and our follies, and thus to enroll ourselves, or suffer ourselves to be enrolled, amongst the members of the LORD's true and living church here on earth? From that moment we enter into a holy communion and fellowship with the angels in heaven; we become the happy children of the same HEAVENLY FATHER; we have the same ALMIGHTY ARM for our strength and security; we eat of the same bread and drink of the same cup; our wills, our understandings, and our lives are elevated to the same sanctity of love, of wisdom, and of life, which forms the bliss and permanency of the heavenly host. In short, we have the heavenly host for our brethren, our companions, and our protectors, according as it is written, "*The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him,*" [Psalm xxxiv. 7.] and again, "*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*" [Heb. i. 14.]

But *thirdly*—It is said concerning the *ten virgins* in the parable of which we are treating, that they "*took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom*"—It remains then to be considered what we are here to understand by these

virgins *taking their lamps*; and what also by their *going forth to meet the bridegroom*.

In regard to the first of these considerations, viz. what is to be understood by *taking their lamps*, it must be evident to every intelligent person, that the expression is to be interpreted according to its *spiritual* meaning, and not merely as to its *natural* sense, inasmuch as it has reference to the members of the LORD'S church here on earth in their *going forth to meet their DIVINE BRIDEGROOM JESUS CHRIST*, Who cannot be *met* according to the *natural* signification of the term *meeting*, but only according to the *spiritual* signification.

By the *lamps* therefore here spoken of are not to be understood *natural* lamps, or those lamps which are of use to give light to the *body*, but *spiritual* lamps, or those lamps which are serviceable to give light to the *soul*, which lamps are no other than the bright truths of GOD'S MOST HOLY WORD, according to what is written, "*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*" [Psalm cxix. 105.] For as a *natural lamp* is of benefit in the darkness of *natural* night, to direct men from place to place in this lower world, so as to prevent their mistaking their way, and thus plunging themselves into danger and

mischief, in like manner a *spiritual lamp*, which is the truth of GOD'S MOST HOLY WORD, is of benefit in the darkness of *spiritual* night, to guide man in his way to heaven, and thus to prevent his going astray from the right path, and thereby plunging himself into dangers and mischiefs, a thousand times more terrible than any which can befall the body.

Every Christian therefore, or every member of the LORD'S church, like the *virgins* in the parable, is careful to *take* his *spiritual lamp*, whensoever he *goes forth to meet the bridegroom*, since without the *spiritual light* of GOD'S MOST HOLY WORD, it is impossible for him either to *go forth*, or to *meet* the GREAT SAVIOUR, now in glory, by virtue of His full union with the ETERNAL FATHER. For without *spiritual light* in the understanding, he cannot know Who this SAVIOUR is, still less can he know what is to be understood by *going forth and meeting Him*. He fancies therefore that the *going forth*, spoken of in the parable, has reference to the *body*, not being at all aware that it relates only to the exertions of the *mind*, that is to say, of the *will* and *understanding*, since no approach can now be made to JESUS CHRIST but by the *love* of Him in the *will*, and the knowledge of Him in the *understanding*. In

like manner he is mistaken respecting what is meant by *meeting* this GREAT and HOLY GOD, not aware again that by *meeting*, on this occasion, is not to be understood *personal* meeting, but *conjunction of life and love*, and that consequently no Christian can ever be said properly to *meet* JESUS CHRIST, only so far as he finds delight in the *love* of Him, and in a *life* according to His precepts of love and charity.

Here then may be discovered the reason, why the ten virgins in the parable are first described as *taking their lamps*, and in the next place, as *going forth to meet the bridegroom*. It is because the light of heavenly truth in the understanding is the first requisite for man's guidance in the great work of his regeneration and salvation, since until man is illuminated by this light, it is absolutely impossible for him to stir a step in the important business, described in the parable, of *meeting the BRIDE-GROOM*, or what is the same thing, attaining conjunction of life and love with JESUS CHRIST; or, what still amounts to the same, *putting off the old man, and putting on the new*.

But let us mark now the blessed effects of the above light, whensoever man becomes, as he ought to become, faithful and obedient to it's dictates.

Previous to the reception of this light, he had indeed *gone forth*, but then his *going forth* was merely amongst the temporal objects of this lower world, to which he was attracted by the love of glory, of gain, or of some other enchanting delusion. In the mean time all the grand realities of an eternal world were concealed from his view, at least the sight of them was so faint and obscure, as to produce no effect on his conduct. He was therefore totally immersed, as to his best affections and thoughts, in the cares and pleasures of *bodily* life, whilst the higher joys and interests of *spiritual* and *everlasting* life were accounted as things of no moment, and were accordingly disregarded. But lo ! the Scripture is at length again fulfilled, where it is written, “*God said, Let there be light, and there was light.*” Enlightened therefore by this light, he beholds new prospects. The doors of an eternal world are opened to his delighted eyes, and he sees what he could not see before, that the present world, with all its concerns, are but as *shadows*, when compared with the *glory that shall be revealed*. Now then it comes to pass, that he *goes forth* to secure objects worth securing, viz. the love and the favour of GOD ; deliverance from the tyranny of his passions ; renovation of his whole heart and soul in the divine image and

likeness ; a blessed introduction to the society of the children of GOD ; in short, all that incalculable multitude of honours, of glories, of joys and of delights, involved in the emphatic language well understood,—“ *to meet the BRIDEGROOM.*”

For what shall we say is involved in this most sacred and significant name THE BRIDEGROOM, and to Whom is the name applied ? every one knows that the term BRIDEGROOM expresses all that is most endearing in affection, and most honourable and dignified in character. If we look too into the Old Testament, we shall there find, that this most holy and interesting title is assumed by JEHOVAH Himself, to denote the sacred relationship subsisting between Himself and His church, or people, for thus it is written, “ *As the BRIDEGROOM rejoiceth over the Bride, so shall thy GOD rejoice over thee,*” [Isaiah lxii. 5.] And if we further consult the pages of the New Testament, we shall be further delighted at the discovery, that the same holy title is applied to the GREAT SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, or the MANIFESTED JEHOVAH, concerning Whom John the Baptist thus testifies, “ *He that hath the bride is the BRIDEGROOM ; but the friend of the BRIDEGROOM, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom’s voice : This my*

“*joy therefore is fulfilled,*” [John iii. 29.] **JESUS CHRIST** Himself also confirmeth this testimony, where He saith, “*Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn whilst the BRIDEGROOM is with them? But the days will come when the BRIDEGROOM shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast,*” [Matt. ix. 15.] in which words it is manifest, that this **GREAT REDEEMING GOD** assumes the same Divine title of **BRIDEGROOM**, under His revelation of Himself in the flesh, which He had before assumed previous to that revelation.

From this combined authority then of evidence, resulting from the express declarations both of the Old and New Testaments, we are fully warranted in establishing the interesting conclusion, *first*, that the **JEHOVAH** of the Old Testament and the **JESUS** of the New, are the same identical Being, differing from each other, only as that which is manifested in a body of flesh and blood differs from that which is not so manifested; and *secondly*, that the **DIVINE BEING**, recorded in the parable under the high and holy appellation of **BRIDEGROOM**, is none other than **JESUS CHRIST**, or **JEHOVAH** brought near as a **GOD-MAN**, for the blessed purpose of calling all mankind to Himself, that He might enter into an eternal conjunction with them of holy love and wisdom, and that thus

might be accomplished what was afterwards written,
 “ *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to*
 “ *Him, for the marriage of the LAMB is come,*
 “ *and His wife hath made herself ready.*” [Rev.
 xix. 7.]

To conclude—What a volume of interesting instruction is opened for our perusal and edification in the words of which we have been treating! For we are here informed of a *kingdom*, called *the kingdom of heaven*, in which the ALMIGHTY has His eternal throne, ruling His happy subjects in agreement with the blessed laws of His Own Divine Love, Wisdom and Peace. We learn too that this heavenly kingdom bears some resemblance to that providential dominion which the same ALMIGHTY FATHER has established here on earth, for we read that it is *like unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the BRIDEGROOM*. We are further instructed that under the name and character of these ten *virgins* are included all the families and individuals of families of mankind here on earth, since every man here below is born for the blessed purpose that he may finally become a joyful inhabitant of heaven. Every man therefore is gifted with more or less of information respecting the kingdom of

heaven, and in this sense is said to *take his lamp and go forth to meet the BRIDEGROOM*. Lastly we learn, that by **THE BRIDEGROOM** is here meant the **MANIFESTED GOD**, Whose high and holy name is **JESUS CHRIST**, and that by *going forth to meet this BRIDEGROOM* is to be understood every motion, tendency, or inclination of the mind to seek and acquire conjunction of life and love with that **EVERLASTING FATHER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH**.

What then remains, but that we henceforth bestir ourselves, with a seriousness and earnestness becoming the awful situation in which we are placed, to secure the bright crown of glory presented to our acceptance in that eternal kingdom, for the enjoyment of which we were created? What remains, I say, but that henceforth we open our eyes, or suffer them to be opened, to see that the love and favour of the **HEAVENLY BRIDEGROOM** is a prize of infinitely higher value than all the gain and glory and gratification of this lower world, and that consequently to *go forth to meet HIM*, as it is the most honourable and dignified of all human exertions, so is it the only one which can secure to us either peace of mind here, or a happy reception hereafter amongst that heavenly

host, who are *for ever* “*casting their crowns*
“*before the throne of the ALMIGHTY, and saying,*
“*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.*” [Rev. iv. 10, 11.] AMEN.

SERMON II.

ON THE FIVE WISE AND THE FIVE FOOLISH VIRGINS.

MATT. XXV. 2, 3, 4. *And five of them were wise, and five were foolish: They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

THESE words are a continuation of the instructive parable of the *ten virgins* treated of in a former discourse, in which I endeavoured to point out the lesson of edifying wisdom contained in the introductory words, "*Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.*"

The continuation, like the introduction, is replete with information, which demands the most profound attention of every Christian. For when JESUS CHRIST speaks, His voice is the voice of GOD HIMSELF, and of course must involve in it

whatsoever is most closely connected with the edification, the happiness and eternal interests of all His intelligent creatures.

Allow me then to endeavour to unfold to you the deep mysteries of divine teaching intended for our instruction, *first*, in the opposite characters here presented of the *ten virgins*, when it is said, *Five of them were wise and five were foolish*; and *secondly*, in the ground, or reason of this contrariety of character, when it is added, *They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps*.

First then let us see how our hearts and understandings were intended to be affected by the awful distinction here made of the ten virgins into the *five wise* ones, and the *five foolish* ones.

I call this an *awful* distinction, because it relates to the professors of religion in general, who are here described under the appellation of *ten virgins*. For what can be more *awful* than to think, that such a distinction can be applicable to such a description of people? To think, I say, that the charge of *folly* can be urged against any person, who enrolls his name amongst the worshippers of the GREAT and HOLY GOD; who confesses his belief in a divine revelation; who is in the

habit of repeating a holy creed, of offering up holy prayers, of singing holy psalms, of joining in the external forms of that adoration which is intended to elevate his heart and best affections to an eternal conjunction of life and peace with the **DIVINE FATHER** of his being. Can any consideration, I repeat it, be more *awful* than this, that even in a congregation of professing Christians, *folly* may have its proselytes, as well as *wisdom*, so that it may be said of every such assembly, as of the ten virgins in the parable, *Five of them were wise, and five were foolish?*

For let us enquire—What is it we are to understand by *wisdom* and *folly*, or by being *wise* and being *foolish*?—According to the common and natural acceptance of the terms, *wisdom*, or being *wise*, consists in fixing decidedly on some *useful end of life*, and in pursuing uninterruptibly the *means* conducive to the promotion and security of that *end*. On the other hand, *folly*, or being *foolish*, consists either in never determining on any *end of life*, or, if such end be determined on, in never pursuing the *means* necessary for its attainment, or, in some cases, in mistaking the *means* for the *end*, so as finally to lose sight of the *end*, and rest solely and securely in the practice of the *means*.

As for example—In the ordinary concerns of human life, every *wise* man regards *happiness* as the grand and supreme *end* which he ought constantly to keep in view, thus as the prime and pre-eminent object of his pursuit. But he soon discovers that this *end* cannot be accomplished without the *means* of obtaining it, and that these *means*, in regard to *temporal* happiness, consist principally in *health of body*, and also in the attainment of such a measure of *temporal wealth* and *reputation*, as his particular situation in life requires. In his search after *happiness* therefore, he is always careful to discriminate between the *end* and the *means*, or between the *happiness itself* and the *bodily health, wealth, and reputation* necessary to secure it, lest at any time he should either *neglect the means*, or should, on the contrary, pay them such undue regard, as to exalt them above the *end*, and thus finally lose sight of the *end*.

But let us observe now the conduct of a *foolish* man on this same occasion, that is to say, in regard to the pursuit and acquirement of *happiness*, as the grand *end* of human life. In some instances, this *foolish* man never reflects on any such *end*, but is content to pass his present days without any consideration of the future consequences of his

conduct. Of course, he never makes any distinction between *happiness* as the *end* which he has in view, and the *means* necessary to secure it, whether those means be *bodily health*, or *temporal wealth* and *reputation*. In other instances, however, the *foolish* man has the discernment to discover, that *happiness* ought to be exalted as the grand object and centre of all his purposes, and that *bodily health*, together with *temporal wealth* and *reputation*, are the *means* required for the attainment of that *end*. But mark now the wanderings of *human folly*, and the mistakes which it is continually making even in the promotion of its dearest interests ! For no sooner doth the *foolish* man discover the *means* conducive to his purpose, than he frequently forgets the *end*, to which those *means* were to conduct him, and fixes the whole bent of his mind, not on the *happiness* for which he set out in his journey of life, but on the *health*, *wealth*, *reputation*, &c. which were to lead him to the possession of it.

Such, beloved, are some of the more prominent marks and characters of *wisdom* and *folly*, as discoverable in common life, and even amongst those who have never suffered their mental eyes to be opened to the grand concerns of religion,

and to the pre-eminent interests presented to view by religious light and life.

But affecting and interesting as the above marks and characters are, there is still a *wisdom* and a *folly* of another and higher description, which has an infinitely superior claim on our attention and regard; I mean the *wisdom* and the *folly* manifested in the conduct of the *professors of religion*, or of those who call themselves the worshippers of the GOD OF HEAVEN, and are the candidates for the divine blessings of eternal life and happiness.

For let us turn our eyes now, in the first place, to note the *wise professor*, or one whose feet are guided by the light of *heavenly wisdom*, in his journey to that *heavenly Canaan*, which religion opens to his view, and presents to his acceptance.

Behold then this child of the MOST HIGH, or, what amounts to the same thing, this *wise virgin*, pursuing his sure and steady path to the realms of bliss! For he also, like other men, fixes on *happiness* as the grand object and *end* of all his purposes, but then the happiness, on which he fixes, is not a mere *temporal* happiness, or the happiness resulting from the prosperity of selfish and worldly designs, which has no other foundation than worldly wealth, reputation and delight. But *his* is an

eternal happiness, a bliss which is to endure for ever, because grounded in connection with eternal objects, such as God, His life, His love, and His everlasting kingdom. The first and pre-eminent concern therefore of this *wise virgin* is to maintain this connection unbroken, by devoting his whole heart and soul and mind to the service of God, and by thus joining his love with the divine love, his wisdom with the divine wisdom, and all his works with the divine operation. But he is well aware, at the same time, that every *end* requires *means* for it's accomplishment, and that consequently eternal happiness cannot be secured without the instrumentality of such *means*. He is aware also, because he is so taught by the light of divine revelation, that the *means* conducive to the possession of eternal bliss, consist principally in the great duties of *repentance* ; of *faith* in the MANIFESTED GOD, Whose high and holy name is JESUS CHRIST ; of *prayer*, or the opening and keeping open a daily communication with that God by an elevation of the affections and thoughts to His more immediate presence ; of *good works* also, or the upright performance of every engagement in society, to which his peculiar situation in life calls him ; to say nothing of *reading the Sacred Scriptures*, and of a regular attendance on that

sacrament of the HOLY SUPPER, which JESUS CHRIST ordained to be observed for ever in His Church.

The *wise* professor of religion then has an *end* in view in all his purposes, and he has likewise in view the *means*, by which that *end* is most likely to be secured. But the distinguishing characteristic of his *wisdom* is, that he never suffers the one to be separated from the other, in other words, that he never thinks of attaining the *end* without the *means*, or of applying the *means* as a substitute for the *end*. Whilst therefore he keeps his spiritual eye steadily fixed on conjunction with GOD in love, in wisdom, and in life, as the grand *end* of all religion, he is alike intent on the practice of the evangelical duties of *repentance*; of *faith* in the INCARNATE GOD; of *prayer*; of *good works*; of *reading the Sacred Scriptures*; and of attendance on the sacrament of the *Holy Supper*; as the divinely-appointed *means* for the attainment of that *end*.

Having thus then noted some of the more peculiar features of that *wisdom*, by which the *wise* professor of religion is at all times guided in his religious career, let me now call your attention to some of the more peculiar features of that *folly*, by which the *foolish* professor, or *foolish* virgin,

is deluded and misguided in his religious purposes.

Behold then this *foolish* professor, whilst, like the *wise* one, he appears to himself to regard an *eternal end*, and like the *wise* one, is persuaded also of the necessity of *means* to conduct him to that end ! But behold, at the same time, how *folly* can assume the aspect of *wisdom*, and how, under this disguise, it frequently imposes on it's unhappy votaries, and leads them to destruction ! For although this *foolish* professor has some regard to eternal happiness as an *end*, yet it never enters into his thought, to consider what eternal happiness properly is and means, and how it involves in it the close reciprocal conjunction of love and life on the part of man with love and life on the part of God. This *foolish virgin* therefore forgets that there can be no true happiness separate from God, and that consequently all true happiness is the result of the presence and operation of God. He forgets also that God is present and operative with man, only so far as His love and wisdom are present and operative, and that of course all true happiness is in the closest possible connection with that love and wisdom. Notwithstanding then the regard which the *foolish* professor of religion appears to pay to eternal happiness as the *final end* of all

his purposes and conduct, yet it is plain to see that, for want of considering the true nature and essence of such happiness, and how it is of divine origin, and composed of divine principles, his regard has no effect but to plunge him still deeper into the pit of error and of darkness.

And as this *foolish virgin* thus loses all sight of the *eternal end*, which he ought to keep continually before his eyes for guidance and direction, in like manner he loses sight also of the true and proper use of the *means*, which were intended to conduct him to that *end*, and thus renders them vain and unprofitable. For observe now his *repentance*, his *faith*, his *prayers*, his *good works*, his *reading the Holy Scriptures*, his *attendance on the Divine ordinance of the Holy Supper*, and his application to the other *means* of securing the divine favour, and you will be grieved to discover, that, in some instances, these *means* are rested in as *ends*, so that the true *end*, which is conjunction of life and love with God is entirely forgotten; whilst, in other instances, instead of humbling and abasing the deluded worshipper under a sense of his own unworthiness, as they were intended to do, they only nourish in him an idea of his own merit, and thus separate him further from God, by

exalting him in the dangerous conceit of his own fancied excellence and superior purity.

Having thus then considered what we are to understand by the distinct characters of *wisdom* and *folly*, which mark the conduct of the *wise* and *foolish* virgins in the parable, may I be allowed now to bespeak your further attention to the cause or ground of that distinction, as pointed at in the concluding words of my text, where it is written, "*They that were foolish took their lamps, but took no oil in them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*"

In these words we are informed, in as plain language as words can speak, that the sole cause, or ground of the distinction between the *wisdom* of the *wise* virgins and the *folly* of the *foolish* ones was simply and singly this, that the former, viz. the *wise* virgins, *took oil in their vessels with their lamps*, whereas the latter, or *foolish* virgins, *took no oil in their lamps*. We have only then to enquire what is here to be understood by *oil*, and by *taking*, or omitting to take it *in vessels with lamps*, and we shall then be enabled to see clearly, as by the light of a noon-day sun, what is the grand fundamental distinction between a *wise virgin* and a *foolish* one, or between *wisdom* and *folly* amongst the professors of religion.

I shall begin with the consideration of *oil*, or of the deep and instructive signification involved in the term, as it occurs in the Book of Revelation, or in the language of the MOST HIGH GOD.

Yet what Christian, who is in the habit of perusing the pages of the ETERNAL TRUTH, as every Christian ought to be, can be supposed ignorant, either of the *figurative* application of the term *oil* in the Sacred Scriptures, or of the divine and spiritual principles of which it is a figure? For that *oil*, in the BOOK OF GOD, is spoken of according to a *figurative* and *spiritual* idea, and not merely according to its *literal* and *natural* import, is manifest from the consideration that it is applied to GOD HIMSELF, and of necessary consequence must involve in it some principle elevated far above and out of the principles of nature. Thus it is written in the Book of Psalms, “*Thou anointest my head with oil,*” [Psalm xxiii. 5]; and again, “*Thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows,*” [Psalm xlv. 7.] in which passages it is evident that the term *oil* is not to be understood according to its common or literal signification, since it is impossible to suppose that, in such a sense, it can be used as an instrument in the hands of that DIVINE BEING, Who is so infinitely exalted above all that is *earthy* and *material*.

In like manner we are instructed, from the same divine oracles of the **ETERNAL TRUTH**, not only that *oil* is a *figurative* expression, involving in it a *spiritual* idea, and thus declarative of some *spiritual* principle, but likewise what that principle is, of which it is declarative. For that this principle must be divine and heavenly, consequently in connection with the divine love and purity, is manifest from the various applications of *oil* as enjoined in the divine oracles. Thus we read in those oracles, that the patriarch Jacob, after his remarkable dream concerning the *mysterious ladder*, on which *he saw the angels of God ascending and descending*, rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon it, [Gen. xxviii. 18.] Again we read how, in the Tabernacle, *Oil was to be taken for the light*, [Exod. xxv. 6]; and how in the consecration of Aaron's sons to minister before the **LORD**, "*unleavened bread was to be taken, and cakes unleavened tempered with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with oil*, [Exod. xxix. 2.] We read further, that in the consecration of Aaron it was commanded, among other ceremonies, "*Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and*

“*anoint him,*” [Exod. xxix. 7.] We read lastly, that it was of divine appointment in the Jewish Church, that not only *Priests*, but also *Kings*, were to be inaugurated into their respective offices by the *anointing of oil*.

And what now are we to conclude from these several applications of *oil*, as grounded in the wisdom and authority of the DIVINE LAWGIVER in the Israelitish Church? Is it reasonable to suppose that any *material substance*, such as *oil*, would have been selected by the ALMIGHTY, for such sacred purposes, unless it had involved, in it's *figurative* meaning, some *living principle* superior to *dead matter*? For what sanctity can be conceived to result from *matter*, if it be separated from *spirit*, and thus from *life* and *holiness*? We are compelled then, by every rational view of the subject under consideration, to acknowledge, in the *first* place, the *figurative* or *analogical* character of *oil*, wheresoever the term occurs in the Sacred Scriptures, and in the *second* place to believe that this character involves in it a living and heavenly principle from GOD Himself, consequently His mercy, His love, and all that compassionate tenderness, by and from which the FATHER OF HEAVEN, the GREAT I AM, regards his suffering children here on earth.

Behold here then, at one view, the true ground and cause of that difference and disagreement of character, which marked the *wise* and *foolish* virgins of whom we have been treating! “*They that were foolish, we read, took their lamps, and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*” For what is all this but saying, in so many words, and with a force of language which is irresistible, that the grand feature of discrimination, which distinguishes religious *folly* from religious *wisdom* is this, that *religious folly* is content with the *lamp of religious knowledge*, but makes little or no account of the *oil of religious love and life*; or, to express it otherwise, *religious folly* is satisfied with *assenting to a Creed*, but is indifferent about *keeping the Commandments*; or, to present it under another view, *religious folly* thinks it enough to have an *enlightened understanding*, and to fulfil those external duties which such an understanding sees to be reasonable, whilst, in the mean time, it is careless about the *purification of it's will*, or about that radical removal of the evils of selfish and worldly love, which are opposed to the love, the purity and the peace of the MOST HIGH GOD?

Do we wish then to pass out of the land of

religious folly, and to continue our spiritual journey towards the *heavenly Canaan*, or the land of *religious wisdom*? Do we wish thus no longer to be branded with the debasing name and title of *foolish virgins*, but, on the contrary, to secure to ourselves the bright and golden crown, which at once adorns, dignifies, and blesses the head of every *wise virgin*? We must then follow the example proposed for our imitation in the parable, where it is written, “*The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*” In other words, to the knowledge of truth, which we derive from it’s divine source the **WORD OF GOD**, we must join the *love of what is good*, and obedience to it’s dictates : Our *Creed* must thus be ever kept in close connection with the *Commandments*, agreeably with the divine precept, *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* We must no longer therefore rest our salvation on mere external forms, ceremonies and professions, howsoever holy and sacred they may *outwardly* appear, but we must consider seriously, what we *are within*, as well as what we seem to be *without* ; thus how far the sign of the cross is stamped on our *minds*, as well as upon our *foreheads*, and what agreement there is between the *intentions of our hearts* and the *prayers of our lips*. We must, in short, no

longer suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by the *brightness* of our *lamps*, but we must examine, and this in the presence of God, whether this brightness is the result of the *holy oil* of the divine love and goodness which they contain, or the mere sparkling of our own fancied sanctity, assumed for the low purpose of securing human credit and reputation, rather than with any heavenly design of connecting ourselves, and all our concerns, with the mercy, the favour and the approbation of our HEAVENLY FATHER, the GREAT and HOLY GOD.

To conclude—I should now proceed to consider the remainder of the instructive parable, of which I have been treating, but the present time will only permit me to press earnestly on your attention, as to a subject inseparable from your eternal interests, the proper marks and characters of *religious folly* and *religious wisdom* above adverted to, together with the *spiritual causes* in which they originate.

Let it then, from henceforth, remain engraven deep on all our hearts, as a truth which ought never to be forgotten, that all *folly*, and especially *religious folly*, consists, either in never fixing on any *definite end* to our pursuits, whether they regard this world or another, or in separating that *end* from the *means* proper for it's accomplish-

ment, so as finally to lose sight of the *end*, by adhering solely to the *means*. And let it be remembered with equal earnestness, as a truth of similar importance, that all *wisdom*, and especially *religious wisdom*, consists in elevating our minds, and keeping them elevated to an *eternal end*, such as God, His word, His providence and kingdom, and at the same time in adopting the *means* necessary for the attainment of this *end*, by *using* them, but without *abusing* them, in other words, by keeping them in submission to and close connection with their *end*, but never allowing them to exalt themselves in such a manner, as either to conceal the *end* from our view, or to usurp it's place.

When we have thus marked distinctly in our own minds the true characteristics of *folly* and of *wisdom*, or of *foolish* and *wise virgins*, our next concern must be, (and there cannot be a greater,) to trace up these characteristics to their true *cause*, or *source*, until we make the glad discovery, that *religious folly* originates in the thoughtless conduct of the *foolish virgins* in the parable, of whom it is written, that they *took their lamps, but took no oil with them*; but that *religious wisdom*, on the other hand, originates in the prudent conduct of the *wise virgins*, of whom it is written, that *they took oil in their vessels with their lamps*. It has

already been shown what is the proper language of these striking *figures* and how a *lamp without oil* is knowledge separate from the life of knowledge, thus the confession of the lips disjoined from the purpose of the heart ; or, to express it otherwise, intellectual light void of holy love and charity ; a *Creed* separate from the *Commandments* ; or notions and opinions undirected and unsanctified by that conjunction of life with the GREAT and HOLY GOD, to which all notions and opinions ought continually to point. *Oil*, on the other hand, *taken with the lamp*, means nothing else, and is nothing else, than the blessed conjunction of all the above principles, thus the conjunction of knowledge with the life of knowledge ; of the confession of the *lips* with the purpose of the *heart* ; of intellectual light with holy love and charity ; of a *Creed* with the *Commandments* ; and of every notion and opinion with it's only proper end, *conjunction of life with God*.

Who then amongst us is *wise*? Who amongst us is desirous to shun all the delusions of *folly*, and to have his eternal place hereafter amongst the children of wisdom? Let him then *bind for a sign upon his hand, and as frontlets between his eyes, and write them on the posts of his house, and on*

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his gates, these divine and never-to-be-forgotten words, "The foolish took their lamps, but took no oil in them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." AMEN.

SERMON III.

ON SLUMBERING AND SLEEPING.

MATT. XXV. 5. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.*

IN two former discourses on the parable, from which these words are taken, I have already endeavoured to show, what is properly to be understood by the *kingdom of heaven* being likened unto *ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom*; and what also by the distinct characters of these virgins, where it is written, “*Five of them were wise, and five were foolish; the foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*”

May I now bespeak your further attention and patience, whilst I labour to impress on your minds the additional lesson of heavenly instruction and of saving wisdom, to be collected from these words of the DIVINE SPEAKER, “*While the*

“ *bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept.*”

The words resolve themselves into two distinct propositions,

1st, What is here to be understood by the **BRIDEGROOM** *tarrying* ;

2ndly, What by *all* the virgins *slumbering* and *sleeping*.

In regard to the *first* of these propositions, viz. what is to be understood by the **BRIDEGROOM** *tarrying*, it is not easy to conceive that any Christian, who duly considers that by the **BRIDEGROOM** here spoken of is meant the *manifested* **GOD**, Whose high and holy name is **JESUS CHRIST**, can be in any doubt, or labour under any difficulty of apprehension. For by *tarrying*, in the common acceptation of the term, is implied some kind or degree of *delay* in the performance of some expected act, whether that delay be *real*, or only *apparent*. The term therefore may be applied, with the utmost propriety, to the **ALMIGHTY** Himself, since it is most reasonable to suppose, that **GOD** doth not always fulfil His purposes at the exact moment when men look for such fulfilment, in which case he will appear to *tarry*, notwithstanding the *speed*, with which the divine will of the **MOST HIGH** is at all times accomplished.

It will *seem* indeed to the mere natural man, as if an **OMNIPOTENT BEING**, such as **GOD** is, had no impediments, and could have none, to the *immediate* and *instantaneous* execution of His own counsels. For thus the natural man reasons with himself. Is not **GOD**, says he, **OMNIPOTENT**, and cannot Omnipotence instantly effect all it's purposes by a single motion of the *hand*, or by a single expression of the *voice*? What occasion then is there for **GOD** to *tarry*, when *in a moment* He can accomplish whatsoever His will is inclined to accomplish? In the present instance therefore, why should He keep the virgins *waiting* for His coming, and thus tempt them to *slumber* and to *sleep*, when yet, by a more hasty advent, He might have prevented those *drowsy* feelings, and by so doing, have given to the wise virgins an immediate introduction to the *marriage*?

Such alas! are the vain reasonings of the mere natural man, in regard to the **DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE**, which reasonings, in some instances, are extended to other cases of *divine delay*, and to cases too, connected with the very life and salvation of all intelligent creatures. For how often do we hear some such questions as the following, asked by those, who do not give themselves the

trouble to consult the pages of the **ETERNAL TRUTH** for information and satisfaction ! Why, say they, doth the **ALMIGHTY** lead man, in this lower world, through such a *tedious* process of purification and regeneration, preparatory to his admission into everlasting happiness, when yet He has it in his power to open the doors of heaven *immediately* to all His children, and thus to save them the trouble of a *long* and *tiresome* preparation ? Why doth the **DIVINE BRIDEGROOM** thus *tarry*, and in so doing expose His attendants to multiplied troubles and dangers, instead of admitting them *instantly* to the *marriage feast* of His own pure love, wisdom, and bliss ? For is not heaven (they argue) a place into which all alike are capable of being admitted, provided the Divine mercy be but willing to admit them ? What need then of *delay* in a matter of so much importance, and to what purpose is it that man is suffered to struggle *so long* with sin, with error, with infirmity and distress ?

Such, beloved, is the reasoning of the mere *natural man* on the important subject of salvation and eternal happiness.

But alas ! how plain is it to discover, from this reasoning, the truth of those words of the **MOST HIGH**, addressed by His prophet to all

such reasoners, where it is written, “ *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD : For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts !*” The error therefore of the natural man, in thinking about heaven and eternal happiness, evidently lies here, that he will not submit his own opinion, on this most interesting of all subjects, to be guided by the DIVINE OPINION, but will rather judge for himself *independently of God*, and in direct opposition to the wisdom which teacheth, “ *My thoughts are not your thoughts.*”

For did man but suffer his eyes to be opened by that ETERNAL WISDOM which saith, “ *Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,*” [John iii. 5.] he would then be enabled to see clearly, that *heaven*, or what is here called the *kingdom of God*, is a place, or rather a *state*, into which man cannot possibly be introduced without *previous preparation and qualification*, which preparation and qualification consist in *receiving a new birth*, in other words, in receiving *new principles of life, new purposes, new thoughts*, and all that change of disposition, of temper and of operation,

which, in the language of GOD is called a *birth of water and of the spirit*. But how plain is it to discern, that such a *change* as this, or such a *newness of birth*, cannot possibly be effected *suddenly*, or in a *moment*, since such *instantaneous* operation is contrary to the *order of GOD*, which order requires, both in creation and regeneration, a *gradual* progress, or process, rather than a *sudden* and *instantaneous* effort, towards the perfection of life and being ! As reasonably therefore might we expect to see a *child suddenly*, or in a *moment*, become a *full grown man*, or to see a grain of mustard seed *suddenly* and *in a moment* grow up into a *tree*, as to behold a *sinner* converted *instantly* into a *saint*, and the kingdom of darkness and disorder yield *suddenly* to the sovereignty of the higher kingdom of the light and order of heaven. How plain therefore is it to discern yet further, that the cause of all *delay*, or *tarrying*, on the part of the BRIDEGROOM, originates in man, rather than in GOD, since it is the necessary result of man's natural unfitness to enjoy even the society of angels, and of GOD Himself, until he be rendered meet, by the holy discipline of repentance, of faith, of charity, and other evangelical graces, to find a blessing in such society ! Let man then only, on his part, adopt the

holy resolution of the Psalmist, by addressing his **HEAVENLY FATHER** in the devout language, "*I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments,*" [Psalm cxix. 60.] and he would then soon make the glad discovery, that all the *delay*, or *tarrying*, of which he complains, in regard to the fulfilment of divine promises, is the effect solely of his own *delay*, or *tardiness*, in *keeping the commandments of God*, in other words, of the *slowness* of his advancement in the grand and necessary work of his purification.

Having thus then endeavoured to show what we are to understand by the *bridegroom tarrying*, let us now proceed to the consideration of the *second* proposition into which the words of my text resolve themselves, viz. what is further to be understood by *all the virgins slumbering and sleeping*.

These two terms, *slumbering* and *sleeping*, are manifestly expressive of *bodily* acts, and it is to be feared, are too generally regarded as confined to the body *alone*, since perhaps few Christians, comparatively, are in the habit of extending their meaning, so as to discern clearly that the *soul* has its *slumber* and *sleep*, as well as the *body*, and further, that the *slumber* and *sleep* of the *soul* are

acts of infinitely more importance to be attended to, than the *slumber* and *sleep* of the *body*.

Yet that *slumbering* and *sleeping* are proper to the *soul*, or *spirit*, of a man, as well as to his *body*, is manifest, not only from the *general* application of the terms, whensoever they occur in the Divine Oracles, but also from their *particular* application in the parable under immediate discussion.

For in this parable, as in all the other parables spoken by the GREAT SAVIOUR, the grand concerns of man's *spiritual* and *eternal* life are evidently intended to be figured under types and representations taken from the objects of *natural* and *temporal* life. Thus when mention is made of *lamps*; of *going forth to meet the bridegroom*; of omitting to *take oil in these lamps*; as was the case with the *foolish virgins*; and also of *taking oil in their vessels with their lamps*, as was the case with the *wise virgins*; it is manifest that, under these *outward natural* emblems of preparation to attend an *outward* or *natural* marriage, was meant to be described the preparation fitted to attend another and infinitely more important marriage, viz. that *internal* or *spiritual* marriage, to which every human being is invited in those divine words of the BLESSED SAVIOUR, "*Abide in ME*

“ *and I in you ;*” [John xv. 4.] which marriage is nothing, more or less, than a holy and eternal conjunction of life with that BLESSED SAVIOUR. To render the parable then consistent with itself, in other words, to preserve inviolate the fulness and harmony of it's divine meaning, it is necessary that we annex a spiritual and internal sense, or interpretation, to every part alike, consequently to the expressions of *slumbering* and *sleeping* in the words of my text. It is consequently necessary to apply the acts of *slumbering* and *sleeping* to the *mind*, as well as to the *body*, and thus to say that the mind *slumbers* and *sleeps* alike with the body, and that this *slumber* and *sleep* of the *mind* are therefore intended to be figured and expressed in these words of the parable.

Is it asked what is properly to be understood by the *spiritual slumbering* and *sleeping* of the human *mind* ?—It may be replied in a few words, that the mind of man spiritually *slumbers* and *sleeps*, whensoever it's *will* is unaffected with the great concerns of God and another world, and when, in consequence of such want of spiritual affection, it's *understanding* never opens it's eyes, or suffers them to be opened, to see and confess the vast realities, which God has been pleased to reveal respecting Himself and His eternal kingdom. The two

expressions then of *slumbering* and *sleeping* have a distinct relation to the two distinct principles which constitute every human mind, viz : the *will* and the *understanding*, so that when the *will* of man feels none or but little interest in spiritual and everlasting objects, man is then said to *slumber*, and when the *understanding* of man has none, or but a faint view of those objects, man is then said to *sleep*.

As for example—Are there any here present, who draw near unto GOD with their *lips*, whilst their *hearts* are far from Him ; who *bend their knees*, in apparent humility, before their HEAVENLY FATHER, whilst they *exalt their heads* in the fancied idea of their own greatness ; whose bosoms have never been *warmed* with the pure love of GOD and of their neighbour, but rather *chilled* and *frozen* by the inordinate love of themselves and of the world ; whose affections are consequently *alive* to the *things of time* and *sense*, but comparatively *dead* to the *things of eternity* and the *spiritual concerns of their own souls* as connected with eternity ; who have never yet been convinced of their natural defilement and separation from GOD through sinful attachments, and of course have never experienced the joys resulting from repentance and conjunction of life with GOD ; who thus

regard the present world as their true *home*, and their life in it as their true *happiness*, instead of reflecting on that *everlasting home* and *everlasting happiness* for which they were created ; who thus live *like the beasts that perish*, with this only difference, that *beasts* are incapable of thinking about any other world than the present, or about any **DIVINE BEING** to whom they are indebted for their present gratifications, whereas man hath the capacity, if he would use it, both of elevating his mind to **GOD** and heaven, and of enjoying the comforts of such elevation ;—Are there, I say, any here present of this melancholy description ? They then rank amongst the *slumbering* and *sleeping virgins* in the parable, because their *wills* and *understandings* are as yet unaffected with the great concerns of eternity, and whatsoever external show they may make of being the servants of **GOD**, they in reality acknowledge no **GOD**, but themselves, and worship only the idols of selfish and worldly love which themselves have created.

Here however it may be necessary to make a distinction between the slumbering and sleeping of the *wise* virgins, and that of the *foolish*, since it is most reasonable to suppose, that although both the *wise* and the *foolish* are described in the parable as alike *slumbering* and *sleeping* whilst the **BRIDE-**

GROOM *tarried*, yet the *slumber* and *sleep* of the *former* was of a very different quality, and manifested itself in very different effects, from the *slumber* and *sleep* of the *latter*.

What then shall we say are the proper marks and characters, by which to distinguish the *slumbering* and *sleeping* of the *wise* virgins from the *slumbering* and *sleeping* of the *foolish*?

Interesting and important as this question is, we have yet a full and satisfactory answer to it in the distinguishing characteristic of these virgins, as it is given to us in the parable. For of the *foolish* virgins it is said, that they *took their lamps*; but *took no oil with them*, whereas of the *wise* virgins it is said, that they *took oil in their vessels with their lamps*, from which account it appears, (as we have already endeavoured to show in a former discourse) that the *foolish* virgins *made indeed a profession* of religion, and had *acquired even some knowledge* respecting religion, but yet were destitute in their hearts of the *essence* and *life* of religion, which is *love* and *charity*; whereas the *wise* virgins, notwithstanding their *slumbering* and *sleeping whilst the BRIDEGROOM tarried*, had yet something in their hearts distinct from, and superior to, both profession and knowledge, because in their hearts the love of God and of man was exalted

to pre-eminence above all speculative opinions, and thus the celestial *oil* of heavenly affection was the supreme and governing principle of their lives.

Behold here, then, in this description of the difference of *internal* character, by which the *wise* and *foolish* virgins were distinguished from each other, a description also of the difference, by which their *slumbering* and *sleep* was distinguished, so that the *slumbering* and *sleep* of the *wise virgins* was of quite another character than the *slumbering* and *sleep* of the *foolish virgins*.

For the *wise virgins*, although they *slumbered* and *slept*, during the BRIDEGROOM'S *tarrying*, had yet something in their hearts, which was *opposed* to *slumbering* and *sleeping*, and which consequently rendered them *unwilling* and *dissatisfied slumberers* and *sleepers*. Notwithstanding therefore their temporary thoughtlessness, and the ascendancy which the lower concerns of this world occasionally acquired over the higher interests of another, they did not *deliberately* yield to the deadly influence of this thoughtlessness and ascendancy, but on the contrary *resisted* it, so that at *midnight*, when the *cry was made*, *Behold the bridegroom cometh*, they were quickly prepared to enter in with *him to the marriage*. The *foolish virgins*, on the contrary, having *lamps without*

oil, in other words, possessing a *speculative faith* destitute of the life of *heaven-born love and charity*, had nothing in their hearts, but what was highly favourable to the spirit of *slumbering and sleeping*, and which consequently rendered them *willing captives* to it's defiling and deadly influence. They delighted therefore in the idea of banishing from their minds all consideration of any interests but what were connected with the gain and glory of the present life, and so far from opposing in themselves this *slumbering and sleeping*, they became it's *voluntary victims*, so that when the BRIDEGROOM came, they were unprepared to *go in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut*.

This case, of the difference between the *slumbering and sleeping* of the *wise and foolish virgins* in the parable may be illustrated by what the experience of all ages, and perhaps of none more than the present, has taught us to believe respecting the manner and degree, in which the minds and lives of the *wise and the foolish* of all ages, and in all places, are affected by the grand and awful concerns of God and another world. For although, perhaps, in the great universal family by which this world is peopled, there is not a single example to be found of one, who *never*

slumbers and *sleeps* in regard to those concerns, yet it must be obvious to the most ordinary observer, that this *slumber* and *sleep* differs, and this with every possible shade of difference, amongst the individuals who compose that family. In some minds, for example, the principles of religious knowledge and life have taken a deeper root than in others, and the consequence is, that they are more on their guard against those selfish and worldly attachments, which might tend either to darken their spiritual sight, or to extinguish the flame of their spiritual affections. In other minds again, the cares and pleasures of the present life have attained an undue ascendancy, so that the coming of the HEAVENLY BRIDEGROOM, with all the awful circumstances attending it, are either never thought of at all, or engage so slight a degree of attention, as scarcely deserves to be called an attention. It is endless to tell the diversity of character, which marks these two classes of the human race, all of them tending to prove the truth of what is said in the parable, that *while the BRIDEGROOM tarried, all* [the virgins] *slumbered and slept*, yet all of them tending to prove further, that the slumbering and sleeping of the *wise* virgins was of a quality and degree

perfectly distinct from the slumbering and sleeping of the *foolish virgins*.

To conclude—From what hath been above said respecting the *tarrying* of the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM, and the consequent *slumbering* and *sleeping* of the *wise* and *foolish virgins*, much serious thought will necessarily be excited in the minds of such hearers, as have any serious concern about that eternal state of things, which is so soon to succeed the perishable interests of the present world. And since all serious thought comes from God, and leads to God, the happy subjects of it, whosoever they be, will not fail to be elevated by it to a blessed contemplation of that adorable and ever active providence by which the GREAT and HOLY GOD is perpetually watchful over the everlasting, and thus the *best* interests of all his intelligent creatures. An interesting discovery will thence be made of the grand and edifying truth, that, in the strict sense of the words, the TRUE BRIDEGROOM never *tarryes*, since the TRUE BRIDEGROOM is JESUS CHRIST, and JESUS CHRIST is the ETERNAL GOD made MAN, that He might be seen, believed in, and approached as a MAN, since otherwise He could not have been either seen, believed in, or approached at all by his fallen and sinful creatures. When this God therefore is said to *tarry*, it is only in

accommodation to the natural and imperfect apprehension of His children, who are occasionally led to fancy that He *tarryes*, because He doth not *immediately* fulfil all that they expect from Him, when yet the real truth is, that He is every moment at work to promote the salvation of every human being, but then this salvation requires an indefinite variety of *gradual* and *successive* operations, which necessarily give it the semblance of *delay* and *tarrying*.

Do we any of us then still *slumber* and *sleep* as to the grand concerns of our immortal souls? Are our *affections* cold and dead, and our *thoughts* *dark* and *perplexed* respecting God and heaven, and eternity? It is because we do not consider, as we ought, the incessant watchfulness of the divine love over us, and that thus our HEAVENLY BRIDE-GROOM never *tarryes*. For were we but truly awake to this reviving and delightful consideration, how would it be possible for us to trifle with such a love, and thus to become indifferent to it, by opening our *eyes* and our *hearts* to lesser goods, so as to suffer them to gain an undue ascendancy? How would it be possible, I say, for us to build all our hopes and prospects on the sandy foundation of the perishable gain and glory of this transitory world, when a gain and glory of such infinitely

higher importance are presented to our acceptance? Let us then only keep our eyes open to the contemplation, and our hearts to the reception, of that divine mercy of the SAVIOUR GOD, Who is ever calling to us with a voice of fatherly affection, and saying, *Come unto ME all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, and we may then console ourselves with the delightful assurance, that we shall rank amongst the number of the *wise virgins* in the parable; and although, in this case, we may occasionally be found *slumbering* and *sleeping*, yet our *slumber* and *sleep* will differ essentially from that of the *foolish virgins*, because it will be the *slumber* and *sleep*, not of *inclination*, but of *natural infirmity*; not of *voluntary purpose*, but of *involuntary constraint*; and therefore when we awake, as we shall be happy to do at the *midnight cry*, we shall be ready to enter-*in* to the marriage with that heavenly host of whom it is written, "*Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the LAMB.*" [Rev. xix. 9.]—AMEN.

SERMON IV.

THE MIDNIGHT CRY.

MATT. XXV. 6. *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him.*

IN the three preceding discourses on the parable from which these words are taken, we have already considered the distinct characters of the *wise* and *foolish virgins*, whose history it contains, together with the ground of that distinction. We have also noted the circumstance of their *slumbering* and *sleeping* in consequence of the *tarrying* of the **BRIDEGROOM**, together with the proper and edifying idea intended to be suggested by this *tarrying*. We proceed now therefore to the consideration of some other events connected with the above, and of equal importance to our eternal interests, and first to what is recorded in my text, where it is written, *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him.*

There are four distinct points of momentous enquiry involved in these words,

1st, What is to be understood by the *midnight* here spoken of ;

2ndly, What by the *cry made* at that period ;

3rdly, What by the **BRIDEGROOM** *coming* ; and

4thly, What by the call on this occasion, *Go ye out to meet Him.*

In regard to the *first* of these points, viz. what is to be understood by the *midnight* here spoken of, it can hardly be supposed that any intelligent Christian is so short-sighted as not to be able to see, that there is a *spiritual* midnight as well as a *natural* one, in other words, that there is a midnight of *mind*, as well as of *body*, and that the *spiritual* midnight, or the midnight of *mind*, is what is meant to be expressed in the above words of the parable.

Is it asked what is to be understood by a *spiritual* midnight, or a midnight of *mind*? It may be replied, that this midnight has a *double* application, as having reference, in the *first* place, to *individuals*, and in the *second* place to *societies*, or the *church at large*, and that, with respect to *both*, it denotes the highest degree of *intellectual darkness* in regard to that light which is above every other light, viz. the **LIGHT OF TRUTH**, or

the revealed knowledge of GOD, HIS WORD, His kingdom, and that eternal life which is from GOD, and in connection with Him.

As therefore it is *natural* midnight, or the midnight of *body*, when the light of the sun of this world no longer shines on the earth, but is removed from it to it's greatest possible state of obscurity, in like manner it is *spiritual* midnight, or the midnight of *mind*, when the light of the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS no longer shines in the hearts and understandings of mankind, whether individuals or societies, but is removed from them in such a degree, as to create the greatest possible intellectual darkness.

As for example—Is there any individual human being, who hath never yet rejoiced in the knowledge of GOD and of His eternal kingdom ; in whose mind the light of heavenly truth hath never shined, or, having *once* shined, is again extinguished ; who is possibly of quick apprehension respecting his temporal interests and all his concerns in this lower world, but dim-sighted in regard to those interests and concerns of another world, which are of such infinitely greater importance ; who still persuades himself that he has escaped from the regions of *darkness and shadow of death*, because he can repeat a creed, and

receive a sacrament, when yet neither the creed or the sacrament has got admission into his *life*, but remains *lifeless* and *fruitless* in the *memory* only ; who thus peruses the Gospel as a record of *speculative truths*, not as a teacher and enforcer of *practical piety*, and who consequently regards the GREAT SAVIOUR announced in the Gospel, as having made Himself a *meritorious sacrifice* for sins, rather than as the manifested GOD, for the purpose of purifying and delivering human minds from the defilement and power of sin, through renovation and regeneration ? Is there, I say, any individual human being, whose mind is thus darkened in consequence of it's separation from the light of the eternal truth ? By what term can it's darkness be better or more fitly expressed, than by the term *midnight*, or that period of natural time, when the sun of heaven, with its reviving heat and light, is at it's furthest state of removal from the earth ?

Midnight, then, is a term most exactly descriptive of the state of every individual mind which is alienated from the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH ; and if a *society of men*, or what is called a *church*, be in this same déplorable degree of alienation, the term is then, of course, applicable with equal reason to such a society, or church. It

was accordingly *midnight* with the *Jewish church*, when they rejected the *manifested* GOD, Whose high and holy name is JESUS CHRIST, and who appeared amongst them to turn them unto Himself, and make them His children. It will be *midnight* also with the present *christian church*, should it ever come to pass, that this *manifested* GOD is either rejected in that church, as having no just title to divinity and divine worship, or is acknowledged only *partially*, in consequence of not being approached and worshipped as the ONLY GOD. For if one truth be more to be depended on than another, it is this, that GOD is One, and that thus it is impossible there can be *more* GODS than One. If then JESUS CHRIST be acknowledged to be GOD, He must in such case, of necessity, be acknowledged to be the *only* GOD, and approached and worshipped accordingly, otherwise His divinity is as completely denied and rejected, as if He were not approached and worshipped at all; and of course the church will be as much overtaken with *midnight darkness*, because as much separated from the light of the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, as if no such SUN had ever shined, and no such light had ever been communicated.

I have thought proper, beloved, to make these observations respecting the *midnight* of a

society, or of a *church*, because there is too much reason, I fear, to be alarmed, at this day, on account of the *midnight darkness* which threatens our own church. For what multitudes, at this day, who still call themselves christians, make no scruple of openly denying the DIVINITY of the GREAT SAVIOUR? And what multitudes again of those, who still call themselves christians, acknowledge indeed the DIVINITY of this SAVIOUR, but then they acknowledge it *partially*; and thus, for want of seeing that He is the *only* GOD, (since there can be but *one* GOD,) they do not worship Him as the *only* GOD, and consequently they do not worship Him *at all*, inasmuch as the proper worship of GOD cannot possibly be divided! And what *midnight* can be more terrible than this, which thus separates man from that DIVINE BEING, Who emphatically calls Himself the *Light of the world*, and Who, by assuming that dignified title, manifestly announces that He is the only giver of *light*, and that of course all must abide in *darkness*, who do not look up to and adore Him under that title?

But 2ndly—let us proceed to consider, as was proposed, what is to be understood by the *cry*, which, we read, *was made* in the *midnight*, of which we have been treating.

The term *cry*, like the term *midnight*, and also like the other terms mentioned in the parable, such as *lamps*, *vessels*, *oil*, *slumbering* and *sleeping*, &c. has a *spiritual* signification, as well as a *natural* one, and according to that *spiritual* signification it doth not mean a *cry* applied to the *external* ears of the *body*, but a *cry* applied to the *internal* ears of the *soul*, or *spirit*.

Is it asked what is to be understood by a *cry*, as applied to the *internal* ears of a man's *soul*, or *spirit*? It may be replied, in answer to this question, that a *cry* as applied in this sense of the term, is a *strong impression*, made on the *mind* of man, either of some great trouble which excites alarm, or of some great joy which produces consolation, and which, in either case, is as manifestly perceived by *the mind*, as a cry, or outward sound of the voice, is sensibly felt by the *bodily ear*.

And is not this sense of the term *cry* confirmed by the general experience of mankind? For who, amongst the sons and daughters of men, hath not occasionally been made sensible of this *cry*, whilst, at one time, some heavy affliction, arising either from the loss of friends, the loss of reputation, the loss of gain, or the loss of health, hath overwhelmed him; or, at another time, he hath

found himself consoled and elevated by the tidings of some new and unexpected prosperity ?

The *midnight cry* then, spoken of in my text, is a *cry*, which we ought all of us to be prepared to hear, at one time or other, in the deep centre of our own bosoms, especially as it regards the subject with which, in my text, it is connected, viz. *the coming of the BRIDEGROOM*. For alas ! how few amongst us, it is to be feared, are duly prepared, as we ought to be, for the results of that coming ! How few likewise are aware of it's nature, it's importance, and of the manner in which it is to be accomplished ! Is it not reasonable then to suppose that the GOD of mercy, seeing how infinitely we are interested in this grand event, and yet how little we are aware of it's certainty and awful consequences, will be pleased in His compassion to awaken us out of our *midnight dreams*, either by some *loud cry* of alarm in the consciences of the thoughtless and impenitent, or by a contrary *cry* of joy and consolation in the hearts of the true believers ?

3rdly. This reasonableness will be rendered more fully manifest by the consideration of the *third* point of discussion presented in the words of my text, viz : *what is properly to be understood by the BRIDEGROOM COMING*—Allow me then to

call your most awakened attention to this consideration.

It has been already shown, in a former discourse, that by the **BRIDEGROOM** mentioned in the parable, which is the subject of our present discussion, is meant the **GREAT REDEEMER**, or **GOD manifest in the flesh**, Who is called the **BRIDEGROOM**, by reason of the ardency of His divine love to conjoin Himself to man, and man to Himself, in a reciprocal and eternal bond of the most endearing affection, regard, and similarity of purpose and operation.

By the *coming*, then, of this **GOD** is manifestly to be understood every *approach*, which, at any period of time, He has been pleased to make to His people, whether *generally* or *individually*, with a view to invite them to a share of His loving-kindness, by turning them from objects less deserving their attachment, and thus recalling them to the bosom of His own favour, rest, and everlasting benediction.

Accordingly we read, in the interesting pages of His **MOST HOLY WORD**, how this **DIVINE BRIDEGROOM** revealed Himself, in old time, to His people before and after the flood, and thus successively to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, together with an illustrious company of suc-

ceeding Judges, Kings, Prophets, &c. &c. and all for the blessed purpose of claiming them as His lawful *bride*, and thus conferring upon them the abundance of His own divine honour, glory, and blessedness, which, as a BRIDEGROOM, He is ever eager to dispense to all His children, who are made sensible of the infinitely blessed dignity and privilege of becoming His *bride*.

We read further in the same Divine pages, how, *in the fulness of time*, and when mankind had nearly lost all knowledge of their DIVINE BRIDEGROOM, and especially all love towards Him, this GREAT LOVER of souls appeared in the world in a *body of flesh*, thus as a *Man*, yet still with the same divine intent, that He might recover His lost place in the affections of His children, and thus attach them to Himself by the *golden wedding ring* of His own pure love, mercy and favour.

But we have not yet reached the full extent of the meaning of that *coming of the BRIDEGROOM* spoken of in my text. For we read yet further in the pages of Divine Revelation, how this DIVINE BRIDEGROOM, during His abode here below as a *Man*, and foreseeing His rejection, not only by the *Jewish church* in which He appeared, but also by that *Christian church* which He called

to be His *bride*, announced, in the way of prediction, His second advent, or *coming*, to take unto Himself another bride. This second advent, or *coming*, is described at large in the Book of the Revelations, under the figure of *a city*, called the *New Jerusalem*, coming down from GOD out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, [Rev. xxi. 2.] by the descent of which city, according to the interpretation of the best and wisest commentators, is intended to be figured the further manifestation of the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM, not in *person*, but in the power and spirit of His MOST HOLY WORD, for the purpose of again establishing His *tabernacle* amongst men, and thus of entering into a new *marriage covenant* of righteousness, peace and protection with His penitent and believing children. It is accordingly written on the interesting occasion, “Behold the tabernacle of GOD is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and GOD Himself shall be with them their GOD. And GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.” [Rev. xxi. 3, 4.]

But there is yet another meaning of the term

coming, as applied to the **DIVINE BRIDEGROOM**, which demands our most serious attention. I mean the *coming*, by which that **BRIDEGROOM** manifests the intenseness of His divine love to all His children, in the course of every day, and indeed of every moment of their lives, whilst by the power and presence of His holy spirit in their hearts and consciences, He either reproveth them for their sins and follies, or consoles them under a sense of His own infinite mercy, wisdom and omnipotence. For who, let me ask, amongst the children of men, hath not, at times, been made sensible of this *coming* of his **HEAVENLY BRIDEGROOM**? Who I say, hath not, at times, had this full proof of the presence and loving-kindness of his **GOD**, either *chastening* him, as a kind father chasteneth his offending child, or comforting and encouraging him with the sweet smiles of parental love and favour?

From this sense then of the **COMING OF THE BRIDEGROOM** spoken of in my text, we may now be enabled to discover what is to be understood by the further *cry*, “*Go ye out to meet Him,*” which was the fourth point intended for our present consideration.

It has already been shown in a former discourse, that by *going out to meet the BRIDEGROOM*,

is not to be understood any *personal* or *bodily* act, but only a *mental* and *spiritual* act, since JESUS CHRIST, Who is the TRUE BRIDEGROOM, cannot possibly be approached, and still less found, by any act of the *body*, but only by an exertion of the *mind* with it's *affections* and *thoughts*, thus by the united energy of man's *will* and *understanding*.

To *go out* then and *meet the Bridegroom* manifestly means, that we believe in, and are rightly affected by, all the occasions of His *coming*, as above noted ; thus that we believe in, and are rightly affected by, His *coming* to the Patriarchs, Judges, and Prophets of old ; also that we believe in, and are rightly affected by, His *manifestation in the flesh* to the Jewish church, when He appeared amongst them as a DIVINE MAN, to invite them to Himself ; and further that we believe in, and are rightly affected by, the promise of His *second coming* to the *Christian church*, for the blessed purpose of correcting it's errors, and renewing it again in His own Divine Spirit of righteousness and truth ; and lastly, that we believe in, and are rightly affected by, His daily and *momentary coming* to each of us individually, to convince us of our sins and disorders, and to console us by the manifestation of His own divine love, favour and benediction.

Who then is that wise and faithful servant, who is truly obedient to the *midnight cry* concerning the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM, “*Go ye out to meet Him?*” Who is that wise and faithful servant, who is thus desirous, above all things, to become the *pure bride* of this BRIDEGROOM, and who would esteem the acquirement of this holy title, as of infinitely higher value than all the riches, honours, and pleasures of this lower world?—Let every such wise and faithful servant keep continually in his remembrance and affection the ardency of the love of this BRIDEGROOM, which has induced Him, in all ages of the world, to make a discovery of Himself to His people, for the blessed purpose of calling them to Himself, that He may purify them from their natural defilements, and replenish them with all the abundance of His favours, blessings and graces. Let him not however be content with looking only at what is *past*, but let him fix his eye attentively also on what is *present*, that is to say, on the *present* approaches of the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM to His *church in general*, and to every *member of the church in particular*. Let him thus believe, with an affectionate and grateful heart, how this same BRIDEGROOM, Who in days of old made Himself and His divine love known to Patriarchs, and Pro-

phets, and Who manifested Himself in person to the Jewish nation, is at this day operative, with the same intenseness of mercy, to restore His church to it's pristine purity, by rescuing it from all it's disorders both in doctrine and life. But let him not be satisfied with this *general* belief—let him extend it also to *individuals*, especially to *himself*, by noting all that passes in his own mind and conscience, until he makes the blessed discovery, that his DIVINE BRIDEGROOM is ever present in the deep centre of his own bosom to claim him as His *bride*, by doing that in *spirit*, which He once did in *person* in the land of Judea, when, as it is written of Him, “*He shewed strength with His arm ; He scattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts ; He put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted them of low degree.*” [Luke i. 51, 52.] May humility be thus exalted above pride! charity above malice and hatred! and the pure love of the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM above every inferior love which has a tendency either to darken or destroy the beauty, glory and blessedness of His divine countenance and kingdom! “*Blessed is that servant, whom his LORD, when He cometh, shall find so doing!*” [Matt. xxiv. 46.] AMEN.

SERMON V.

THE VIRGINS ARISING AND TRIMMING THEIR LAMPS.

MATT. XXV. 7. *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.*

IN my last discourse on the parable from which these words are taken, I endeavoured to point out the spiritual instruction intended for and conveyed to us in the verse immediately preceding my text, where it is written, "*At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him.*"

In the words before us, we learn the effect which this midnight alarm had both upon the wise and foolish virgins—*Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.*

Let us consider now the instruction intended for our use in these divine words, as we have already done in the foregoing parts of this most instructive parable.

It is remarkable that two *distinct* expressions are here used by our BLESSED LORD, to denote the effect, which the *midnight cry*, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh!* produced in the minds both of the wise and foolish virgins. For we are told 1st, that they *arose*, and 2dly that they *trimmed their lamps*.

I have frequently taken occasion to explain to you the true ground and reason of this *twofold* mode of expression, which occurs so commonly in the Sacred Scriptures, by endeavouring to show, how it originates in the heavenly marriage of the divine love and divine wisdom, or of the divine goodness and divine truth, consequently of the human *will* and the human *understanding*, which are created to receive those heavenly principles; and how in agreement with such marriage, the holy volume is written throughout. According therefore to this idea, when it is said by JESUS CHRIST that the virgins *arose*, He meant to describe the effect produced by the *midnight cry* on the *wills* of those virgins; and when he says further that they *trimmed their lamps*, He meant to describe the additional effect produced on their *understandings*.

Let us proceed now to the consideration of these two distinct effects; and 1st, of the effect

produced on the *wills* of these virgins, and described by this expression, they *arose*.

In the language of God, man is said to *arise*, whensoever his *will* begins to be affected with the sense of an *eternal good*, such as is the good of love towards God, and love towards his neighbour; as on the other hand he is said to *descend*, or *go down*, when his will is influenced only by a sense of *temporal goods*, such as relate to himself alone, or to the lower things of this world and the flesh, and in proportion as he is so influenced.

Here then we may be enabled to see what is to be understood by these virgins *arising*, when they heard the sound of the midnight cry, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh*. JESUS CHRIST, I say, would teach us by this expression, they *arose*, that their *wills* began to be worked on, and to be made sensible of a higher good, than what relates to this world and the flesh. He would teach us thus, that before they heard the *midnight cry*, they had not arisen to any sense of an *eternal good*, but had *slumbered* and *slept* in the sensation and possession only of temporal goods; forgetful of the love of God and of their everlasting interests as connected with it; unawakened to the delights of heavenly wisdom, insensible to the consolations

of heavenly peace, and dead to the purities of heavenly holiness.

If it be objected that the *foolish virgins* could not be said to *arise* according to this sense of the expression, since the very name of *foolish virgins* implies that they are insensible of the joys resulting from the love and possession of eternal goods, it may be observed in reply, that the most foolish and wicked people have their times and seasons of serious reflection, when, by the sound of some *midnight cry*, such as worldly disappointment, sickness, the loss of friends, or some other temporal distress, they are made sensible, for a moment, of the instability of all earthly bliss, and of the consequent importance of preparing for and securing more permanent and lasting joys. But the misfortune, with regard to the *foolish virgins* on such occasions, is this, that their convictions are merely the effects of present trouble, and vanish and are utterly effaced the moment that trouble ceases, and temporal prosperity returns. The *arising* therefore of the *foolish virgins* is the mere effect of *fear*, not of heartfelt conviction, deep repentance, and sincere conversion to God. Their religion thus is a religion of *compulsion*, or of a *rod*, which lasts no longer than whilst they feel the *smart*, or see the *rod* lifted over their heads.

But it is far otherwise with the *wise virgins*, when they *arise* at the sound of the *midnight cry*. For their *arising* is not the effect of *fear*, so much as of *love*; not of *compulsion*, so much as of *free* and *voluntary* determination of their *wills* and *affections*. They are made sensible in the inmost principle of their minds that an *everlasting* good must of necessity be of infinitely higher value, and consequently infinitely more worthy of pursuit, than any *temporal* good. For they see that all things come to an end but the love of God, and what is connected with that love; and this conviction with them is not *momentary*, but *lasting*; not *transient* and *unfruitful*, but *fixed* and *productive of the noblest purposes and operations*; leading them to a steady and stable pursuit of an eternal object, and to the separation and rejection of all things incompatible with and opposed to that object. Thus the *wise virgins*, at the *midnight cry*, experience an elevation of their wills and affections to the *supreme good*; a nearer approach to an imperishable happiness; a closer conjunction with heaven and it's GOD; a fuller conviction of the insufficiency of the things of this world to promote a permanent bliss; consequently, they experience at the same time a deeper repentance, a purer obedience, together with a fuller and more absolute

surrender of themselves to the disposal of their **HEAVENLY FATHER.**

Having thus then considered the first effect produced by the *midnight cry*, as described by the words in my text, *Then all those virgins arose*, let me now bespeak your serious attention to the *second* effect, as described in these words, *And trimmed their lamps.*

It has already been observed that the *trimming their lamps*, here spoken of, has reference to the effect produced by the *midnight cry* in the *understandings* of the *virgins* whose history is recorded in the parable. For the *understanding* is properly the *lamp* of the soul of man, inasmuch as the understanding in man is formed for the admission and reception of the light of the **ETERNAL TRUTH**, which is the **WORD OF GOD**. To *trim* this lamp then must also have reference to the *understanding*, and is therefore a term here applied by our **BLESSED LORD** to denote the operation of the *midnight cry* upon the *intellectual* or *thinking* principle of the virgins, as their *arising* was meant to denote the operation of the same cry on the *voluntary* or *will-principle*. For man, it is well known, consists of two distinct principles of life, a *will* and an *understanding*, the *former* being created to admit and to be made sensible of all the

blessings of the divine *love, mercy, and goodness*, whilst the *latter* was created to admit and be made sensible of all the blessings of the divine *wisdom, truth, and knowledge*. Thus both were created to admit and receive *conjointly* the whole life of GOD, which is His life of united love and wisdom.

Hence then may be seen the reason why the *trimming their lamps* is here spoken of by JESUS CHRIST, as well as the *arising* of the virgins in the parable. For whensoever the *will* of man is affected, his *understanding* is affected also, inso-much that whatsoever the *will* regards as a *good* or as an *evil*, it immediately sets the *understanding* at work to secure the *one*, and to shun the *other*. Thus in the case of these virgins, when their *wills* were affected by the midnight cry, which excited them to *arise*, their *understandings* were immediately affected by the same cry, exciting them to *trim their lamps*.

Let us now take a view of this latter effect, the *trimming their lamps*, as it relates both to the *foolish* and to the *wise* virgins. And *first*, as it relates to the *foolish* virgins.

There are no virgins so *foolish*, who do not occasionally exercise their understandings and thoughts, in other words, *trim their lamps*,

respecting the great concerns of another world, especially when under the alarm of some *midnight cry*, such as sickness, worldly disappointment, or any other heavy temporal affliction. For every man must of necessity wish to be saved, or to be eternally happy, in preference to being lost, or being eternally miserable. Of consequence, he must occasionally exercise his understanding and thoughts about salvation and eternal happiness, and also about destruction and eternal misery, agreeable to what was above shewn concerning the connection between the *will* and the *understanding*. The *foolish virgins* are accordingly described as thus *trimming their lamps*. But what shall we say is implied in this expression, in reference to the *foolish virgins*? Alas! it has been already shown, that these virgins are called *foolish virgins*, because they have *knowledge* without *the life of knowledge*, *faith* without *charity*, and *speculation* without *practice*. Such therefore is the *trimming of their lamps*. They exercise indeed their *understandings* and their *thoughts* on the great subjects of religion, and the business of salvation, but then their *wills* and *affections* remain unchanged, unpurified and unconverted. The consequence is, that neglecting to apply to God and His Holy Word for instruction, with penitent and

contrite hearts, and trusting to the conclusions of their own understandings, they indeed *trim their lamps*, but then they do so by the powers of their own reason alone, separate from the grace and wisdom of God. Thus they think from themselves, not from the Word of God; they would be saved in *their own* way, not in the way which God has appointed; and the result is, they are betrayed into all kinds of error and delusion; yea, some of them are even led to suppose that they can be saved by the merits of CHRIST and the mercy of God, independent of their co-operation with those merits and that mercy, thus independent of that repentance, of that obedience, of that reformation and regeneration, which the Word of God declares to be the necessary qualifications to receive the benefits either of divine mercy or divine merit. Such then is the method by which the foolish virgins of all ages *trim their lamps*, and deceive themselves to their own destruction. Let us now see what is the conduct, in this respect, of the *wise virgins*.

By the *wise virgins*, it has been already shown, are to be understood those, in every period of the church of Christ, who to *knowledge* have joined the *life of knowledge*; to *faith, charity*; and to *speculation, practice*. When these therefore are

awakened by the *midnight cry* to *arise* and *trim their lamps*, a full and complete effect is produced both on their *wills* and *understandings*. We have already noticed what this effect is on their *wills*, and how they really do *arise*, by elevating their love and affections, or rather suffering them to be elevated, out of and above the perishable goods of this lower world and the flesh, to lay hold of and secure an everlasting Good in the love of God and of their neighbour. In agreement with this elevation of their love or *wills*, is the elevation and correspondent cultivation of their *understandings*, expressed in the language of the parable by *trimming their lamps*. To explore therefore diligently the WORD OF GOD, so as to comprehend it's divine meaning ; to open thus their intellectual eyes to the bright light of the ETERNAL TRUTH ; to separate this light from the darkness of error, so as to distinguish between the *day* and the *night* in their own minds ; to form conclusions in favour of a religious life, so as to discern that religion is the best friend of man ; to weigh well and to discriminate the several orders and degrees of what is called *good*, until it be seen, as by the sun at noon-day, that an *eternal* good is of infinitely higher value than a *temporal* one ; to examine and discover the sources of human *error*, and especially of that

fatal and fundamental one, that man may be saved by faith in the blood and merits of CHRIST, without repentance, without reformation, without regeneration of heart and of life ; such is the *trimming*, which the *wise virgins*, in all ages, apply to their *lamps*, until they burn bright with the sacred fire and lustre of evangelical life and light.

To conclude—It seems impossible that any sincere Christian should hear or read what is above said of the virgins in the parable *arising* and *trimming their lamps*, without being led into serious self-examination of his own heart and life, by asking himself some such questions as these. Am I *arisen*, and have I *trimmed my lamp*? Is my *love* elevated above the perishable objects of this transitory world, to lay hold on an eternal good? And does my *understanding* keep pace with my *will*, and confirm it's choice? Do I for this purpose explore the pages of the ETERNAL TRUTH, and form my judgment of things accordingly? Do I distinguish carefully between truth and error, also between good and evil, and further, between the different orders and degrees of good, so as to exalt at all times an everlasting good above a perishable one? Blessed is that *wise virgin*, who shall have the courage and the conscience to ask himself these questions in the sanctuary of his own

mind; and in the presence of the **GOD** of that sanctuary! But doubly blessed is he, who shall form his life accordingly, and who *arising* and *trimming his lamp* by the light of the **ETERNAL TRUTH**, shall finally attain, through repentance and regeneration, to an everlasting and blessed conjunction of life with his **GOD** and **SAVIOUR**! **AMEN.**

SERMON VI.

THE FOOLISH VIRGINS ASKING FOR OIL.

MATT. XXV. 8. *And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.*

IN the preceding verse we are informed, that in consequence of the midnight cry, *Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him,—all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.*

In a former discourse on this most instructive parable, we have considered what is properly to be understood by these virgins *arising, and trimming their lamps.* May I now bespeak your serious attention to what is further to be understood in the words of my text, by the foolish virgins *saying unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.*

There are two distinct points of most weighty and interesting consideration suggested by these words, which demand the most devout regard of

all Christians. The *first* is, the request of the foolish virgins to the wise, “*Give us of your oil.*” The *second* is, the reason for making this request, “*For our lamps are gone out.*”

I shall begin with the *first* of these points, viz. the request of the foolish virgins to the wise, “*Give us of your oil.*”

This request evidently implies, that the foolish virgins, finding and feeling a defect of real evangelical and saving virtue in themselves, in other words, being made sensible in their own minds, that they possessed no true and proper love either to God or their neighbour, consequently no true and proper wisdom, holiness or religion, were desirous of *borrowing* these excellencies from *others*, under a fond but mistaken idea, that such *borrowed* excellence might be imputed to them as *their own*, and thus that they might gain admission with the BRIDEGROOM to the marriage, as if they themselves were the *wise virgins*, from whom their virtues were *borrowed*.

Happy had it been for the Christian world, if this folly of mistaking *borrowed* excellence for *real*, and of depending upon it as if it was *real*, had died and been buried with the foolish virgins in the parable. But will truth and good conscience allow us to form such a conclusion? Rather

do not both truth and good conscience compel us to acknowledge, that in all ages of the church of CHRIST, this same folly, this same mistaken dependance, have prevailed, and that even our own age hath not escaped the terrible and deadly infection of the same poisonous persuasion?

It is never an agreeable task to point out the errors of mankind, or to expose to public view all these delusions by which the great enemy of man is ever at work, first to deceive, and then to destroy him. Yet surely it must be allowed that such a task, howsoever painful it may be, is still *necessary*, and not only necessary, but also *salutary*, consequently the task of *charity*, since if error never be seen, how can we hope to escape it? And if we do not escape error, what well-grounded reason have we then to expect, that we shall ever be enlightened with the bright beams of the ETERNAL TRUTH! And without the ETERNAL TRUTH and it's light, how can we hope ever to be saved?

Permit me then to observe how much it is to be feared, that many Christians, even at this day, notwithstanding the melancholy example of the foolish virgins in the parable before their eyes, are still blinded by the same folly, and betrayed into the same danger of resting their salvation on

borrowed excellence, instead of labouring by repentance and regeneration to secure, in their own bosoms, from the GREAT and HOLY GOD, all those heavenly graces and virtues, whereby alone they can be saved.

How many, for instance, depend upon the purity of the *church* in which they have been educated, and fancy that that purity will be imputed to them, and that they shall be admitted into heaven hereafter, not because they have been real penitents, and true converts to JESUS CHRIST; not because they have purified their hearts and lives through the keeping His holy commandments, but because it has been their lot to be born in a *Christian country*, and to be brought up in the communion of a Christian church, distinguished from other Christian churches by the pre-eminent sanctity of its doctrine, its discipline and its worship!

How many again depend upon their *creeds*, or *professions of faith*, and imagine themselves in the divine favour, and that they shall be finally accepted of GOD, not because they have endeavoured to please GOD by the purity of their lives, by their abhorrence of all sin, and by the love and the practice of holiness, but because they are *orthodox in their opinions, correct in their notions*,

pure and evangelical in their doctrines ! borrowing thus their hope of salvation, and their qualifications to be saved, from the piety and wisdom of their ancestors, rather than grounding their expectations and dependencies on a piety and wisdom which they themselves have acquired from GOD by pure and holy living.

But of all the delusions of this description, which are at this day desolating the church of CHRIST by mistake and by mischief, none is more deplorable, and it is to be feared, none is more common, than a false, ill-grounded dependance on *the mercy of GOD, and on the merits of the GREAT REDEEMER.* Yet, how many alas ! amongst Christians, are betrayed into this delusion, and thus made the sad victims of it's folly ! How many, who fancy that they may be admitted into heaven hereafter, merely through the mercy of GOD, without any preparation of their own hearts and lives to receive that mercy ! How many too, who believe that their sins are washed away by the *blood of CHRIST*, without any repentance on their parts ; and that the merits and righteousness of CHRIST will be imputed to them by an indolent act of faith, although through the whole course of their lives, they have never once made a sincere effort to introduce the spirit of His holiness into their

own hearts and lives, or to imitate at all what was meritorious in the life of the GREAT SAVIOUR!

But need I be at any pains, beloved, to expose all these mistaken and mischievous ideas, or rather, do not they sufficiently expose themselves, by proving themselves to be dictated by that same deluded spirit, which led the foolish virgins in the parable to say unto the wise, “ Give us of your oil ?”

For, with respect to the *first* of these delusions, viz. the hope of being saved hereafter, in consequence of being born in a *Christian country*, and of belonging to a church in which the pure doctrine of Christianity is taught and inculcated—of what benefit, it may be asked, can such advantages prove to any man, only so far as they lead him to cherish and cultivate a *truly Christian temper and spirit* in his heart, in his life and conversation? For what is it that makes a Christian, but the temper, spirit and life of a Christian? A man is not a Christian by living in a *Christian country*, or by being introduced through baptism into any particular *Christian church*, as too many sad instances alas! prove. But he becomes a Christian by believing in CHRIST, by following His example, and by keeping His precepts. If then we hope to be saved by the virtues of the church to which we

belong, separate from our belief in the GREAT SAVIOUR and keeping His precepts, what is this, but saying to the church, as the *foolish* virgins said unto the *wise*, “*Give us of your oil?*” What is it also but repeating the old folly, for which the Jews were rebuked by the prophet, when they said, *The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these?* But what saith the LORD to these boasters in the purity of their temple, and these *borrowers* from that purity? “*Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place,*” plainly teaching them, that they were not to be saved by the virtues of their temple, but by the virtues of heaven in their own hearts and lives, brought forth by repentance and regeneration.

So again, in regard to a *creed*, or to a *profession of Christian faith*: What eye cannot see, unless blinded by prejudice, that no *creed*, or *profession of faith*, can save a man, unless his life be directed according to such *creed* or *profession*? For what *oil of salvation* can there be in a *creed*, unless it leads a man to forsake his sins, and to labour, according to the spirit of the gospel, to become a *new man*, or a *child of God*? It would be an easy way indeed of getting to heaven, if nothing more was required than to say, LORD, I

believe. But the gospel has joined *repentance* and *obedience* to belief, as the necessary qualifications for being admitted to eternal bliss. To depend, then, for salvation on *belief* alone, separate from *repentance* and *obedience*, what is this but repeating the folly of the *foolish* virgins of old, by saying to a *creed*, as they said to the *wise virgins*, “ Give us of your oil ?”

The same observations may be also extended to those other dependencies, viz. *the mercy of God* and *the merits of CHRIST*. For what benefit can any man reasonably hope to derive either from the *mercy of God*, or from the *merits of CHRIST*, whilst he continues to love and to live in sin ? The *mercy of God* is held forth and proclaimed in the Sacred Scriptures to every man, as an inducement to forsake sin, and as a security, that if he forsakes his sins, and walks in newness of life, he will then be accepted of God, and the sins which he has committed will be remembered no more. But the *mercy of God* is never held forth and proclaimed in the Sacred Scriptures to any man as a security, so long as he wilfully continues in sin. The same also is true of *the merits of CHRIST*. For in what shall we say do those *merits* properly consist ? Surely in this, that JESUS CHRIST, by temptation-combats subdued the powers of darkness, and thus

removed them from man, whilst at the same time, and by the same acts, He glorified His HUMANITY, or made it DIVINE, and thus gave man perpetual access to His Godhead in that HUMANITY. These *merits* then, it is plain, were intended to call man out of sin, and to give him power to become a *child of God*, not to be pleaded as a reason for continuing in sin, by holding out the hope of forgiveness to the impenitent. How manifest therefore is it, that to depend either on the *mercy of God*, or on *the merits of CHRIST*, separate from repentance, from obedience, and from a holy life, is to abuse both that *mercy* and those *merits*, and to say to them, in the same spirit of delusion with the foolish virgins in the parable, “*Give us of your oil!*”

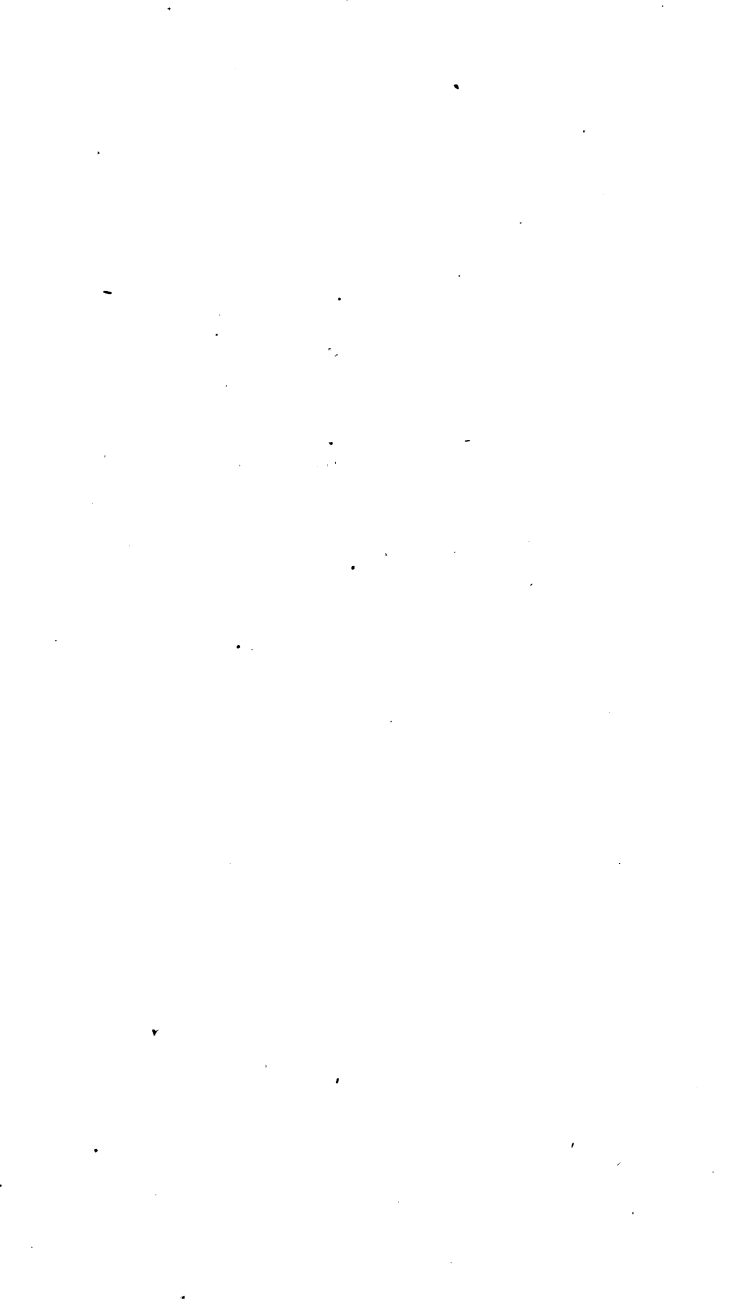
To conclude—let not what has been above said be interpreted into anything like an intimation, that *churches*, and *creeds*, and *the mercy of God*, and the *merits of CHRIST*, are things of no account in the business of salvation, and that therefore it is of no concern to what *church* a man belongs, or what kind of a *creed* he professes to believe, or whether he depends on the *mercy of God* and the *merits of CHRIST*, or not. For believe me, nothing like this was intended to be insinuated. It is only meant to say, that the *purest*

church, the most *perfect creed*, the *highest mercy of God and merits of CHRIST*, can be of no avail to any man, in the way of salvation, so long as he continues wilfully impenitent, and depends on the virtues of others to introduce him to heaven, instead of securing heavenly virtue in his own mind and life by real regeneration.

Would we then no longer imitate the folly, and perish in the delusions of those *foolish virgins*, who say to the wise, *Give us of your oil*? Would we rather become of the number of those *wise virgins*, who have *oil in our lamps with our vessels*, and are thus ready to enter-in with the Bridegroom to the marriage? Let us then seriously enter upon the great work of repentance and regeneration in our own hearts and lives. Let us thus procure to ourselves the precious *oil* of salvation, by applying to the GREAT SAVIOUR, to cleanse us from our corruptions, and purify us with the love of Himself and of our neighbour. Let us thank God that we were born in a *Christian country*, that we belong to a *Christian church*, that we have been taught a *Christian creed*, that we can look up to, and depend upon that astonishing *mercy of God* and those adorable *merits of CHRIST*, from which alone are derived all the powers and blessings of salvation. But then let us regard all these

advantages as more pressing and powerful calls upon us to forsake our sins, and to become holy, pure, wise and righteous, not as inducements to continue in sin, or as any substitutes for our want of real repentance and conversion to God.

Thus may we hope to escape all the miserable delusion of the foolish virgins in the parable, and to be found, when the BRIDEGROOM cometh, in the number of those *wise* virgins, who will be admitted to the unspeakable honour and happiness of *entering-in with HIM to the marriage.*
AMEN.



SERMON VII.

THE FOOLISH VIRGINS ASKING FOR OIL.

MATT. XXV. 8. *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.*

IN a former discourse on these words, we endeavoured to point out the unreasonableness of this request of the foolish virgins to the wise, from the consideration, that no one can be saved by the virtue of *another*, only so far as he endeavours to make that virtue *his own*, by repentance and regeneration. No one therefore, it was shown, can be saved by the *church* to which he belongs, or by the *creed* which he professes to believe, or even by the *mercy* and *merits* of JESUS CHRIST, only so far as by repentance and regeneration he becomes a *living* member of that church, a *living* believer of that creed, and a devout and practical receiver of that mercy and those merits.

Having thus then considered the groundless

nature of the request of the foolish virgins in my text, I shall now proceed to the consideration of the reason assigned for making it, as it is expressed in these words, *For our lamps are gone out.*

It has already been shown, that by the *lamps*, here spoken of, are spiritually to be understood the *knowledges of heavenly truth* in the understandings of men, because what a lamp and its light are to the *bodies* of men for guidance and direction, that truth and its light are to the *souls* of men for similar purposes. By the *lamps going out* then, according to the same spiritual idea, is to be understood, that the knowledges of heavenly truth and their light are *extinguished* in the human understanding, so as to be no longer fitted for the purposes of spiritual guidance and direction, as they were designed to be.

From this view now of the subject, a most important enquiry is suggested in the thinking mind, viz. what are the causes why the lamp of the ETERNAL TRUTH is suffered to *go out* in the souls of men? In other words, What are the causes why the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH, which is the light of heaven, does not always burn bright in the human understanding, so as to guide its happy possessor in the safe and sure way to the realms of eternal bliss?

The reply to this enquiry shall be the subject of my present discourse, and may the **ALMIGHTY** direct us all to a right apprehension of it's infinite importance !

There are *three* causes, more especially, which may be assigned as operative on this occasion.

1st. The neglect of prayer ;

2ndly, The neglect of reading the Sacred Scriptures, or **WORD OF GOD** ; and

3rdly, The neglect of practical obedience.

I shall begin with the first of these causes, viz. a *neglect of prayer*.

That the *lamp* of the Eternal Truth must of necessity *go out* in the mind of man, if the great duty of prayer be *neglected*, will appear plain from considering the nature and effect of that duty. For it is by prayer that we open and maintain communion with God and heaven. It is by prayer therefore, that we become admissive of the divine grace and pure love of the **FATHER** of heaven, and thus attain to the same spirit in ourselves. It is by prayer, thus, that we are supplied with that *holy oil* of the divine mercy and benediction, which is so absolutely necessary to keep our *lamps burning*. If then we *never* pray, we can *never* expect to receive that *holy oil* ;

and if we *seldom* pray, we can hardly expect a sufficient portion of it to *light our lamps*. In this unhappy case, what must be the sure consequence, but that our *lamps* will *go out*, and that whatsoever *speculative opinions* we may cherish ; whatsoever *knowledges* of the ETERNAL TRUTH we may have imbibed in our *understandings* ; with whatsoever zeal and ardour we may either repeat or maintain a *creed* ; we shall be found in that dark and miserable state described by JESUS CHRIST, where He so emphatically says, “ *If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.*”

Prayer then is absolutely necessary to supply our lamps with *oil*, and thus to prevent their *going out*. But observe, I am not here speaking of that *prayer*, which consists merely of words and gestures, and which may more properly be called *saying our prayers*, than *praying* ; but I am speaking of the *prayer* which arises from humble and penitent hearts, and which being derived from GOD, exalts the soul of man to communion with GOD. I am speaking therefore of the prayer of *holy* and *purified affections*, of *heavenly desires* and *inclinations*, which pant after a higher bliss than this world can give, and can never be satisfied

until sin be subdued, and all the powers, the graces, the virtues, the blessings of heaven be exalted in it's place. Such is the *prayer*, which keeps the *lamp* of the **ETERNAL TRUTH** ever burning bright in the minds of men. Such therefore is the prayer, through the *neglect* of which the lamp must of necessity *go out*.

But 2ndly. Another cause why the lamp of truth *goes out* in the human mind, is *neglect of reading the Sacred Scriptures*, or **WORD OF GOD**.

That this neglect must of necessity operate to the *extinguishing the light of truth*, may appear plain from considering the nature of the Sacred Scriptures, and the effect produced by reading them. For what Christian doth not know, or may not know, that the Sacred Scriptures are the **WORD OF GOD**, and that the **WORD OF GOD** is not only the source of all spiritual light in the *lamp* of man's understanding, but also the source of all the *oil* necessary to make that lamp to burn? For in the Sacred Scriptures **GOD** is ever present, ever instructing, ever consoling, ever strengthening, ever elevating man to conjunction of life with Himself. In the Sacred Scriptures therefore we hold communion with the **MOST HIGH**, we are admitted to His blessed presence, we hear

Him conversing with us, and we are made sensible of a power, of a wisdom, of a sanctity, which raise us above ourselves and the world, and make us partakers of a divine nature and life. All then that can be *known* of GOD, or heaven, or eternal life, is from the Sacred Scriptures: All our power to love GOD and one another is from the same Divine source: All our holiness, our purity, our bliss, we derive solely from this Eternal Word of the MOST HIGH. If then we *never* read this HOLY BOOK, our lamps must of necessity *go out*, because they will want both *light*, and the *oil* requisite to nourish it: Or, if we *seldom* read the HOLY BOOK, how plain is it to see, in this case, that the *light* cannot be so bright, because the *oil* cannot be so plentiful as it might have been! Thus, in either case, we extinguish in ourselves the light of heaven: We suffer dark clouds to interpose between us and the sun of heaven: And the terrible consequence is, that neither being warmed nor enlightened by it's bright beams, we plunge ourselves into the miserable darkness of sin, forgetfulness of GOD, and of our everlasting destination.

Do we wish then to arise out of that darkness, and to walk in the path of eternal life by the guidance of the eternal light? We must then read

diligently the pages of revealed truth, called the Sacred Scriptures, or **WORD OF GOD**. By *reading diligently*, however, I do not mean the reading *hastily*, or even the reading *often*, because it is possible we may read both *often* and *hastily*, and yet not be the better for what we read. But by *reading diligently*, I mean reading *attentively*, and by *reading attentively*, I would be understood to mean, reading with an attention fixed on **GOD**; thus with hearts elevated towards heaven; with desires panting after the eternal wisdom and life, that so we may be delivered from our corruptions, and made partakers of all those heavenly graces, virtues and blessings, which **GOD** never fails to impart to those who seek them diligently in His **HOLY WORD**. Such is the reading necessary to replenish our lamps with *oil*, and thereby with light. Such therefore is the reading, from the neglect of which we have every thing to fear, because without it our *lamps* will certainly *go out*.

But 3rdly. Another cause, why the lamp of the **ETERNAL TRUTH** *goes out*, at any time in the human mind, is a *neglect of practical obedience*.

By *practical obedience*, I would here be understood to mean a practical conformity of life to the spirit of our prayers, and to the spirit of

the instruction we derive from reading the **WORD OF GOD**. It too frequently happens that men separate the spirit of their prayers, and also the spirit of divine instruction, from their common life. Thus they think it enough to be devout in the *church*, or in their *closets*, but they forget that the great end of such devotion is to make them devout on all other occasions, as in their business, their occupations, their conversations, their recreations, and all the other engagements and duties to which they are called in their daily intercourse with the world. For what good reason can be assigned why man should be pious and holy in his prayers, and not be pious and holy likewise when he rises from his prayers? Is it not the intent of prayer, and also the intent of reading the Sacred Scriptures, to open man's mind to the presence of **GOD**, to fill him with the spirit of **GOD**, and thus to render him just, and pure and holy in all his thoughts, words and works? If man then forgets **GOD**, when he rises from his prayers, or from his reading the Sacred Scriptures; if he thus banishes himself from the presence of **GOD**, and suffers himself to be influenced by another spirit than the spirit of **GOD**; how plain is it to see, that his prayers and his reading the Sacred Scriptures have been of no benefit or advantage to him whatsoever!

Here then we may see the reason why the *lamp* of the ETERNAL TRUTH must of necessity go out in the mind of that person, who is negligent of the great duty of *practical obedience*. For what is the end or use of the light of truth, but to guide and direct man in the discharge of the duties of his ordinary life, as his *business*, his *employment*, his *eating* and *drinking*, his *recreations*, and the like? If then man doth not apply the light of the Eternal Truth to these purposes, it is to him an unprofitable thing, and perishes for want of use. JESUS CHRIST therefore says, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,*" to instruct us, that light is given us, not for our own use only in our *closets*, or at our *devotions*, but that it may *shine before men*, by guiding and directing us in all our intercourses with men, thus in all the engagements of common life. We may therefore establish it as a great evangelical truth, that as the light of the sun of this world is given us, not merely that we may admire it's brightness, and take delight in it's splendour, but that we may be enlightened by it's beams in all our ordinary business; in like manner, the light of the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS is given us, not merely for our amusement, or to gratify our vanity, but to guide us in the paths of

justice and judgment; to enable us to live good and useful lives; to deliver us from the delusions of our self-love; to raise us out of the grave of indolence and unprofitable works; and thus finally to make us fruitful in all those good works, which, being *wrought in God*, may promote His glory and our own salvation.

To conclude—Do we wish then to be delivered from the natural darkness and blindness of our passions, and to keep the *lamp of life* ever burning bright in our minds? Do we wish thus never to lose our way in that *wilderness* through which we are journeying to the *heavenly Canaan*, but rather to see before us and to follow the *pillar of fire*, which the God of our fathers has appointed for our guidance and security? Then let us be careful to *trim our lamps* perpetually with the *holy oil* procured by *prayer*, by *reading the Sacred Scriptures*, and by *practical obedience*. For this purpose, let our prayers be constant, regular, serious and devout, not determined by the fickleness of our passions, or the mere results of natural affection and zeal, but proceeding from penitent and devout hearts, penetrated by the sacred presence, and sanctified by the holy influence of that **DIVINE BEING**, to Whom we pray. Let our *reading of the*

Sacred Scriptures, in like manner, be daily, deliberate, and conscientious, recollecting that they are the *bread of our life*, and the only supply of *oil to our lamps*. Lastly, let our obedience be *practical*, by bringing down into our common life the spirit of our prayers, together with the power and sanctity of those truths which we derive from reading. Thus will our lamps never *go out*, like those of the foolish virgins in the parable, but being replenished continually with *fresh oil* from the FATHER OF MERCIES, they will enlighten us with a cheerful, steady, and blessed light on our way to heaven, and will thus qualify us to be admitted, with the wise virgins, to the marriage feast of the HEAVENLY BRIDEGROOM.—AMEN.

SERMON VIII.

THE ANSWER OF THE WISE VIRGINS.

MATT. XXV. 9. *But the wise answered, saying, [Not so,] lest there be not enough for us and you ; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*

THESE words contain the reply of the *wise virgins* in the parable, which has been the subject of several late discourses, when those virgins were solicited by the *foolish* ones, to *give them of their oil, because their lamps were gone out*. They contain, at the same time, a description of the *folly* of such a solicitation, as I shall now endeavour to show by considering, in the *first* place, the force of the argument involved in the words, *Lest there be not enough for us and you ;* and by enforcing, in the *second* place, the wisdom of the counsel, “ *Go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*”

First then, let me intreat your most earnest attention to the force of the argument involved in these words, “ *Lest there be not enough for us and you.*”

By the *enough* here spoken of is evidently meant *enough* of that *figurative oil*, which was necessary to keep their lamps burning, in other words, (to speak without a figure,) *enough* of that saving love to GOD and man, without which there can be no true light of understanding in the human mind, howsoever it may appear enlightened by speculative doctrine, or by any confession of faith, derived even from the WORD OF GOD ITSELF.

When therefore, in objecting to the request of the *foolish virgins*, it is said by the *wise virgins*; “ *Lest there be not enough for us and you,*” it is the same thing as if they had said, It is impossible for us to grant what you ask, inasmuch as the good of heavenly love cannot possibly be transferred from one man to another, so as to satisfy the requirements of both. For, in the *first* place, no one person can possess a greater share of that good, than what is requisite for his own salvation; and in the *second* place, supposing this good to be transferred to another, it would be of no manner of avail to him in the great concern of salvation, since a *transferred* good is like somewhat *borrowed*,

and is consequently not a man's *own*, but the property of him from whom it is *borrowed*.

Such then being the ground of the refusal of the *wise virgins* to listen to the request of the *foolish ones*, as expressed in the words, "Give us of *your oil*," allow me now to press upon you the high reasonableness of this refusal.

It must be evident to every considerate person, who is at all interested about his eternal salvation, that this greatest of all possible blessings can never be attained, only so far as the heavenly graces of the knowledge and the love of GOD are conjointly imparted to the human soul, so as to become the ruling principles of it's life and conversation. I say *conjointly* imparted, since the *knowledge* of GOD *alone*, separate from the *love* of GOD, is not a sufficient qualification for admission into the realms of bliss, inasmuch as the most abandoned of mankind may be the external recipients of such knowledge. On the other hand, the *love* of GOD, separate from the *knowledge* of GOD, is a grace which cannot possibly have birth, for how can any human being love another being, especially a DIVINE BEING, with Whom he has no acquaintance, or of whose essence, character, and properties, he is entirely ignorant?

It is absolutely necessary then, previous to man's salvation, that the *knowledge* and the *love* of God be *conjointly* implanted in his mind, and it is further necessary, for the same blessed end, that these heavenly principles become the *ruling principles of his life, and conversation*. I say the *ruling* principles, since unless they are allowed to have pre-eminence, and thus to be exalted to dominion above all man's lower principles, they do not, in such case, belong to the man, or constitute the man, inasmuch as, properly speaking, nothing really *belongs to* any of us, or really constitutes what we call *ourselves*, but the principles by which we are *governed*, in other words, the principles which put our lives in motion, and impart energy and activity to our daily operations.

Let us examine now the request of the *foolish virgins* to the *wise* ones, "*Give us of your oil,*" by the considerations above stated respecting the qualities and properties of the *oil* for which they asked.

From these considerations it is manifest that the request of the foolish virgins involved an *impossibility*, because it implied that one man can impart to another the *saving knowledge* and *love* of God *conjointly*, and not only so, but that he can exalt those heavenly principles in the mind

of another, as the *ruling principles* of his life and conversation.

It is true indeed that one man may impart to another the *knowledge of God*, and in some degree excite in him a feeling of the *love of God*; but the question in the present case is, not concerning a *knowledge* and a *love* thus communicated by another, but concerning a *knowledge* and a *love* which a man makes *his own*, by incorporating it into his own *will* and *understanding*, and thus into his *life*. For what eye cannot discern, that no *saving good* can be appropriated to any human being, only in proportion as he sees it, in *his own understanding*, to be a good, and is accordingly affected by it in *his own will*, so as to exalt it in his mind and life above every other good? It is not sufficient therefore that a man believes the gospel to be true, merely because *others* assure him of its truth, unless he himself be convinced, by the light of truth in *his own* understanding, that truth and the gospel are one. In like manner it is not sufficient that he acknowledges the love of God to be the *highest good*, merely because others tell him so, unless he himself be made sensible of the pre-eminence of that good in *his own* will, and is thus led to exalt it, as it deserves, above every inferior good both in his mind and life. For man,

it is well known, is a compound of *two* men, viz. an *external* man, and an *internal* man, or, as described by the Apostle, an *inward* and *outward* man, [2. Cor. iv. 16.] the one being distinguished from the other by their respective capacities, thus the *inward* man being distinguished from the *outward* by it's capacity of regarding and of being affected by the things of God and His eternal kingdom, whilst the *outward* is distinguished from the *inward* by it's capacity of regarding and being affected by the things of this lower world. Now it is possible that some notions of God and of His love may be imparted to the *outward* man, so as to affect this man, when yet, at the same time, they produce no effect whatsoever in the *inward* man. But how plain is it to see that, in such case, neither the knowledge, nor the love of God have any real place in the man himself, since the man himself consists of two constituent parts, the one *outward*, and the other *inward*, which *latter* part is the only one capable of receiving that knowledge and love in all it's power and fulness!

Here then we may discover, at one view, the extreme folly of the request of the *foolish virgins* to the wise, "*Give us of your oil.*" For how is it possible that any one man, or set of men, should be able to implant, in the *inward* mind of another

man, the *real* and *saving* knowledge and love of God? I say *real* and *saving* knowledge and love, to distinguish it from that *apparent* and *fruitless* knowledge and love, which, affecting only the *outward* man, leaves the *inward* man in the same state of emptiness, as if it had never made the slightest impression on the *outward* man.

But this extreme of folly and inconsideration will be seen in a still clearer and more convincing light, by proceeding to consider, as was proposed in the *second* place, the wisdom of the counsel of the *wise virgins*, as expressed in these words, “*Go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*”

For from these words it is manifest, that the *figurative oil* in the parable, or, in other words, the *good of celestial love and life*, cannot possibly be *borrowed* from another, but must be *bought* by the man himself, before it can become his blessed property, so as to secure to him a happy place in the bosom and kingdom of his HEAVENLY FATHER.

We have only then to consider, and by consideration to practise, the important lesson here involved in the expression, *Buy for yourselves*, and we shall then want no further instruction to teach us by what means we may most effectually

incorporate into our hearts and lives the blessing of all blessings, viz. the *saving oil* of the *knowledge* and *love of God* and *our neighbour*.

Now the term *buying* is a term in such common use, that it is not easy to suppose that any person can be so ignorant, as not to be able to comprehend it's meaning. For to *buy* a thing, according to the obvious natural idea of *buying*, is to give some part of our property, whether of money, of land, or of any other valuable, in exchange for it, by which means we secure to ourselves the possession of some commodity, which we hold in estimation, at the price of some other commodity which is less dear to us.

This, I say, is the *natural* idea of *buying*, and such also is the *spiritual* idea, with this only difference, that *spiritual buying* involves in it the exchange of *spiritual* property, whereas *natural buying* involves in it merely the exchange of *natural property*.

Is any one at a loss to know what is meant by the exchange of *spiritual property*, thus by the *spiritual buying* spoken of in my text? Let him then consider, and consider attentively, that there are various kinds of *spiritual property*, and that these various kinds of property may be exchanged, the one for the other, so that man may purchase

one kind at the expence of another, and may thus be in the continual habit of enriching himself by such exchange.

As for example—The *spiritual property*, which, of all others, is of the highest value, because it infinitely exceeds all other both in quality and duration, is what belongs to GOD Himself, viz. His Divine Love, His Divine Wisdom, and His Divine Power, together with all His other Attributes and Perfections of Omniscience, Omnipresence, Infinity, Immensity, and the like. But besides this *spiritual property*, there is other *spiritual property*, which may be termed *angelic*, involving in it all the perfections and excellencies of the inhabitants of the heavenly kingdom, called *angels*, and including in it the love, the wisdom, the power and operation of all the different societies of angelic beings, who constitute what is called collectively the *heavenly host*. In addition to these higher degrees of property may be taken into the account what belongs peculiarly to *man*, viz. his will, his wisdom, his power and operation, or all that affection, thought, and energy, which properly constitute a human being.

From this view now of the different kinds and degrees of property, we may be enabled clearly to discover what is to be understood in the words

of my text by *buying*, as applied to *oil*, in other words, as applied to what is signified by *oil*, viz. the combined knowledge and love of the SUPREME GOOD, that is to say, of GOD and His eternal kingdom. We may discover, I say, that by *buying*, in this case, is meant the giving our own human property, including in it *our own* will, *our own* wisdom, and *our own* power, in exchange for the DIVINE Will, the DIVINE Wisdom, and the DIVINE Power, and this in such a manner, that we may no longer be governed and led by *our own* will, *our own* wisdom, and *our own* power, but by the DIVINE Will, the DIVINE Wisdom, and the DIVINE Power.

That this is the proper and just idea of *buying* in the words of my text, as applied to *oil*, or to the acquirement of the SUPREME GOOD and the SUPREME TRUTH, may be further manifest by what is said, in the Book of the Revelation, to the Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, where it is written, “ *I counsel thee to buy of ME gold* “ *tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and* “ *white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and* “ *that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.*” [Rev. iii. 18.] For what can be supposed to be here meant by *gold tried in the fire*, but the *gold* of heavenly love and charity purified by trial and

temptation? What again can be supposed to be meant by *white raiment*, but the *white raiment* of heavenly truth, which is as a covering, a defence, and ornament to such heavenly love? What therefore can lastly be meant by *buying* on this occasion, but the procuring of heavenly love and truth on the part of man, by the exchange of *his own* love and wisdom for the DIVINE LOVE and WISDOM, in other words, by the submission of whatsoever he calls *his own*, to the government, guidance, and protection of what is of GOD in his own mind and life? It is accordingly added, “*That the shame of thy nakedness do not appear,*” because until man is wise to submit *his own* will and wisdom to the DIVINE will and wisdom, and thus to secure to himself the blessed possession of the SUPREME GOOD and SUPREME TRUTH, there is nothing properly belonging to him but *shame* and *nakedness*, shame having relation to the natural corruption of his will, and *nakedness* to the natural blindness of his understanding.

Did this subject stand in need of any further illustration, it might be sought for and found in those remarkable words in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, where it is written, “*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.*” [chap. lv. 1.] The subject
 may also be illustrated and confirmed by the two
 following parables of the GREAT SAVIOUR, where
 it is written, “ *The kingdom of heaven is like
 “ unto treasure hid in a field, the which, when a
 “ man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof
 “ goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth
 “ that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is
 “ like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls,
 “ who, when he had found one pearl of great
 “ price, went and sold all that he had, and bought
 “ it.*” [Matt xiii. 44, 45, 46.] For what shall
 we say is the *wine and milk*, spoken of in the
 above words of the Prophet? What also is the
treasure hid in a field, and the *pearl of great
 price*, spoken of in the parables of JESUS CHRIST,
 but *figurative expressions*, intended to impress
 more deeply on our minds a sense of the infinite
 importance and value of the knowledge and love
 of the GREAT AND HOLY GOD? What then can
 be meant by *selling all that we have* and *buying*
 these valuables, but the absolute surrender and
 submission of *our own wills* and of *our own wis-
 dom* to the government and guidance of the will
 and wisdom of our HEAVENLY FATHER, our
 CREATOR, our REDEEMER, and SANCTIFIER,

by virtue of which surrender and submission we separate from ourselves all that is defiled, foolish, and miserable, and in it's place secure to ourselves the eternal possession of all that is pure, wise, blessed and holy, from God and His heavenly kingdom ?

Suffer me now, in the way of conclusion, to endeavour to enforce on your minds and consciences the *practical* application of what has been above said on the subject of *spiritual buying*.

If any man will take the trouble of comparing the natural state of his own mind and life with the testimony of the REVEALED WORD OF THE MOST HIGH, he will assuredly be led by such comparison to make the discovery, howsoever painful it may be, that his natural will is not in agreement with the DIVINE WILL, neither is his natural understanding and natural life in that accord with the DIVINE UNDERSTANDING and DIVINE LIFE, which is so absolutely necessary to secure his admission hereafter into the kingdom of heaven. For alas ! how is the nature of man at this day, in consequence both of hereditary and actual corruption, become so *alienated from the life of God*, as the Apostle expresseth it, that self-love and the love of the world have gained a miserable ascendancy over the love of God, insomuch that

human glory is exalted above DIVINE GLORY, worldly wealth above heavenly riches, the pleasures of sense above the delights of wisdom, and thus self above GOD, and earth above heaven! And what is the necessary consequence of this disorder, but that pride and vanity, covetousness and sensuality, malice and hatred, with every other infernal passion, like so many *ravenous wolves* and *poisonous serpents*, have taken possession of that human mind, which was originally created to be the temple and habitation of GOD Himself, in which He might rule and govern, by introducing into it all the heavenly affections of brotherly kindness and charity, of contentment, gentleness and peace, and thus fulfilling His own blessed prophecy, "*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.*" [Isaiah xi. 6.]

On the other hand, notwithstanding all this disorder and defilement, which so manifestly prevail in the natural or unconverted state of the human heart, it cannot have escaped the most superficial reader of the WORD OF GOD, that a remedy is provided for the mischief, inasmuch as it is expressly declared in that WORD, (speaking

of the manifestation of God *in the flesh*,) "*Blessed be the LORD GOD of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David.*" [Luke i. 68, 69.] For what shall we say is the full amount of this Divine testimony? Is it not the consolatory assurance, that GOD, in the GLORIFIED HUMANITY of JESUS CHRIST, is still present with and near to every child of man, to *redeem* him from all his natural evils, and thus to replenish him with all the graces of heaven and heavenly life, whensoever he is wise to renounce those evils, and thus to implore the proffered divine aid, or *horn of salvation*, of his SAVIOUR GOD? Whatsoever then may be the natural evils and disorders of which we complain, and howsoever, in consequence of their mischievous influence, our natural situation may be like that of the man in the parable, who *went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, leaving him half dead, yet the GOOD SAMARITAN from above is still near to us, and with us, as with the traveller of old, to bind up our wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and to set us on his own beast, and bring us to an inn, and take care of us.* [Luke x. 33, 34.]

Here however arise some questions of such an importance as no words can describe, viz. How shall we most effectually secure to ourselves the *oil* and *wine* of the GOOD SAMARITAN for the cure of our wounds? Shall we, like the *foolish virgins* in the parable, say unto the *wise*, *Give us of your oil*, or shall we not rather obey the counsel of the *wise*, by *going to them that sell*, and *buying for ourselves*?—It has already been shewn, in the former part of this discourse, that the *essential oil* of the Divine mercy and love cannot be *borrowed* but must be *bought*, before it can be so appropriated to us, as to bring us to heaven, and further, that the price of *buying* is nothing more or less, than the submission of our own will and wisdom to the DIVINE WILL and WISDOM, that so the *latter* may at all times be exalted above the former.

What then remains, but that we apply to the GOOD SAMARITAN, Whose high and holy name is JESUS CHRIST, for the *oil* and *wine* of His Divine benediction? What remains, I say, but that we go to the GIVER OF ALL GOOD for a communication of that good, remembering however that something must be given on our part *in exchange* for it. Is it asked what this something is? I answer in the words of JESUS CHRIST,

“ *Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple,*” [Luke xiv. 33.] Oh *terrible* words to the mere natural man, who accounteth his own will and his own wisdom to be his greatest treasures and best friends ! But oh *consolatory* words to the spiritual man, who has learnt the heavenly lesson, to regard his own will and his own wisdom as his greatest mischiefs and most deadly enemies, and as the *All* likewise which he is required to *forsake* ! Grant us then, O MERCIFUL LORD, the grace to discover, and to live according to the discovery, that in thus *forsaking all that we have*, we gain *all*, since in renouncing our own will and wisdom we *gain* Thy will and wisdom, and by that gain become Thy children, the sharers of Thy bounty, the inheritors of Thy glory, the bride of the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM, and meet to enter-in with Him to the *marriage*.—AMEN.



SERMON IX.

THEY THAT ARE READY ENTER-IN TO THE MARRIAGE.

MATT. XXV. 10. *And while they went to buy, the BRIDEGROOM came ; and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage ; and the door was shut.*

IN the last discourse on the parable, from which these words are taken, it was shown what is to be understood by the foolish virgins *going to buy* ; and in a former discourse, what is properly meant by the BRIDEGROOM *coming*. It only remains therefore to be now considered what is the further instruction intended for our observation in these words, “ *And they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut.* ”

The words present to our view *three* distinct points of consideration, all of them meriting our most profound attention.

1st, What is here to be understood by being *ready*; or by *those that were ready* ;

2ndly, What by *entering in with Him to the marriage* ; and

3rdly, What by *the door being shut*.

In regard to the *first* of these points, viz. what is to be understood by being *ready*, or by those *that were ready*, it must be evident, from the whole tenour of the parable under consideration, that *readiness*, or, what is the same thing, *preparedness to enter-in with the BRIDEGROOM into the marriage*, implies these two things, *first* that the prepared person should have a *lamp*, and *secondly*, that he should have *oil* in the lamp ; or, in other words, *first*, that he should have what is signified by a *lamp*, viz. an *enlightened understanding*, that is to say, an understanding instructed in heavenly truth, or knowledge, derived from the WORD OF GOD, and *secondly* that he should have what is signified by *oil*, viz. a *pure will*, that is to say, a devout inclination to form his life according to such heavenly truth or knowledge.

Allow me to press upon you this *double character* of *readiness*, or *preparedness*, by presenting it to your view more *distinctly* and *particularly*.

Every one knows, or *may* know, if he pays the slightest attention to what is passing in the deep centre of his own bosom, that the mind of every individual human being consists of *two* distinct principles, commonly called *will* and *understanding*, the *will* being the seat of his *love* and it's *affections*, whilst the *understanding* is the seat of his *intelligence* and it's *thoughts*.

Every one also knows, or *may* know, if he be desirous to know it, that it is the intention of the **ALMIGHTY**, by or through His **HOLY WORD**, to *join together* those two principles, so that they may be united in their regard to one eternal end and object, which regard is accomplished whensoever the human will loves **GOD** above all things, and it's neighbour as itself, and when the human understanding, at the same time, endeavours to acquaint itself with, and to confirm the requirements of that love.

Here then we may discover, at one view, what is to be understood by those that are *ready*, or *prepared*, as they are called in the words of my text, because here we may plainly see, that so long as the *will* of man is unwilling to love **GOD** above all things and it's neighbour as itself, and so long as the *understanding* is indisposed to acquaint itself with and to confirm the requirements of that

love, so long the man himself is *un-ready*, or *un-prepared*, to fulfil all the purposes of the ALMIGHTY in His endeavour to effect the *union* of those two principles. On the other hand, in proportion as the *will* of man is inclined to love God above all things and it's neighbour as itself, and in proportion as the *understanding* is disposed to acquaint itself with and to confirm the requirements of that love, in the same proportion the man himself may be properly said to be *ready* or *prepared* to accomplish all divine purposes.

Hence then it is, that a *double preparation* is necessary on the part of every human being, before he can be accepted of God, and thus *ready*, or qualified for admission into his eternal kingdom. It is necessary, I say, that he be *prepared*, not as to his *will alone*, nor yet as to his *understanding alone*, but as to *both united*, in other words, not as to *love alone*, nor yet as to *knowledge alone*, but as to *love and knowledge conjoined*, and in that conjunction elevated and directed to eternal objects. For *love alone*, separate from *knowledge*, is like the *heat* of the sun separate from it's *light*, which, as experience teaches, is not sufficient for the purpose of rendering the earth fruitful. On the other hand, *knowledge alone*, when separate from *love*, is like the *light* of the sun separate from it's

heat, which, as the same experience testifies, and as every one may be convinced by observing the effect of a winter's sun, is utterly incapable of promoting vegetable life, and thus of administering to the production of those necessaries, which the bodily life of man requires for its support.

Here therefore we may be enabled to settle at once the controversy, which, for so many ages, has disturbed the peace of the Christian church, and which still continues to perplex and distract the minds of it's contending members. The controversy, to which I allude, is that, which has so long been agitated in settling the point of pre-eminence respecting *charity* and *faith*, whilst some have insisted that, in regard to salvation, *charity* has the precedence, and whilst others, with equal zeal, have maintained that *faith alone* is the saving grace and virtue, which opens the doors of heaven, and introduces man to the presence and favour of his MAKER. But how plain is it to see, from what has been above observed respecting those who are *ready*, that the combatants on each side of this question are alike mistaken, since it is not *charity alone*, nor yet *faith alone*, which secures the salvation of man, but *charity* and *faith united*, since charity involves in it all the graces and virtues of a *purified will*, whilst *faith* involves in it all the

perfections of an *enlightened understanding*, and salvation is the result of the conjunction of the united graces, virtues, and perfections of *both*.

But the qualifications to constitute that *readiness*, or *preparedness*, of which we are speaking, will more plainly appear, if we proceed to the consideration of the *second* point presented to our view in the words of my text, viz. what we are to understand by the expression, “ *Went in with Him to the marriage.*”

It is impossible for any well-disposed person to peruse the WORD OF GOD with any degree of serious attention, without being forcibly struck with the frequent allusion made, in that Holy Book, to *marriage*, and with the application of the term to spiritual subjects, or to all the important concerns of man, as resulting from his connection with God and eternal life.

Thus the GREAT SAVIOUR, in one of His instructive parables, likens the kingdom of heaven to a *certain King, who made a marriage for His Son, and sent forth His servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding.* [Matt. xxii. 1, 2, 3.] In the same parable we also read, how “ *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* ” ? [verses 11, 12.] We again read, in the Revelations, these admonitory words of instruction and consolation, addressed to all Christians, “ *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the LAMB is come, and His wife hath made herself ready;* ” and further, “ *Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.* ” [Rev. xix. 7, 9.] To the same purport we find the ALMIGHTY, in speaking of His holy connection with His church or people here below, assuming to Himself the significant names and titles of a BRIDEGROOM and HUSBAND, whilst He is pleased, at the same time, to dignify His church, or people, with the honourable names and titles of His *bride* and *wife*. [See Isaiah, lxi. 10. Jer. xxxi. 32. Matt. ix. 15. Mark ii. 19. John iii. 29. Rev. xxi. 2, 9.] And lastly, (to crown the whole of this interesting testimony) when the prophet Isaiah has occasion to record the prosperous state of the LORD’S church here on earth, in consequence of her reception of evangelical light and wisdom, he describes her in this significant, animated, and consolatory language, “ *Thou shalt no more be termed, Forsaken; neither shall thy land be any more termed, Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land*

“ *Beulah* ; for the LORD delighteth in thee, and
 “ *thy land shall be married. For as a young*
 “ *man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry*
 “ *thee, and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the*
 “ *bride, so shall thy GOD rejoice over thee.*”
 [Chap. lxii. 4, 5.]

From all this weight of Divine Testimony, then, it is abundantly evident, that the term *marriage*, whensoever it occurs in the sacred pages of Revelation, involves in it a variety of spiritual ideas, all of them of the utmost importance to man, because all of them tending to conduct him to a right knowledge of those qualifications which are necessary to make him *ready*, or *prepared*, to enter into the kingdom of everlasting blessedness.

The term *marriage*, therefore, in the language of Revelation, is not limited to that meaning, which is usually annexed to it in the language of men, but, when viewed in the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH, and thus manifested as to its interior contents, is seen to be expressive of unions and conjunctions the most sublime, and at the same time the most edifying, that can enter into the heart of man to conceive. For *first*, according to the sense which the GREAT SAVIOUR annexes to the term *marriage*, it has manifest reference to the union of DIVINITY and HUMANITY in Himself,

until He Himself, by virtue of that union, became the **ONE ONLY GOD**, and was enabled to say, "*I and my FATHER are ONE,*" [John x. 30.] "*All power is given unto ME in heaven and in earth,*" [Matt. xxviii. 18.] "*I am ALPHA and OMEGA, the BEGINNING and the ENDING, saith the LORD ; Which Is, and which WAS, and Which is TO COME, the ALMIGHTY.*" [Rev. i. 8. 11.] Thus all the generations of men were henceforth to be taught, that in the divine person of **JESUS CHRIST**, the **FATHER** and the **SON**, or the **DIVINITY** and **HUMANITY**, are eternally **ONE**, as the soul and body of man are one, and that by means of this union the *unknown* **FATHER** is made *known*, the *invisible* **FATHER** is made *visible*, and the otherwise *un-approachable* **FATHER** is made approachable and reconcilable to all such of His penitent and believing children, as seek everlasting conjunction, or *marriage*, with this their creating and redeeming God.

But the spiritual meaning of the term *marriage*, when the term occurs in the sacred pages of Revelation, is not confined to the *union* of **DIVINITY** and **HUMANITY** in the person of the **GREAT SAVIOUR**, since from the above testimony it is manifestly set forth as extending to the reciprocal conjunction of **GOD** with man, and of man with

GOD, by virtue of which conjunction GOD is pleased to call Himself the BRIDEGROOM and HUSBAND, and his people, or church, the *bride* and *wife*. And whereas it is impossible for man to attain such conjunction with his GOD, except through the medium of a purified *will* and *understanding*, that is to say, through the medium of *united love* and *wisdom*, or of *united goodness* and *truth*, since without such union there can be no purification of *will* and *understanding*, therefore the spiritual meaning of the Scripture term *marriage* involves in it, *secondly*, these several subordinate marriages of *goodness* and *truth*, of *love* and *wisdom*, of *will* and *understanding*, in the hearts and lives of all those, who are intent on attaining the high dignity and supreme blessedness of becoming, as all are called to become, the *bride* the LAMB'S *wife*.

When then it is said in the words of my text, "*And they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage,*" we are not to understand by this expression, *went in with Him to the marriage*, that they were introduced to some state of *external delight* and *festivity*, resembling what usually occurs in the celebration of marriages here below, but we are rather to understand an introduction to a state of *internal joy* and *gratification*, which is

the sure and blessed result of what is properly signified and represented by the sacred and holy term *marriage*. We are to understand therefore, that they, *who were ready*, or who were prepared according to that preparation of will and understanding of which we have been speaking, were now called to taste and enjoy all the heavenly fruits of such preparation, by being admitted to a closer and more intimate communion and conjunction with their SAVIOUR GOD in His divine love, wisdom and peace. We are to understand yet further, that the eternal principles of goodness and truth, and of every evangelical grace and virtue in their purified wills and enlightened understandings, were henceforth to be rendered inseparable, being bound together within the *golden girdle* of the divine mercy, favour and benediction. Love therefore was henceforth to be combined with it's wisdom, and wisdom with it's love ; the *will* with the *understanding*, and the *understanding* with the *will*; and both with God. Of consequence, from this marriage were to be for ever separated all the principles of disorder and misery, because by and through this marriage was to be fulfilled the divine and blessed promise, where it is written, "*I will betroth thee unto Me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, [justice] and in judgment,*

“and in loving-kindness and in mercies. I will
 “even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness; and
 “thou shalt know the LORD.” [Hosea ii. 19. 20.]

Such then being the true and proper meaning of the *marriage* spoken of in my text, to which the wise virgins, or *they that were ready*, were introduced, it will now be evident what is lastly to be understood by the concluding words, “And
 “*the door was shut.*”

It will be evident, I say, that since the *marriage* here spoken of is a *spiritual* marriage, having relation to the reciprocal conjunction subsisting between GOD and His church, therefore the *door* here spoken of must be regarded according to it's spiritual signification, as having relation to such a *spiritual marriage*.

But what shall we say is this *mysterious* and *significant door*? What too are we to understand by it's being *opened*, and what by it's being *shut*?

These questions can only be answered by considering what properly constitutes a *natural door*, and what are the proper uses of it's *opening* and *shutting*.

Now every one knows that a *natural door* is a *medium* of communication in a house between one room and another, and also a medium of

introduction into the house itself ; and that by the *opening* and *shutting* of the door such communication and introduction are either effected or prohibited.

Instead of the *natural term house*, then, let us substitute the term *marriage*, according to the sense in which it has been above explained, and we shall be enabled to see at once what is to be understood by the *door* at present under consideration, and what by its *opening* and *shutting*.

For it has been already shown, that what introduces to the *heavenly marriage*, is the knowledge of truth in the understanding conducting man to the good of the love of God and of his neighbour in his will, and that in proportion as such knowledge and love are conjoined, in the same proportion the door is *opened*, and man enters into the marriage. It follows therefore of necessary consequence, that if there be no such knowledge in the understanding, and no such love in the will, there the door of all heavenly marriage must of necessity be *shut*, and must continue *shut*, until it be opened by those heavenly principles of united love and wisdom, which can alone introduce to the *marriage supper of the LAMB*, and all its joys.

And here it may be seen clearly, if we be disposed to see, that the **FATHER OF MERCIES**, Whose high and holy name is **JESUS CHRIST**, never, on any occasion, *shuts* the door of the above marriage, or, what is the same thing, *shuts* the door of his heavenly kingdom, against any, even the least of His intelligent creatures, but on the contrary, that he keeps this door for ever *open*, since it is the very essence of His infinite and adorable mercy to delight in admitting all His children to the nearest and closest conjunction with Himself in the blessings and purities of His divine love, wisdom, and peace. Accordingly He has gifted, and continually gifts, every one of His children with the astonishing faculties of understanding what is true, and of willing or desiring what is good, and of thus conjoining in himself all the principles of heavenly life, salvation and blessedness.

If the door then of the above marriage be, at any time, *shut* against any human being, it can be owing solely to this *double* cause, viz. that, in the *first* place, he closes his eyes against the bright light of the knowledge of the eternal truth, which is for ever dawning forth from it's divine source, the **WORD OF GOD**, and in the *second* place, that, notwithstanding the admission of this light into his

understanding, he still refuses to submit his *will* and *life* to it's heavenly guidance, and thus never attains to the marriage or conjunction of that love and wisdom, to which the truth was intended to guide him. Some men, therefore, it is to be feared, never obtain a seat at *the marriage-supper of the LAMB*, because they *close their eyes* against *heavenly light*, whilst others again deprive themselves of the same high and blessed privilege, because they *harden their hearts* against the admission of the purity and warmth of *heavenly love*.

But there is yet another most important and edifying idea suggested by the words under consideration, "*And the door was shut,*" since the *shutting of the door* here spoken of manifestly implies, not only a positive prohibition against the admission of *unprepared* guests to the heavenly marriage, but also an eternal guard and security to prevent the *prepared* from *falling back again* into those defilements, errors, and miseries, in which they had been immersed, previous to their introduction to the *heavenly marriage*.

And what a blessed truth is here presented to the view of all those *wise virgins*, who, through repentance, faith and obedience, have enjoyed the unspeakable honour and happiness of being intro-

duced to the *marriage supper of the LAMB* ! For what can be more consolatory to these highly-favoured guests than to be assured, that it is absolutely impossible for them ever to fall back again from the glorious eminence to which they have been exalted, since, by the providence of the MOST HIGH, *the door is shut* everlastingly against all such relapse, in consequence of it's being *shut* against all the infernal powers of seduction and temptation ? It is then the inconceivable bliss of every *wise virgin* to reflect, that the *seal* of his marriage with the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM can never be *broken*, and that the *consecrated ring*, which is the symbol of that marriage, will continue to all eternity, not only untarnished, but increasing every day in it's representative lustre, as the sure indication of a covenant of love and of protection eternal as the heavens.

To conclude—We have now seen what is to be understood, in the words of my text, by being *ready* or *prepared*, when the subject treated of is concerning introduction to *spiritual* or *heavenly marriage*, inasmuch as all such marriage has relation to the reciprocal conjunction of GOD with man, and of man with GOD, and consequently no man can be *ready* or *prepared* to enter into this marriage, only so far as his *understanding* is

enlightened with *heavenly knowledge*, and his *will* enlivened by *heavenly love*, and thus the *marriage*, or *conjunction*, of *love* and of *wisdom*, or, what amounts to the same thing, of *goodness* and of *truth*, is effected in his purified and regenerate bosom.

We have seen also what is further to be understood by the *door* of this marriage being *shut*, and how such *shutting* is the result, not of any arbitrary determination of the ALMIGHTY to exclude any of his intelligent creatures from the joys and glories of His eternal kingdom, but only of the perverseness of man, who is unwilling to open his *eyes* to the reception of heavenly *light*, and his *heart* to the reception of heavenly *love*, and both to conjunction with that DIVINE BRIDEGROOM, Who, in His adorable mercy, has been pleased to call the whole race of mankind to an eternal marriage with Himself in those blessed words, "*Abide in ME, and I in you.*" [John xv. 4.]

Who then is that *wise virgin*, who aspires after the distinguished privilege and bliss of being *ready to enter* with his REDEEMING LORD into this heavenly and everlasting *marriage*? Who is that *wise virgin*, who, like the pious Mary of old, sees this to be the *one thing needful*, accounting

all the riches, glories, and pleasures of this transitory world, comparatively as *dross*? Let every such child of wisdom humble himself in never-ceasing gratitude and adoration before his HEAVENLY FATHER for the unspeakable honour and happiness to which he is called as a guest at the *marriage supper of the LAMB*. Let him never forget this *marriage supper*, but let it be the first grand object of his regard, both in his *going-out* and *coming-in, from this time forth, and for evermore*. Let him remember too that this marriage supper has its *door of introduction*, and also its *door of exclusion*, and that its door of introduction is faith in the GREAT REDEEMER and a life according to His commandments, whilst its *door of exclusion* is a want of such faith and life. Let him therefore, in all his devout approaches to the throne of grace, draw nigh immediately to JESUS CHRIST, Who has been pleased, in this view, to call Himself pre-eminently *the door*, and to add, "*By ME if any man enter-in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*" [John. x. 9.] But whilst he thus opens his *understanding* to the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH, which is ever directing him to the gate of *admission* to everlasting bliss, let him, at the same time, prepare his *will* to follow

the guidance of his *understanding*, until both *will* and *understanding* are no longer *two*, but *one*. Let him thus unite in himself the *knowledge* of truth with its *love*, and the *love* of truth with its *knowledge*, and both with GOD, under the blessed assurance, that if he thus combines in his mind and life the principles of heaven, he will finally become one of that happy number, of whom it is written in my text, *And they that were ready entered in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut.*—AMEN !



SERMON X.

THE PRAYER OF THE FOOLISH VIRGINS REJECTED.

MATT. xxv. 11, 12. *Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, LORD, LORD, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

IN the foregoing discourses we have endeavoured to collect the various lessons of important instruction intended for us in the parable of the *wise and foolish virgins*, from the time of their first going forth to meet the BRIDEGROOM, until the time of the BRIDEGROOM'S coming, when *they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut.*

We come now to consider what befel the foolish virgins on this awful occasion, when, as it is expressed in the words of my text, they *also came, saying, LORD, LORD, open to us; but He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

There are two distinct points of interesting information presented to us in these words,

1st. That foolish virgins *pray*, or, to speak perhaps more properly, *offer up forms of prayer* to the GREAT and HOLY GOD ;

2ndly, That all such *prayers*, or all such *forms of prayer*, separate from the *spirit* and *life* of prayer, are of no avail whatsoever, in other words, do not obtain the blessings prayed for.

In regard to the *first* of these points of information, it is confirmed to us by these words, “*Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, “LORD, LORD, open to us,”*” for in these words is evidently contained a *form of prayer*, or *supplication*, offered up by the foolish virgins to the SUPREME FOUNTAIN of all good, Who is here addressed under the appellation of LORD, LORD.

But it deserves well to be considered, that, although the foolish virgins presented to the ALMIGHTY an *external form* of prayer, or *supplication*, yet it cannot, with any propriety be said that they *prayed*, inasmuch as there is a manifest difference between *praying* and *using a form of prayer*, which difference is of the utmost importance to be attended to.

For prayer, *properly so called*, implies a sincerity of heart and of purpose before the GREAT and HOLY GOD, which sincerity is always rewarded by obtaining the blessings for which it prays, agreeable to those words of JESUS CHRIST, “*Every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened,*” [Matt. vii. 8.] But in using an external form of prayer, no such sincerity of heart and of purpose is necessary, and therefore we find that the *foolish virgins* in the parable had the power of using such a *form*, which form was yet distinguished from *prayer properly so called*, by it's unproductiveness of blessing, for we read, that, notwithstanding this *semblance of prayer*, it received only this answer, “*Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*”

From this part then of the history of the *foolish virgins* under consideration, we are instructed in this great and edifying truth, that prayer is of a *two-fold* character, viz. *internal* and *external*, the former originating in sincere repentance and conversion of the heart and life to the GREAT and HOLY GOD, whilst the latter, viz. *external* prayer, is a *mere work of the lips and gestures*, unattended with any devout sense of the Divine Object to Whom it is addressed, and thus

leaving man in the same impure state of affection, purpose and thought, in which it found him.

The utter unprofitableness of this *external prayer* is thus described in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, where it is written, "*When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you ; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear,*" [chap. i. 15.]; and to show further what was wanting to make this prayer both acceptable and profitable, it is immediately added, "*Wash ye, make ye clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*" [Verses 16, 17.]

Here therefore we are enabled to discover the difference between that *external* and *ineffectual prayer*, of which the LORD saith, "*I will not hear,*" and that *internal* and *profitable prayer* of which it is written, "*He that asketh receiveth ; he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*" For all *external* and *ineffectual* prayer is a mere *lip-worship*, in which the *heart* has no share, inasmuch as there is in it no desire of real purification in the sight of God ; consequently there is in it no spirit of repentance and renovation ; no removal of actual and

hereditary evil ; no elevation of the interiors of the mind towards heaven ; no separation between the clean and the unclean, between what is of **GOD** and what is not of **GOD** ; whereas in all *internal* and *profitable* prayer this case is entirely reversed, because such prayer is always accompanied with heavenly affection, inclining man to depart from all the working of iniquity, and by such departure to elevate his mind towards heaven, to conjoin himself with the **SUPREME GOOD**, and thus to gain a victory over the devil, the world and the flesh, by associating himself with that Divine Omnipotence, of which it is written, “ *But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of GOD, even to them that believe on His name ; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD.*” [John i. 12, 13.]

Would we know then what is the proper character of our *prayers*, in other words whether they be *internal* and *profitable*, or whether they be merely *external* and *ineffectual*? We have only to enquire within ourselves, how far they proceed, or not, from pure and penitent affections ; consequently how far they lead us, or otherwise, to forsake all sins, to explore, in the spirit of true

repentance, the secret workings of our own hearts; to distinguish thus between the *precious* and the *vile*, in other words, between what is of GOD and what is not of GOD in the hidden chambers of our own minds and lives; and all this with the blessed view, that we may gradually recover in ourselves the *image and likeness of GOD*, being *born again*, as the Apostle expresseth it, *not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, even of the WORD OF GOD which endureth for ever.*

Would we know yet further how we may attain the spirit of *internal* and *profitable* prayer, so as no longer to deceive ourselves by fancying that we pray, when we are only using *external forms* and *postures* of prayer, we must then consider seriously what is the great *end* of prayer, until we make the blessed discovery, that prayer was intended and ordained of the ALMIGHTY as the instrumental means of opening our minds to the contemplation and love of Himself, and thus of finally conjoining us with Himself in the affection and practice of all that is wise, and good and holy. Of course, it was intended and ordained as the instrumental means of *opening heaven to us* and *in us*, since heaven is always *opened*, whensoever GOD is rightly contemplated, loved, and adored, agreeable to what is written of the GREAT REDEEMER, that "*when He*

was baptized and praying, the heaven was opened." [Luke iii. 21.] Let us then only keep in recollection this *grand end* of all our supplications and addresses to the throne of grace, and we shall then soon find imparted to us from above the *genuine spirit of prayer*, raising us above ourselves and the world to an eternal conjunction with God and heaven, and thus convincing us that prayer is a *golden key* communicated to us from the FATHER OF MERCIES for the happy purpose of *unlocking* all the riches and treasures of eternity, and that consequently, whensoever we *pray*, or make use of this *key*, we have a demonstrative proof of a divine power and agency present with us, agreeable to what is written, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." [John iii. 27.]

Having thus then considered the *first* point of interesting instruction presented to our view in the words of my text, viz. the *prayer* of the *foolish virgins*, and how this prayer cannot properly be called *prayer*, being nothing else but *lip-worship*, separate from all that *internal* adoration of the *heart*, which constitutes the true nature and essence of the grace of prayer, may I now request your further serious attention, whilst I proceed to the elucidation of the *second* point, by endeavouring

to prove, that all such prayers of the *foolish virgins*, or all such external semblances of prayer, are of no avail whatsoever in the sight of God, in other words, are not productive of the blessings prayed for ?

This inefficacy or unproductiveness of such prayer is expressed in my text by these awful words, "*But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*"

It is impossible however to comprehend the full meaning and import of this most tremendous declaration, as uttered by the ALMIGHTY in reply to the addresses of His creatures, unless it be previously considered, and considered seriously, what is involved, *first* in the words, "*Verily I say unto you,*" and *secondly* in the words, "*I know you not.*"

I shall begin with the first of these points, viz. what is involved in the words, "*Verily I say unto you.*"

Perhaps it is not so generally known as it ought to be, that the term *Verily*, which is so frequently annexed by JESUS CHRIST to His Divine sayings, [See Matt. v. 18. 26. chap. vi. 16. chap. x. 23. 42. chap. xvii. 20. chap. xviii. 13. 18. chap. xxv. 12. chap. xxviii. 20. John iii. 11. chap. v. 19. 24. 25. chap. vi. 26. 32. 47. 53.

chap. viii. 34. 51. 58. chap. x. 7. chap. xiii. 16. 20. 21. chap. xxi. 18. 25.] in the original language is AMEN, and that AMEN properly means TRUTH, and consequently, when applied by JESUS CHRIST, is expressive of Divine confirmation of the truth of what He saith, since He Himself is super-eminently THE TRUTH, according to His own words, "I *am the way, and THE TRUTH and the life.*" [John xiv. 6.] On which account He is called also the AMEN, as in the Revelations, where it is written, "*These things saith THE AMEN, the FAITHFUL and TRUE WITNESS, the beginning of the creation of God.*" [chap. iii. 14.]

It is remarkable too, that in the Gospel according to John, whensoever the above term VERILY, or AMEN, is applied by the GREAT SAVIOUR to confirm what He saith, the term is not used *singly*, but *repeatedly*, or in a *double* form, thus, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you,*" to instruct us, no doubt, respecting the pre-eminent importance of the subject treated of, and the consequently higher degree of attention which it demanded.

When then, in reply to the formal and lip-supplication of the foolish virgins in my text, it is said by the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM, "*VERILY I say unto you, I know you not,*" the term

VERILY was manifestly intended by the DIVINE SPEAKER to mark the superior importance and sublime truth of His awful declaration, *I know you not*, and thus to excite a more than ordinary attention to all the tremendous mischiefs involved in that declaration.

But what, shall we say, are the tremendous mischiefs involved in the declaration, "*I know you not?*" This is the *second* point which demands our most awakened enquiry.

To judge from *appearance*, it doth not seem as if these few words, "*I know you not,*" were expressive of any very severe judgment against the persons to whom they are applied, when yet, in *truth* and *reality*, it is impossible to conceive of any sentence either more extensive or more formidable.

For when the ALMIGHTY FATHER of the universe addresses Himself to any of His intelligent creatures, in these words, "*Verily I say unto you, I know you not,*" what eye cannot see that the expression, "*I know you not,*" involves in it a deeper meaning than appears in the face of it, since it cannot be supposed that the OMNISCIENT GOD is *literally defective in knowledge* respecting any of His creatures, whether they be *wise* or *foolish?*

"*I know you not,*" then, (when the words

proceed from the GREAT and HOLY GOD) must be interpreted according to some higher rule than what is applied in the interpretation of the language of men, and what this rule is, cannot be doubtful; if it be considered that all *knowledge*, in the language of GOD, involves in it, not only *knowledge*, but *love*, and that accordingly GOD is said to *know the way of the righteous*, because He *loveth them*, and *not to know the way of the wicked*, because their way is *opposed to His love*.

Here then we may discern, at one view, all that interesting and edifying meaning involved in the above awful declaration of the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM to the *foolish virgins*, "*I know you not.*" We may discern, I say, that it is the same thing as if He had said, I discover nothing in you, which is in harmony and agreement with *My love*. Your *affections* and Mine are in direct contrariety to each other. It is impossible therefore that we can dwell together in the same kingdom, because there is no cement of union between us, but on the contrary every source of discord and disagreement. The *door* therefore between us is *shut*, and you must depart into your own kingdom, because you have no qualification whatsoever for admission to the kingdom and marriage feast of the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM.

Oh terrible words to all those *foolish virgins*, who, in preparing to meet the BRIDEGROOM, take their *lamps*, but take no *oil* in them! For what can be more terrible than to think, that all such foolish virgins are in a state of alienation from the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM, insomuch that even the tenderness of His *love* cannot profit them, because they oppose in themselves all it's invitations, counsels, providences, and continual endeavours to draw them within the *golden girdle* of it's Almighty protection and everlasting benediction?

Would we then reverse this sad sentence of misery and condemnation? Would we secure to ourselves a blessed place in the favour of heaven, so that the *door* may be ever *open* to the *marriage feast* of it's joys and delights? Would we thus no longer remain either *unknown* to the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM, or *unknowing* of His love, but rather be found in the happy number of those of whom the GREAT SHEPHERD JESUS CHRIST saith, "*I know my sheep, and am known of mine?*"—What then is required of us, but that we imitate the conduct of the *wise virgins* in the parable under consideration, by *taking oil in our vessels with our lamps*, in other words, by suffering the *knowledge of truth* in our under-

standings to conduct us to the *love* of all that is good and heavenly in our *wills* and *lives*, that so we may finally attain to that blessed marriage of *speculation* and *practice*; of *faith* and *obedience*; of the *creed*, which teaches what we ought to *believe*, and of the *commandment*, which enjoins what we ought to *do*, on which are founded all the joys and blessednesses of heaven and it's inhabitants? What, I say, is required of us, but that we thus suffer the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM to *open*, and to *keep open* in us, the *door* of His *marriage-chamber*, from a full conviction, that we can only so far enter into heaven hereafter, as heaven enters us during our abode here on earth, and that heaven cannot enter into us, except in proportion as we admit the principles of heaven, which are the principles of heavenly love, wisdom, and life, to obtain the dominion in us, by controuling and ruling all our affections, tempers, purposes and ends of life?

And here may I be allowed to trespass a little longer on your time and patience, whilst I remark, and remark with tears, that in the whole history of the Christian Church, there perhaps never was a time when the grand laws, relative to the *heavenly marriage* of which we have been speaking, were so little attended to, as in the particular

period in which we live. And what shall we say has been the unhappy consequence of this criminal and mischievous neglect? Do not we see, in many instances, a mere *speculative faith* exalted and regarded as the *only key*, which can open the door of heaven, whilst all the heavenly duties of repentance and obedience; of humility and self-denial; of Glory to God in the highest and goodwill towards men; are set in the back ground as things of little or no moment? Is not the *lamp* of knowledge thus left destitute of the *oil* of love and charity? Of course, whilst we say with our *lips*, LORD, LORD, *open to us*, do not our *hearts* utter a contrary prayer, by immersing themselves in all the uncleanness of selfish, worldly and sensual love, and thus *shutting the door* of heaven against us? For how can *filth* and *folly* enter into the kingdom of *purity* and *wisdom*? And yet, until our *hearts* be purified by the love of God and of our neighbour, and our *understandings*, at the same time, be enlightened by the wisdom of that love, what are we also but the dregs of impurity, rendered even more impure, and consequently more abominable, by the *shining lamps* of external profession without *oil*, under which they are concealed indeed from the sight of man, but rendered more hateful in the sight of God?

To conclude—In the significant and instructive history of the two Prophets, Elijah and Elisha, we read the following remarkable passage, that when they were gone over Jordan, Elijah said unto Elisha, “*Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee let a DOUBLE portion of thy spirit be upon me.*” [2 Kings, ii. 9.]

Behold in this history an illustration and exemplification of the proper quality and character of the *wise virgins* in all ages, and in all places, who *take their lamps, and go forth to meet the Bridegroom.* For all such *wise virgins* are enlightened to see, that the GRAND PROPHET, Whose holy name is JESUS CHRIST, and of Whom the Prophet *Elijah* was but a representative figure, is ever present with them, and ever saying unto them, as Elijah said unto Elisha, “*Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee.*” They are instructed also to reply, as *Elisha* did, “*I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me,*” because by this *double portion* they understand, not any *single* grace or virtue, such as *faith without charity, or charity without faith; speculation without practice, or practice without speculation; wisdom without love, or love without wisdom;* but the *conjunction* of these graces and

virtues, in other words, the *heavenly marriage* above spoken of, by virtue of which the *will* and *understanding* of man are no longer *two*, but *one*, and thus prepared to enter-in with the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM to the *marriage chamber* of His most pure love and most holy wisdom *united*.

Be this then, from henceforth, our prayer, that so we may attain the *double portion* of the divine favour and blessing! May the *lamp* and the *oil* of all heavenly virtues be thus ever found in a state of inseparable union in our *hearts*, our *understandings*, and our lives! Thus shall we never hear the tremendous sentence, pronounced by the DIVINE BRIDEGROOM against the *foolish virgins* in these awful words, “*Verily I say unto you, I know you not,*” but on the contrary shall be greeted by Him with that consolatory welcome, “*Come ye blessed of my FATHER, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.*” [Matt. xxv. 34.]—AMEN.

SERMON XI.

ON THE GREAT DUTY OF WATCHFULNESS.

MATT. XXV. 13.] *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the SON OF MAN cometh.*

THESE words contain the advice with which our BLESSED LORD concludes the parable of *the wise and foolish virgins*, whose history we have considered in several former discourses.

They are admirably adapted both to the understanding and practice of all mankind in all ages of the church, being replete with the most sublime instruction, and thus wanting nothing but our most serious consideration, to impress them upon our hearts as *the words of eternal life*, and by such impression to render them productive of eternal life in us, with all its graces, virtues and blessings.

May I trust, then, that we are all of us prepared to give them the attention which they so

justly deserve and claim, and I shall then, with the greater willingness, endeavour to unfold their deep meaning, by presenting it to your understandings under this *two-fold* view,

First, of what is involved in the divine admonition, *Watch therefore*; and

Secondly, What is the high *reasonableness* of this duty, as grounded in the singular and interesting consideration, “*Ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the SON OF MAN cometh.*”

First then—allow me to call your attention to what is involved in the divine admonition, “*Watch ye.*”

The admonition manifestly relates to *spiritual* watching, or watching of the *mind*, and not to mere *natural* watching, or watching of the *body*, inasmuch as it has reference to what is afterwards called *the coming of the SON OF MAN*, which *coming* cannot possibly be an object of observation to the *body* and its *senses*.

But what shall we say is involved in *spiritual* watching, or watching of the *mind*?

The question is an important one, and demands a serious and satisfactory answer; and yet it is impossible that the answer to it can be either serious or satisfactory, until it be well considered,

that all *watching*, whether it be *spiritual* or *natural*; of the *mind*, or of the *body*; requires *light*, since it implies that something is to be noted, whether it be *good*, or *evil*, and that if this something be *good*, it ought to be loved and cherished as such, and if it be *evil*, it ought to be hated and guarded against: Yet, how plain is it to see, that this cannot be effected in a state of *darkness*, since in a state of *darkness*, how is it possible to discover either what is good or what is evil, whether it relate to the *mind* or to the *body*, in other words, whether it be *spiritual* good and evil, or that which is merely natural!

But what again shall we say is the *light* necessary to constitute a state of *spiritual* watchfulness, or watchfulness of the *mind*? This again is an interesting question, which requires a serious and satisfactory answer; and yet it is impossible that the answer to it can be either serious or satisfactory, until it again be well considered, that all *spiritual light*, or *light of the mind*, is derived solely from the WORD OF GOD, according as it is written, "THY WORD is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." [Psalm cxix. 105.] Every man therefore is *enlightened*, or gifted with *spiritual light*, in proportion as the truths contained in the WORD OF GOD are admitted into his *understanding*,

and there elevated as in a *candlestick*, for the double purpose of enabling him to discern both his spiritual *friends* and spiritual *foes*, that so he may open the door of his mind to the *former*, and keep it shut against the *latter*.

But the great duty of *watchfulness* requires, not only that man should possess in his *understanding* the blessed *light* of heavenly truth derived from the WORD OF GOD, but likewise that he should *apply* this light to the purpose for which it is given him, which purpose is manifestly this, to enable him to distinguish in himself the principles of *good* and *evil*, until he discovers that all *good* is from GOD and His holy angels, and that all *evil* is from the devil and his angels, and that these two principles are ever at work within him, contending for the sovereignty, in other words, contending which shall establish in him it's own kingdom, so as to make him it's willing subject and servant.

Behold here then the nature and character of the true *watcher*, or of that faithful Christian, who is obedient to the counsel of his GOD and SAVIOUR, when He said to His disciples, "*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, where- in the Son of Man cometh.*" This *watcher* is ever on his guard to keep the lamp of the ETERNAL TRUTH at all times burning bright in his own

mind, and not only so, but likewise to make every possible advantage of it's *light*, by marking the distinct operations of good and evil in himself. For this purpose he is often reading and meditating on the **WORD OF GOD**, which is the **DIVINE SOURCE** of that light, that so his lamp may never go out, but rather may receive continual increase of it's illuminating beams. His next care is, to render the light *profitable*, by suffering it to guide and direct him in the daily concerns of his life, especially in such as affect his eternal well-being. With this blessed view, he becomes every day more and more attentive to the presence of **GOD** in his own mind and life, since he discovers that all must of necessity go well with him whilst **GOD** is seen to be present, but that if **GOD** be lost sight of, nothing can be expected but mischief, misrule, disturbance and misery. By this attention also to the presence of **GOD** he is enabled to discover more minutely the presence of those things in himself which are at enmity with **GOD**, such as all his selfish, worldly, and sensual affections, thoughts, and appetites, which tend to darken, if not to destroy, the glories and comforts of the Divine presence. Against these things therefore he lifts up the standard of divine security, by pronouncing them to be the

enemies of his salvation, and treating them accordingly. Thus by *watching*, on *one* part, for the presence and nearness of His HEAVENLY FATHER, attended with all the purifying, consolatory, and saving graces of His Divine countenance, and watching on the *other* part, against the cunning, malice, and destructive machinations of his spiritual enemies the powers of darkness, he finds to his inexpressible joy, that the duty of *watchfulness*, when faithfully performed, hath the *double* advantage of opening more and more, in his mind and life, the door of the kingdom of heaven, and of closing more and more the opposite door of the kingdom of death and darkness.

The grand enquiry, then, which concerns us all as *men*, and more especially as *Christians*, is this: Have we set up in our minds the *watch-light* of the ETERNAL TRUTH for guidance and guardianship in the perilous journey of our present lives, or do we think it safe to *walk on still in darkness*, with no other light than that of our own natural reason and intelligence? Do we suffer also the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH to do it's intended duty, by making manifest to us the EVERLASTING GOOD which we ought principally to love, and also the *everlasting evil* which

we ought principally to abhor and shun? Is the love of God and of our neighbour thus seen and exalted in our minds, as the Good of all Goods, whilst the inordinate love of ourselves and of the world, when exalted above the love of God and of our neighbour, is seen and rejected as the evil of all evils? In the little kingdom therefore of our own souls, is the boundary established between good and evil, and do we set guards in this boundary to prevent it's violation, that so the good and the evil may always be seen in their distinctness, and the mischievous power of the *latter* may never be suffered to encroach on the peaceable dominion of the former?—A serious answer to some such questions as these will soon enable us to discover, how far we have as yet obeyed the divine admonition, *Watch ye*, or how far we are still living in a criminal disregard of the wisdom intended for our salvation.

But *secondly*—The high reasonableness of the great duty of *watchfulness* will further appear by considering the singular motive by which it is enforced, as expressed in these remarkable words of the GREAT SAVIOUR, “*For ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the SON OF MAN cometh.*” Let us then proceed to the examination of what is involved in this motive, and *first*,

of what is to be understood by *the coming of* THE SON OF MAN.

This expression, "*the coming of* THE SON OF MAN," hath several distinct meanings, all of them of the highest importance, and all of them therefore deserving our most serious regard and consideration.

For the title, SON OF MAN, hath manifest reference to the GREAT SAVIOUR, Whose high and holy name is JESUS CHRIST, and Who sometimes, in the Sacred Scriptures, is called the SON OF GOD, and sometimes the SON OF MAN, according to the subject treated of. Thus, when His DIVINITY, His ONE-NESS with the FATHER, and His Divine Power are treated of, He is always called the SON OF GOD ; but when His suffering, His coming to judgment, and in general the redemption and regeneration wrought by Him, are treated of, He is then called THE SON OF MAN, as may be plain to every one, who will be at the pains to examine the several passages in the evangelical history, where the two titles, the SON OF GOD and the SON OF MAN occur.

Hence then may be seen what is to be understood by *the coming of* the SON OF MAN, and how it involves, in the *first* place, the descent of the GREAT SAVIOUR here on earth, when He

took upon Him our nature, and was made *manifest in our flesh*, and dwelt amongst us, and enlightened us by His glory, and fought against our enemies, and thus made Himself an everlasting **REDEEMER** and **REGENERATOR** to all those who believe on Him, and keep His commandments.

In the *second* place, *the coming of the SON OF MAN* implies His *second advent* here upon earth, signified by the descent of the *New Jerusalem*, which is the promised *tabernacle of God with men*, for the blessed purpose of renewing the earth in His own pure spirit of justice and judgment, when, as it is expressly declared, “*God* “*will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and* “*there shall be no more death, neither sorrow,* “*nor crying, neither shall there be any more* “*pain,*” [Rev. xxi. 3, 4.]

There is yet another and a *third* sense signified to us by this expression, “*The coming of the SON OF MAN,*” which demands our serious attention, as being of particular importance in regard to our daily conduct and conversation. The sense I mean is what may be called His *individual* coming, or His coming to every one of us *individually*, not as a **JUDGE** and **SAVIOUR** *hereafter* only, but as a **JUDGE** and **SAVIOUR** *now*, and

every moment of our lives, by His WORD and HOLY SPIRIT in the deep centre of our own bosoms.

For that JESUS CHRIST is thus disposed to come to every one of us *individually*, He Himself declares in these momentous words, “*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,*” [John xiv. 23.], and again, “*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.*” [Rev. iii. 20.]

And would we know His gracious intention in thus *coming* to us? It is manifestly this, to cleanse and purify our souls from the defilements of sin; to raise up in us new affections, new inclinations, and new thoughts; to instil into us new principles of conduct and conversation; to make us thus *new creatures* by the WORD of His power; that being renewed in His *image*; being enlightened with His light; being enlivened with His love; being born again of His HOLY SPIRIT; we may be delivered from all the iniquity of our own corrupt affections, and the blindness of our own darkened understandings, and become the

pure, blessed, and everlasting temples of the Divine grace; wisdom, holiness and peace.

This *coming of the SON OF MAN*, I say, demands our most attentive consideration and *watchfulness*, not only because, in general, it is little believed in and noted by many who call themselves Christians, but because it depends altogether on this His *present coming now* in our hearts and lives, whether His former coming in the flesh, or His future coming in glory and in judgment, will be a blessing or a curse to us.

As for example—Of what avail will it be to us to believe that JESUS CHRIST once appeared in the flesh; that He wrought miracles in the land of Judea, that He taught wisdom in the streets of Jerusalem, that he suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane and died on Mount Calvary; and that he rose from the dead, and showed Himself to His disciples after His resurrection? What, I say, will all this belief avail us, unless it be instrumental in leading us to look for His *coming now* in our own hearts and lives, to do for us all that, in a spiritual way, by His holy spirit, which He once did, in a literal way, and by his personal presence, for the Jews of old?

So again—We all of us profess to believe

that **JESUS CHRIST** shall come again at the last day *to judge both the quick and dead*—but what, let me ask, will this belief also profit us, unless it lead us to receive Him now, at this present time, into our hearts as *a judge* ; to judge there both the quick and dead ; in other words, to condemn and cast out every thing that is sinful and dead in us, and at the same time to raise up, into newness of life, all those heavenly, holy, and living affections and thoughts, which may make us glad to see, and render us meet to reign with Him, when He cometh in the kingdom of His glory ?

In short, this sense of *the coming of the SON OF MAN* now, in our hearts, to be the **REFORMER** and **REGENERATOR** of our lives by His holy spirit in us, is that sense of His *coming* which doth most especially concern us, and which therefore we are bound to attend to with the utmost vigilance, since the accomplishment of His coming, according to this sense, is the grand end of all that **JESUS CHRIST** ever did, or ever will do for us ; it is also the end of all that he hath commanded us to do for ourselves ; thus it is the end of all our prayers and of all our praises, inasmuch as it is the fundamental ground of every duty, of every ordinance, and of every institution of the Gospel. For what is it that we any of us want

for our happiness and salvation? Is it not this, that the SON OF MAN, the GLORIFIED REDEEMER, may *come* and gain admission into our hearts; that He may there, on the ruins of our own sinful and miserable natures, establish the pure and blessed kingdom of His own eternal love and wisdom, to the intent, that as we are by nature *dead in Adam*, or alienated from GOD by hereditary evil, we may become *alive again in CHRIST*, and thus be restored to an eternal conjunction with our HEAVENLY FATHER in all that can be called wise, and good, and happy for us?

But it is said concerning this *coming of the SON OF MAN*, and urged as a motive to excite us to the exercise of the great duty of *watchfulness*, that *we know neither the day nor the hour* of it's accomplishment—Let us stop a moment then to consider what we are to understand by these words, and what is the motive which they contain and urge.

Certain it is, that *the coming of the SON OF MAN*, whether considered in relation to the *church in general*, or to an individual *member of the church*, is an event totally *unknown* to the mere natural man, unless he be enlightened by knowledge from above. Thus when the GREAT

SAVIOUR *came in the flesh*, and began His Divine ministry in Jerusalem, for the purpose of preaching His everlasting Gospel of repentance, faith and salvation, the great body of the Jews, we find, knew nothing of His *coming*, but continued still in sin and unbelief, notwithstanding the tenderness of that mercy, which thus brought down their God to visit them. Accordingly we learn, that when this GREAT SAVIOUR "*was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.*" [Luke xix. 41, 42.]

So again, when this same GREAT SAVIOUR, at this day, by the power of His HOLY SPIRIT, *comes* to His thoughtless and rebellious children, as He doth every moment, for the merciful purpose of turning them to Himself, by *convincing* them of *sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*; how little, in general, is this His *coming* either *known* or attended to, and how awfully is thus fulfilled the Divine testimony, where it is written, "*He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.*" [John i. 11.]

Behold here then, in these melancholy examples, the powerful motive to the great duty of

watchfulness, as expressed in the words of JESUS CHRIST in my text, “*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the SON OF MAN cometh!*”

For without *watchfulness* it is absolutely impossible we should ever *know* either the *day*, or the *hour*, when the MOST HIGH will *visit* us, whether generally or individually. Without *watchfulness*, therefore, we shall be like the Jews of old, who, when their SAVIOUR GOD appeared amongst them, to turn them from their sins, and to *gather* them to Himself, *as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings*, were so blinded by the cares and pleasures of the present world, that they had no eyes to see either the DIVINITY of this SAVIOUR, or the divine and blessed purpose of His visitation. Without *watchfulness* too, we shall be alike insensible to the presence and operation of this same SAVIOUR, by His HOLY WORD and SPIRIT, in our own hearts and lives, so that when He *comes*, every *day* and every *hour*, to warn us in our minds and consciences of the great danger of sin, and to elevate us to the sight and possession of an eternal glory, we shall be so infatuated by the love of temporal gratifications, as to pay no attention either

to the visitations of this GOD of our salvation, or to the merciful end and purpose for which He visits us. Thus we shall be strangers both to GOD and ourselves: We shall know nothing of the kingdom of heaven, nor of it's *nearness*, but shall fancy that both heaven and it's KING are at an immeasurable distance from us: And thus, not being aware of the truth of those words of JESUS CHRIST, where He says, "*Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world,*" we shall banish Him always from our sight, and become finally like the Jews of old, on whom the GREAT REDEEMER pronounces the awful sentence, "*Ye will not come unto ME that ye might have life.*" [John v. 40.]

Adored however be the GOD of our salvation! —For although, by the want of *watchfulness*, we are exposed to so many and tremendous mischiefs, yet by a due attention to that heavenly duty, we never fail to become partakers of blessings surpassing all the powers of human thought, to conceive or number.

For behold the true WATCHER, and observe how he keeps ever burning bright in his own mind the light of heavenly truth derived from the WORD OF GOD, and how, by virtue of that light,

he is ever attentive to the *two* doors, the one opening upwards towards heaven, and all the heavenly host, whilst the other opens downwards towards the deep and to all the infernal crew! He carefully notes therefore every *day* and every *hour* of the *coming of the SON OF MAN* in the little kingdom of his own heart, and at the same time is on his guard against every motion of the powers of darkness to gain admission. The sure and happy consequence is, that all the graces, the virtues and the joys of heaven are continually presented to his delighted view and acceptance, whilst an effectual check is given to the inroad of the opposite mischiefs, defilements and miseries. By *watchfulness* therefore he, by degrees, acquires a heavenly temperament and quality, the effect of which is such, that he lives continually in the *DIVINE PRESENCE*; feeds continually on angels' food; eats of their bread; drinks of their cup; and fulfils daily the will of *GOD* on earth, as it is fulfilled in heaven. In the mean time he has nothing to fear from his infernal foes, because he knows that whilst his *GOD* is with him, the powers of darkness cannot hurt him, according as it is written, "*Thou art my King, O GOD, command deliverances for Jacob. Through Thee will we push down our*

“ *enemies ; through Thy name will we tread them
“ under that rise up against us.”* [Psalm xliv.
4, 5.]

To conclude—May then the divine counsel, which closes the instructive parable of the *ten virgins*, make it's proper impression on all our hearts ! May we learn, I say, to *watch*, under a full and deep conviction how closely our everlasting salvation is connected with a faithful discharge of this most sacred duty ! May we recollect too, that there is no state and situation of life, which is not exposed to danger, if this duty be forgotten and neglected, and none which is not fraught with blessings, provided that *watchfulness* be allowed to sit as a guardian in the inner chambers of our own minds ! JESUS CHRIST therefore, in speaking of this duty on another occasion, thus emphatically expresses Himself, “ *What I say unto you, I say unto ALL, Watch ;*” [Mark xiii. 37.] as if He had said, *All* are alike interested in the discharge of this duty, whether they be *rich* or *poor*, *young* or *old*, *learned* or *unlearned*, in *prosperity* or *adversity*, *immersed in worldly business*, or *exempt from it's cares and labours*, *far advanced in the ways of godliness*, or *just beginning their journey to the heavenly Canaan*.

All therefore will find a blessing in the practice of *watchfulness*, and all will be losers and sufferers by the neglect of it. May then the words of JESUS CHRIST never be erased from our minds, “ *What I say unto you, I say unto ALL, Watch.*”
AMEN !



SERMON XII.

THE NATURE OF EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE.

MATT. iv. 17. *From that time JESUS began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

It is greatly to be feared that few Christians have right ideas concerning either the nature or necessity of the evangelical duty of *repentance*. Some are led to conceive of this duty, as being very small and diminutive in the scale of Christian excellence, and though they will allow it some value, because they find it recommended in the Gospel, yet they set other virtues in so much higher estimation, that it's worth is comparatively low and insignificant in their eyes. Some, again, account *repentance* to be merely an *introductory* duty in the Christian life, necessary indeed to *open the door* of the temple, and *let in* the worshippers, but of no use at all, and therefore to be discarded, when the worshippers are admitted—Others, lastly, form to themselves very gross and

limited notions concerning the *degree* and *extent* of this duty : They suppose, for instance, that it reaches and applies only to *external* offences, to those *manifest* and *notorious* disorders of the life which are *visible* to the eyes of men, without any regard to the invisible corruptions of the heart before God. The conclusion is, they call themselves true and perfect penitents, because they abstain from a few *outward* sins, and no longer *appear* to offend before men, not considering that perhaps in the mean time the real evil, the radical disease of their natures, which principally requires the evangelical medicine of *repentance*, rages still in all it's force, and is bringing them rapidly down to the gates of eternal death.

It is with a view to oppose and dissipate these mistaken and mischievous ideas concerning the great duty of *repentance*, that I have now chosen the words of my text for the subject of our present consideration, intending to show from them these four things,

- 1st, The *nature* of evangelical repentance ;
- 2ndly, The *extent* of this duty ;
- 3rdly, The *necessity* of it ; and
- 4thly, The *blessed motives* by which it is pressed on our practice.

First then, permit me to call your attention

to the *nature* of the great evangelical duty of *repentance*.

Repentance is expressed in the Gospel by two distinct terms, the one denoting a *change* or *turning* of the *thoughts*, the other a *change* or *turning* of the *affections*. It is therefore a *two-fold* duty, and may be considered as applying to the two distinguished principles or faculties of man's life, viz. his *understanding* and his *will*, and effecting a *change* or *turning* in each.

Repentance therefore supposes, that the will and understanding, the affections and the thoughts of man are not naturally in the state in which they ought and were designed to be ; *the tares are sown among the wheat* ; it supposes of consequence, that we are fallen, as the Scripture teaches, or departed as to our best faculties from our true good, that is, from God, His life, His righteousness, His truth, and kingdom, both in knowledge and in possession. It supposes further, that we are fallen or departed into what is not good, that is to say, into what is evil, in other words, into something separate from, and opposite to the life, the righteousness, the truth and kingdom of the MOST HIGH.

Repentance supposes yet further, that we begin to be seriously alarmed about this our fallen and disordered state, and that we have an earnest

desire to change it, by recovering that original, that pure and blessed state of heart and life, for which we were created. It supposes therefore that, under the influence of such alarm, we begin to consider with ourselves *whence* we are fallen, and into *what*; that by serious recollection we re-enter into ourselves, and explore, by the light of the **ETERNAL TRUTH**, the hidden sources of good and evil; that, as the Scripture expresses it, *We light a candle, and sweep the house, and search diligently, till we find the lost piece of silver*, the precious knowledge of the purity, the blessedness, the nearness of God and His kingdom, and also of our own corruptions which separate us from **GOD**: It supposes that, in consequence of this knowledge, we begin to attend to the stream of our affections and thoughts, and to note in what direction they run, whether upwards towards God and heaven, or downwards towards the world and ourselves.

But this is not all—*true repentance* supposes, not only that we *know* our evil state, but also that we *labour* to amend it, by recovering a better. It supposes therefore that we set ourselves earnestly at work, by *laying the axe to the root* of our corruptions; that for this purpose we recall our wandering thoughts, controul our disorderly

appetites, regulate our affections, curb our passions, and strive to bring our whole man under the guidance and dominion of the Divine Spirit of the MOST HIGH. It supposes thus, that we suffer religion to influence our lives, not by a mere profession of speculative faith only, which leaves us still the slaves of our corruptions, but by leading us to act at all times from evangelical principles; by recalling us to a sense of our High Original; by rescuing us from the dominion of sin and the powers of darkness, and re-instating us in all that holiness, purity, power, wisdom, and peace, which the Gospel presents to our acceptance, and makes known to us in those memorable words, "*To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God.*" [John i. 12.]

Behold here a picture of the true penitent! Through the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH shining in his mind and conscience, he begins to discover that his nature is sadly corrupted and degraded, being fallen from the purity of God, and the bosom of His peace, into the defilements and misery of a most disorderly and unrighteous life and love. He is convinced of this his unhappy condition, not only by the testimony of the WORD OF GOD, which sounds continually in his ears the

humiliating language, that he “*was born in sin, and that in wickedness did his mother conceive him,*” but also by the testimony of his own experience, from which he learns that “*when he would do good, then evil is present with him;*” that “*the thoughts and imaginations of his heart are only evil continually;*” that so far from loving God “*with all his heart, with all his mind, and with all his strength, and his neighbour as himself,*” according to the requirements of the Divine law, he loves himself and the world much better than God and his neighbour.

Such is the immeasurable distance from God and heaven, at which the true penitent discovers himself wandering in a strange land. He finds too that he is beset by a host of enemies, who are ever labouring to persuade him that his condition is not so bad as he supposes it to be, and that it is in vain for him to attempt to mend it. “*Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,*” is the ensnaring language of these spiritual deceivers, “*for what gain is it to seek God?* The pleasures of this world are sure, being manifest to the senses, but who knows of any other pleasures, or who hath ever come from another world to certify it’s joys?”

The *true penitent* is neither deluded nor discouraged by these false reasonings of folly and

impiety. He believes the divine testimony which assures him, that *the whole world lieth in wickedness, that the earth is corrupt, and full of violence, that darkness is on the face of the deep*, and that it is no longer safe to build his house on a foundation of sand. He knows also and believes, that there is a better foundation, and that it is possible for him to build *a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. He is determined therefore to dig deep for this foundation, and he *never suffers his eyes to sleep, nor his eye-lids to slumber*, until he finds it, and erects upon it that spiritual building, which *cannot fall, because it is founded on a rock*. Or, to speak without a metaphor, the true penitent, under a due sense of the dangers which encompass him, recognizes and lays hold of the blessed powers which the Gospel presents for his security. He sees that the grace of an **OMNIPOTENT GOD** is continually held forth to all who are wise enough to discover it's value, and to make trial of it's virtue, and he earnestly supplicates this grace, and as diligently applies to it. For he finds in this heavenly gift of the **MOST HIGH** a remedy for all his sins, his sorrows and his infirmities. Not that he trusts to the grace and the merits of his **REDEEMER** to do all for him without his co-operation ; or to pardon and cleanse

him from his sins, whilst he continues to cherish and delight in them. No—he sees the extreme folly and danger of such unreasonable conduct, and is convinced that the grace and merits of **JESUS CHRIST** can only profit him, so far as he applies them to their proper end, the removal of his sins. Is he therefore under the influence of any bad passion, any habitual corruption, any ungovernable temper or appetite? He confesses in humility this his abomination and transgression, and prays devoutly for that divine aid by which alone he can hope to overcome it. Does he discover that the love of the world prevails in his heart over the love of heaven, and that self-love is dearer to him than the love of **GOD**? He never rests, till, through the power of the **OMNIPOTENT** in himself, he has reversed this sad state of his affections and Will, and restored the order of heaven to the little world of his desires and thoughts. Does he find that he is naturally proud, envious, covetous, wrathful, discontented, froward, deceitful and impatient? He laments with many tears before the **FATHER OF MERCIES** these his unhappy defilements; but he is not satisfied with mere tears and lamentations: He never ceases to implore also the aid of the **GREAT SAVIOUR**, that through His **DIVINE HUMILITY** he may subdue all pride, through His

DIVINE CONTENTMENT all covetousness, through **HIS DIVINE MEEKNESS** all wrath, through **HIS DIVINE PATIENCE** all fretfulness, through **HIS DIVINE GENTLENESS** all frowardness, and through **HIS DIVINE JUSTICE** all deceit. In a word—it is the resolute purpose of his heart, to oppose in himself every known evil, because it is against God, his life and kingdom, and to cherish every evangelical grace and virtue, because it is of God, and forms and opens the kingdom and life of God in the well-disposed soul; and he is firmly convinced, on the authority of the Gospel, that whilst he makes this the rule of his ordinary life, and practice, he is fulfilling the great ends and designs of true religion; he is growing in the grace of the **MOST HIGH**, he is becoming a child of the eternal wisdom, and rising daily out of the regions of sin and misery, into the possession of that holy land, of which it is written, “*Come ye blessed children of my FATHER, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.*” [Matt. xxv. 34.]

Having thus then considered the nature of the evangelical duty of repentance, and endeavoured to point out that *change of life*, that is to say, that *change of affection and thought* which it implies, I should now proceed to consider the extent of

this duty ; but the present time will only allow me to endeavour to impress what has been already said on your attention and practice.

With this view, permit me to recommend an habitual course of serious self-examination, as the best, the only means of leading to that real and vital change of life and principles of which we have been speaking. It is for want of entering into ourselves, and exploring in the presence of God the sources of good and evil, of wisdom and folly in our own minds, that we many of us, it is to be feared, live strangers to ourselves, and to the necessity of that internal purification presented in the Gospel. But a constant and solemn recollection of ourselves in the presence of God cannot fail to have the best influence on our lives and conversations, because it cannot fail to suggest to us the important enquiry, how far we have heretofore done the great work of *repentance*? In other words, Do we find a change wrought in our affections and thoughts? Does this change dispose us to look *upwards* more than *downwards*; to God and heaven, more than to ourselves and the world? Doth it dispose us to watch diligently the motion and tendency of our daily desires, the direction of our ruling love, and the operation of our passions? Have we entered by *repentance* into

the combat against sin and the powers of darkness, or on the contrary, are we falling asleep in the idle, unreasonable imagination, that JESUS CHRIST can save us through His merits, though we never apply those merits to their proper end, the reformation of our lives? In short, is it become our earnest desire to love GOD above all things and our neighbour as ourselves, and to bring every affection and thought, every temper, word and work, under obedience to that heavenly desire? Some such questions as these will soon lead us to discover how far we are advanced in the great business of *repentance*, and if we are faithful to their salutary exhortation, will soon put us in possession of all that blessedness which JESUS CHRIST designed for us, when He said, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*"—AMEN.



SERMON XIII.

THE EXTENT OF THE DUTY OF REPENTANCE.

MATT. iv. 17. *From that time JESUS began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

IN a former discourse on these words, I endeavoured to point out the *nature* of the great evangelical duty of *repentance*, by teaching more especially how it implies a *change* or *turning* of the affections and thoughts from evil to good, and in what that change or turning principally consists.

I shall now proceed, as was proposed, to the consideration of the *extent* of this duty, and endeavour to show what are its proper *limits*, that so we may not deceive ourselves by any *partial* or *narrow* views of a virtue, which is not only of the *first*, but also of the most *extended* importance in forming the Christian character and life.

There is perhaps no error more common, and none more destructive, than that, by which we *limit* our apprehensions of divine duties, and thereby

contract them within a much *narrower* sphere, than the supreme wisdom and goodness intended in prescribing them.

The ALL-WISE and ALL-MERCIFUL CREATOR, having ever in view an *unbounded* bliss for all His creatures, has left the measures of our duty *unbounded* also, and for this plain reason, because His infinite love requires that our purification should be *unbounded*; that no *limit* should be set to our approaches towards HIMSELF, and towards the full participation of that immeasurable holiness and happiness to which HE invites us in HIMSELF.

We, on the contrary, either not aware of these gracious designs of an infinite mercy, or fancying that those designs may be accomplished in the way of our own contrivances, frequently *contract* and *circumscribe* the counsels of the MOST HIGH. By the most dreadful infatuation, we suffer our own self-love, instead of the love of GOD, to prescribe the measure of our obligations: We say either that GOD does not require so *much*, or that the *much* which he does require, may be paid by *little*: Thus, contrary to all the known laws of reason and equity, what we receive *in full*, we return only *in part*; what was *complete* and *perfect* in it's descent from heaven to us,

becomes *incomplete* and *scanty* in it's ascent back from us to heaven.

To illustrate this by a few instances—The FATHER OF INFINITE MERCY, well knowing that we can never be happy but in the love of Him, and willing us a *complete* and *perfect* measure of such happiness, has for this gracious purpose expressed his holy law in these *extended* forms, “*Thou shalt love the LORD THY GOD with ALL thy heart, and with ALL thy soul; and with ALL thy strength, and with ALL thy mind.*” [Luke x. 27.] Here we see the Divine law is *unlimited*, and without *restriction*, manifestly for the purpose, that the blessing attending the observance of it might be *unlimited* also: For who cannot see, that if the obligation of love imposed by God had been *contracted*, the blessing resulting from it's fulfilment must have been contracted in the same degree?

But behold now the folly and unreasonableness of man in regard to the requirements of this holy law! One disputes it's practicability according to it's *full extent*, and contends, that to love God so *entirely* is a thing impossible. Another perhaps allows the reasonableness of the law, but then he pleads an abatement in the fulfilment of it in his own case—the law, says he, is holy, just

and good, but my frailties and imperfections do not allow me to keep it, and God will supply by his mercy what is defective in my obedience. Thus are we wont to *contract* the measure of love, which the FATHER OF MERCY has prescribed, not aware that, in so doing, we *contract* the measure of blessing, which that love intended to convey to us.

To mention another instance—JESUS CHRIST saith, “*Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not ALL that he hath, he cannot be My disciple,*” [Luke xiv. 33.]—here again is an *unlimited* law, *extending to all* that a man hath, and requiring *all to be forsaken*, as a necessary condition of becoming a disciple of the TRUE SAVIOUR. For the *all* manifestly implies, not our *temporal possessions* only, such as our houses, our lands, and our fortunes, but our *spiritual property* also, namely, the *all* of our own self-will, the *all* of our own self-wisdom, the *all* of our own talents, the *all* of our own prudence and power, doubtless with the blessed intent, not that we should lose *all* or *any* of these things, but rather, that by relinquishing them as *our own property*, and acknowledging them to be God’s *continual gifts*, they might thus become infinitely more blessed to us, whilst they were held in a grateful dependance

on the MOST HIGH, than whilst regarded as *our own*, and not GOD'S.

But how now has this *extensive* law of merey and truth been *contracted*, and thereby annihilated on the part of man, whilst it has been supposed to extend merely to his outward property and possessions ! I say *annihilated*, because *contracted* ; for who cannot see, that according to this *limited* sense of the law, it is impossible it can be observed, or if observed, be attended with any benefit ? For if we suppose all men, according to this narrow sense, to forsake their temporal goods, what is to become of the things of this world ? Besides, if a man forsakes all his *worldly wealth*, but doth not at the same time forsake his *self-love*, and *self-will*, what is he the better, or how is he more a disciple of JESUS CHRIST than he was before !

But perhaps in no instance hath the unreasonableness of man been more evident or more mischievous, than in it's continual attempt to *contract* the great evangelical duty of *repentance*, by *narrowing* the *limits* which the Almighty has prescribed to it.

For when the GREAT GOD AND SAVIOUR began to preach, and say, to a sinful and fallen world, **REPENT**, *for the kingdom of heaven is at*

hand, how plain is it to see, that He left the duty of repentance *unlimited* and *at large*! He does not say, Repent of one, or two, or three sins, but He *extends* the duty to *all possible* transgressions. He does not say, Cease only from *external* evils, from those crimes which *are manifest* in the sight of men, but He says in *general* and *indefinite* terms, REPENT, as if He had said, "Search out
 " and turn away from *all* your corruptions, from
 " the corruptions of the *heart*, as well as of the
 " *hand*; from the corruptions of your *affections*
 " and *thoughts*, as well as of your *words* and
 " *actions*. Consider, not only what is sinful and
 " defiled in the sight of men, but consider also
 " what is sinful and defiled in the sight of *Me*
 " your God. Look diligently into your *minds*
 " and *consciences*, and examine what you are *in*
 " *private*, when alone and retired from men, as
 " well as what you are *in public*, when the eyes of
 " men are upon you. Examine further, how are
 " you affected in regard to *Me*, *My LAW* AND
 " *KINGDOM*? Do you love *Me*, as I deserve and
 " desire to be loved? Do you respect *My LAW*,
 " as the *LAW* of your eternal life? Do you seek
 " *My kingdom*, as that state of enjoyment which
 " calls for your attention above every thing besides?
 " Is it thus become the great labour, the chief

“concern of your lives, to remove from your
 “hearts those things which offend ME, that so
 “with *changed* affections and *changed* thoughts,
 “you may consecrate every day and hour of your
 “lives to My service, and to the attainment of
 “those inconceivable blessings which I have in
 “store for them that seek ME?”

Such, beloved, is manifestly the *blessed extent* of the evangelical duty of repentance. It reaches to the *whole* man, and to the *whole* life. It is not confined to *actions* only, nor to *intentions* only, but to actions and intentions *unitedly*. It regards principally what we are in the sight of God. It regards secondarily what we are in the sight of men. It is a holy duty therefore, not to be completely practised *yesterday*, *to-day*, or *to-morrow* only, but extending to the latest moment of our lives, because there can never be a time when we may not practise it to advantage; there can never be a time when we can any of us say, Now I have nothing to repent of.

But alas! notwithstanding this profitable *extent* of the duty of repentance, as taught and insisted on by the SAVIOUR GOD, how do some amongst us *contract* it's limits, and thus annihilate it's efficacy, by our narrow ideas of it, and our narrower practice! I repent, says one, for I

no longer *defraud my neighbour*, as I once defrauded him. I repent, says another, for I no longer commit *adultery*, as I once did. I repent, says a third, for I no longer bear *false witness* against my neighbour, to the injury of his reputation, as I have been accustomed to do. I have no further need of *repentance*, says a fourth, for I repented of all my sins some years ago, and therefore now I have no sins to repent of. Alas ! mistaken men ! Do you fancy then that you are clean from sin, and have nothing to repent of, because you do not *defraud your neighbour*, because you do not *commit adultery*, because you do not *bear false witness*, as you once did, or because you have done an act of repentance some years ago ? Are there no iniquities then, no defilements besides those which you say you have already repented of ? What think you of sins against God, as well as sins against your neighbour ? What think you of inordinate self-love, and the love of the world, more than of God and His kingdom ? What think you of worldly attachments and worldly compliances, of pride, of covetousness, of envy, of wrath, of malice, of impatience, of all those perverse and disorderly affections and tempers of the heart, which are contrary to the HOLY SPIRIT and PURE LAW of the MOST HIGH ? Surely

these things call for repentance as well as *fraud* and *false witness*. Surely therefore *this ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone.*

To conclude—It has been seen what is the *extent* of the duty of *repentance*, and how, like every other duty towards God, it has its *several degrees*, so that if we are not upon our guard, we may do it *imperfectly*, that is to say, we may repent in a degree short of what is required of us, and thus may love God and our neighbour in a degree less than we might have loved them, and thereby may render our salvation *incomplete*.

Would we wish then to avoid this error, and to practise the duty of repentance in its *full extent*? Would we wish to become thereby clean from sin, and to be restored to the purity and order of God and His kingdom in our own minds and lives? Let us then learn from humble and penitent hearts to supplicate the Divine Majesty, that He would enable us to discern the *full measure* of our duty, and to fulfil it accordingly—Let it be our earnest and constant prayer to JESUS CHRIST, that He would not suffer us any longer to rest in an *imperfect* service, in a *partial* repentance, a *partial* conversion, or a *partial* love; but that seeing the great danger of imposing upon ourselves

by a scanty line of purification in regard to our God—having our eyes opened alike to the sublime heights of the Divine purity, and to the degraded depths of our own defilements—we may discharge the evangelical duty of repentance accordingly, and extending it, not only to our *works*, but also to our *thoughts*, and not only to our *thoughts*, but also to our *inmost affections, purposes, and intentions* before our HEAVENLY FATHER, we may become partakers of all that infinite blessing which He designed for us when He said, “*When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.*”

AMEN.

SERMON XIV.

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE.

MATT. iv. 17. *From that time JESUS began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

IN two former discourses on these words, I have endeavoured to show the *nature* and *extent* of that evangelical duty of *repentance* which they inculcate.

I shall now proceed, as was proposed, to consider the *necessity* of this duty.

By the *necessity* of the duty I would be understood to mean our absolute want of it, in order to the attainment of salvation and eternal life, which want is such, that though we perform all other duties, and are possessed of all other apparent graces and excellencies, yet, *without repentance*, all will be insufficient—We shall still be lacking in the *one thing needful*.

That *repentance* is a duty of such *necessity*, might be made to appear from a variety of consi-

derations, especially from this, that **JESUS CHRIST** Himself lays such particular stress upon it, making it the beginning and foundation of His Gospel, and declaring in express terms to all, “*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” [Luke xiii. 3. 5.] But I shall confine myself to the two following considerations,

1st. That without repentance we cannot have any genuine Gospel faith,

2ndly. That without repentance we can never attain the remission of our sins, and consequently never obtain salvation and eternal life.

First then, I shall endeavour to show that without repentance we cannot have any genuine Gospel faith.

This is plainly declared to us in our **LORD’S** words well understood, where He says to the unbelieving Jews, “*How can ye believe who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?*” [John v. 44.]

In these words our **BLESSED LORD** declares the absolute impossibility of believing, so long as the honour which cometh of man is exalted above the honour which cometh of **GOD**: Which is the same thing as if he had said to the Jews, “*Ye cannot believe,*” because ye do not repent of this your great sin of giving the preference in your hearts to human glory above heavenly glory.

But who cannot see, that what the GREAT REDEEMER here declares to be true of the sin of pride, in receiving honour from men, and not seeking the honour which cometh from GOD only, must needs be equally true of every other sin, and every other disorderly and unreasonable affection? It must needs be true therefore of an inordinate love of the world, of covetousness, of wrath, of malice and hatred, and every other bad passion and corrupt inclination of the heart, which has not been seen, confessed, and repented of before the GREAT and HOLY GOD. All these sinful propensities, when deliberately or of choice indulged in, render it impossible to attain true evangelical faith. And therefore the LORD says in another place, "*Repent and believe the Gospel,*" [Mark i. 15.] manifestly implying, that *repentance* is the *first* duty, necessary to conduct to faith, and that we cannot have faith except we repent.

And would we know the true ground and reason, why no one can have faith without repentance, that is to say, can believe, without a desire to put away his evils? It is plainly this. So long as evil remains in the heart unrepented of and unremoved, it destroys all principles of heavenly belief, in like manner as *lions* or *wolves* would instantly destroy a flock of innocent *sheep* and

*lamb*s, if introduced amongst them ; or as a *hawk* would destroy a *dove*, if put together with it into the same cage ; for all evils unrepented of are as devouring *lions*, or *wolves*, or *hawks* from the kingdom of darkness ; and all principles of heavenly faith are as so many innocent *sheep*, and *lamb*s, and *doves*, from the kingdom of light ; and between these two different kinds of animals, it is impossible there can exist any agreement, it being the very nature of the former to kill and destroy the latter ; and therefore the eternal law of man's salvation is, first to drive out from his heart the *lions* and *wolves* and *hawks*, and then the *sheep* and *lamb*s and *doves* may be introduced safely.

I am well aware, that a contrary opinion prevails, and that the generality of mankind suppose they can have faith independent of repentance, or of a desire to renounce evil. They say therefore, that they believe in JESUS CHRIST, and in another world, and in an eternity of happiness or of misery, though they never think of the great business of repentance and any change of life in consequence of repentance—But what a manifestly mistaken, delusive, and dangerous idea is this, and how is it contradicted by every page of the Gospel, and by every sentiment too of right reason ! For did we really believe in JESUS CHRIST and an eternal

world, we should surely pay attention to the words of JESUS CHRIST and to the expectation of that world by purifying our hearts and lives from those evils, which JESUS CHRIST declares to be contrary to Himself and His kingdom. Our continuance in evil therefore is a positive proof, that as yet we do not really believe. It is a positive proof, that howsoever we may impose upon ourselves, by *fancying* we have *evangelical* faith, we have as yet only what may be called *human* faith, or the faith of devils ; a faith from *ourselves*, but not from GOD ; a faith of *memory* and *persuasion*, but not of *life* and *practice*.

Having thus then endeavoured to show that *without repentance* there can be no such thing as *true faith*, I shall now proceed to show what was Secondly proposed, namely, that *without repentance* there can be no *remission of sins*, consequently no salvation and eternal life.

Before however we go on to establish this proof, it may be expedient to explain first, what we are to understand by the *remission of sins*, and by it's consequences, namely, *salvation* and *eternal life*, because it is perhaps owing to mistaken and groundless ideas of these terms, that mankind have fallen into blindness concerning the *necessity* of repentance.

Now by the *remission of sins*, we are not to suppose, is meant a mere arbitrary act of Divine mercy, whereby God forgives our offences in the way that a sovereign here on earth pardons a rebellious subject, and receives him into favour—or in the way that a creditor forgives a debtor the debt which is owing him—neither by salvation and eternal life are we to understand any effects of such a mere arbitrary act on the part of the ALMIGHTY—for if our sins could be remitted, and we saved, according to this idea, then it is plain the sins of all the world would be remitted in an instant, and every man saved, because God is the purest mercy, and alike disposed every instant to save all.

But by the *remission of sins*, according to the proper and scriptural idea annexed to the term, we are to understand *the removal of evils*, that is to say, their removal from man's life, or what is the same thing, from his love; for so long as man *loves* evil, he must needs *live in* evil, and evil *live in* him; and so long as he lives in evil, and evil lives in him, so long evil is unremitted, that is to say, unremoved; and all the mercy of God in this case cannot help him, because the mercy of God cannot help any man, but as he applies to the means provided of that mercy to deliver him from the love of evils.

In like manner by *salvation* and *eternal life* we are to understand the promised and proper effects of the remission of sins, for when sins are remitted, that is, removed, then all the hindrances to salvation are removed also; then sin has no power at all to condemn man; for then he hates and rejects sin, and loves and cherishes what is contrary to sin, that is, what is of God, of His law, of His love, and of His life; and then these heavenly and blessed principles enter into him, and form themselves into his life and love, and thus deliver him from death, and become in him a source of eternal life, by conjoining him with JESUS CHRIST and all the living powers, virtues, graces and joys of his everlasting kingdom.

From this view now of the true sense and meaning of the *remission of sins*, and of *salvation and eternal life*, it will plainly appear to every considerate person, why *repentance* is necessary to effect these blessed purposes.

For *repentance* is that duty, by which alone sin is rendered removable in man, because it is that duty by which alone sin is rendered *hateful*, and what a man *hates*, that has no place in him, but what he *loves*, that remains and abides with him. And when sin is *hated*, because it is of the devil, then righteousness is loved, because it is of

GOD, and being loved, it forms in man it's own blessed and eternal life, in which salvation and everlasting happiness properly consist.

But he, who never sincerely repents of his sins, that is to say, of his sinful propensities, his unsubdued self-will, his corrupt self-love, his inordinate worldly affections and attachments, his defiled and defiling concupiscencies and thoughts, must needs continue in them, because he never hates and abominates them ; he never supplicates, from a sincere heart, the Divine grace and mercy to help him to remove them ; and in this case, notwithstanding the willingness of the Divine grace and mercy to help him—notwithstanding all the merits of CHRIST, and the blood shed for his redemption, his sins must needs continue unre-mitted, because unremoved, and himself become a subject of condemnation and eternal death, because he hath never sincerely laboured and prayed for the removal of those corruptions of his heart and life, which alone separate him from salvation and eternal life.

But some will perhaps object, and say, that according to the above ideas of the necessity of repentance, we seek to establish our own *merits*, and *righteousness*, and to be saved by *our own works*.

To this objection I answer, that it will apply equally against every other duty, as against that of repentance, so that if there be any force in it, we are then to cease from prayer ; from the reading of the **WORD OF GOD** ; from frequenting Divine ordinances, and keeping the commandments ; from doing good to our fellow creatures, and from every other Christian duty and virtue, lest we should seek to *establish our own merits, and to be saved by our own works* ; but who cannot see the extreme folly of thus annihilating all the exertions and works of man in the way of righteousness ? For what do we make ourselves in such case, but mere inanimate and lifeless logs, or machines, instead of rational and active intelligencies created to understand and to do the will of **GOD** ?

Who cannot see further, that neither the work of repentance, nor any other good work, can have the smallest tendency to establish our own merits, provided we give all the glory thereof to **GOD**, and acknowledge in humility, that it is **GOD** *that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure* ?

Besides, what danger can there possibly be of seeking to establish our own merits in the work of repentance, whilst it is considered, that this is

one of the principal sins we have to repent of, namely, that we seek to establish our own merits in any duty or in any virtue that we perform, instead of ascribing all the merit and glory to **GOD**?

But others will perhaps contend and say, that by ascribing to repentance any efficacy to remove sin, we take away from the all-atoning efficacy of the blood of **CHRIST**, whereby alone we are cleansed from sin and reconciled to **GOD**.

GOD forbid that any one should attempt to lessen the efficacy of the blood of the **GREAT REDEEMER**, for it is certain that there is no other power in heaven or in earth, whereby defiled man can be purified from sin, but only that blood, properly understood and properly applied. But the important question is, what we are to understand by the blood of **CHRIST**, and how it is properly to be applied? Does the blood of **CHRIST** mean only that *material* blood which was shed upon the cross? No, surely; for how can any *material* blood wash away the sin of man, which is a defilement of his heart and spirit? The blood of **CHRIST** then, whereby the soul of man is cleansed from sin, is *spiritual* blood; it is that blood, of which He Himself spake, when He said, *Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood*

of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you. It is therefore a living principle of life from the SAVIOUR GOD, which we are to *drink*, that is, to incorporate into our lives, before it can do us any benefit. It is that same cleansing and purifying power, of which He spake in another place, when He said to His disciples, “*Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you ;*” for it is impossible that any thing can cleanse man from defilement but the LIVING WORD, or the LIVING BLOOD of JESUS CHRIST incorporated into his life.

But how is this blood to be properly applied, so as to have it's proper efficacy ? Shall we say that repentance on the part of man destroys it's efficacy ? Rather let us say, that without repentance on the part of man, the blood of CHRIST cannot possibly be of any efficacy to man, and for this plain reason, because as the light of the sun cannot benefit me unless I open my eyes ; as meat and drink cannot nourish me, unless I take them into my stomach, and thereby incorporate them into my life ; neither can the blood of CHRIST benefit me, unless I drink it, and I cannot drink it, unless I put away my evils by repentance, as it is written, “*Wash ye, make ye clean, put away*

“*the evil of your doings from before my eyes ;*
“*cease to do evil, learn to do well ;*” and then it follows, “*if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall*
“*eat the good of the land.*” I add—*if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall drink the blood of*
JESUS CHRIST, and that shall make you clean.

To conclude—I am well aware that what has been now said, will not seem palatable, or have a pleasant sound in the ears of the careless, the inconsiderate, and impenitent, who find it an easier matter to rely on the blood of **CHRIST**, than to enter upon the arduous business of repentance and change of life ; who would come to the *sabbath of rest*, but without passing through the *six days previous labour* of purification and amendment. But beloved, the question is, not what is *easiest*, but what is *safest* ; not what is *pleasant*, but what is *profitable* ; what will stand us in stead at the last day. And I think it has been shown that without repentance man cannot possibly attain unto any true and well-grounded faith, either in the mercy of **GOD** or in the blood of **CHRIST**, and consequently he cannot attain unto any remission of sins, or unto any salvation and eternal life.

Would we then attain unto a true evangelical faith, and unto a real remission of sins ? Would

we experience thus in ourselves the powers of that salvation and eternal life which are presented to our acceptance by the GREAT REDEEMER, as the fruits of that redemption which He wrought in the days of His flesh? Let us then enter seriously and deliberately upon the great work of self-examination and repentance, recollecting the awful words of JESUS CHRIST, "*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*"

Let us consider all those inclinations, purposes, tempers, affections and thoughts in ourselves, which are opposite to JESUS CHRIST, His law, His life, His love, His spirit, His temper and will. Let us then go to JESUS CHRIST, and with humility and contrition supplicate His grace for the removal of whatsoever we discover offensive and contrary to Him. He will then give us His grace, and we shall apply it to the purposes for which He gives it, namely, to cast out the *lion*, the *wolf*, and the *hawk*, with every other rapacious and unclean beast and bird; and then He will gift us with His own *lamb-like* and *dove-like* spirit; *He will create in us a new heart and a new spirit*, new inclinations and purposes, new affections and thoughts, new words and actions; in short, he will then give us salvation and eternal life, because this is

salvation, to be saved from sin, and this is eternal life, to partake of the life and spirit of JESUS CHRIST, according as it is written, "*He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.*" [1 John, v. 12.]—AMEN.

SERMON XV.

(PREACHED ON CHRISTMAS DAY.)

THE NEARNESS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

MATT. iv. 17. *From that time JESUS began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

IN three former discourses on these words, I have endeavoured to point out the *nature*, the *extent*, and the *necessity* of the duty which they inculcate. I shall now proceed to consider the blessed *motive* by which the duty of repentance is here pressed upon our observance, and I have reserved this consideration purposely for the solemn festival which we celebrate at this season, because it appears to be particularly calculated to enlarge our views of the Divine blessings and benefits which this holy season announces to us.

The motive to repentance is thus expressed in my text, "*For the kingdom of heaven is at hand ;*" and the words manifestly suggest two objects of most interesting enquiry ;

1st. What we are to understand by *the kingdom of heaven* ;

2ndly. What by this kingdom being *at hand*.

I shall begin with the *first* of these considerations, viz. what we are to understand by *the kingdom of heaven*.

This expression, *The kingdom of heaven*, is used in two senses in the Holy Scriptures. It is used first to denote that eternal state of happiness in which the blessed live after death ; and it is used also to denote those *principles of goodness, wisdom, and heavenly life*, which constitute that eternal state of happiness.

The state of the blessed in the other life is called *a kingdom* for this reason, because it is immediately under the guidance and government, the blessing and protection of the MOST HIGH, Who is sometimes on this account called the GREAT KING, and sometimes the KING OF KINGS. It is therefore the *mercy, the wisdom, the power* of God alone, which constitutes this kingdom, and not any thing that the angels possess of their own.

Hence we may come to this sure conclusion, that wheresoever there is anything of the *mercy, the wisdom, and the power* of God, manifested and operative, there is so much of the *kingdom of*

heaven, manifested and operative also, because there is the manifestation and operation of those blessed and heavenly principles, in which the happiness, the glory, the order, the peace and security of the heavenly inhabitants consist.

That HOLY CHILD, JESUS, therefore, whose wonderful birth we at this season celebrate, being the supreme and highest manifestation of the DIVINE MERCY, WISDOM, and POWER, is called in an eminent sense the *kingdom of heaven*; and for the same reason, all that proceeds from that INCARNATE GOD, viz. HIS WORD, HIS DOCTRINE, HIS LIFE and HIS SPIRIT, is called by the same high and holy name, because, wheresoever that WORD and DOCTRINE, that LIFE and SPIRIT, are received and cherished, they open and form a *heavenly kingdom*; they establish the blessed sovereignty and government of the MOST HIGH GOD; they reduce all things to the same order, harmony, peace and stability, which constitute the bliss and eternity of the inhabitants of heaven.

Accordingly, JESUS CHRIST, when here on earth, called his precepts, doctrines and spirit the *kingdom of heaven*, and in agreement with the blessed effects which they were intended to produce amongst men, in delivering them from sin and disorder, and restoring them to righteousness and

peace, He compares this kingdom of heaven to a variety of corresponding things here on earth. Thus He says, "THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is *likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.* THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is like *unto a grain of mustard seed.* THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is like *unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.* THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is like *unto treasure hid in a field.* THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is like *unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls.* THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is like *unto a net that was cast into the sea."* (See Matt. xiii. throughout.) In all these comparisons, it is plain, the GREAT REDEEMER speaks of and describes the wonderful and blessed effects of the operation of His WORD, His DOCTRINE, His SPIRIT, in the hearts and lives of men; and therefore He says in another place, "*The kingdom of God is within you.*" [Luke xvii. 22.]

Having thus then endeavoured to show what is to be understood by *the kingdom of heaven*, I shall now proceed to consider in the second place, what we are to understand further by this kingdom *being at hand.*

What is here expressed by *being at hand*, is

expressed in other places by *being nigh*, or *near*; thus JESUS CHRIST charges His disciples to declare to those who did not receive them, “*Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the KINGDOM OF GOD is come nigh unto you.*” [Luke x. 11.]

It is impossible to conceive a consideration more interesting to man, than this of the *nearness* of the KINGDOM OF GOD, or as it is otherwise expressed the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. For how do all the glories of this world, all it's riches, it's pleasures and highest gratifications, vanish instantly, and become as nothing, when set in competition with the important realities here brought *near*, and presented to our view? And yet alas! how few amongst us are affected as we ought to be with these realities! And how many alas! are still pursuing the fleeting phantoms and shadows of temporal joys, to the neglect at least, if not to the absolute denial of their eternal substance!

But let us consider more particularly and distinctly what this *nearness* of the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN implies.

It has been already seen that the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN has a two-fold sense, 1st, as relating to the state of the blessed in another life; and 2ndly, as relating to the heavenly principles which constitute that state.

In like manner, the *nearness* of this kingdom has a two-fold application; it relates both to the state of the blessed in another life; and it relates also to the heavenly and blessed principles which constitute that state.

In regard to the first of these applications, viz. to the state of the blessed in another life, it is a most awful, a most edifying and most consolatory truth, that heaven and earth, things eternal and things temporal, angels and men, are declared by their MAKER to be so *near* unto each other. We indeed in our folly too frequently put them asunder, and by a fatal and most unreasonable unwillingness to elevate our minds to heaven and things eternal, we often either absolutely deny their existence, or set them so *far off* from ourselves, that their existence neither affects nor profits us. Whereas, were we but wise to suffer our eyes to be opened, by the light of the everlasting Gospel, how should we be convinced and ashamed of our thoughtlessness and our impiety! For as the servant of Elisha of old, when his eyes were opened by his master's prayers, saw *the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about his master*, (2 Kings, vi. 17.) how should we also, were the eyes of our minds opened, behold ourselves, in like manner encompassed

continually by a heavenly host of holy friends and guardians ! How should we be thus certified to our comfort, that neither we ourselves, nor the world we live in, are left a moment without the aid, protection and blessing of heavenly ministries ; and that if we do not see this at all times to be the case, it is owing merely to the blindness arising from our corruptions, which indispose us for the sight of such spiritual and eternal realities !

But this nearness of the *kingdom of heaven* is true also in regard to those *eternal principles of righteousness and peace*, which constitute heaven and the blessedness of it's inhabitants. These likewise are *brought near* to man, and so *near*, that nothing can be nearer.

In confirmation of this great Gospel truth, permit me to call your attention to that inconceivable mystery of the Divine mercy and providence, which we this day celebrate. Turn your eyes then towards yonder Bethlehem, the sacred birth-place of an INCARNATE GOD, and behold, in that new-born Infant, the descent and approach of all the powers of the ETERNAL, to bless and to save a sinful world ! For that Infant is not an ordinary infant, nor conceived in an ordinary manner, but He is the SON OF THE MOST HIGH ; (Luke i. 35,) He is the ETERNAL WORD *made*

flesh, (John i. 14,) and finally made One with the EVERLASTING FATHER ; He is GOD made man, that He might bring near unto man His righteousness and salvation, which man by sin had put away so far from himself. In that WONDERFUL CHILD then, the kingdom of heaven is both brought *near* and opened to all who wish to enter, because in and through that WONDERFUL CHILD, all, who desire it, are supplied with grace and power to attain unto heavenly life, and become the SONS OF GOD. For that Child is *the door* of the heavenly sheep-fold, and whosoever goes in through that door, "*finds pasture.*" [John x. 9.]

Behold here then the blessed motive which the GREAT SAVIOUR presses upon our attention, as an encouragement to repentance, when He says, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" It is the same thing as if He had said, *Repent*, for an eternal world is *near* you, and ten thousand times ten thousand of the heavenly host encompass you about, to bless, to guide and to protect you. *Repent*, for your GOD also is come *near* to you, your CREATOR and your PRESERVER ; He is come down from heaven to give you power to ascend thither, by delivering you from your sins, by cleansing you from your defilements, and through

His holy grace and truth, creating you anew in righteousness and true holiness. *Repent* therefore, for now you have no shadow of an excuse for remaining impenitent, because now your GOD is not, as heretofore, a *distant*, an *unseen*, an *unknown*, an *unapproachable* GOD ; He does not now come to you in thunderings and lightnings, and conceal Himself in thick darkness, as of old on the top of Sinai ; but now, by his manifestation in the flesh He is brought *nigh* unto you, and you may therefore *draw nigh* unto Him ; He is made *visible* and *known* to you ; you may therefore both *see* and *apprehend* Him ; He is rendered *approachable* ; it is therefore your own fault if you do not forsake your sins and come to Him. Moreover He calls, and invites you with the tenderness of a FATHER, to accept of His mercy, to be made happy in His love, to become partakers of His life and spirit and grace. How is it possible then that any can refuse to listen to the counsels, and to accept the favours and consolations of such a FATHER ?

To conclude—There perhaps never was a consideration of such importance, and so calculated to affect man, as that of the adorable, the astonishing event which we this day celebrate, viz. the appearing of GOD *in the flesh*, and the descent and approach thereby of the *kingdom of heaven*.

unto man. Howbeit, important as this consideration is, and calculated as it is to affect us, it is an awful and melancholy truth, that the world in general is little affected by it, and almost insensible to it's importance. The world in general therefore still set GOD and heaven at an *immeasurable distance* from themselves, notwithstanding the positive declaration of the REDEEMER, that *the kingdom of heaven is at hand, or near.*

Would we know whether this is the case with us? Would we know whether we are setting GOD and *heaven and eternity afar off* from us, or beholding them *near*, as they are in reality? Let us examine ourselves then by this simple rule, and we shall obtain the fullest information. Let us ask ourselves the short question, *Do we repent of our sins?* Are we setting our faces against all the ways and works of ungodliness and folly? And is it our motive for so doing, that through a belief in the INCARNATE GOD, we may find opened in ourselves that blessed and heavenly kingdom of righteousness, rest and peace, which He came to restore in us?

Some such enquiry as this will soon determine, how and in what degree we are affected with that descent and approach of the ETERNAL and of His kingdom, which distinguish this holy

season. For if as yet we have never done the work of repentance ; if we have never yet abhorred and forsaken our natural sins, and follies, and vanities ; then it is too plain, that *the nearness of the kingdom of heaven* is a consideration of no concern to us, and that we still set **GOD** and **HEAVEN**, and **ETERNITY** at an immeasurable distance. But if we have obeyed the **SAVIOUR'S** call and truly repented of our sins, and become converted to Him, we may then rest in the comfortable assurance, that his approach, his nearness, and the nearness of His kingdom, have begun to affect us as they ought ; and then too we shall see them *near*, and shall rejoice in that *nearness*, and shall find therein fulfilled, in our own bosoms, to our unspeakable bliss, that promise of our **GOD**, by the prophet, “ *I bring near my righteousness ; it shall not be far off ; and my salvation shall not tarry ; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.*” [Isaiah xlvi. 13.]—**AMEN.**



SERMON XVI.

(PREACHED ON CHRISTMAS DAY.)

GOD RENDERED VISIBLE IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST.

JOHN i. 18. *No man hath seen GOD at any time ; the ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, Who is in the bosom of the FATHER, He hath declared Him.*

WHAT is here rendered *declared*, is expressed in the original tongue by a term, which literally signifies to *bring out*, or to *bring forth*; so that the passage may be read thus, *The ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, Who is in the bosom of the FATHER, He hath brought Him out*, [or brought Him forth]; that is to say, hath *brought Him out*, or *brought Him forth* to man's view and apprehension: As if it had been said, GOD was heretofore a *hidden* and *unmanifested* GOD, removed altogether from the sight and apprehension of man, whilst He dwelt concealed within the vail of His own eternal and hidden majesty, for

no man hath, or could heretofore, *see GOD at any time* : But now, in the person of JESUS CHRIST, the veil, which concealed the Divine glory, is rent asunder, and the MAJESTY of the ETERNAL FATHER is disclosed to mortal eyes, and exhibited to mortal apprehension ; for *the ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, Who is in the bosom of the FATHER, He hath brought Him forth* ; He hath made Him *visible, manifest*, and in a degree *comprehensible*, to all who are disposed to believe in, to come unto, and to attain conjunction of life with Him.

From the words of my text thus explained, permit me to endeavour to open and to press upon you the vast importance of the doctrine which they inculcate, and which is highly deserving of our attention at *all* times, but particularly so at the present holy season, when we commemorate the first dawn of the ETERNAL GLORY *brought forth here* on earth, by the incarnation of that ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, *Who is in the bosom of the FATHER*.

I shall consider the words of my text in a two-fold point of view,

1st, As announcing, that in the person of JESUS CHRIST, the ETERNAL FATHER is *brought forth* into a fuller manifestation *before the eyes and understandings* of men ;

2ndly, As announcing, that He is thereby also *brought forth* into a greater fulness of operation *on the hearts and lives* of men.

First then, it appears from the words of the text, that the **ETERNAL FATHER** is *brought forth* into a fuller manifestation before the *eyes and understandings* of men.

By a *fuller* manifestation, I would be understood to mean a manifestation *more visible*, more *personal*, more *distinct* and *determinate* ; a manifestation therefore better accommodated to the state and faculties of man, who, in consequence of transgression and corruption, was no longer capable of looking up to and attaining conjunction with the *invisible* and *unmanifested* **GODHEAD**, as in his first created state.

For such had been the sad effect and consequences of sin, that a cloud of darkness was spread thereby over the **DIVINE PRESENCE** in the human mind, and though **GOD** was still the same unchangeable **GOD** of brightness, of glory and of light in His own un-created Majesty, yet the understanding of His creature man was become so closed and obscured through defilement, that he could no longer see the face of his **HEAVENLY FATHER**, and live.

And such must of necessity have continued

to be our miserable state of darkness and of death, had not that HEAVENLY FATHER, in unutterable mercy, condescended to our infirmities, and by a new and extraordinary manifestation of Himself in the flesh, unveiled again His hidden glories to the blind, and by that blessed means imparted new life to the penitent and the believing.

Accordingly they, who in ancient times prophesied concerning the coming and appearance of this GREAT INCARNATE GOD, were agreed in this testimony respecting Him, that, at His approach and manifestation, "*the eyes of the blind should be opened, and should see the KING IN HIS BEAUTY*; (Isaiah xxxiii. 17.) *that GOD would destroy in that day the covering that was cast over all people, and the veil that was spread over all nations*; (Isaiah xxv. 7.) that all should rejoice and sing on the occasion, "*Lo! this is our GOD, we have waited for Him, and He will save us.*" (verse 9.) To the same purpose, that INCARNATE GOD Himself testifies, "*He that seeth ME, seeth the FATHER*: (John xiv. 9.) *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in ME, should not abide in darkness.*" (John xii. 46.) They likewise, who beheld this GOD in the flesh, were enabled also to bear the same witness, and say, "*We beheld His*

“*glory, the glory as of the ONLY-BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, full of grace and truth.*” (John i. 14.)

It ought then to be an inexpressible consolation to us to know, that we are not left to the darkness of our own conjectures, nor yet to the equally uncertain notices presented to us in the volume of nature, in order to form a just conception and idea of the GREAT FATHER of the UNIVERSE, and of the central source of the life of our own being. We need not, I say, bewilder ourselves in the mazes of philosophical investigation, and ingenious theories of men, to satiate our thirst of saving knowledge on this highest and most important of all speculations. For lo! the Gospel at once dispels all the doubts, enlightens all the darkness, and gratifies all the desires of the humble and the penitent. For the *invisible* God is there presented to our delighted view under a *visible* manifestation, accommodated to our faculties, and even *brought forth* to the evidence of our senses. In the Humanity of the BLESSED JESUS we see concentrated and apparent whatsoever is *sublime* of the DIVINE MAJESTY, *affectionate* of the DIVINE LOVE, or *intelligent* of the DIVINE WISDOM. We approach therefore and believe in this INCARNATE GOD, and as we approach and

believe, we *behold His GLORY*, we gaze upon His perfections, we find heaven opened in His Divine countenance, and access thereby presented to the INFINITE and ETERNAL FATHER who dwelleth in Him. And here we are presently convinced that there can be no mistake, that there is nothing visionary, nothing of imposition, nothing of imagination, but that all is real and substantial, because we hear this GREAT INCARNATE GOD Himself declare, "*He that followeth ME, shall not abide in darkness, but shall have the LIGHT OF LIFE :*" (John viii. 12.) And what can this *light of life* mean or involve, but the light of the knowledge and the perfections of the INFINITE and ETERNAL GODHEAD thus manifested and *brought forth* to our view in the person of JESUS CHRIST ?

Do we then wish to come out of darkness into *light*? Do we wish to be admitted to the high privilege of beholding the ETERNAL KING in *His beauty*, and of seeing all that mortal eyes are capable of seeing of the *invisible* GOD? Let us direct our ravished sight then to the birth-place of that SAVIOUR, whose nativity we this day celebrate. Let us go, I say, to the stable at Bethlehem, and there see the Infant JESUS. Let us imagine we behold in that DIVINE CHILD the first unvailing

of the *hidden* DEITY to the apprehension of mortals ; the first radiance and dawning of the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS here upon earth. Let us then attend Him in His marvellous growth and progress, until the SUN arrives at it's *meridian splendour*, by a full and complete incorporation of the WHOLE DIVINE MAJESTY in that HUMANITY which it had so miraculously assumed. For behold, that Infant, in process of time, becomes a PERFECT MAN, and as He advances to this perfection, He is made by degrees receptive of *all the fulness of the GOD-HEAD* ; being enabled to say, "I and My FATHER, " *are One ; believe ME, that I am in the FATHER, " and the FATHER in ME.*" [John x. 30. chap. xiv. 11.] Thus by looking at this GOD-MAN, we behold *all the fulness of the FATHER* ; by fixing our eyes on the *visible* JESUS, we contemplate the glory, the perfections, the mercy, the truth, and the face of the *invisible* DEITY.

But secondly, the words of my text announce, that in the person of the BLESSED JESUS, the ETERNAL FATHER is not only *brought forth* into a fuller manifestation *before the eyes and understandings* of men, but also into a greater fulness of operation *in their hearts and lives.*

Every Christian is taught to believe, from the high authority of the Sacred Scriptures, that

GOD, by His **HOLY SPIRIT**, exercises a continual operation on the hearts of all mankind.

This operation is what is called the *Divine Grace*, and it's blessed effects are to enlighten the understanding, to purify the will, to reform the life, and thus finally to save the spirits or souls of men, so far as they are willing to submit to it's guidance and government.

But though all this be known respecting the Divine operation, yet it is not perhaps so seriously considered, even by Christians, as it ought to be, that this operation has acquired a *seven-fold* energy, and consequently is capable of producing a *seven-fold* effect, since that manifestation of **GOD** in *the flesh*, which we this day commemorate.

This increased energy and effect is beautifully and figuratively described to us in those remarkable words of the evangelical prophet, where, speaking of the blessings to be derived from the coming of the **INCARNATE GOD**, he thus expresses himself; "*Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD shall bind up the breach of His people, and shall heal the stroke of their wound.*" [Isaiah xxx. 26.] The same thing is further expressed by that

INCARNATE GOD Himself, where speaking of the end of His coming here on earth, He says, "*I am come that they might have life, and that THEY MIGHT HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY.*" [John x. 10.]

Let us stop awhile to contemplate this new accession of power, which the FATHER OF MERCIES assumed ; this *more abundant life* which He communicated ; through His adorable manifestation in the *visible HUMANITY* of the GREAT REDEEMER.

Whilst GOD remained *veiled* and *invisible* in the deep centre of His own Being, it was impossible for his fallen creatures to form a just idea either of His existence or of His perfections. It was impossible therefore that they could be excited either to a right faith or to a sincere repentance ; or to a pure love, since no one can believe in, still less can he by repentance affectionately cleave to, what he cannot in some measure apprehend as an object of intellectual thought and conception.

But when it pleased the ETERNAL in His adorable mercy to take to Himself a BODY of flesh and blood ; when the GOD OF HEAVEN thus presented Himself *visible* in a HUMAN FORM of substantiality and of personality ; when He gave thus the highest and most affecting proof possible

of His infinite, His astonishing desire to bless and to save His otherwise lost creatures, by a condescension to their infirmities, and at the same time an accommodation to their imperfections ; then every human being, who was not totally lost to a sense of DIVINE MERCY, could repent, could believe, could adore, could love, and could be saved ; then was fulfilled the apostolic declaration, that “ *as sin abounded, grace did much more abound ;*” for then an antidote of superior efficacy was provided for human defilement, proportioned exactly to the virulence of the poison ; the sin of man, so far from exhausting the measures of the Divine mercy, rather increased and enlarged them, by calling the compassion of the GOD of heaven into a fuller exercise. For lo ! that GOD Himself appears, and even associates with sinners, and encourages them to come unto Him by the most tender invitations. The penitent transgressor is thus not only moved to conversion by the most irresistable of all attractions, viz. the condescending kindness of his HEAVENLY FATHER, but he finds himself supplied also with a more abundant power to combat his corruptions, and to live a new life of holy love and charity : For the INCARNATE GOD, Whom he now worships, was Himself a combatant, in the days of his flesh,

against sin and the powers of darkness, and thus supplied both courage and strength to all future combatants. This conquering God the sinner can now behold face to face, and what is still more to his advantage, he can behold him stretching forth the arms of an infinite power to strengthen, and lifting up the countenance of an infinite mercy to forgive and to receive him : Thus he is neither left to struggle with his passions without assistance, nor to combat them without encouragement, because as the hand of OMNIPOTENCE is brought near to help him, so the face of the ETERNAL LOVING-KINDNESS is presented to console him in the PERSON, in the TRUTH, in the PATIENCE, in the CONDESCENSION of an INCARNATE SAVIOUR.

Would we then enter into and experience this increased energy of the DIVINE OPERATION ? Would we thus gain the greater victory over our corruptions, become again the happy children of the MOST HIGH, and be made partakers of all the superior blessings and privileges announced in the Gospel ? Let us then draw nigh with penitent hearts unto the *visible*, the *near*, the *embodied* God, in the person of the BLESSED JESUS. Let us henceforth take this God for our GOD, this LORD for our LORD, believing that the *invisible*

GOD dwells in Him *with all his fulness*, and may be *seen*; that the *distant* GOD is brought *nigh* in Him, and may be *approached*; that the *unknown* GOD is *made known* in Him, and may be *apprehended*; that what appeared an *irreconcilable* GOD is reconcilable in Him, and may be *loved*, yea, may be more loved than He was ever loved before, both because He has given a greater proof of His love, and because He declares, to all true penitents, as to her of old, *Her sins which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.* [Luke vii. 47.] Thus shall we find the declaration of JESUS CHRIST verified, that He came not only to give life, but to *give it more abundantly*, and cleaving with devout affection to this *greater abundance* of the heavenly gift dispensed by the INCARNATE SAVIOUR, we shall be astonished and delighted to behold the rays of the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS beaming upon us with *seven-fold* lustre, communicating to our dark understandings a *seven-fold* light, and enduing us with a *seven-fold* strength, to combat and subdue our passions. Above all, we shall rejoice in the manifestation of a DIVINE LOVE and a DIVINE MERCY, of which before we could have formed no conception, for what instance of love and of mercy ever occurred comparable to that which we this day celebrate,

GOD condescending to become a *man*, that He might acquire a fuller and more adequate power to bless and to save his otherwise lost creatures? And impressed with this enlarged perception of the DIVINE BENIGNITY, we shall return it with a gratitude equally extended, and thus shall not only *love much, because much was forgiven*, but we shall *love more*, because our apprehension of the Divine Love will be *the more complete*, the *more affectionate*, the *more purifying*, the *more exalted*.

To conclude—Moses, we read, was commanded of GOD to build Him a *Tabernacle*, and Solomon to build a *Temple*, and the intent of both these sacred edifices was, that GOD might be present there, and exhibit to the devout worshipper a fuller display of His DIVINE GLORY, MAJESTY, MERCY and PROVIDENCE, than could otherwise have been communicated.

Yet both these consecrated buildings were but *types and figures*; they were but *figures*, I say, of that infinitely more HOLY, more HEAVENLY, because LIVING TEMPLE, of which JESUS CHRIST spake when He said, “*Destroy this TEMPLE, and in three days I will raise it up; but He spake of the temple of His BODY.*” [John ii. 19, 21.] For it is in this LIVING

TEMPLE, this CONSECRATED BODY of the GREAT REDEEMER, that the INFINITE MAJESTY of the MOST HIGH and ETERNAL GOD is ever present both with angels and with men, and ever present for this blessed purpose, that through that BODY He may display a *greater fulness* of His MERCY, a *brighter light* of His GLORY, and thus operate on His creatures to produce a *more plentiful* reception of His GRACE and LOVE, than could otherwise have been communicated.

What now should we have thought of a Jew or of an Israelite of old, who, disregarding the merciful intent of his God in building the *Tabernacle* and the *Temple*, had refused to worship the FATHER of the universe in the place of His own appointment, and had said in his deluded heart, that he had no need of such helps to his devotion, but could perform a worship equally acceptable to God, and equally profitable to himself in any other place? Should we not have lamented, and lamented justly, that such a Jew and such an Israelite would at one and the same time have deprived himself of an inestimable benefit, and his God of that service which He had a right to require?

But how infinitely more deplorable is the case

of those Christians, who refuse to approach and worship GOD in that LIVING TEMPLE, the BODY of JESUS CHRIST, which, for that purpose, the ETERNAL hath been pleased to consecrate and to glorify, by dwelling in it for ever, and making it one with Himself? For what *other* GOD can such expect to find? How can they hope to *approach* and *come to* the FATHER, but in that HUMANITY, by which alone He is *accessible*? How can they hope to *see* or *know* the INVISIBLE, but in that *visible* manifestation, by which He is willing to be seen and known? How can they hope to obtain the victory over their corruptions, and *power to become the sons of God*, when they refuse to go to that SAVIOUR, Who has declared, “*All power is given to ME in heaven and in earth; and, except ye believe that I am, ye shall die in your sins*?”

Let us then, beloved, aware of the infinite danger of disregarding the appointments of the MOST HIGH, approach and worship Him, as He wishes to be approached and worshiped by us. Let us draw nigh, I say, in the spirit of a true repentance, unto JESUS CHRIST, as to the *visible*, the *manifested*, the *near*, the OMNIPOTENT, the *reconcilable* GOD. Let us believe that in His DIVINE PERSON *all the fulness of the Godhead*

dwelleth bodily. Let us adore the merciful and miraculous provision thus made for our salvation, and labour to extend it's *seven-fold* energies, by a *seven-fold* increase in penitence and in piety. And then, if we continue stedfast in this faith and life, we shall soon be convinced, to our unspeakable joy, of it's certainties and of it's comforts, because we shall presently be made sensible of a *brighter* light to enlighten us, of a *greater* strength to combat our corruptions, and of a *more powerful* operation to effect all that reformation and renewal of heart and life, of which it is written, "*To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God,*" &c.—AMEN.

SERMON XVII.

(PREACHED ON CHRISTMAS DAY.)

JESUS CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

JOHN xii. 46. *I am come a LIGHT INTO THE WORLD, that whosoever believeth on ME should not abide in darkness.*

THERE is not, in all the range of creation, any element to be found more wonderful than *light*, especially the light of the sun : And yet, perhaps, there is no element, the wonderful properties of which are, in general, so little thought of, and attended to. We see the sun rise every day, and we are made sensible of the brightness and comfort of his beams, but how few amongst us reflect, as we ought, on the astonishing properties, qualities and virtues of those beams, and from what source they flow ! How few, I say, reflect, that without the sun's light, we could not even see the sun, nor see one-another, nor contemplate the beauties of the world around us, nor rejoice in beholding the stupendous works of the Most

HIGH! Without the sun's light, therefore, the fair page of creation would be a mere blank, and the eye of man, which was formed to view its magnificence, and to delight in the varieties of its forms, would be enveloped in gross darkness. Without the sun's light, too, creation must perish, since without the sun's light, the earth could not produce her fruits, vegetation would be suspended, all the laws of nature would be disturbed, and of consequence, the whole economy of this lower world would sooner or later be thrown into confusion and destruction. Lastly, without *light*, man could not discern the mischiefs, the dangers, the defilements, by which he is encompassed, and of course, not being able to see and shun them, he must perish in them: Without light, too, it would be impossible for man to carry on the business of life here below, since without light, he could not even move from one place to another, and therefore must remain ever fixed in the same spot; still less could he apply himself to any work of his calling, or to the discharge of any of the duties of his station in society.

Such then being the high value, importance and benefit of *light*, we cannot be surprized that the **GREAT SAVIOUR**, amongst the other distinguished titles which He was pleased to assume,

took this also of *Light*. It must however be manifest to every thinking person, that when JESUS CHRIST calls Himself *a light*, and *the light*, He did not mean to speak of mere *natural* light, such as is that of the sun of this world, but of *spiritual* light, such as is that of the SUN OF HEAVEN. He meant therefore to teach us, that He is to our *minds*, what the light of the sun of this world is to our *bodies*, the same blessing, the same comfort, the same deliverer from destruction, the same preserver of life, without which it is as impossible for our souls to exist in a state of bliss and order, as it is for our bodies, if deprived of the light of this world.

Permit me, then, on this sacred day, when we commemorate the appearing of this DIVINE LIGHT here on earth, and thus the *rising* of the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, to point out, as a suitable subject of our contemplation, some of the more striking agreements between the light of this HEAVENLY SUN, and the light of the sun of this world, that so we may be led the more effectually, not only to make a right estimate of the incomparably high value of the former light, but also to apply it, as we ought, to the salutary and saving purposes for which it is given.

And 1st.—It is one property, as was observed,

of the light of the sun of this world, to enable us to see the sun and one-another, and to contemplate the beauties of the world around us.

Exactly similar to this, but in a point of view, infinitely more important, is the property of that spiritual light of which JESUS CHRIST speaks, when He says, "*I am come a Light into the world.*" For it is by virtue of this light, if we truly believe in it, that we are enabled to discern the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS in the eternal world, ever shining, ever emitting his bright beams of light and comfort on benighted mortals. For we behold in this SUN the face of JESUS CHRIST, the merciful radiance of His Divine Countenance, and how *in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD* bodily, for the purpose of blessing and saving mankind. Thus tracing up the light to it's Divine source, we become acquainted with the GOD of *our salvation*, and have the same sure proof of His existence, that we have of the sun of this world, when we trace up his light to it's source. But this is not all, for by means of the light which JESUS CHRIST is, and which He dispenses, we are enabled to *see one-another*. I do not mean to see one-another as to the forms and qualities of our *bodies*, but as to the infinitely higher and more interesting properties of our immortal *souls* or

spirits. For by virtue of spiritual light, we discover that we are *eternal beings* ; that there is in us a principle which can never die ; that we were created to live for ever happy in the kingdom of **GOD** ; that we belong thus to the great family of **GOD**, being His creatures, and the heirs of His glory ; that we are related thus one to another as brethren, being children of the same Parent, and partakers of the same promises ; that we are bound thus to respect, to love, and to do every kind office one to another, not only for the sake of ourselves, but for the sake of our **COMMON PARENT**.

But this is not all—for by virtue of spiritual light, we are enabled to discover the **ETERNAL WORLD**, that world of realities and of beauties, for the enjoyment of which we were more especially created. For observe now the views of the true believer, who admits into his mind the light of the **ETERNAL TRUTH**. He sees that the material world, which we at present inhabit, is but the outward *crust* or *shell* of another, and an infinitely more magnificent world, from which it came forth. He sees also that these two worlds are in the closest connection with each other, the *eternal* world being within the *temporal* world, as the soul is within it's body, agreeable to which idea **JESUS CHRIST** says, “ *The kingdom of God is*

“ *within you,*” and in another place, “ *The kingdom of God is nigh unto you.*” To this eternal world, then, this kingdom of God, the true believer always directs his enlightened eyes, being convinced that all that is beautiful, all that is harmonious, all that is magnificent, all that is delightful in the objects of this lower world is of small account, when compared with the superior beauty, harmony, magnificence and delight of the objects of the eternal world.

But further—It was noted concerning the light of the sun of this world, that without it, creation must perish, since without the sun’s light, the earth could not produce her fruits, vegetation would be suspended, all the laws of nature would be disturbed, and of consequence, the whole economy of this lower world would sooner or later be thrown into confusion and destruction.

Behold here again, then, another striking image of the properties and the effects of that *spiritual light* of which we are speaking, and how infinitely therefore we are indebted to the distinguished mercy of this day, on which it first began to dawn on the regions of this lower world !

For without that *spiritual light*, all *spiritual creation* must perish, all *spiritual fruitfulness* must cease, all *spiritual order* and *harmony* must

be destroyed, and the whole *spiritual world* of man must sooner or later become a miserable chaos of confusion and of destruction. As a proof of the truth of this observation, let me appeal only to the state of that mind, which has never as yet admitted the light of heaven, which is the light of JESUS CHRIST, for guidance and direction. For look, I entreat you, into the interiors of such a mind, and tell me what you find there. Do you discover in it any thing of GOD'S *creation*, any *fruitfulness* in heavenly graces and virtues, any *order*, *peace*, and *harmony* resulting from that fruitfulness? On the contrary, do not you rather behold, and are not you affrighted to see a miserable chaos of *confusion* and *destruction*, whilst all the bad passions are suffered to reign without controul, and there is no *governor*, no judge, no peace-maker to allay the disturbance? And would you learn the cause of this disturbance? It is because the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH has never been admitted and exalted. It is because the mind has never been opened to JESUS CHRIST, the DIVINE SOURCE of that *light*. It is therefore because darkness hath ruled instead of light, viz. the darkness of error, the false and deceitful appearances of happiness grounded only in the love of this world; and a rejection thus of that heavenly

wisdom, which would have taught, that there is no solid peace, no durable rest and joy to be found by man, but in the love of God, and in a pursuit of the great ends of his being in agreement with that love.

On the other hand, let me invite you to take a view of that mind, which has been wise to admit, and diligent to improve the lustre of *spiritual light* in itself, as communicated from it's adorable fountain JESUS CHRIST. For behold, in that mind, the fair creation of GOD, in all it's beauty, brightness and perfection! Behold a land, no longer barren and unfruitful, or what is still worse, producing nothing except *thorns* and *thistles*: But, behold, I say, a land, planted with all the plants of Paradise, watered with the dew of heaven, and overflowing with the *milk* and *honey* of every spiritual, every heavenly grace, virtue and benediction! Behold further, in that land the reign of order, of harmony, of peace and of protection! *The wolf and the lamb feed together; the lion lies down with the kid; the sucking child lays it's hand on the cockatrice den;* and would we know the reason? It is because all the bad passions are subdued; every corrupt inclination is under controul; human folly gives place to Divine Wisdom; whilst innocence, love and charity from

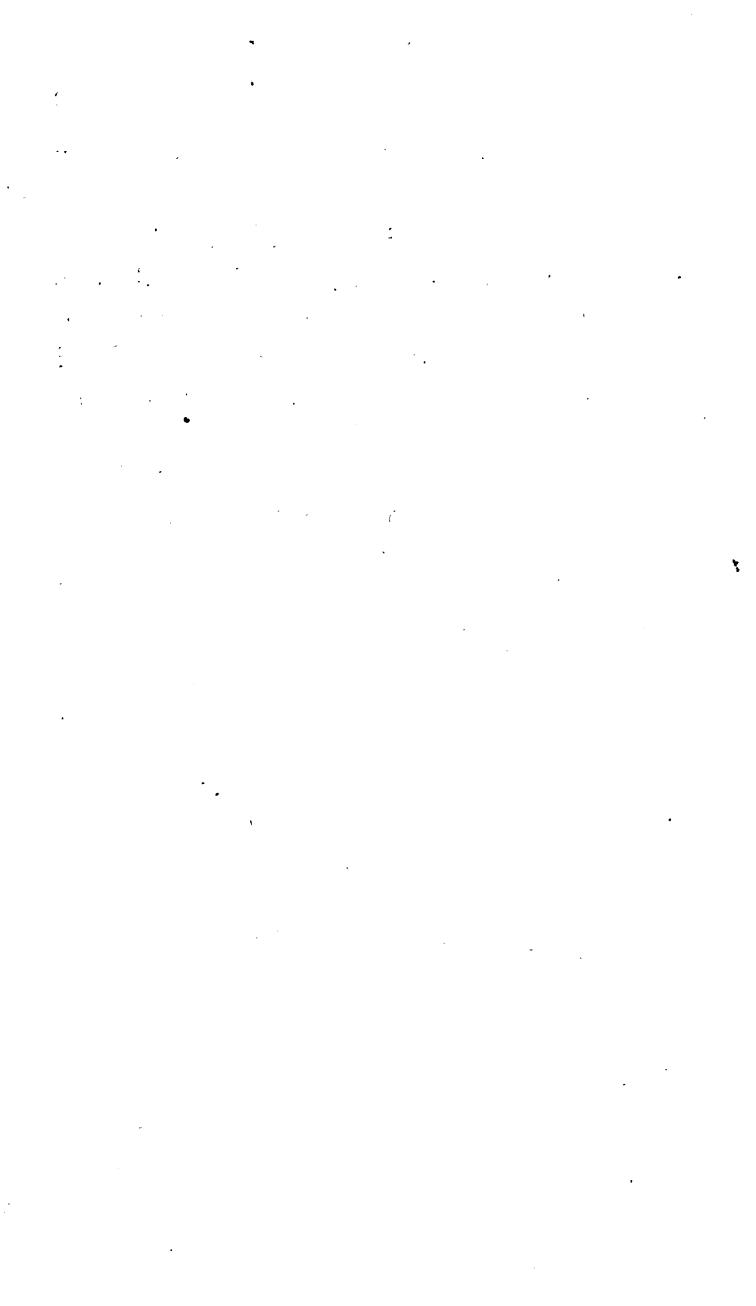
God, with their constant companions, justice and judgment, integrity, uprightness and purity, are exalted to pre-eminence, converting the *wilderness* into a *paradise*, and the *desert* into a *garden of God*. Such is the blessed effect of a reception of the *Eternal Light*. Such therefore is the mercy, which calls for our most profound and grateful acknowledgments on this sacred day, when that *Light* first began to dawn upon the earth.

I should now proceed to the consideration of some other striking cases of correspondence or agreement between the *natural light* of the sun of this world, and the *spiritual light* flowing from the **SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**, but deferring this consideration till to-morrow morning, when I hope, through the Divine Mercy, again to resume it, I shall conclude my present discourse with a brief application of what has been already said.

This day has ever been distinguished amongst Christians by the *manifestation of God in the flesh*, and thus by the rising as it were of a *New Sun* on this lower world, to *give light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the ways of peace*. In the face and person of **JESUS CHRIST**, we behold this **GLORIOUS SUN**, Who therefore calls Himself by the high title of the *Light of the World*, and is

pleased to declare, that they who follow Him *shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* Whilst then we hail the rising of this **GLO-RIOUS SUN,** and adore that Divine mercy, which hath thus blessed us with it's *light,* let us be careful to secure the advantages which that light presents to our acceptance. Let us accordingly examine ourselves, how far we have heretofore secured those advantages, or not. For this purpose, let us ask ourselves, again and again, the interesting questions: Hath the light, which hath been vouchsafed to us, led us to it's Adorable Fountain, and enabled us to discover that that fountain is **JESUS CHRIST?** Do we approach thus to **JESUS CHRIST** as the **ONLY DIVINE SOURCE** of all the *light,* and consequently of all the *life* that we can either see or enjoy? Hath the light further led us to the knowledge of ourselves, and of one-another, so as to discover to us, that we are immortal beings, children of the same **HEAVENLY FATHER,** heirs of the same heavenly kingdom, and thus bound to love, to honour, to respect, and to do good one towards another? Have we learnt yet further from this *marvellous light,* that there is another world, besides that which we, at present inhabit, a world of realities, a world of substances, a world of glories and of comforts, of which, at present, we

can form but a faint idea, and that we are all hastening towards that world, as fast as the wings of time can carry us? Lastly, hath the light exerted in us it's *creating, preserving, and fructifying virtues*? Is the *wilderness* of our minds become a *paradise*, the *desert* a *garden of God*? In other words, Do the graces, the virtues, the blessings of heaven flourish, and exalt the peace and purity of their kingdom above the violence, the anarchy and confusion of our passions? Blessed be the man, who is not afraid to ask himself these questions, and to wait for their answer! Blessed be the man, who receives and walks by the **ETERNAL LIGHT**! For he shall never be overtaken with darkness, but *shall have the LIGHT OF LIFE*.
AMEN.



SERMON XVIII.

(PREACHED SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY.)

JESUS CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

JOHN xii. 46. *I am come a LIGHT INTO THE WORLD, that whosoever believeth on ME should not abide in darkness.*

IN my discourse of yesterday on these words, I endeavoured to point out the blessed effects of that Advent of the GREAT REDEEMER, which we at this season celebrate, from the consideration of that character, under which He describes Himself in the words of my text, as being *a light*, or, as He calls Himself in another place, "*The Light of the world.*" On this occasion, a comparison was drawn between the *natural light* which we derive from the sun of this world, and the *spiritual light* which we derive from that SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, which as at this time rose upon the earth.

Having pursued this comparison through several particular and striking cases, by shewing how each light directs us to it's source, and makes

that source known to us ; how each also enables us to see one-another, the light of this world making manifest our bodily forms, whilst the light of the **ETERNAL TRUTH** makes manifest the forms and qualities of our immortal souls ; and lastly, how each light discovers to us the world in which it shines, the one a temporal world, and the other an eternal one ; I shall now bespeak your attention to other instances of similitude not less edifying and important than the foregoing.

And 1st.—Without the light of the sun of this world, ~~as was observed yesterday,~~ man could not discern the mischiefs, the dangers, and the defilements, by which he is encompassed in this lower world, and of course, for want of knowing and guarding against them, he must perish in them : But by the advantage of the sun's light, we know, he can discover, so as to guard against, both mischief, danger and defilement.

Behold here then another most striking resemblance between the effects of the *light of this world*, and those of the *light of heaven*, which **JESUS CHRIST** is, and which He dispenses. For without the light of the **ETERNAL TRUTH**, it is impossible for man to discover the *spiritual* mischiefs, dangers and defilements, with which his soul, or spirit, is encompassed, and which daily

threaten his eternal destruction. As for example ; without the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH, man cannot discover the mischief, the danger and defilement of sin, nor how to escape them ; for without the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH, he cannot distinguish between good and evil ; between what is of God, and what is *not* of God ; between what has a tendency to save him, and what has a tendency to condemn him ; still less can he discern clearly the nature of sin, in what it consists, and to what it leads. Thus without the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH, he may be walking on the *precipice* of everlasting destruction, and yet not be aware of his danger ; he may be taking a *serpent* into his bosom, without being apprised of it's poison ; he may be drinking some *deadly thing*, and not know it but by the death which it occasions. In short, without the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH, man may be said to be walking perpetually in a dark and dreary wilderness, infested with all kinds of wild beasts and venomous reptiles, which he can neither see, nor guard against, whilst at the same time he can discover no path by which to escape.

But adored be that ETERNAL LIGHT, which as at this time dawned upon the earth in the person, and at the birth, of the GREAT SAVIOUR ! How happily is the state of man reversed by the

appearing of this **LIGHT** ! For lo ! as it begins to shine in the believer's mind, his eyes are opened to discover all the spiritual mischiefs, dangers and defilements by which he is encompassed. He is accordingly put instantly on his guard. The howling *wilderness*, it's *wild beasts* and *serpents* are detected, and being detected, they cease to be destructive. Or, to speak plainly, and without a metaphor, the evil of sin, with all it's deadly passions, and subtle poison ; the deceitfulness of riches, the intoxications of sensual pleasure, the enchantments of folly, the delusions of a blinded and mistaken world ; all these things are made manifest in his penitent bosom, and being made manifest, they are opposed, and by opposition overthrown. And as the believer is thus made sensible that sin and it's defilements are the only things which he has to fear, in like manner he is made sensible that **GOD**, **HIS GRACE**, **HIS LOVE**, **HIS KINGDOM** and **PROVIDENCE** are the only things on which to ground his hope and dependence. Thus, through the light of the **ETERNAL TRUTH**, which enables him to distinguish between good and evil, between what is saving and what is condemning, he shuns all danger, and walks in the safe and secure path which leads to the kingdom of peace and righteousness.

But further—It is a well-known property of the light of the sun of this world, that by it a man is enabled to carry on his ordinary business here below, and to move from one place to another, whereas without it, he must remain for ever fixed in one spot, and be utterly incapable of applying himself to any work of his calling, or to the discharge of any of the duties of his station in society.

Let us here then again learn to recognise and adore the wonderful blessings imparted to us by the communication of the light of that **HEAVENLY SUN**, which as at this time rose upon the earth. And that these blessings may make their proper impression, let us turn our eyes to note well the character and conduct of that man, in whose mind the light of the **ETERNAL TRUTH** hath never been exalted for guidance and direction; and then let us note the contrary character and conduct of the devout and penitent Christian, who directs his footsteps daily by the brightness and comfort of that unerring light.

First then, let us turn our eyes to note well the character and conduct of that man, in whose mind the light of the **ETERNAL TRUTH** hath never been exalted for guidance and direction. Behold, I say, a human being, trusting entirely to the

guidance of his own reason, but never consulting that *superior* and *heavenly light*, which was given him to enlighten and bless his reason! He is prudent possibly in his *temporal* concerns, and perhaps too he may be prosperous. But as to his *eternal* concerns, he is like a man *without light*, and consequently he doth not know which way to turn himself, or how to proceed. He never therefore doeth the work of repentance, because he neither sees the nature nor the necessity of such a work. He never becomes a convert to JESUS CHRIST, because conversion to any thing, but worldly prosperity and joy, appears to him useless and unprofitable. He never attains to the love of GOD and of his neighbour, because he cannot see how either the one or the other will contribute to his happiness. Thus, as to his eternal concerns, he *stands still*, and remains *motionless*, like a man in the dark, not stirring a single step towards that blessed kingdom for which he was created, and the reason is, because he doth not admit into his mind that *light of truth* from JESUS CHRIST, which was given him to direct him in the way. In the mean time, though he himself is not aware of it, he moves with a rapidity inconceivable towards the kingdom of darkness and misery, because such is the necessary unavoidable lot of every one, who

doth not exalt in his mind and life that *light of wisdom*, which cometh from JESUS CHRIST, to convert man *from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*.

But let us turn now from this affecting and disgusting sight, to mark the contrary character and conduct of that penitent and devout Christian, who believes in JESUS CHRIST *as his God*, and applies the *light of His ETERNAL TRUTH* for the guidance and direction of his life. He too is *prudent* in his *temporal* concerns, because the ETERNAL TRUTH teaches him to be so, but then he is prudent on this ground, because such prudence, he learns, has a tendency to advance and improve his *eternal* interests. For he discovers that it is a requirement of the ETERNAL TRUTH, that man should be just, upright, honest, faithful, conscientious and industrious in the business and duties of his ordinary calling, and that in such case he connects the business and duties of his ordinary calling with God and heaven, by having respect to those God-like and heavenly principles of justice, uprightness, honesty, fidelity, conscience and industry. The pious and penitent Christian therefore doth not neglect his *temporal concerns*, but rather compels them to administer to his *eternal interests*, by bringing into fuller exercise the eter-

nal principles of the love of God and his neighbour. His chief labour therefore is, to exalt in all his temporal concerns the *light of the Gospel*, which is *the light of everlasting life*, that so, in all his engagements here below, he may be governed and guided by an eternal and blessed end, which is conjunction with God. For this purpose, he is ever jealous over himself, lest temporal ends should be regarded more than eternal. It is on this account, that he applies perpetually the *light of truth* in his own mind, to explore his secret purposes; to discover all his wanderings from God and heaven; to mark every perverse affection and treacherous thought, every suggestion and every stratagem of his spiritual enemy, which might at any time betray him into either sin or carelessness, and thus divert him from the path of salvation and bliss. Repentance, therefore, obedience, heavenly-mindedness, prayer, self-denial and charity—these are the graces and virtues which he ever cultivates, as his grand securities against evil and error: These therefore are the graces and virtues which put his life in motion, and enable him to walk with a calm, steady, firm and cheerful pace, to the gates of *that city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God*.

I might now proceed to point out some other cases of agreement, between the light of the sun of this world, and the light of the SUN OF HEAVEN. I might show, for instance, that there is in each light an *attractive* power, to *draw* things towards itself, and that, as the light of the sun of this world exercises such a power on *plants* and *flowers*, agreeable to the testimony of every one's experience, in like manner, the SUN OF HEAVEN exercises such a power on the souls of men, according to that testimony of JESUS CHRIST, where He says, "I, if I be lifted up *from the earth, will draw all unto ME.*" [John xii. 32.] It might also be shown, that as all the objects of this world derive their *colours* from the light of the sun of this world, and are *without colour* when they are *without light*, as experience testifies, in like manner, all human souls derive their *colours*, or, what is the same thing, their respective *qualities*, from the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH, or from JESUS CHRIST, the BRIGHT SUN of the eternal world, each having a distinct heavenly *quality* according to his distinct reception of that light: and no heavenly quality at all, if that light be not admitted.

But leaving these cases to be the subjects of your own private meditation, I shall at present

conclude what has been already said, with a brief application of it's infinite importance.

Is it then true, that without **JESUS CHRIST**, and *the light of the ETERNAL TRUTH* which proceeds from Him, we cannot discover the *spiritual mischiefs*, the *spiritual dangers*, the *spiritual defilements*, by which we are encompassed? Is it true also, that without **JESUS CHRIST** and His *light*, we cannot stir a step in the business of our salvation, but must of necessity remain in our natural ignorances and corruptions, in our natural separations from **GOD** through sin and defilement, and in our consequent separation from the kingdom of heaven, it's purities, it's sanctities, and it's joys? Then, what words can sufficiently describe, either the infinite value and importance of that *light*, or the weight of obligation imposed on every Christian, to secure all it's blessings and advantages? Then, who can be called *wise*, who can be called *good*, who can be called *happy*, amongst the children of men, who doth not possess, and is not under the guidance of that *light*? Then too, what a debt of gratitude is due to the **FATHER OF MERCIES**, for the event which distinguishes this holy season, when that light first began to dawn on this lower world! How likewise are we bound to believe on, to approach, to adore, to love

and worship that INCARNATE GOD, that *manifested* JEHOVAH, that DIVINE HUMANITY of JESUS CHRIST, from which Alone *the light of* ETERNAL LIFE proceeds ! Above all, how jealous, how watchful ought we to be over ourselves, lest our passions, our corruptions, or our prejudices, should shut us up in our own natural darkness, and preclude us from receiving the blessings of that *light* ! Let us then learn to pray with the holy man of old, “ O LORD, *send out thy light and thy truth, that they may guide me.*” Let us repent us of our sins : Let us go to the GREAT SAVIOUR : Let us acknowledge that all heavenly *light*, and all heavenly *life* also, are from Him, and from Him alone. Then will He hear our prayers, and accept our desires, and to us will be extended His promised blessing, where He says, “ *He that followeth ME, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the LIGHT OF LIFE.*”—
AMEN.



SERMON XIX.

(PREACHED ON PALM SUNDAY.)

THE EDIFYING LANGUAGE OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

HEB. xi. part of the 4th verse. *By it He being dead yet speaketh.*

THE whole verse from whence these words are taken, runs thus, *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts ; then it follows, And by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

I shall not waste your time with pointing out the propriety of the application of these words to another sacrifice besides that of Abel, viz. to the sacrifice of the GREAT REDEEMER, and to that cross and those sufferings, which we are called, at this season more particularly, to commemorate. For every thing, and every circumstance, we know, like the sacrifice of Abel, has a language of it's own, and speaks to man, if he had but ears

to hear it. The actions therefore of JESUS CHRIST, as well as His words, were speeches most eloquent and instructive; But His sufferings and death were most eloquent and instructive of all, and therefore it may with the utmost propriety be said of this His bitter cross, *By it He being dead yet speaketh.*

But what is the sublime and edifying language of this our Redeemer's cross? What is it that He speaketh to us by this awful conclusion of His sojourning here on earth? The question is of the utmost importance; and to those who ask it in sincerity, that they may profit by it, I shall endeavour to suggest such an answer in my following discourse, as may tend most to instruction and edification.

It is not however of man or of angels to comprehend the infinite wisdom in *all* it's depths and heighths, which the cross speaketh, for this is known only unto GOD Himself. Nevertheless we may comprehend a *part* of it, if we be so disposed; and the smallest part of this wisdom, it will be found, is infinitely above all the wisdom of this world; for it is the wisdom of GOD Himself; it is the speech and language of the ETERNAL TRUTH; and therefore it might well be asked in comparison with it, *Where is the wise? Where is the Scribe?*

Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?
[1 Cor. i. 20.]

Let us attempt then to read and understand the holy language of the cross; for this purpose, let us look humbly unto Him that speaketh by it, and then we may hope to read and understand aright.

And 1st. The language of the cross is a language of Divine love and charity. For thus saith JESUS CHRIST, "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*" [John xv. 13.] And thus saith the Apostle, "*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*" [1 John, iii. 16.] What then could express with greater energy the power and fulness of the Divine love towards man, than the cross of CHRIST? How infinitely desirous must He be of man's salvation, who could submit to endure such a complication of bitter sufferings to effect it! We have no thought to conceive, or words to express the tenderness of such love. Howbeit we have faculties wherewith we may ponder and profit by the instructive lesson herein taught us: For we may learn by it, that our souls are infinitely precious

in the sight of God ; that He has an infinite desire to save and bless us, by conjoining Himself to us, and us unto Himself: And may this consideration teach us to love Him in return, and though we cannot love Him as He deserves, yet let us love Him as much as we are able. May it teach us also to love one-another, as being alike the objects of the Divine love, agreeable to the Apostle's precept, "*Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one-another.*" [John iv. 11.]

But 2ndly. The language of the cross is a language of awful correction and reproof. "*I will reprove thee and set before thee the things that thou hast done,*" [Psalm L. 21.] saith the Lord to His church. And how could these words be more effectually fulfilled, than by the cross of CHRIST? For what a rebuke do the sufferings and death of the SON OF GOD proclaim aloud against the pride, the covetousness, the sensuality, the worldly-mindedness, the vanity and fallen corrupt state of the heart of man! For behold the LAMB OF GOD, meek and lowly, patient and contented, despised and persecuted, suffering and crucified, accounting this world as a mere nothing, rejecting all it's false glory and delusive joys, and intent only on the fulfilment of Divine purposes! Can any contemplate this picture and not be ashamed

of themselves? Is it possible to behold this sight and not see and lament our iniquities, our manifold transgressions and unfaithfulnesses before a HOLY GOD? What a dreadful thing too must sin be, which could require such a sufferer to remove it! How far must man be fallen from his GOD, that a crucified SAVIOUR was become necessary to restore him! And shall we be deaf to this language of wholesome reproof, by still continuing to live in sin and folly? Oh, let us rather *thank our God for giving us this warning* of our corruptions and miseries, and learn from the cross at least this wisdom, to know our own vileness, and knowing it, to seek a remedy for it in Him, who came to *open a fountain for sin and uncleanness*. Let our defilements thus be the means of converting us unto that GOD, Who is waiting continually to show us mercy, and Who for this purpose endured the cross, that He might in the first place move us to repentance, and in the next place might convince us of His will and eternal disposition to save us.

For 3rdly. The language of the cross is a language of Divine consolation and support. For thus saith the prophet, [Isaiah xl. 1, 2.] "*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your GOD; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry*

unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins."

The design of the cross is first to rebuke and break, and then to bind up and heal what was broken : Whosoever then the hearts and souls of men are humbled and softened by it's wholesome reproof and correction, they are then presently exalted and comforted by it's consolatory speech and language. For look now at the suffering and crucified JESUS, ye who are begun to be troubled about sin, and to desire deliverance and redemption : *"Surely he hath borne your griefs and carried your sorrows :"* Surely *"he was wounded for your transgressions, and bruised for your iniquities : The chastisement of your peace was upon Him, and by his stripes ye are healed."* [Isaiah liii. 4, 5.] All the blessings, and comforts, and joys therefore purchased by the cross are your's : The world indeed knoweth nothing of this it's language of consolation, because the world is deluded by false joys, and hath never been troubled about sin : But ye will read in the sufferings of your REDEEMER the end of all your sorrows, whilst you behold him in this last period of his life preparing and ripening for a greater weight of glory, according as it is written, *"Ought*

“ *not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory ?*” [Luke xxiv. 26,] and whilst you further see, that this is the glory purchased and prepared for you, according to his own blessed prayer, “ *FATHER, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.*” [John xvii. 24.]

4thly. The language of the cross is a language of patience and submission to GOD under affliction, for thus it is written, “ *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth ; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*” [Isaiah liii. 7.] Art thou then, O man, in any trouble or affliction ? Do things go contrary to thee, and do the providences of GOD appear perplexing ? Doth the joy of thine heart fail thee, and hast thou begun to learn that man is born to misery ? Oh, take good heed, in this day of calamity, lest thou murmur at the wisdom of the Divine dispensations. For this purpose be prevailed upon to cast a look unto the cross of thy REDEEMER. Behold, *was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow !* and yet he doth not repine or murmur ; he is *dumb and openeth not his mouth* to complain ; he seeks refuge only

in the will of his HEAVENLY FATHER ; for hear his own gracious words, "*If this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done.*" [Matt. xxvi. 42.] Be ashamed then and confounded for thine impatience, thy fretfulness, and thy repining, O sinful man, and under all thy greatest troubles think of the lesson which thy GOD hath taught thee, and learn from his cross at least this wisdom, to be patient, silent, submissive, and to *put thy trust in God.*

Lastly—the language of the cross is a language of eternal life and salvation, by the reconciliation of GOD to man, and the mutual conjunction of GOD with man, and of man with GOD. For thus saith the BLESSED JESUS, when under the pressure of his grievous sufferings, "*Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out ; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.*" [John xii. 31, 32.] Oh, that our eyes were enlightened to see the fulfilment of these blessed words in the cross of our REDEEMER ! What a wisdom, what an unspeakable comfort, would be thence derived to us ! *Now is the judgment of this world* : For by the cross the GREAT REDEEMER fought against and opposed all the spiritual enemies of man : By the cross

also he overcame them ; for so it is written, *Now shall the prince of this world be cast out* : Thus the powers of darkness, which had heretofore obstructed man in his return to heaven, were separated and removed ; and man, by virtue of the redemption wrought, had power given him *to tread upon serpents, and upon all the power of the enemy* : But this was not all, “ *I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me,*” saith the suffering JESUS : By the cross he was *lifted up* ; for by the cross he was exalted to full and perfect union with the FATHER ; as He saith in another place, “ *At that day ye shall know, that I am in the FATHER and the FATHER in Me:*” [John xiv. 20.] Thus heaven, with eternal life and salvation, were opened and brought near to penitent sinners who believed in his Divine and blessed person, because *as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God*. Thus too reconciliation and re-conjunction were effected between GOD and man, because in and by the GLORIFIED HUMAN NATURE of the BLESSED JESUS, GOD had access to all repenting believers, and they to GOD, which otherwise would have been impossible, since the BLESSED JESUS Himself testifies, “ *No one cometh to the FATHER but by ME.*” [John xiv. 6.]

Ponder well then this language of the cross, O ye fallen and sinful children of men : Ye are indeed born in great disorder : Ye are not now what ye were intended to be by creation : Sin hath laid waste in you the paradise of GOD : But the paradise of GOD may yet be restored if you are but wise : For sin and the powers of darkness may yet be destroyed if it be not your own fault ; whilst order, life, righteousness, joy and peace from GOD out of heaven may yet descend and dwell in your penitent and humble hearts : For behold the suffering, but conquering Redeemer ! Behold him, I say, "*leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious children, that the Lord God might dwell among them.*" [Psalm lxxviii. 18.] Go then to this OMNIPOTENT GOD and SAVIOUR in the spirit of evangelical faith and of sincere repentance, and ye will then find, in that VICTORIOUS GOD, hell subdued and heaven opened. Supplicate of Him the grace to enable you to oppose all your corruptions, your natural pride, vanity, covetousness, sensuality, and worldly-mindedness, that ye may live holy, pure and heavenly lives. Believe on Him as the Giver of eternal life : Seek conjunction with Him by keeping his commandments ; and then rest

assured that sooner or later you will find fulfilled in yourselves, to your unspeakable joy, these His own gracious words, of eternal life, "*To him that overcometh will I give to sit with Me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.*" [Rev. iii. 21.]—AMEN.

the same time, the government was also trying to get the people to buy more of its own products. This was done by giving out coupons that could be used to buy goods at a discount. The government also tried to control the prices of goods, but this was not very successful. In the end, the government had to give up on its price controls and let the market decide the prices of goods. This was a big change for the government, and it showed that the market was still the best way to run the economy.

SERMON XX.

(PREACHED ON GOOD FRIDAY.)

REDEMPTION A COMPLEX WORK.

JOHN XIX. 30. *When JESUS therefore had received the vinegar, He said, IT IS FINISHED.*

WHAT the LORD here meant by it's being *finished*, may plainly appear from His last prayer to His FATHER, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the same Evangelist, where He says, *I have FINISHED the work which THOU gavest ME to do.*

The great work then of Redemption, which He was sent into the world to accomplish, is what the BLESSED JESUS here points at in His last words upon the cross, when He says, *It is finished.* But the *finishing* of a work manifestly implies it's *beginning* and it's *progress*; it implies, I say, that the work consists of *various parts*, and also that it is *gradual* and *progressive*; and therefore we shall never be able to comprehend what the BLESSED JESUS meant by the work of Redemption being *finished*, until we consider it's *beginning* and it's *progress*, as well as it's *conclusion*.

Let this then be the subject of our present attention ; for what subject can be more proper on this sacred day, when we commemorate the mournful and *closing period* of that blessed work which the LORD came into the world to accomplish for us, than to take a view of *all it's parts*, and thus to see it in it's *connection* from *beginning to end* ? A weak and imperfect judgment too often confines it's intellectual sight to a *partial* and *limited* contemplation of the objects towards which it is directed, and thus, for want of *extending* and *combining* it's views, it never attains to a full and clear sight of all the harmonies and proportions of what it wanted to see. Whereas a strong, an enlightened understanding is not thus contented with looking only at the *single detached parts* of a work, but *connecting them together*, it regards the *whole*, and in so doing is enabled to discover the *completion* of beauty and perfection.

Be this then the rule for the regulation of our conduct on the present occasion, and keeping it in sight, let us proceed to consider the great work of our Redemption, which was as on this day *finished*, and which may be regarded in the *four* following distinct points of view ;

- 1st. As a work of *instruction* ;
- 2ndly. As a work of *example* ;

3rdly. As a work of *combat* ; and

4thly. As a work of *victory*.

First then let us consider the work of Redemption as a *work of instruction*.

Without instruction, and this from GOD also, it is impossible that man can be redeemed, because to be redeemed implies to be delivered from the power of sin and error, that is to say, from the powers of hell and darkness, and thereby restored to communication and conjunction with the powers of righteousness, that is to say, with the powers of heaven and of light ; which effects cannot possibly have place in man, until he be instructed by the **WORD OF GOD**.

I say *by the WORD OF GOD*, because the words of man are not sufficient for this purpose, inasmuch as the words of man, if grounded in no higher authority than that of man, can only lead us to look up to man ; whereas redemption implies that we look up to GOD, and, that we also love and serve Him, and this we never can do only so far as we are instructed from Himself by and out of His **DIVINE WORD**.

Hence it is that JESUS CHRIST says to His disciples, “ *Now ye are clean THROUGH THE WORD which I have spoken unto you ;*” (John xv. 3.) for to be *clean* implies to be clean from sin,

that is to say, to be redeemed from it's power ; and to be clean *through the WORD which JESUS CHRIST SPAKE*, implies further, that this cleansing from sin, or redemption from it's power, was the pure effect of that omnipotent speech of the MOST HIGH GOD.

Here then we may see the reason why JESUS CHRIST began His great work of Redemption by *teaching* and *preaching*, that is to say, by *instructing*. For unless He had so *taught* and *preached*, and *instructed*, there could have been no redeeming power in man. Whereas, when He spake His DIVINE WORD, it fell into the hearts of the humble and the penitent, as a DIVINE SEED of ETERNAL LIFE from heaven, producing at once the double effect, 1st. of deliverance from the powers of sin and darkness, and 2ndly, of restoration to and conjunction with the powers of righteousness and light. Thus by and through this DIVINE WORD, as it was believed in and practised, GOD had access to man, and man to GOD. The DIVINE LIFE and POWER and BENEDICTION were brought down to man's apprehension, and presented to his view and to his choice ; and if he was wise, when he viewed them, to *choose* them also, so as to *delight* in them, they then fixed in him their eternal abode, and made him the beloved child and offspring of that GOD from Whom they descended.

But 2ndly—the work of redemption was a work of *example* also, as well as of *instruction*: And the reason is plain, because without *example* no full benefit could have been derived from *instruction*, especially from the instruction of the SON OF GOD, which was of so sublime and heavenly a nature, and so opposite to the prejudices and the passions of men, that had he not set an *example* in his own person of the possibility of practising His precepts, they would have been utterly rejected by mankind, as rules of life which were altogether inconsistent with the infirmities of humanity; and consequently impracticable.

Here then let us learn to adore the mercy of the MOST HIGH, which, in accomplishing the great work of our redemption, was pleased to present to our view and to our imitation the most pure and perfect *example*. For behold the BLESSED JESUS, not only communicating from Himself, as GOD, lessons of the most Divine and holy wisdom, to teach man the way to bliss, but also Himself walking in the heavenly path, by practising those lessons! Behold, I say, in His DIVINE PERSON instruction *realised*, the truth *substantiated*, the precepts of holiness no longer left to float about the world in ideal shadows of mere words and sounds, but *embodied* in and *enforced* by the

life, the conduct, the character of the **DIVINE TEACHER!** For observe now the uniform tenor of that life, that character, and that conduct. Look, I say, at the *example* of the **SON OF GOD**, and learn thence, that the wisdom of heaven is not *visionary*, is not *impracticable*, is not anything either *out of our reach to apprehend*, or *beyond our abilities to fulfil*; but that on the contrary, it is both level with the measure of our intellectual faculties to conceive, and of our wills to practise, because a man like ourselves hath both comprehended and accomplished it.

And here let it not be objected that the example of which we are speaking, is a *singular*, an *extraordinary* example, which the *general* and ordinary circumstances, situations, characters, and engagements of mankind will not allow them to imitate. For I am not here speaking of what was *singular* and *extraordinary* in this case, but of what is accommodated to the *universal*, the *common* imitation of mankind. For we are not called, neither have we powers like **JESUS CHRIST**, to go about the world working miracles, and instructing mankind as he did. But what then? If we cannot work miracles and instruct mankind, as He did, we can do what He Himself declares to be *greater works*, [John xiv. 12.] viz. we can

through His grace subdue our corruptions ; we can through the same grace gain the victory over our bad passions ; we can *learn of HIM to be meek and lowly of heart* ; we can love God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves ; we can be honest and upright, patient and contented in our several stations as the SON OF GOD was ; thus we can gain all the benefits to be derived from His blessed example, which was intended rather to influence the *spirit*, the *temper* and the *end*, than the external *form* and *habit* of our lives.

But 3rdly,—the work of redemption was not only a work of *instruction* and of *example*, but it was also a work of *combat*.

There is much said in the Sacred Scriptures concerning the LORD's *combats*, though the subject in general, it is to be feared, is little considered and attended to, even by those who call themselves Christians.

The prophet Isaiah speaks of those *combats* in these remarkable words, “ *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah ? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength ? Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-*

“*fat ? I have trodden the wine-press alone, and
 “ of the people there was none with Me ; for I
 “ will tread them in mine anger, and trample them
 “ in my fury ; and their blood shall be sprinkled
 “ upon my garments, and I will stain all my
 “ raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine
 “ heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.”*
 (Isaiah lxiii. 1 to 7.)

The same *combats* are spoken of in the Book of the Psalms throughout, because all the Psalms, in their real or spiritual sense, have reference to JESUS CHRIST, as He Himself teaches, (Luke xxiv. 44.) and therefore whatsoever is said in that HOLY BOOK respecting *David's enemies* and his *wars* against them, is to be understood as relating principally to the *spiritual combats* of the GREAT REDEEMER.

In the Gospel also we meet with frequent allusions to the same combats, as where it is written, “*He hath shewed strength with his arm ;
 “ he hath scattered the proud in the imagination
 “ of their hearts : He hath put down the mighty
 “ from their seats.”* (Luke i. 51, 52.) And in another place, “*Now is the judgment of this
 “ world, now shall the prince of this world be
 “ cast out.”* (John xii. 31.) And again, “*I beheld
 “ Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”* (Luke

x. 18.) And again, “ *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.*” (Luke xi. 21, 22.)

And would we know the deep ground of the reason and necessity of these combats on the part of the GREAT SAVIOUR ? It is manifestly this ; because at the time of His coming into the world, the powers of darkness had gained an almost universal dominion over the minds of men, in consequence of that unhappy departure from God which tended to lead man into confederacy with God’s enemies. For such is the tremendous nature and effect of all wilful sin on the part of man, that is to say, of every corrupt affection and temper of the heart, such as pride, vanity, covetousness, sensuality and the like, deliberately cherished and indulged in : The dreadful consequence, I say, of such corruptions is, not only that they separate man from God and from the communications of His blessed LIFE and PEACE, but they also plunge him into a miserable, polluted association, and connection with the powers of darkness, so that he becomes closely linked in with them, both in their crimes and their destruction.

Here then we may discern the reason, why the work of redemption must of necessity be a work of *combat* also, to render it complete. For the very meaning of the term *redemption* implies deliverance from spiritual captivity and bondage. But how now could such deliverance have been effected, but by a power stronger than the imprisoning power, that is to say, stronger than the powers of darkness? And how shall this stronger power operate to produce it's delivering effects, but by first *leading into captivity the captive power*, or as it is otherwise expressed, by first *binding the strong man*? The LORD then must needs be *engaged in combat*, before He can accomplish the redemption of man, because without combat, no enemy can be subdued, and had not man's spiritual enemies been subdued, he could never have been saved.

And here, if we would gain a clear and edifying idea both of the nature, of the severity, and of the blessed effects of the combats of the SON OF GOD, let us direct our eyes towards the sad scene which the solemnity of this day presents to our view. For behold the SAVIOUR of the world suffering and expiring on a cross! Behold, I say, the *consummation*, the *finishing* and *concluding* period of that tremendous *warfare* which he

had so long waged against the enemies of man's salvation ! You are melted into compassion at observing the pangs of His tortured body by the hands of bloody men. But have you considered the infinitely more terrible pangs which He endured in His *mind* from the infestations of infernal spirits ? Have you reflected, that this was *their hour and the power of darkness*, and that He was content to bear it, as the only possible means of rescuing you from the same power ? Learn then from the cross this lesson never to be forgotten, that there was *finished* the great work of warfare, whereby salvation was made possible again to fallen man, through the subjugation and removal of the powers of darkness.

But lastly—Redemption, to be complete, must also in the fourth place be a work of *victory*.

This must be very plain from what has been already said, since if *combat* was necessary to effect man's redemption, so must *victory*, inasmuch as victory is the end of combat.

The LORD's victories are perpetually spoken of in the Sacred Scriptures, though, like his combats, it is to be feared, they are little regarded by Christians, either as to their nature or their consequences.

To adduce all the passages from the Book

OF GOD, which celebrate the triumphs of the VICTORIOUS REDEEMER, would be to take up more of your time than can at present well be spared. I shall therefore content myself with observing, concerning this part of the work of redemption, as a work of *victory*, that it was the victory of humility over pride; of meekness over oppression; of a Divine patience over the most infernal violence; of mercy, charity and loving-kindness over all the corrupt and selfish passions of the human heart: It was in short the conquest of love, and by love, over all malice, hatred, revenge, and every other temper contrary to love. Thus it was the conquest of a GOD, because none but a GOD could so love; none therefore but a GOD could so fight, and so conquer.

And would we see the *proofs* of this Divine victory? Let us turn our eyes to the MIGHTY CONQUEROR asserting, by His resurrection from the dead, His full and complete power over death and hell, and all the enemies of our salvation. Would we behold further the *fruits* of His Divine triumph? Let us view Him finally in His ascension glory, exalted to the most intimate union with His FATHER, and thus keeping heaven for ever open in His Divine Person to the penitent and the faithful who come unto Him. Let us view

Him, I say, and let us also hear Him, from the throne of His glory, pronouncing these Divine words of power, of consolation, and of life to all His pious followers, "*Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and on all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*" (Luke x. 19.)

To conclude—We have thus seen that the redemption accomplished by the SON OF GOD was a *complicated* work, consisting of several *particular* and *distinct* operations, which together constituted the *whole* of the stupendous plan and its effects.

Let us learn then from henceforth to regard this astonishing, this DIVINE ACT in all its *parts*, that so we may gain the complete, the edifying idea of what so much concerns us to be *fully* acquainted with.

And here let me put you upon your guard against that *partial* and *limited* view of this grand design, with which too many Christians alas! sit down contented. The SON OF GOD, they say, has shed His precious blood, and laid down His precious life for our sins, and thus satisfied His FATHER'S justice, and reconciled us unto an offended God. They see therefore nothing more in the *work* of redemption than the shedding of

CHRIST'S blood, and nothing more of it's *effects*, than what they call the satisfaction of the FATHER'S justice.

But, beloved, permit me to observe, that this, as I said, is a *partial* and *limited* view of the subject, which by no means embraces the *whole*, or even the *principal parts* that constitute the whole. For, according to this view, nothing at all is seen of JESUS CHRIST either as an *instructor*, as an *example*, as a *combatant*, or as a *conqueror*, and yet it is plain from what has been said, that all these *several* characters enter into and form the one grand and complete character of the GREAT REDEEMER.

Would we then come out of such *narrow* and *contracted* apprehension of the MIGHTY SAVIOUR and His works, so as to behold them in their *full*, their *extended* character and design? Let us then learn to view the work of redemption in all the *parts* of which we have been speaking, viz. as a work of *instruction*, of *example*, of *combat*, and of *victory*. Let us learn, I say, to apprehend in this work the infinite, the astonishing mercy of the MOST HIGH, Who required indeed satisfaction, before He could be reconciled to His offending creatures, but then it was the satisfaction of seeing them delivered from their offences, and

restored again to His own pure image and likeness : It was a satisfaction therefore which could not be attained by Him, until He Himself had made every possible exertion to save us by coming down Himself amongst us ; by teaching us the most sublime truths respecting Himself and His kingdom ; by practising those truths at the same time in His own person ; by entering into the most grievous and painful warfare against the enemies of our salvation ; and finally by glorifying the HUMAN NATURE which He had assumed, until it became completely One with the DIVINE from which it came forth, and was thus made the everlasting medium of our knowledge of and access to the DIVINE, which otherwise we could never either have known or approached.

And when we have thus contemplated the complete operation of that love which came to seek and save us, let us next consider how we may render it most effectual. Let us consider, I say, that the *instruction* even of a GOD cannot profit us, only so far as we study and comprehend it ; neither can His *example*, only as we follow it ; nor His *combats*, unless they lead us likewise to fight against our corruptions ; nor His *victories*, but by encouraging us also to conquer. For if we still persevere wilfully in our follies and our

transgressions, the labours of the REDEEMER, so far from being a blessing to us, will but add to our condemnation. But if we are wise to suffer our understandings to be opened by His WORD, and our conduct to be regulated by His EXAMPLE ; if we use the courage which He inspires, to fight against our vices, and suffer Him to conduct us through His combats to His victories ; we may then hope sooner or later to experience all that reconciliation, that redemption and salvation, which He came in such adorable mercy to procure for us ; and then we also, when we arrive at the happy termination of our spiritual labours, shall be enabled to exclaim to our unutterable joy, in His spirit and in His language, IT IS FINISHED.—
AMEN.

SERMON XXI.

(PREACHED ON EASTER DAY.)

THE DUTY AND BLESSEDNESS OF FORETHOUGHT.

MATT. xvi. 21. *From that time forth began JESUS to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.*

IT appears from these words, and from other similar passages in the evangelical history, that our BLESSED LORD not only foresaw His own *death* and *resurrection*, but that He was continually desirous to communicate the knowledge of those important events to all His followers. For in the history delivered by St. Matthew we find no less than three *express declarations* to this effect, not to mention a variety of hints and allusions to the same purpose, which make it most manifest how continually those grand objects occupied His own mind and attention, and also how earnest He was to impress them upon the minds and attentions of others.

And all this forethought was surely what might rightly and reasonably be expected from a **DIVINE UNDERSTANDING** and **COMPREHENSION**. For what can be righter or more reasonable than to look into futurity, so far as any one is able to discover what is involved in it? It is a certain proof either of a weak or of a perverse mind, to confine it's views to *present* objects, and to look forward no further than to the concerns of the *present* day. A man of a strong judgment, and of an enlightened piety, is never thus contented with a *limited* prospect of events and contingencies. His extended eye takes a larger circuit of vision, and is not afraid of looking into the most remote ages. It penetrates even beyond the boundaries of time and sense, until it reaches the regions of the invisible, the eternal world. It connects the things which *are* with those which *will be*, the things which *perish* with those which are to *endure*. It sees that all things are hastening to some grand, some most interesting *end*, and it anticipates that *end*. Death therefore, resurrection, judgment, eternity, these are the vast objects which occupy a wise man's attention, that so he may grow familiar with them, and he deems it the most extreme folly not to endeavour to become well acquainted with things, which must so certainly come to pass, and

in which he is more deeply interested than in any other. Such is the temper, such is the forethought of every well-disposed and intelligent mind : Such therefore was the temper, such was the forethought of the **BLESSED JESUS**, because He was the **MOST PERFECT GOODNESS** and **INTELLIGENCE**.

It cannot be unsuitable to the sacred occasion of the high festival which we are met to commemorate, to dwell upon this instructive subject, and therefore I propose, in my following discourse, to press upon you the example of your **REDEEMER** in the above particulars, by pointing out the high reasonableness of accustoming ourselves to take a view of, so as to become familiar with, these two grand and certain objects,

1st. *Death*, or the putting off our present mortal bodies, and ceasing to exist any longer in the present world ;

2ndly. *Resurrection*, or our entrance into a new world, where we are to live for ever.

First then, I shall endeavour to show the reasonableness of our accustoming ourselves to a view of *death*, until we become familiar with an event, which is to terminate our existence in the present world.

I am well aware that in advancing and defending this position, I shall have to combat many pre-

judices, arising in the minds of those, whose continual labour it is to keep death out of sight, as much as lies in their power, and who insist, that the thought of such a calamity must necessarily overspread the mind with a perpetual gloom of melancholy and sadness, so as to dissipate all that cheerfulness and alacrity, which is expedient to make life comfortable, and to enable us to discharge it's duties.

And indeed, if this be a true representation of the effect of accustoming ourselves to a view of *death*, it must be allowed to be a very weighty argument against such a habit; for what can be conceived to be either more unreasonable, or more unchristian, than to be always melancholy and sad?

But the question is—Is it a necessary effect of a view of *death* to make man melancholy and sad? or rather, are not melancholy and sadness the natural and necessary consequences of our not becoming familiar with *death*? Let us take these questions into serious consideration, so as to give them their proper answer.

You say then, that the thought of death has a necessary tendency to make you sad and melancholy, and therefore you are determined to reject such thought as far as lies in your power. But have you ever considered, that, let your endeavours

to reject the thought of *death* be ever so vigorous and constant, it is not in your power to reject it? You may indeed strive against the thought, and may have recourse to a variety of dissipation to drive it away from your remembrance, and possibly you may succeed during the moments of dissipation: But the moments of dissipation, (you know as well as I can tell you) are not eternal, and must sooner or later be succeeded by moments of recollection, and then, what will you have gained by your dissipation? Alas! instead of having dispelled the thought of *death*, you will find it recur with a thousand times more force and terror, than before. Every passing-bell that you hear will but add to your alarm and to your misery; so that the very pains you take to expel the thought of *death*, so far from answering your purpose, will but sharpen it's sting.

The truth of the case therefore is plainly this. *Death* is so great, so unavoidable a certainty; it is so closely connected with the condition and circumstances of human nature; that it is absolutely out of our power to dispel the thought of it. If we do not admit the reflection *willingly*, we must admit it *against our will*. If we do not make it a *pleasure* and a *profit* to us to think of death, we must then be content to think of it *with pain*, and

without profit. And which, let me ask, is the more *sad* and *melancholy* thought, that which is *agreeable to our inclinations*, or that which is *forced upon us*; that which is *beneficial* and *blessed* to us, or that which is *otherwise*? Let every one's own impartial judgment determine these questions.

There is nothing then *necessarily* melancholy in the thought of death; it is only a melancholy thought to those who do not become familiar with it, by thinking of it *willingly* and *wisely*, according to the spirit and the temper of true religion. For if death be thought of, as it ever ought to be, under the influence of religious love and religious hope, so far from being a source of gloominess and sorrow, it presents a prospect of the brightest consolations. For it is well to be noted, no painful, no tormenting affections whatsoever originate in the thought of death. Their origin is manifestly from sin, which the thought of death has a direct tendency to destroy; and therefore it is an eternal law, that every one must be sad and sorrowful until sin be extirpated in him, by a sincere conversion to God, but so soon as ever sin is extirpated, then sadness and sorrow give place to the blessed affections of heavenly joy and consolation, and man recovers that proper, that holy, that only permanent cheerfulness, which comes from God, and makes him God's happy child and servant.

Behold here then the true reasonableness and high wisdom of becoming familiar with the thoughts of *death!* This familiarity leads immediately to the destruction of the empire of sin and sinful affections, and thereby of all our miseries. In proportion as we open our eyes to views beyond the grave, we become less the slaves of our passions and our corruptions. The spirit and power of religious love and religious joy begin then to dawn upon our minds, and enlightening us with new light from above, enable us to make the true estimate of goods and evils. The comparative *littlenesses* of the things of this world are thus seen in their proper size, and we become affected as we ought to be with the superior *greatness* and *grandeur* of the things of the world to come. Death, in the mean time, which is so terrible to the thoughtless, assumes in our enlightened view a new and different aspect, being seen no longer under the form of a calamity, but of a comfort ; not as an enemy and a destroyer, but as a friend and preserver. Thus by accustoming our minds to view the passage which is to conduct us out of time into eternity, we grow wiser and better by the prospect, and so far from looking at it with dismay, we learn at length to regard it as what it really is, to the true Christian, the termination of his sorrows, and the commencement of his purest joys.

But this will more plainly appear from considering, as was 2ndly proposed, not only the reasonableness of becoming familiar with death, or the cessation of our life in this world, but the further reasonableness of becoming familiar with the *resurrection state*, which is to succeed death, when we are to enter into a new world, and there take up our eternal abodes. This latter view indeed ought ever to be connected with the former, because they are properly *one*, inasmuch as a departure out of this world implies an entrance into another, and therefore we find that our BLESSED LORD always *conjoins* them, and when He speaks of His *decease*, He speaks at the same time of His *resurrection*.

Nothing can be more consolatory, nothing more animating than the prospects of futurity presented to the view of Christians. And (adored be the mercy and the miracle which distinguish this sacred day!) nothing too can be more *certain*, nothing *established on surer foundations*, than those blessed prospects.

For behold (what the solemnity of this day presents so directly to our view)—behold, I say, a RISING GOD, asserting His Divine power over *death* and the *grave*, opening the gates of eternal life to all His followers, and proclaiming aloud to

the penitent and the sincere, *Because I live, ye shall live also.*

There is then from henceforth a sure and a blessed kingdom prepared for the faithful in the regions of eternity. Death and the grave, so far from proving our destruction, are but the appointed ways to conduct us to that kingdom. JESUS CHRIST has gone the way before us, and lo ! from the throne of His glory, He is continually inviting us to follow him ; because He is continually saying, *Come unto ME, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* (Matt. xi. 28.) And again, *To him that overcometh will I give to sit with ME on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set with my FATHER on His throne.* (Rev. iii. 21.)

Such then are the *resurrection glories* presented to our view ; such are the *confirmed certainties* of another world, and of our inconceivable interests in it's vast realities.

Who then cannot see the high reasonableness of giving to these things his serious thought, his most deliberate attention, and warmest affection ? because who cannot see, that these things belong to us, and become ours, only so far as we *attend to*, and are *affected* by them ? The beasts which perish have no such inheritance prepared beyond

the grave ; and this is the reason why they are incapable of looking into futurity, neither have they faculties to enjoy the delights of heaven. But what, let me ask, is the difference between us and them, if we, who have capacities and faculties for such enjoyment and forethought, never exercise them ? Surely in this case we cease to be men, and degrade ourselves even below the brute creation. For what is it which properly constitutes us men, and distinguishes us from the inferior animals ? Is it not the power and the privilege by which we can respect a God, His KINGDOM, and our own eternal connection with both ? If then we forget this connection ; if we never accustom ourselves to think of the GREAT and GLORIOUS God and His KINGDOM for which we were created, where is then the distinction we boast of, or what are we more than the beasts ?

And yet it is an awful truth, that if we are not well upon our guard against our corruptions, against the trifling cares, the little interests, and the delusive pleasures of the perishable world which we at present inhabit, they will darken in an instant all our views of futurity ; they will tempt us to forego all our greatness and glory ; they will extinguish all the bright lights of heaven to us ; so that we shall see nothing but uncertainties, and

being distracted with doubts and fears, between the revelation of **GOD** and our own infidelity, between the stableness of the **ETERNAL TRUTH** and the fickleness of our own judgments, we shall live wretched lives, and die deaths even more miserable than the beasts, because we shall die under the anguishing reflection that we have forfeited heaven by our folly, and plunged ourselves into eternal ruin by our thoughtlessness.

But (praised be the **GOD** of our salvation) it is in the power of every one of us, if we are so disposed, to escape the horrors of such condemnation, and attain unto the blessed light of wisdom, and the unutterable consolations of mercy. Let us only be wise, by a vigorous repentance and faith, to keep our eyes ever open to a **RISING GOD**, and our ears to the heavenly language which His *resurrection* speaks. Let us thus never lose sight of our future destination. Let us exert the faculties with which we are gifted, to think above the transitory things of this world, which we are so soon to leave, by contemplating, so as to be affected by, the enduring things of eternity. Let us connect this world with the other, and never forget that that other is the world, where all our true treasure, where all our proper grandeur awaits us. A man who is heir to a great estate, in this world,

is never satisfied, until he has examined well its titles and securities. A man too, who is born to earthly dignity and distinction, is careful to keep his high birth in remembrance, and to act accordingly. But what are all the possessions and the honours of this world, when compared with an inheritance in heaven, with the glory that shall be revealed? Be it then our wisdom, as it is our happiness, both to examine well our title to eternal bliss, and to act up also to the high dignity which it confers upon us: And let it no longer be said, on this or any other occasion, that *the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.*

Then shall we find that the powers, the certainties, the consolations of the world to come will gain every day greater strength, and operate with a more prevailing, a more sanctifying influence on our minds and lives. We shall be *no longer doubtful but believing.* Our faith will rest, not on the unstable foundations of conjecture, or on the visionary ideas of uncertain speculation, but on *fact*, on the incontrovertible fact of the *resurrection* of the SON OF GOD. For whilst we behold the RISING JESUS, we shall see a living experimental demonstration of the existence of His kingdom, and of

our own immortality : And connecting ourselves by faith and love with that MIGHTY CONQUEROR of *death* and the *grave*, we shall perceive the gates of heaven ever opened to us, and the vail rent asunder, which before separated between this world and another. Thus, even during our abode in the flesh, *mortality* will in some degree *be swallowed up of life*, even the ever blessed life of the knowledge and love of the MOST HIGH GOD. And thus too, being convinced of our close conjunction with an eternal world, it's vast realities, it's blessed inhabitants, and it's DIVINE AUTHOR, we shall be enabled to fulfil all our Christian duties to the best advantage in this world, because we shall be *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the LORD*, for this most prevailing of all reasons, *because we know that our labour will not be in vain in the LORD.*—AMEN.



SERMON XXII.

(PREACHED ON EASTER DAY.)

THE IMMORTALITY OF MAN PROVED BY THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

JOHN xiv. latter part of 19th verse. *Because I live, ye shall live also.*

THERE are two things concerning which it is of the utmost concern to man to be fully satisfied in his own mind : The *first* is, that he is to live after death ; the *second* is, that he may live happy after death. These two things, I say, ought to engage the most serious attention and consideration of every reasonable being, because until his belief in these things is well-grounded, it is impossible for him to attain unto any degree of solid peace and comfort here below. Even supposing that he entertains *a doubt* on these points, how must that doubt enter into and corrode all his worldly enjoyments ! For how is it possible that a man should be happy a single moment of his life, when he does not know but that that moment may be the last of his existence ! It may be said perhaps, that

he may banish such doubts from his recollection, and may thus enjoy his temporal delights without alarm or interruption. But let us consider, is this possible? Is it possible, I say, or is there any instance upon record in the history of man, of any human being who could totally annihilate the thoughts of futurity? Rather, are not such thoughts engrafted in our very essence as men? Do not they make a part of our very constitutions? To attempt then to annihilate such thoughts, is to attempt to un-make ourselves; and yet to think of being happy whilst those thoughts are *unsettled*, or, what is the same thing, whilst we are *unsatisfied* and *fluctuating* about our future views, is a thing equally unreasonable and inconsistent with our peace.

I have been led into these reflections from the words of my text, because those words contain a full and positive declaration, from the highest possible authority, that we are to live after death. And I have chosen those words for the subject of our *present* consideration, because of their close connection with the blessed, the glorious event, by which this holy day is so eminently distinguished. For when JESUS CHRIST rose from the dead, He demonstrated by fact the truth and reality of the *first* part of His assertion, *Because I live*; and

he thus gave the most convincing proof also, that He had power to accomplish the *second* part, *Ye shall live also.*

Permit me then, from these words of the GREAT REDEEMER, thus confirmed and enforced by the festival which we are met to celebrate, to call your attention to the sublime truths which they announce, by endeavouring to show from them these two things ;

1st. That JESUS CHRIST Who once died, is *now alive* ; and

2dly. That in consequence of His being *alive*, we also shall *live after death.*

First then, we learn from the words of JESUS CHRIST in my text, that although He once died, yet HE *is now alive.*

It may perhaps seem to require an apology, for endeavouring to prove to a congregation of Christians, that JESUS CHRIST is *now alive*, since this great truth makes a part of the creed which we are taught daily to repeat and to believe.

But, beloved, permit me to intimate, that it is one thing to *repeat a truth in a creed*, and another thing to *believe it*, and therefore it by no means follows, that we believe JESUS CHRIST to be *now alive*, merely because our lips assent to

that doctrine, whilst we are rehearsing the articles of our Christian faith.

For to believe that **JESUS CHRIST** is now *alive*, implies these two things, 1st, that with our *understandings* we are fully convinced as to the fact of His resurrection from the dead, as it is stated in the Gospel; and 2ndly, that with our *wills* we are rightly affected by that fact.

And 1st. In order to believe that **JESUS CHRIST** is now *alive*, we ought to be fully convinced in our *understandings* as to the truth of the fact recorded in the Gospel, concerning His resurrection from the dead.

And here allow me to observe, that there never was any historical fact recorded, which was supported by better authority than this, or even by *equal* authority. Indeed it is a fact which was never controverted, except on the ground of evidence, which, one would think, the boldness of infidelity itself ought to be ashamed of: I mean the evidence of the soldiers appointed to guard the sepulchre, who said, or rather were suborned to say, *His disciples came by night, and stole Him away, while we slept*: (Matt. xxviii. 12, 13.) So that it appears, there is nothing but the testimony of a few men, who, by their own confession, were *asleep* at the time, to invalidate the fact of the

LORD's resurrection, and to oppose the testimony of so many who saw Him when they were *broad awake*.

For this consideration ought further to be attended to, that the BLESSED JESUS was seen after his resurrection, not by one or two of His Apostles only, but by them *all*; and not by His Apostles *alone*, but, as St. Paul testifies, by 500 *brethren besides*; and this not for the space of an hour or a day only, but during *forty* successive days, so that a full and sufficient time was allowed for the spectators to recollect themselves, and form a cool and deliberate judgment. It deserves further to be considered, that He was not only *seen* by them, but *conversed*, and did *eat* and *drink* with them; yea, and in one instance was *felt* also, as in the case of the *unbelieving Thomas*, who was confirmed in his wavering faith by putting his hand *into the prints of the nails*, and into the pierced *side* of His newly-risen LORD and MASTER. (John. xx. 24 to 30.)

We have then every evidence that we could wish for the conviction of our *understandings* respecting the fact of the resurrection of the dead body of the GREAT REDEEMER, insomuch that if we are so disposed, we may confirm it as fully as we can confirm any other fact whatsoever. We

may, I say, establish ourselves, beyond any possibility of doubt, in the belief of this most important truth, that there is a **DIVINE POWER** *superior to death*, which **DIVINE POWER** was once manifested in the resurrection of the dead body of **JESUS CHRIST**, so that that body, which was dead, became *alive* again, and is now *alive for evermore*.

But there is yet something else wanting, besides the mere conviction of our *understandings*, for our full confirmation in this faith, and that is, that our *wills* should be rightly affected by it.

For the *will*, we know, constitutes the principal part of ourselves, because the *will* is the same thing as our *love*; and therefore if our understandings *alone* be convinced of a truth, whilst our *wills* or our *loves* are unaffected by it, in this case we are but *half-convinced*, or rather perhaps we are *not convinced at all*, since daily experience teaches, that if a man *knows* a thing to be true, and doth not *love* that it should be true, his *love* will presently counteract his *knowledge*, and he will soon persuade himself that the thing is not true.

By the will being affected in the present instance, I would be understood to mean, that we *find a delight*, and a *supreme delight*, in believing that **JESUS CHRIST** is now *alive from the dead*. And since none can find such *delight*, but they

who depart from all sin, and endeavour to live such lives as are pleasing to God, therefore this also is implied in our wills being affected by the resurrection of JESUS from the dead.

Here then we see what is the *second* step for us to pursue, in order to attain a full and satisfactory conviction of this great evangelical truth, that JESUS CHRIST is *now alive*. We must endeavour to make it our *delight*, and our *supreme delight*, to believe this truth. For this purpose, we must be careful to live good lives, by rejecting whatsoever is contrary to JESUS CHRIST, to His life and His gospel. We must thus attach ourselves to that RISEN GOD, until, by the joys arising from that attachment; by the power which we thence derive over our corruptions; by the order, the peace, the heavenly consolation which are thence infused into our lives; we are convinced that He is and *lives*, just as a man, who is made sensible of the sun's refreshing light and warmth, and how he is thereby preserved continually from darkness and cold, is fully convinced, and wants no argument to confirm the conviction, that it is the sun, and therefore that the sun exists. Our faith will then be fixed and permanent, because it will be the faith of our whole man, of our *wills*, as well as of our *understandings*; whereas, if it be the faith of

our understandings *only*, we shall first believe and then disbelieve, since, as was above observed, what we principally *love* and *delight* in, is sure in the end to influence all our persuasions.

And here we may discover, perhaps, the true reason, why so few even amongst Christians at this day are fully persuaded of this great evangelical truth, that **JESUS CHRIST** is *now alive*, and *the Fountain of all life*, in heaven. It is not because they want evidence to convince their *understandings* of the truth of this fact, for the evidence in this case is as striking and as convincing, as that the sun shines at noon-day. But the true cause of their unbelief, it is to be feared, is this ; that they do not *wish* it to be so ; in other words, they do not live in such a manner as to *find a delight* and an *interest* in thinking about **JESUS CHRIST**, and **HIS ETERNAL LIFE** and **KINGDOM**, but rather in such a manner, as to make them afraid of all such thought and sentiment. What wonder then that they do not believe, when their transgressions plunge them into such an abyss of defilement and darkness, that they do not *love* to believe ! For “ *Every one that doeth evil hateth the light ; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d.*” [John iii. 20.]

But 2ndly.—We learn from the words of my text, not only that JESUS CHRIST is now *alive*, but also, that in consequence of His being alive, we also shall live after death—*Because I live, ye shall live also.*

It may seem again to require an apology, for attempting to prove so plain a proposition, a proposition too, which every Christian is taught perpetually to repeat in his creed, and the truth of which he imbibes with his mother's milk.

But, beloved, permit me again to observe, that it is not the plainness of a proposition, nor yet the daily repetition of it in a creed, which can ensure it's belief; and that if our faith in a future life has not better ground than this to stand upon, we shall be found in the day of trial to have no such faith.

For the simple truth of the case is this—A wicked and impenitent man, whatsoever he may suppose to the contrary, has no firm and fixed belief in another life. I say *a firm and fixed belief*, because he has indeed some ideas or sentiments respecting a future state, which he mistakes for belief, although in reality they amount to no more than a wavering, unsettled and painful apprehension. For did he truly and firmly believe in a future life, it would be impossible for him, from

that moment, to be a wicked and impenitent man any longer ; because it is absolutely impossible for any man to act in contradiction to his own favourite and settled principles ; and if a belief in a future life was such a principle in him, he could no more live any longer in wilful sin, than he could contradict himself.

It is necessary then, if we would become true believers in an eternal life and an eternal world, that we endeavour to confirm our belief in these great objects by something more than the repetition of a creed. And since all confirmation of spiritual truths, as was above hinted, applies itself principally to our *understandings* and to our *wills*, inasmuch as these two faculties form what we call ourselves, therefore, in order to attain a right faith in our own resurrection from the dead, as well as in the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST, we ought to labour to convince ourselves of the certainty of this truth in both these faculties of our minds.

And adored be the eternal mercy of our God, which has not left us to fluctuate in the miserable uncertainty of doubt and conjecture on this most important and interesting subject ! Adored, I say, be the eternal mercy of our God, which has supplied us with an indefinite store, if we are disposed to make use of it, of the most satisfactory

and convincing evidence, respecting our immortal and everlasting destination, applicable both to our *understandings* and to our *wills*!

For do we wish to be convinced, as to our *understandings*, that *this corruptible shall put on incorruption*? The revelation of GOD, in every page of it, will help us to this conviction, because the revelation of GOD, in every page of it, testifies to the existence of another world, and thus to the truth of this assertion of JESUS CHRIST, *Because I live, ye shall live also*. Our own reason likewise, if we would consult it, will confirm to us the same blessed truth, because our own reason, in being able to look forward to eternity, and especially in being able to *delight in* such a prospect, demonstrates that we were made for eternity, otherwise why should we have any capacity of thinking about it, any more than the brute creatures have? But it is not reason *only*, nor is it revelation *only*, which establishes this conviction of our immortality. To confirm to us this important truth beyond the possibility of a doubt, it has pleased the ALMIGHTY to prove it even to our *senses* by the resurrection of the dead body of JESUS CHRIST.

Do we wish further to be convinced of our immortality, as to our *wills*, as well as our *understandings*? Let us then be careful to live good

lives, by endeavouring to do the will of our HEAVENLY FATHER, and we shall then find that conviction growing stronger and stronger every day, because we shall every day feel a *greater delight* and *interest* in it. Whilst indeed we continue to live thoughtlessly, with our best affections immersed in the mere concerns of this world, it's gain, it's glory, and it's pleasures; and especially if we plunge into crimes, which are in opposition to the LAW and the LIFE of GOD, it will be impossible for us to attain unto this blessed conviction in our wills, because in that case it will be rather a *torment* than a *satisfaction* to us to think of another world. But so soon as ever we begin to live like rational creatures, by respecting the LAW and the LIFE of our GREAT CREATOR, from that moment the thoughts of eternity will become *dear* to us; from that moment therefore we shall be convinced of our immortality by an evidence even superior to that of our *bodily senses*. For our bodily senses, as they frequently do in other points, so they may deceive us in this; but the fear and the love and the truth of GOD, which will then be the ground of our convictions, cannot deceive us. If then we make it our principal concern to cherish that holy fear and love and truth in our minds, and to form our lives accordingly, our faith in our immortal

destination will be fixed on a rock. For we shall then feel the *peculiar*, the *full* force of those words of our REDEEMER, *Because I live, ye shall live also*; inasmuch as forming our lives according to His life, our love according to His love, and thus being conjoined with Him in the bonds of a mutual and consequently an indestructible affection, we shall be enabled to testify with the Apostle, and say, *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.* [Rom. viii. 38, 39.]

To conclude—We have seen, from what has been said, that our belief in another world, and in our eternal connection with it, will depend principally upon ourselves.

I say our *belief* in another world will depend upon ourselves, but not the *existence* of another world, for the existence of another world is altogether independent of our belief or our unbelief, inasmuch as it is an eternal truth, unconnected with our persuasions, that JESUS CHRIST *lives*, that there is a heaven and that there is a hell, and that we ourselves must take up our everlasting

abodes hereafter, either in the happinesses of the one, or in the miseries of the other.

It is not then what we think about these great objects, that can affect either their existence or their importance. The infidel may amuse himself even with ridiculing these things, but his ridicule can no more move the BEING and KINGDOM of JESUS CHRIST, than it can shake the sun in the heavens. The profligate, in like manner, may live unconcerned about an eternal world, but his unconcern is only a miserable proof of his own folly—it is no proof at all that there is no other world which demands his concern.

But although what we think about another world is of no importance with respect to the existence of that world, yet it is surely of the first importance with regard to ourselves. It is of the first importance, I say, to ourselves, that we should believe that JESUS CHRIST *lives*, and that we also shall live after death, either in eternal happiness or misery; for if we do not believe these great truths, we cease to be men, and degrade ourselves even below the condition of beasts; we exercise upon ourselves the most atrocious cruelty, by plucking out our own eyes, and destroying our best hope, the source alike of every virtuous energy, and of every holy consolation.

And here let me put you upon your guard against that terrible infection of principle, which, under the name of philosophy, is at this day begun to desolate the Christian world, by adopting the old impiety, which maintained, *there is no resurrection of the dead*. That such an infection prevails at this day, there can be no doubt. That a disbelief in a future state of existence is gaining ground amongst us, there is too much reason to apprehend. That perhaps there never was a time, since the creation of mankind, when the great realities of the invisible world did so little affect human minds, as the present, I most sincerely wish could be proved not true.

What remedy then shall we apply against this baneful infection? What barrier shall we set against this desolating, this destructive persuasion, which, if once admitted into our minds, annihilates in an instant all the consolations of Christian hope and the exertions of Christian virtue? There is no barrier can be set; there is no remedy can be found, but in the grand, the miraculous event which distinguishes this day, I mean the *resurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead*. Let us then endeavour to confirm this event both in our *wills* and in our *understandings* by all possible means. Let us learn to *believe* it, and for this purpose, to

delight in believing it, because until we *delight* in it, we shall not believe it. With this view, let us be careful to live good lives, to shun all sin, looking upwards to that *risen* God for the grace to do so, and thereby to please Him, because the more we look upwards to JESUS CHRIST with a desire to please Him, the more we shall be delighted with the view of His resurrection glory ; and the more we taste of this delight, so much the more shall we be convinced of the truth, and be made sensible of the consolation of His blessed words, *Because I live, ye shall live also.*—AMEN.

SERMON XXIII.

(PREACHED ON EASTER SUNDAY.)

THE SURPRISE EXCITED AT THE FUTURE RESURRECTION.

1 CORINTH. xv. part of the 52nd verse. *For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

THE great occasion of our present festival calls us to considerations of the highest moment, respecting our eternal well-being. For when we behold the REDEEMER of the world bursting the bonds of death, and by his resurrection asserting his Divine power over the enemies which He came to conquer, the solemn event naturally leads us to look forward to a similar one, which is to take place with ourselves. It brings therefore to our view that awful moment, when we also are to enter into another state of existence ; when the concerns of time are to cease, and those of eternity are to have their commencement ; when *mortality shall be swallowed up of life*, and ourselves, with all the families of

the earth, are to appear more immediately before God.

How infinitely interesting are certainties like these ! How comparatively trifling to an immortal spirit must every other consideration appear, that is not in some degree of connection with such grand events !

Let us then endeavour to improve the present holy season by cherishing the reflections which it has a tendency to excite. A traveller, who is about to journey to a distant country, where he is to settle for life, will naturally be inquisitive about that country, about it's inhabitants, it's laws, and it's customs, and will transport his thoughts thither, long before he reaches it with his body. The Christian traveller, in like manner, who really believes in the heavenly country towards which he is directing his course, must of necessity be alike inquisitive respecting it, and by the earnestness of his enquiries, will take possession of the promised land with his mind, although his body is compelled still to sojourn in a distant clime.

Be this our present wisdom ! For a moment let us shut our eyes to the things of time ; let us bid adieu to the concerns of the present life ; let us anticipate the great day of our resurrection into

the eternal world ; for why should not we accustom ourselves to detach our thoughts from this earth, which we are so soon to leave, and send them before us to that eternal land whither we are so soon to follow them, to live for ever ?

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Let us imagine that we hear the trumpet *already* sound ; let us fancy we see the dead *already* raised, and ourselves amongst the number of those who are *already changed*. The eye of faith is gifted with a sort of prophetic sight, which, whilst it takes a view of futurity, at once demonstrates it's Divine origin, and edifies and blesses it's possessor.

But what is it that so much excites our surprise at entering first upon our new state of existence ? We seem to wonder that we are still alive, and even *more* alive than in the world which we have left ; that our wills are more vigorous, our thoughts more active, and our knowledge more extended : We are astonished also at our *new bodies*, and that they are complete and perfect as our bodies of flesh and blood ; that we can see, and hear, and taste, and smell, and converse as before : But we are yet more amazed at the objects which surround us ; at the various realities with

which we find ourselves encompassed ; at the beautiful, the wonderful works of GOD, which present themselves to our view : at the numberless associate spirits who accompany and hold converse with us.

But whence is it, I say, that we are so much surprised at these things ? Alas ! it is plain we had heretofore never fully believed in another world, neither had we believed fully, that when we left this world, we were to rise again, and live in the next life in bodies, as in this. For had we fully believed in another world, we must certainly have believed that it contained varieties of objects and of inhabitants, at least as numerous and as real as this world, both worlds being alike the creation of the all-wise GOD : And had we believed fully that we were to rise again and live with bodies in that world, we must needs have believed further, that those bodies had senses, and that those senses were as much more perfect than the senses of our present bodies, as that which is spiritual is more perfect than that which is natural ; for *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.* [1 Cor. xv. 42, 43, 44.]

But let us attend more minutely to what presents itself to our view in this new state of existence.

If we examine closely we shall discover, that although all are surprised more or less at their entrance into the eternal world, yet the surprise is very different in different persons; and that in general it may be distinguished into two kinds, viz. a *surprise of sorrow*, and a *surprise of joy*.

For behold the countenances of those men who are just now arrived out of the world of time, and observe the features of anguish and of dissatisfaction with which they are deformed. You ask what it is that makes them uneasy? Alas! they are reflecting with horror on the spirit of unbelief in which they passed the few days and years they had to live in this world. They now wonder what could have infatuated them, that they should have been so blind to the realities of the eternal world. Their wonder and their horror are increased from the consideration, that in the WORD OF GOD they had received the fullest assurances of being raised again hereafter to everlasting life. But these assurances they had either not attended to, or had despised: They tremble therefore to think, that they had “*laid up treasures for themselves only upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt,*

“ *and where thieves break through and steal,*” but that they had made no provision for that eternal world upon which they are now entered : They tremble to think further, that although God had forewarned them of this folly, when He said, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall these things be, which thou hast provided,* [Luke xii. 20.] yet they had been so exceedingly wicked and thoughtless, as not to believe this weighty testimony of the MOST HIGH.

But behold that other company, in whose countenances also you discover much of amazement, mixed with the keenest affliction ! What is the ground of their sorrow ? Alas ! during their short abode upon earth, they had imposed on themselves and others by appearances of religious belief and religious obligation, which were destitute of all substance and reality. They had made a semblance of serving God, but without sincerity : They had made a semblance of loving their neighbour, but their love of their neighbour was only a more refined love of themselves ; they had loved him, for the sake of favour, of convenience and worldly reputation, not from the genuine principle of Gospel charity : They are therefore now astonished and confounded at discovering, that they can no

longer carry on the imposition : For in this new world into which they are entered, appearance and deceit, they find, cannot be assumed. All must be genuine ; all must be open ; agreeable to the declaration of the GOD of that world, *There is nothing covered which shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known.* (Matt. x. 26.) Their torment therefore, as well as their surprise, is grounded in this necessity, that they are forced to discover all their most secret defiled purposes and thoughts : They can no longer conceal what they are, either their vices or their follies : Their insincerity towards GOD and their neighbour manifests itself even in the form of their bodies and in their very countenances, so that in them is awfully fulfilled the terrible warning of GOD to Jerusalem by his prophet, “ *Because thou hast forgotten ME, and trusted in falsehood, therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear.*” (Jer. xiii. 25, 26.)

But lo ! a third company presents itself, and they also with looks of amazement and dejection ! You enquire into the cause of their sorrow, and are equally amazed with them to find that they had been foolish enough in the world to delude themselves with the groundless idea, that after death they might be admitted into heaven, without

any regard to their former life. Some of them had supposed that death itself would effect some great change in them for the better, and that in putting off their earthly bodies, they should put off at the same time all their corrupt propensities, all their bad passions, their unsanctified affections and thoughts. But how are they astonished and confounded at the discovery, that death makes no such change ! that he, who dies in the defilements of sin, rises again in the same defilements ! and that for this plain reason, because death cannot affect the spirit of man ; it only affects his earthly body by removing it, and therefore his spirit must of necessity remain after death, such as it was before, in heavenly love, if it had been heavenly, but in defiled and earthly love, if it had been of this description, according as it is written, *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still : And he that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still.* (Rev. xxii. 11.)

Others of them had flattered themselves with the vain imagination, that at or after death it would be time enough to supplicate the Divine grace and favour, and that if they then offered up devout prayers to God, they should instantly be heard, have their requests granted, and the door of heaven

opened. But what is their surprise and confusion, when they hear those words of the HEAVENLY BRIDEGROOM, which they had often heard in the former world without attending to them, *Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, LORD, LORD, open to us; but he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not!* [Matt. xxv. 11, 12,]

Such is *the surprise of sorrow* observable in too many instances at the resurrection into the eternal world.

But there is also *a surprise of joy*, and I am persuaded you will be delighted to notice it with me. Turn then your eyes to that company of sincere Christians, who have lately finished their earthly pilgrimage, and are just risen from the dead to be received into the mansions of eternal rest and peace. In their looks also you behold an expression of astonishment, but it is the astonishment of finding that their bliss infinitely surpasses every thing they could have conceived. They had believed indeed, during their abode upon earth, that they should live after death, and if found worthy, should be received into the habitations of the just; but their belief they now see realised beyond their most sanguine expectations, and that it is true what is written, *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,*

neither have entered into the heart of man the things which GOD hath prepared for them that love Him.

But let us examine these happy ones more particularly. It is a circumstance which more especially distinguishes the other world from this, that in that world nothing can be concealed, but all things are made manifest. This is remarkably the case in those blessed believers before our eyes. From their countenances we discern what had been the temper and spirit of their lives here on earth. They had not, like those deluded ones whom we have just seen—they had not, I say, at any time forgotten this place of their final destination. They had not suffered any temporal vanity, any false glory, or false happiness of this world, to blind their eyes to the persuasion that they were to live for ever. They had believed the WORD OF GOD, and in conformity to such belief, their whole lives here on earth had been a constant preparation for immortality. *They fought the good fight of faith, and laid hold on eternal life.*

For observe and mark in their now glorified bodies that *eternal life* on which *they laid hold!* It is their inconceivable bliss to have attained to the heavenly spirit of pure love towards GOD and charity towards their neighbour. Whilst they lived

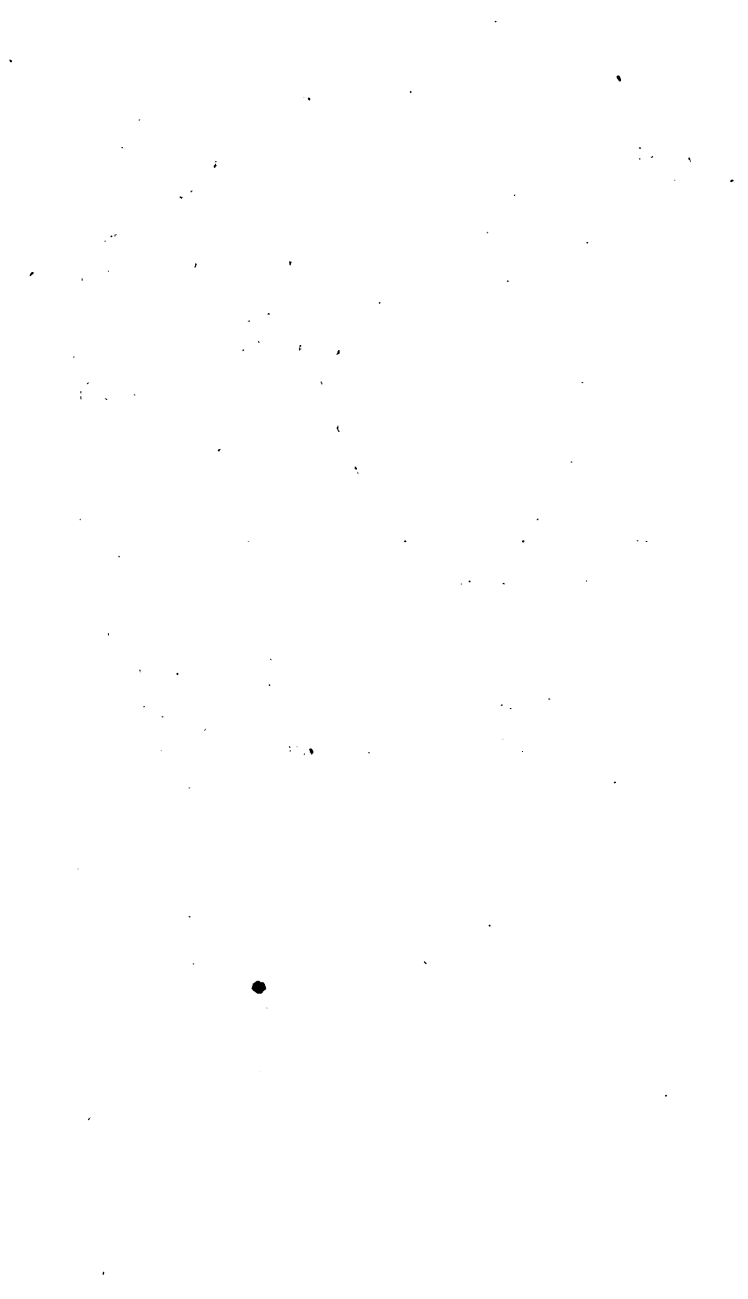
here on earth, this was the end of all their prayers, of all their praises, of all their mortifications and religious duties, to remove from their hearts the defiled love of themselves and of the world, that they might be born again of a pure, a blessed and a God-like love. They were well assured, that this death unto sin and new birth unto righteousness constitute the sum and substance of the Gospel spirit and design. In their religion therefore there was no deceit ; nothing like pretence, imposition or insincerity : All in them was real and true, because all was upright before GOD, and it was the inmost, the constant purpose of their hearts and lives to become his new-born children, and thereby attain the fulness of the promised blessing, where it is written, *To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of GOD, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD,* (John i. 12.)

These faithful ones therefore had not deceived themselves with the vain idea, that eternal life might be attained after death, without any regard to their works in this world, but they had remembered their LORD's words where He says, *The night cometh when no man can work.* Under the persuasion of this truth, they had wrought out their

salvation during the day of grace. They had laboured, through the influence of that DIVINE SPIRIT which they knew was continually supplied to the faithful—they had laboured, I say, to remove all the defilements of corrupt nature, to subdue every evil propensity, bad passion, and disorderly affection, that they might be renewed in the whole mind, and temper and 'spirit of their GREAT REDEEMER. And behold the success of their labours! That GREAT REDEEMER now welcomes them as His own; He beholds in them and delights to behold, His own image and likeness; He acknowledges them for His beloved children, and receives them to Himself with the infinitely blessed salutation, *Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your LORD.*

To conclude—At that solemn hour towards which we are fast hastening, when we also must every one of us rise again in the eternal world, may the *surprise of sorrow* not be our's, but may we experience the contrary *surprise of joy*! For this purpose, may it be our present wisdom to keep that world in remembrance! May we never forget the very slight partition that even at this moment separates us from it! Above all, may we take heed that our daily practice be consistent with our belief; in other words, that we live so as

we shall wish we had done when we put off our present bodies ; in such heavenly tempers and dispositions, such pure thoughts and good works, as may form and fix in us the life of heaven ! In short, may we learn to be sincere, to shun all imposture, all pretence, all inconsistency, in a matter of such infinite moment ! Then will our GOD be with us of a truth, and by His GOOD SPIRIT will renew us in His own image, His own likeness, and His own life. And then, when *this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality*, we also may hope to be received into the eternal mansions of peace with that happy welcome, *Come ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*—AMEN.



SERMON XXIV.

THE SURPRISE EXCITED AT THE FUTURE RESURRECTION.

I CORINTH. xv. part of the 52nd verse. *For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

IN a former discourse on these words, we have pursued some of the grand reflections which they are calculated to excite in the serious mind. We have anticipated that awful time when the predictions which they contain are to be accomplished, and when we ourselves, with all the families of the earth, are to enter upon the great realities of another world. We have taken a view, by the eye of faith, of the surprise which that period will occasion amongst persons of different characters and tempers, and have seen how this surprise will be the surprise either of joy or of sorrow, according as that period has been expected or unexpected, provided for or disregarded, during the abode of men in this world.

May I be permitted to call you again to these edifying contemplations, and for this purpose to invite you to take your stations again in the world of departed spirits, to see by the eye of faith what is transacting there ! May I be permitted to lead you once more out of this lower orb of time, to ascend into the regions of eternity ; to quit the valley of trouble, of vanity and of disorder, that in a more elevated station you may be the better enabled to scrutinize and be affected by the concerns of immortality. Experience teaches that in taking a survey even of this world, the higher we ascend, the further we can see : Let this circumstance instruct us, that in regard to our spiritual and eternal interests, if we wish to attain enlarged and extended views, we must elevate our thoughts occasionally out of the lower things of time and sense, and take advantage of the boundless prospect which will thereby be presented to our astonished eyes.

But what is it which now forces itself upon our notice and observance in this elevated station amongst departed spirits ? Behold ! the same most solemn and interesting scene continually transacting, which was seen of old by the beloved Apostle St. John, when his eyes were opened to a view of the invisible world ! Behold, I say, the

affecting scene which he thus describes, "*I saw the dead small and great stand before God ; and the books were opened ; and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*" [Rev. xx. 12.]

How awfully affecting are these words ! and how great must be the astonishment of those, who have often read and heard them in this world, and yet never have attended to their weighty import, till their attention is excited by becoming themselves the immediate subjects of their terrible fulfilment in the life to come !

But here I shall not attempt any description of a consternation, of which no language of man can possibly convey any adequate conception. For who shall pretend to delineate the anguishing feelings of those in another life, who, during their lives in this world had been regardless of the commands and of the promises of GOD ; who had sinned against the broad light of his ETERNAL TRUTH ; who had neglected thus the opportunity of securing the *crown of life* ; and all this, for the sake of a few momentary vanities, a few transitory pleasures, which, like the flowers of the field, withered and died as soon as they were born—

who, I say, shall pretend to draw a picture of the sensations of such, when they enter into the other world, and find that all is now true ; that it is now no dream, no spectre of the imagination, as they alas ! had flattered themselves ; but that in the most tremendous and positive certainty, all is realized ; because they now discover by experimental proof that they are to be *judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works ?*

Nevertheless, although words cannot describe the above sensations, neither perhaps would it answer any purpose, except of exciting horror, to describe them, yet the particular criminalities, which have tended to excite those sensations, will in part admit of description, and at the same time may be peculiarly edifying to notice.

Let us then fix our eyes attentively on that unhappy man just arrived from the world of Christians. Behold ! on opening the books, he is immediately found guilty, and receives the sentence of condemnation. We enquire into the cause of his sentence, and are the more surprised at it, when we learn, that he had neither committed murder, nor theft, nor adultery, nor any other notorious crime ; yea, he had even been distinguished for many apparent virtues ; he had

maintained a fair character in the world, and had passed amongst his acquaintance for a sober and orderly Christian. What then could be this man's great offence, that on *opening the books*, his name should not be found written in *the Book of Life*? Alas! It is now discovered, that through the whole of his past life here on earth, he never once had cherished a serious intention of pleasing GOD, by regarding Him in all his thoughts and actions, by devoting himself to His service, and labouring after that change and renovation of heart and life, through the DIVINE SPIRIT, to which all Christians are alike called in the Gospel. It is true; he had not been guilty of any heinous sins, because he was tender of his reputation; he feared the censures of men; he might suffer thus as to his worldly interests; but then he had never taught himself to abstain from crimes because they were criminal in the sight of GOD; he had never laboured to purify himself from sin through this heavenly, this only-availing motive: It is true again, he had done many apparently good actions, and had lived a life of external order and decency; but then, in so doing, it is now found, he had respected men more than GOD; he had never once attempted to fulfil the Apostolic precept where it is written, *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or*

whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. What wonder then that his name should not be found written in *the Book of Life*, when there was nothing of the Book of Life written in his *name*? in other words, when all his purposes, all his thoughts, all his actions, were without life, because they were without God?

But behold that other spirit, lately deceased also, in whose countenance likewise you see evident marks of the keenest anguish and disappointment! We again ask what is the cause of his trouble? And we discover it to be this, that his name is not found written in the Book of Life, any more than the former. We discover also that he feels the greater disappointment on the occasion, because he had flattered himself, during his life in the world, that when he came to die, he should be entitled to a distinguished place in the kingdom of heaven. For during his life in the world, it seems, he had thought, and read, and talked much about religion; he had even paid attention to some religious duties, he had frequented the public worship of God, and had been partaker of His sacraments. How then comes it to pass that he is not now found amongst *the living*? Alas! Unhappy and deluded man! he is now convinced to his shame, that although he had thought and

talked about religion, yet he had not been religious. The reason is, his religion had consisted merely in speculation and opinion and ceremony, but had never been applied to practise in the duties of life. He had repeated *creeds*, but he had not wrought *charity* : He had occasionally *frequented the church*, but then, on leaving the church, he left all his religion behind him there : For his ordinary tempers, ways of thinking, and ways of acting out of the church, had no manner of connection with religion. He had sometimes indeed said his prayers, but then it might be more properly called *saying his prayers*, than praying ; for in his prayers his heart was unmoved, his affections unchanged, his life unreformed. He had never in short once prayed in the true Christian spirit of repentance and conversion to God. The consequence was, like Moab of old, *his taste remained in him, and his scent was not changed* : In other words, all the evils of his corrupt nature had reigned without any disturbance from his religion ; he had continued proud and vain, covetous and discontented, envious and malicious, fretful and impatient, a lover of himself and of the world, as if he had never heard the sound of the Gospel ; and therefore he is now forced to yield to the terrible but everlasting sentence, “ *He that is*

“*unjust, let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.*” [Rev. xxii. 11.]

But behold a *third* example of the miserable folly and impiety of thoughtless men, in forgetting that great day, of which the mercy of God has so often fore-warned them, the day of judgment! For observe that young man, who had scarce lived half his days here on earth, when he was summoned by unexpected death to appear before God! *The books, you see, are opened,* and he retires trembling under the impression of the sentence which he hears pronounced, in these awful words, “*Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting.*” [Dan v. 27.] He enquires into the reason of this his sentence, and is thunder-struck when it is explained to him. For he learns, that what was *wanting*, in his own case, was a consequence of the unstableness of his principles, since, from the want of a sincere conversion to God, he had never deliberately fixed his mind in a firm belief concerning God, His word, His kingdom, and His providence. The effect was such as might reasonably be expected; *He had halted between two opinions*: Sometimes he had thought that God was to be implicitly believed; that His Word must certainly be true, His kingdom sure, and His providence to be de-

pended upon : At other times, the sentiments of the world prevailed, he forgot God and His law, and suffered himself to be governed only by the law of fashion, of custom, and of caprice. He was thus alternately *hot* and *cold*, one day fearing God, and the next day casting off his fear ; in some things obeying the precepts of the Gospel, but in other things rejecting them : Thus his true character was that of the *double-minded man*, described by the Apostle, of whom it is added, that *he is unstable in all his ways* : And it was in this state of instability, of indetermination, and of inconsistency, that death found him, and he was taken out of this world, to be convinced too late of his miserable folly.

Beloved, may we take warning from these unhappy examples here presented to our view ! And whilst the day of grace is our's ; whilst we have the blessed opportunity afforded us of making our peace with God, of supplicating his mercy, of reforming our tempers and lives through his spirit, of growing in his wisdom, and securing thus to ourselves the *rich inheritance of the saints in light*, let us take heed how we forego so great and blessed privileges, by our want of attention to their certainty and importance. It is a truth much to be deplored, but still I fear it is a truth, that

unstableness of principle ; indetermination of our wills in respect to God and things eternal ; a careless indifference about saving duties, which we should be ashamed to be guilty of, even in the common duties of life ; an indolent contentment under an external profession of religion, whilst our hearts and lives are destitute of it's power, and strangers to it's comforts ; a cold and formal reserve in our conduct towards God, which is satisfied with a *forced* service of him, but denies Him *the freewill offering* of a grateful and affectionate heart, entirely and willingly devoted to his service—it is, I say, much to be deplored, that whilst these inconsistencies appear to be the characteristic evils of the times in which we live, so they are evils which require a more peculiar watchfulness on our part, as the only security against their destructive influence. For other evils put us instantly on our guard by the alarm which they excite. We are struck, for instance, with immediate horror at the thought of committing murder, adultery, or theft, and this horror is the means of our protection. But to forget God, or to be cold in his service ; to be indifferent or to be remiss in the great work of our salvation ; to make a false estimate of the riches and requirements of the Divine mercy and grace which are presented to our

acceptance, and to make an estimate equally false of the good things of this world, in mistaking them for *real* goods—these are evils alas! which in general excite no alarm, and therefore their real magnitude and danger are not attended to as they ought to be.

But, beloved, let us be wise, through the grace and wisdom of the MOST HIGH, to strip off the vail of delusive appearances, which would hide from our eyes at any time either the size or the enormity of those evils to which we are exposed. For this purpose, let us be earnest, let us be constant in our prayers to GOD for the assistances of his SPIRIT to *give us a right judgment in all things*. And let us keep in view that awful time, when *the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, and the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and we must be judged according to our works*. So shall we be effectually guarded against the delusions of error arising from the enchantments of this world, and when the solemn day arrives that we must stand before GOD, and see the *books opened*, we shall find our names written in the BOOK OF LIFE, and shall be received into the holy city to live with GOD for ever.—AMEN.

The first part of the book is devoted to a general history of the United States, from the discovery of the continent to the present time. It is divided into three volumes, each of which contains a complete history of the country from the beginning to the end of the reign of a particular monarch.

The second part of the book is devoted to a general history of the United States, from the discovery of the continent to the present time. It is divided into three volumes, each of which contains a complete history of the country from the beginning to the end of the reign of a particular monarch.

The third part of the book is devoted to a general history of the United States, from the discovery of the continent to the present time. It is divided into three volumes, each of which contains a complete history of the country from the beginning to the end of the reign of a particular monarch.

The fourth part of the book is devoted to a general history of the United States, from the discovery of the continent to the present time. It is divided into three volumes, each of which contains a complete history of the country from the beginning to the end of the reign of a particular monarch.

The fifth part of the book is devoted to a general history of the United States, from the discovery of the continent to the present time. It is divided into three volumes, each of which contains a complete history of the country from the beginning to the end of the reign of a particular monarch.

SERMON XXV.

(PREACHED ON ASCENSION DAY.)

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE SPIRIT OF ENQUIRY.

JOHN xvi. 5. *But now I go My way to Him that sent ME, and none of you asketh ME, whither goest Thou.*

THESE words were spoken by our BLESSED LORD to His disciples at the time when He was about to leave the world, and return unto the FATHER from Whom He came forth. There is something singular in the manner in which our LORD here expresses Himself. For after declaring whither He was going, He adds, *And none of you asketh Me, whither goest Thou.* But what could be the reason of His making this observation? Why was it not sufficient for Him to have told His disciples plainly whither He was going, without tacitly reproaching them for not previously making the enquiry!

It is impossible for the wisdom of man, unenlightened from above, to comprehend the ground

and motives of our LORD'S conduct on this occasion ; but the wisdom of man enlightened by the wisdom of GOD *may* comprehend. For this latter wisdom will be enabled to see, that God is infinitely desirous to excite in man the spirit of enquiry after Divine knowledge, as the sole means of attaining Divine knowledge. He doth not think it sufficient merely to *give* man information, but He would also stir up man to *seek* information, being well aware that no instruction can be received, unless it hath been previously *desired* and *sought after*. GOD'S first step therefore, in conducting man to wisdom, is to kindle in the human bosom the holy affection of wisdom, the heavenly longing after Divine science, the earnest and diligent investigation of ETERNAL TRUTH, without which it is impossible that truth can be received or even seen. And He would instruct us further, that the ETERNAL TRUTH cannot be successfully sought after, so as to be found and possessed by us, only so far as it is seen and sought after in connection with JESUS CHRIST, the GREAT INCARNATE GOD, and humbly and gratefully acknowledged to be His most merciful and gracious gift. Therefore JESUS CHRIST saith, *None of you asketh ME.*

Behold here then the true ground and reason

why our BLESSED LORD, after declaring to His disciples whither He was going, adds further, *And none of you asketh Me, whither goest Thou!* For by thus reproaching them with a want of the spirit of enquiry in their own minds concerning Him, and concerning that new state upon which He was now about to enter, He would have led them, and by them all future disciples, to cherish that enquiring spirit in themselves, as the sole means of their profiting by any information which He had to give them. He would have led them also to see and to confess, that HE ALONE could satisfy their enquiry, and that therefore in every investigation of truth, they ought to *ask* HIM, by approaching to HIM as the only source of information and instruction. He would thus have prepared them to receive Divine knowledge by kindling a *previous desire* of it, knowing of a certainty that wisdom can never be *found* till it be first *sought after*, but that to *seek* wisdom is to *find* it, especially if it be sought from JESUS CHRIST, and seen to be the gift of His adorable mercy and loving-kindness, to conduct man to conjunction of life with Him,

Such then being the Divine intention of our BLESSED LORD in the words of my text, permit me, on the present holy occasion, to endeavour to

second that intention, and to give success to it, by stirring up in your minds the spirit of heavenly enquiry concerning that most important and Divine event which we are met this day to commemorate.

Certain it is, that the HOLY JESUS is infinitely desirous to lead all of us to the right knowledge of Himself, as He was desirous to lead His first apostles and disciples to that knowledge. The weighty question therefore, which He proposed to His followers of old, He still proposeth, with an equal earnestness of affection and zeal, to every one of us, *Whom do ye say, that I the Son of Man am?* (Matt. xvi. 15.) The reason is, because we can never attain to the right knowledge of JESUS CHRIST, but by diligently attending to and faithfully answering this Divine enquiry concerning Him in our own minds; and till we attain to the right knowledge of JESUS CHRIST, we must of necessity be wanting in that wisdom which is of all others the most excellent and important.

For what will it avail us, to be acquainted with all the depths of human science, if in the mean-time we should be found ignorant of this grand Divine science of eternal life and salvation? Of what use will it be to us, to be able to trace

out the courses of the stars, and even to call them all by their names, if in the mean while we are living unacquainted with and know not the name of that *bright and Morning Star*, (Rev. ii. 28.) which was intended to arise as a star of saving wisdom in our hearts? Surely such vanity of knowledge, separated from it's Divine source, will but tend to draw down upon us that severe rebuke which God once gave to His people by the Prophet, where it is written, *Thy wisdom and thy knowledge it hath perverted thee ; therefore shall evil come upon thee, and thou shalt not know from whence it riseth.* [Isaiah xlvii. 10, 11.]

And as JESUS CHRIST is thus infinitely desirous to lead us to the *general* knowledge of Himself, because that knowledge he knows to be the highest and most blessed that we can ever attain to, so is He infinitely desirous to lead us to the *particular* knowledge of Himself, that is to say, to the knowledge of Himself under all the *particular* states and circumstances through which He passed, and under all the *particular* characters in which He appeared, from the time of His incarnation and birth, to the time of his final ascension or return to His original glory.

May I bespeak your more especial attention to this desire and purpose of your REDEEMER, so far as it relates to that *particular* state into which He entered, and that *particular* character which He assumed, as on this day.

On this occasion, methinks I hear the BLESSED JESUS reproving us all, in the same words, and to the same purpose, with which He reprovèd his disciples of old, "*None of you asketh Me, whither goest Thou?*" For alas! how few have ever entered into any serious enquiry from serious motives in their own minds on this most interesting subject! How few have ever made it the ground of their prayer and entreaty to the ascended SAVIOUR, to be informed whither He is gone, and into what new state He is entered! Yet we must be forced to confess, if we give the subject a moment's thought, that there is none which so much concerns us; since our very salvation may depend upon the manner in which we are affected by it, and on the influence which we suffer it to have on our minds and thoughts.

But you will say perhaps, we have enquired on the subject; we have consulted the holy Scriptures, and we find and believe, on their authority, that JESUS is gone up into heaven—But shall we stop here and not enquire further, *what*

He is doing in heaven, and what *character* He bears there? We may possibly, by such negligence, deprive ourselves of all the benefits of our belief that He is in heaven. For what can it avail us to acknowledge merely that our REDEEMER is in the place called heaven? We believe that all His apostles are also in heaven, and if we believe no more concerning Himself, what can our faith respecting Him in such case profit us, any more than our faith respecting His apostles?

But you will say perhaps further, that JESUS CHRIST is *seated at the right hand of God in heaven*, as the Scriptures testify: We do well to believe so, for He certainly is seated at the right hand of GOD; but so also are all His true followers, according as it is written, “*He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left.*” [Matt. xxv. 33.] If then we are contented merely with believing that JESUS is seated at the *right hand of God*, without enquiring further what the *right hand of God* means, and what the difference is between the REDEEMER’S seat there, and those of His followers, our faith in this case also may fall very short of that perfection and profitableness, which are the characteristics of a truly evangelical faith.

It is plain then, from these instances, that to

attain a right faith concerning the glory of our ascending LORD, it is not sufficient *merely to believe* that He is gone into heaven, that He is returned to the FATHER, and that He is seated at the right hand of GOD, for it is possible we may believe all these things *without understanding* them, without forming any just idea, of what they mean ; and a belief void of understanding and of just ideas, must surely be confessed to be a *blind* belief, which amounts to no belief at all. Yet such, it is to be feared, is the belief of many at this day ; and hence come those contradictory and pernicious tenets, which we discover circulating in the church, respecting the important article of faith which the solemnity of the present occasion announces to us.

Thus some, we find, although they profess with other Christians to believe that JESUS CHRIST is in heaven, and *at the right hand of GOD*, yet they consider His HUMANITY merely as the humanity of another man, and themselves as much unconcerned with it, in regard to every thing which respects worship and adoration, and eternal life, as they are unconcerned with the spirits of their deceased brethren. Such is the heretical persuasion of those who are called *Socinians*.

Others again, although they acknowledge a difference between the HUMANITY of JESUS CHRIST

in heaven, and that of other men, and although they allow further a pre-eminence to the HUMANITY of JESUS CHRIST, as being invested with superior power and jurisdiction in the heavenly kingdoms, yet they still refuse it the tribute of adoration and worship, and deny it's claim to Divine honours. Such is the impious persuasion of those who are distinguished by the name of *Arians*. And yet both these *Arians* and *Socinians*, notwithstanding these heretical persuasions, profess to believe the Holy Scriptures, which teach that JESUS CHRIST is seated at *the right hand of God in heaven*.

But methinks, by this time, I hear you ask, If such be the case, that we may believe the Scripture declarations concerning our LORD'S ascension glory, and yet be betrayed into erroneous opinions on the subject, what methods are we then to pursue for the purpose of acquiring right information, and to avoid error. What steps shall we take to secure to ourselves all the comforts of an evangelical and enlightened faith ?

The answer is plain ; let us attend well to the reproof of JESUS CHRIST on the subject, saying in every human bosom, as He once said to his first disciples, *None of you asketh ME, whither goest Thou*. Let this reproof lead us to the spirit of a serious and devout enquiry in our own minds

from serious motives concerning our ascending LORD ; and let it lead us further to apply to HIM, in sincere prayer, to give us the true understanding of His own WORD concerning Himself, under the full persuasion that no one else can give it us, because He alone is the WORD, and He alone therefore can unfold the WORD. But whereas our prayer to JESUS CHRIST cannot be sincere, unless we come to Him with pure and penitent hearts, seeking the knowledge of Him, not from the spirit of vain curiosity only, but out of an earnest regard to our eternal salvation by Him, let us beseech Him further to give us the spirit of a real conversion, that in all humility and meekness we may both seek and receive the illumination of his heavenly wisdom as the most blessed treasure that our hearts can ever find.

Behold the simple but infallible secret, whereby we may attain deliverance from all error, and experience a blessed confirmation in the light and power of the ETERNAL TRUTH, respecting more especially that Divine event which we this day commemorate ! For then will all that be accomplished in us, which was accomplished in the disciples of old, during their conversation with their Divine Master, when, as it is written, “ *He opened their understandings that they might understand*

“ *the Scriptures.*” [Luke xxiv. 45.] For in such case He will *open our understandings* also, as He opened theirs, and for the same purpose. And by virtue of such understanding; we shall be enabled to see, that the HUMANITY of JESUS CHRIST in heaven is altogether different from that of other men, being *filled*, as the Apostle expresseth it, *with all the fulness of God*, or, as it is expressed in another place, having *all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in it.* (Col. ii. 9.) Thus we shall be enabled to see further, how in His ascension glory, *He and the Father are One; how He is in the Father, and the Father in Him;* and hereby how He Himself, even as to His HUMANITY, is *all DIVINE*, according to the prophetic declaration, “ *His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the MIGHTY GOD, the EVER-
LASTING FATHER, the PRINCE OF PEACE.*” [Isaiah ix. 6.] Thus too we shall be enabled to discern, that by His *sitting on the right hand of God*, was intended to be figured and expressed to us the OMNIPOTENCE of His HUMANITY, by virtue of it’s undivided union with the ETERNAL FATHER, agreeable to His declaration in another place, where He says, speaking of the same union and it’s effect, *All power is given unto ME in heaven and in earth.* (Matt. xxviii. 18.) And be-

holding our LORD, the HOLY JESUS, thus exalted in his ascension glory to One-ness with the FATHER, and thereby to all power and dominion both in heaven and in earth; and perceiving that in HIM and through HIM, we have continual access to all the riches, and blessings, and comforts of the DIVINITY dwelling in Him, and One with Him, we shall take the Divine picture to our bosoms, and treasure it up therein, and be continually looking at it to our unspeakable joy, because we shall perceive it to be the *pearl of great price, for which the wise merchantman selleth all he hath that he may buy it.* (Matt. xiii. 46.)—AMEN.

SERMON XXVI.

(PREACHED ON ASCENSION DAY.)

THE EXALTATION OF JESUS CHRIST IN MAN.

PSALM xxi. 13. *Be Thou exalted LORD in
Thine own strength.*

WE commemorate on this sacred day the accomplishment of the holy prayer here used by the Psalmist, "*Be Thou exalted LORD in Thine own strength.*" For it was, as on this day, that the BLESSED JESUS, as to His HUMANITY, was exalted to a full and intimate union with the ETERNAL FATHER, so that from henceforth the DIVINITY and HUMANITY became one and indivisible, agreeable to His own declaration where He saith, "*I and my FATHER are One.*" [John x. 30.] Thus He acquired dominion over all things both in heaven and earth, agreeable to that other declaration concerning Him where it is written, "*Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet;*" [Psalm viii. 6.]

and again, "*All power is given unto ME in heaven and in earth.*" [Matt. xxviii. 18.]

But whilst we adore the Divine mercy in this exaltation of the BLESSED JESUS to be the GOD and FATHER of His people, and to give them perpetual access to Himself in His now GLORIFIED or DIVINE HUMANITY, we ought surely to consider, and to consider seriously, whether a similar exaltation hath taken place in ourselves, in other words, whether the same JESUS be exalted in His own strength in us. For what will any other exaltation of this GREAT and HOLY GOD avail us? It is true, and it will be eternally true, that JESUS CHRIST is now exalted to everlasting dominion over heaven and earth, even as to His HUMANITY. But if this dominion doth not extend unto ourselves; if it be confined to His kingdom in the heavens, or to those few faithful and penitent ones here on earth, who confess His sovereignty; if it's peace, it's blessing, it's protection, it's salvation, have never yet been experienced by us in our own bosoms; if, so far from being the subjects of such happy experience, we are the slaves of another lord, and have consigned ourselves over to the dominion of another sovereign; of what concern to us, in such case, is the exaltation and sovereignty of the GREAT SAVIOUR? So far as respects our-

selves, it would have been the same thing if He had never been exalted, or, as if He had never changed His *crown of thorns* for a *crown of glory*.

From these considerations then it is plain, that if we ever wish to experience in our own bosoms all the unspeakable blessings resulting from that exaltation of the HOLY JESUS which we this day commemorate, we cannot then too scrupulously and earnestly enquire how far and in what degree He is *exalted in ourselves*, in other words, how far and in what degree we have admitted Him, or what is the same thing, HIS HOLY SPIRIT, to the sovereignty and dominion in our hearts, our understandings and our lives.

To assist in this interesting enquiry shall be the purport of my present discourse, in which I propose to establish and confirm these four distinct propositions.

1st, That the BLESSED JESUS can never be *exalted in His own strength* in ourselves, until He be first exalted in our *understandings* and *thoughts* ;

2ndly, That He can never be *exalted in His own strength* in ourselves, until He be further exalted in our *wills* and *affections*.

3rdly, That He can never be *exalted in His own strength* in ourselves, until He be also exalted in our *words* and *actions* ; and

4thly, That all these several exaltations of the BLESSED JESUS, both in our *understandings* and *thoughts*, in our *wills* and *affections*, and in our *words* and *actions*, are the constant and sure effects resulting, not from any power merely our own, but from His Divine operation, whilst we endeavour to co-operate with Him, by renouncing our corruptions, and departing from all iniquity.

I shall begin with the first of these propositions, and endeavour to show, that the BLESSED JESUS can never be *exalted in His own strength* in ourselves, until He be exalted in our *understandings* and *thoughts*.

By exalting the BLESSED JESUS in our *understandings* and *thoughts*, I would be understood to mean the exalting of the blessed truths of His MOST HOLY WORD, for JESUS and His WORD can never be separated, and therefore whosoever exalts in his understanding and thoughts the sacred and heavenly truths of that WORD, exalts at the same time the BLESSED JESUS in all the interior principles of his intellectual mind.

If it be asked, How are the sacred truths of **GOD'S MOST HOLY WORD** to be *exalted* in the human understanding and thought? I would answer, by living according to them, that is to say, by making them the supreme rule of all our conduct; by suffering them to influence all our secret purposes and intentions; by submitting to their controul and guidance all the lower persuasions and imaginations originating in the natural mind through it's connection with the concerns of this lower world. For when we are thus wise to take counsel of the **ETERNAL WORD**, it's blessed truths are then in a perpetual state of *ascent* from the lower or external regions of our minds, where they first enter, to the highest and most internal regions, where they become fixed, until at length they gain the entire ascendancy or supreme dominion over all the principles and practices of our lives both natural and intellectual. Whereas, if we are not thus wise to take counsel of the **ETERNAL WORD**, it's blessed truths, in such case, are not capable of any *ascent* or *elevation*, but remain as things despised, rejected and trampled upon, in those lowest principles of the sensual mind where they were first admitted.

From this view then of the subject, we may be enabled to see, if we be so disposed, that the

BLESSED JESUS can never be *exalted in His own strength* in ourselves, until He be first exalted in our *understandings* and *thoughts*.

For who cannot discern that *understanding* and *thought* constitute a very considerable part of the faculties which make and denominate us men, insomuch that if understanding and thought be wanting, we absolutely cease to be men? Who therefore cannot discern yet further, that the objects, the principles, the persuasions, which are exalted to pre-eminence in our understandings and thoughts, are the very objects, principles and persuasions which are exalted to pre-eminence in ourselves? If then these objects, these principles, these persuasions, be not grounded in the **ETERNAL TRUTH** of **GOD'S MOST HOLY WORD**; if they are not thus in connection with **JESUS CHRIST, HIS LIFE, HIS LOVE** and **HIS KINGDOM**, but originate in the lower concerns of our earthly and temporal existence; how plain is it to see, in this case, that so far from **JESUS CHRIST** being *exalted* in us, we allow the sovereignty and dominion of our minds to be usurped by other lords and masters, to whose rule and government we yield an implicit and destructive obedience!

And here it may be useful to observe, that the **BLESSED JESUS**, being infinitely desirous to

regain His heavenly kingdom in us, and for this purpose to be exalted to supreme dominion, commences His Divine operation *first* with our *understandings* and *thoughts*. Accordingly, in reading or hearing His HOLY WORD, the *first* impression usually excited by the sacred truths which it contains, is made on our *intellectual* faculty, by enabling us to *know* and to *discern* good and evil, truth and error, what is of GOD and what is not of GOD. Thus the FATHER OF MERCIES makes His *first* entrance into our *understandings*, and if I may use the expression, lays the *first* foundations of His kingdom in this our *intellectual* faculty, being well aware that if this faculty be secured to His service, He may then succeed in securing the other faculties ; whereas, if our understandings are not first enlightened by HOLY TRUTH, and if that truth be not *exalted to dominion*, it is then a vain thing to attempt to introduce His heavenly kingdom of righteousness, joy and peace into the other regions of the human mind.

To refuse then to submit our *understandings* to the guidance and government of the ETERNAL TRUTH, whether by deriding that truth, or by neglecting to cultivate an acquaintance with it, or by exalting the maxims of worldly wisdom above it, is in reality to refuse JESUS CHRIST admission

into our minds, and to pull down, instead of exalting His dominion in ourselves.

But it is not sufficient that JESUS CHRIST be *exalted in His own strength* in our *understandings* and *thoughts*, since understanding and thought form only a *part* of ourselves, and that part by no means the principal one, and therefore it is necessary, if we ever wish to establish His entire exaltation, that we proceed to exalt Him also in our *wills* and *affections*, which leads me to the consideration of the *second* point proposed for discussion, viz. that the BLESSED JESUS can never be *exalted in His own strength* in ourselves, until He be exalted in our *wills* and *affections*.

By exalting the BLESSED JESUS in our *wills* and *affections*, I would be understood to mean the exalting of Him in our *love*, for the *will*, we know, is the seat or habitation of the *love*, and the *affections* are nothing else but it's derivations, or the several channels into which it flows.

That we are required thus to exalt the DIVINE BEING in our *love*, is plain from the words of JESUS CHRIST Himself, where He says, "*Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength,*" [Matt. xxii. 37. Luke x. 27.] for it is impossible that any object can be thus

loved with *all* the heart, with *all* the soul, with *all* the mind, and with *all* the strength, unless it be first exalted to dominion and sovereignty in all those several principles of the human spirit.

If it be asked how, or by what means, this exaltation of the BLESSED JESUS in our *wills* and *affections* is to be accomplished? I would answer, by living according to the truths of GOD'S MOST HOLY WORD, as made manifest in our *understandings*, that is to say, by departing from those ways of life, and from those intentions and purposes of life, which the WORD OF GOD pronounces to be *evil*, and by following those ways, and cherishing those intentions and purposes, which the WORD OF GOD pronounces to be *good*. For as we endeavour so to form our lives, then GOD inspires us with the love and delight of so doing, and by degrees this love and delight take entire possession of our inner man, and fix in us their supreme abode and dominion, and thus the BLESSED JESUS, from whom Alone that love and delight proceed, is exalted to everlasting pre-eminence and sovereignty in our wills and affections.

Here then we may be enabled to discover the reason why the BLESSED JESUS can never be *exalted in His own strength* in ourselves, until He be exalted in our *wills* and *affections*.

For our *wills* and *affections*, it is well known, constitute the principal and pre-eminent part of ourselves, insomuch that our quality, our character, the complexion and tenor of our lives, depend entirely upon the principles by which our *wills* and *affections* are occupied and governed. As for instance—Is a worldly and selfish spirit predominant in our *wills and affections*? We must of necessity ourselves be worldly and selfish. Are our wills and affections again influenced by the love of earthly gain and glory? Earthly gain and glory, in such case, must inevitably stamp their impression on our lives, our manners, our tempers and our conversations. On the other hand, does the *love of God and of our neighbour* possess the supreme place in our wills and affections? How plain is it to see, that, on this occasion, our ruling character and quality are formed according to that love, and we rank amongst the pure and blessed children of that **HEAVENLY FATHER**, from whom that love proceeds, and towards whom it is continually directed?

Do we then aspire after the distinguished honour of *exalting* the **BLESSED JESUS** in ourselves? We must then begin with exalting His Divine love and wisdom to the supreme sovereignty and dominion in our wills and affections. For this

purpose, we must endeavour to form our lives, both as to intention and operation, according to the knowledges of heavenly truth which we have received from the WORD OF GOD in our understandings. Do we learn from such knowledge, that we ought not to cherish any evil and disorderly love? We must instantly cease to cherish it. Are we further instructed by such knowledge, that selfish and worldly love is evil and disorderly? We must immediately reject from our hearts every selfish and worldly affection. Are we enlightened further to discern, that all pride and vanity, all covetousness and sensuality, all malice and hatred, all impatience and revenge, all contempt of others, are the sure symptoms of such selfish and worldly love? We must then never rest till we have *laid the axe* of evangelical faith and repentance *to the root* of every such defiled and disorderly affection. Lastly, are we taught by the revelation of God, that His love and His wisdom are treasures infinitely more valuable than all the wealth of this world, and that to become His children is a privilege and a happiness infinitely exceeding every other privilege and happiness whatsoever? Then we must be careful to live as we have been taught, until we have secured those treasures, and made that privilege and that happiness everlastingly our

own. Thus will the BLESSED JESUS be eternally *exalted* in us, since He is ever one with His DIVINE LOVE and WISDOM, and since His DIVINE LOVE and WISDOM must of necessity enter and abide with us for ever, when we are wise to remove those corruptions which alone obstruct and prevent their entrance and abode with us.

I should now proceed to consider the two remaining propositions intended for discussion, but the present time will only permit me to observe (what the solemnity of this day is calculated to impress so deeply on our minds) that we have no one concern here below, which, in point of real importance, admits of any comparison with that of exalting and fixing in our minds some eternal principles, and of discovering that those principles are in connection with JESUS CHRIST.

For let us take a view of that unhappy mind in which no such principles are exalted and fixed; and what do we behold there? Alas! we discern nothing but confusion, disorder, uncertainty, misery and death. The bad passions, alternately bear sway, and being under no controul from above, their rule is that of anarchy, and their sceptre of iron. GOD and HEAVEN are thus banished and set at an immeasurable distance from this distracted mind, so that not a single ray of

heavenly light, not a single beam of Divine consolation can be admitted. In the mean time the powers of darkness take the advantage, and finding nothing to oppose their progress, they enter in, and take everlasting possession, exalting folly in the place of wisdom, evil in the place of good, and thus converting what was intended to be the *temple of God* and the *habitation of holiness and peace*, into a *den of thieves and robbers*, into *the hold of every foul spirit*, and a *cage of every unclean and hateful bird*. [Rev. xviii. 2.]

But let us turn from this disgusting scene, to take a view of that happy Christian, in whose mind are exalted and fixed the principles of the eternal love and wisdom of JESUS CHRIST. Behold then the serenity of his countenance, the order of his life, the composure, the stability, the uprightness of his whole conduct and conversation! Yet he also has passions like other men, and is encompassed also with the same infirmities. But then, unlike most other men, he has submitted all his passions to the dominion of the DIVINE GRACE and MERCY, and all his infirmities to the support of DIVINE STRENGTH. GOD therefore is his perpetual ruler and guide, and under this governance, his mind is preserved in peace. For though his *feet* are still upon earth, yet his *head*

is in heaven, and though he be still subject to temptation in the lower principles of his mind, yet through connection with **JESUS CHRIST** in the higher, he is always a conqueror and passing on to victory. Thus all evil is by degrees subdued and put under his feet, whilst at the same time wisdom, purity, the kingdom and blessing of the **MOST HIGH GOD** are exalted to a proportionable degree of eternal sovereignty in his humble and thankful bosom.

May the **ALMIGHTY**, in His adorable mercy, grant, that *our* lot may be with those of this latter description, and that we may thus experience the fulfilment of those gracious words of our ascended **LORD**, "*To him that overcometh will I give to sit with ME on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on His throne.*"
[Rev. iii. 21.] **AMEN.**

SERMON XXVII.

(PREACHED ON WHITSUNDAY.)

THE EXALTATION OF JESUS CHRIST IN MAN.

PSALM xxi. 13. *Be Thou exalted LORD in Thine own strength.*

IN a former discourse on these words we have endeavoured to show that their accomplishment, and their only important accomplishment with respect to ourselves, relates to the *exaltation* of JESUS CHRIST in ourselves. It was further shown that JESUS CHRIST cannot be *exalted* in ourselves, only so far as He is exalted, 1st, in our *understandings* and *thoughts*, and 2ndly, in our *wills* and *affections*. | Hence we took occasion to point out the nature and the manner of these two exaltations, and also the interesting duties which those exaltations respectively require of us.

I shall now proceed to the consideration of the two other propositions resulting from the same subject, which are these,

1st, That **JESUS CHRIST** can never be *exalted in His own strength* in ourselves, until He be exalted in our *words* and *actions* ; and

2ndly, That all the exaltations of the **BLESSED JESUS**, both in our *understandings* and *thoughts*, in our *wills* and *affections*, and in our *words* and *actions*, are the constant and sure effects resulting, not from any power merely our own, but from that **DIVINE INFLUENCE** and **OPERATION**, which we this day commemorate, whilst we endeavour to co-operate with it, by renouncing our corruptions, and departing from all iniquity.

First then I shall endeavour to show, that **JESUS CHRIST** can never be *exalted in his own strength* in ourselves, until He be exalted in our *words* and *actions*.

By exalting **JESUS CHRIST** in our *words* and *actions* I would be understood to mean, that in all the words which we speak, and in all the actions which we perform, some *eternal end* be regarded, and that this end be in connection with **JESUS CHRIST**, His **WORD** and His **KINGDOM**.

For all the *words* and *actions* of man must of necessity proceed from some principle, either *natural* or *spiritual*, and must accordingly have reference to some end, either *temporal* or *eternal*.

For *words* and *actions*, it is plain, are *effects*, and no effect was ever produced without a *cause*, or without some respect to an *end*. But the *causes* of words and actions are the principles and persuasions which govern our minds; and the *ends* to which words and actions have respect, are always in agreement with such principles and persuasions. If then the governing principles and persuasions of our minds be merely *natural* and *temporal*; in other words, if they regard only *natural* and *temporal* ends, such as the gain, the glory, the pleasure of this world and the flesh, in this case, our words and actions will regard only a *natural* and *temporal* end, consequently a *natural* and *temporal* end will be *exalted* in them. But on the contrary, if the governing principles and persuasions of our minds be *spiritual* and *eternal*, that is to say, if they regard *spiritual* and *eternal* ends, such as relate to the love of God and of our neighbour, and to all the order, purity and peace resulting from such love, in this case, how plain is it to see that our *words* and *actions*, as resulting from such causes, must of necessity also regard a *spiritual* and *eternal* end; and since every spiritual and eternal end is in connection with JESUS CHRIST, they must consequently have respect also to that GREAT and HOLY GOD, and

therefore that GREAT and HOLY GOD will ever be *exalted* in them.

Hence then we may discover the truth of the proposition, that JESUS CHRIST can never be *exalted in His own strength* in ourselves, until He be exalted in our *words* and *actions*. For our words and actions, it is evident, as well as our *wills* and *understandings*, make a part of ourselves, neither can they be separated from us, without destroying our very being. For what are we ourselves, or what is our *will*, and what is our *understanding*, if they be without *operation*? Are they not, in such case, mere fluctuating indeterminate principles, void of energy, of use and of blessedness? Accordingly the Sacred Scriptures perpetually inculcate the important and edifying doctrine, that we are to be judged hereafter *according to our words* and *our works*. Thus JESUS CHRIST teaches respecting our *words*, *By thy words thou shalt be justified, or by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* (Matt. xii. 37.) And again, respecting our *works*, *Every branch in ME that bringeth not forth fruit, He taketh away.* (John xv. 2.) And again, *The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.* (Rev. xx. 12.) And again, in the Divine prayer which the LORD hath taught us, we

pray, not only that *His name may be hallowed*, and *His kingdom come*, but also that “*His will may be done here on earth, as it is done in the heavens.*” Words and works then, it is plain, make a part of ourselves, and this in such a manner, and degree, that we can never be called complete men without them. Consequently no principle in us, whether it be good or evil, can become completely fixed in us, until it be fixed in our words and in our works. Of course, JESUS CHRIST cannot be completely *exalted* in us, until He be exalted in these our operations, so as to govern, guide and influence, not only our affections and thoughts, but likewise all the language of our lips, and every employment of our hands.

And here let us learn, that the religion of the Gospel is not only *speculative*, but *practical*, in other words, that it doth not tend only to regulate our *opinions*, by enabling us to repeat a *creed*, but it extends it's blessed influence also to our *words* and *actions*, by infusing into them a holy and heavenly principle ; by directing them to an eternal end ; and by thus filling them with the LIFE, the POWER and BENEDICTION of the FATHER OF MERCIES. Let us learn further, not to think that we are hardly and severely dealt with, because GOD requires us thus to *exalt* Him both

in our souls and bodies, but rather to think that, for this very reason, we are the more bound to adore that inexpressible mercy and tender love of our HEAVENLY FATHER, which is thus desirous to take entire possession of us, by *exalting* HIS HOLY and BLESSED DOMINION both over our secret intentions and the means of bringing them into effect and usefulness. Let us, I say, learn to be thankful, that GOD will not have his kingdom *divided* in us; but will possess an *entire* sovereignty both over our *minds* and *bodies*. Consequently He will no longer allow us to speak and to act merely from ourselves, but from the eternal principles of His adorable love and wisdom in ourselves. For what must be the necessary consequence of being left to speak and act merely from ourselves? Would not every word and work, in such case, tend to strengthen and fix the corrupt principle from which it proceeded, and thus separate us more and more, in our own selfishness, from all the blessedness of the DIVINE PURITY, WISDOM and POWER? Whereas, when we are wise to speak and act from those eternal principles of the DIVINE LOVE and WISDOM, which are communicated for that purpose, then every word and work has a tendency to strengthen and confirm those principles, and in so doing to extend

and to exalt the dominion of the BLESSED JESUS. It is accordingly written in the prophet, *If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD honourable ; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words ; then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD ; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy Father ; for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.* (Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.)

Having thus then endeavoured to confirm and establish our *first* proposition, respecting the exaltation of the BLESSED JESUS in our *words* and our *works*, I shall now proceed to the consideration of the *second*, by endeavouring further to show, that all the exaltations of the BLESSED JESUS, both in our *understandings* and *thoughts*, in our *wills* and *affections*, and in our *words* and *works*, are the constant and sure effects resulting, not from any power merely our own, but from that DIVINE INFLUENCE and OPERATION which we this day commemorate, whilst we endeavour to co-operate with Him, by renouncing our corruptions, departing from all iniquity, and labouring to fulfil His HOLY WILL and COMMANDMENTS.

That **JESUS CHRIST** exercises a secret **DIVINE INFLUENCE** and **OPERATION** on the minds of all mankind ; and that it is by means of this influence and operation that we are enabled to will, to think, to speak and to act any thing that is good, is abundantly confirmed to us by the extraordinary and miraculous event which we this day commemorate.

For we learn from the testimony of the Sacred Scriptures, that as at this time the **BLESSED JESUS** fulfilled His sacred promise to His disciples of sending to them the **HOLY SPIRIT**, to *abide with them for ever*, as their everlasting **COMFORTER** and **GUIDE into all truth**.

This extraordinary and miraculous event, we learn, was announced by the singular and significant signs of a *sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, which filled all the house where they were sitting*, together with the *appearance of cloven tongues like as of fire, which sat upon each of them*, (Acts ii. 1 to 5.) the *sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind* manifestly denoting the **DIVINE POWER** and **ENERGY** of that **HOLY SPIRIT** which was then communicated ; whilst the *tongues like as of fire* as evidently indicated, that under the influence of that Divine power and energy, the Apostles would be enabled to speak

with *new tongues*, in other words, that the doctrine which they taught would be the doctrine of heavenly love and charity, which love and charity is the true and proper *fire* of heaven. The *tongues* therefore appeared as *cloven* tongues, because *cloven* has respect to this *twofold* doctrine, viz. the doctrine of love towards GOD and charity towards men, in which alone every doctrinal truth is founded, and towards which it points.

But shall we say that this extraordinary and miraculous event was intended to be confined to the twelve Apostles of the LORD, and to the first teachers of Christianity? Shall we suppose that they *only* were to receive the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, and that we at this day have no part or lot in the communication of the DIVINE BLESSING? Surely this would be to contradict the constant declarations of the *eternal truth*, and especially the apostolic testimony where it is expressly declared, on the occasion, “*The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the LORD our GOD shall call.*” (Acts ii. 39.) We conclude then, from this sure testimony, that all Christians at this day are as truly the subjects of DIVINE INFLUENCE and OPERATION, as ever the apostles were, and that if we do not know this to be true, it can only be owing to our want of

faith in the Divine promise, and our want of a corresponding purity of life in conformity to such a faith. It is not indeed to be expected, that at this day we shall literally hear, as the apostles did, a *sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind*, or that we shall literally see, as they did, the *appearance of cloven tongues as of fire, sitting upon each of us*. But what then? If we possess the great reality of the DIVINE BLESSING typified by these signs, it is of little or no consequence whether the signs themselves be presented or not; and we may say on this occasion what the LORD said on another to His Apostle Thomas, “*Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.*” Here then we may be enabled to see, if we be so disposed, that every exaltation of the BLESSED JESUS, whether in our *understandings and thoughts*, or in our *wills and affections*, or in our *words and works*, is the constant and sure effect resulting, not from any power merely our own, but from His DIVINE INFLUENCE and OPERATION, whilst we endeavour to co-operate with Him, by renouncing our corruptions, departing from all iniquity, and labouring, *as of ourselves*, to fulfil His holy will and commandments.

For if it be true, as we have seen it is, and as the solemnity of this sacred day announces, that we are all of us alike the subjects of **DIVINE INFLUENCE** and **OPERATION**, and that a **HOLY COMFORTER**, the **SPIRIT OF TRUTH** from **JESUS CHRIST**, is thus perpetually present with us in the deep centre of our being: If it be further true, as **JESUS CHRIST** expressly testifies, that *without Him*, that is to say, without His **HOLY SPIRIT**, we “*can do nothing*,” [John xv. 5,] consequently can neither will, nor think, nor speak nor act; then how plain is it to see, that every virtue, every grace, every excellence, the knowledge which enlightens our understandings, the love and charity which inflames our wills, the wisdom and energy which influence our words and works, the purity, the peace, the sanctity, by which our whole minds are at once governed, protected and blessed—how plain, I say, is it to see, that all these things are the results of the **DIVINE AGENCY** of **JESUS CHRIST**, and are at the same time the proofs of His **DIVINE PRESENCE** in us, the testifications of the fulfilment of His promise, and the demonstrations most positive of His Divine love towards us, and of the ardour with which He seeks our salvation!

Do we wish then for the most convincing signs of the certainty, the reality of that Divine

blessing, the descent of the HOLY GHOST, which we this day commemorate? Let us then seek them *in ourselves*, where alone those signs are to be found and seen. But let us seek them *in the manner* which JESUS CHRIST Himself has appointed as the necessary condition of finding and seeing them. Do we ask what this *manner* is? I answer, it is *co-operation* with JESUS CHRIST. Is it asked further, what *co-operation* with JESUS CHRIST is and means? I answer, to *co-operate* with JESUS CHRIST is to unite our wills with His will, our understandings with His wisdom, our purposes and operations with His purpose and operation, in the great work of our salvation. Is it asked lastly, how shall we thus unite our wills, our understandings and our operations with the will, the wisdom and the operation of JESUS CHRIST? I answer, by shunning, as sins against that Great God, those corrupt affections, thoughts and practices, which He declares to be evil, and by cherishing and fulfilling those which He pronounces to be good.

Behold here then the plain and simple, but sure and certain method of being convinced of the Divine presence and operation in ourselves! It is to begin with renouncing our corruptions, and in that spirit with endeavouring to exalt the BLESSED JESUS first in our *understandings* and *thoughts*,

for then we shall presently find that He will be exalted there, and will thus prove to us, by the light of the **ETERNAL TRUTH** which He will there display, both **HIS DIVINE PRESENCE** and **HIS DIVINE OPERATION**. It is next to exalt Him in our *wills* and *affections*, where He will then give us an additional proof, by the **SUPREME GOOD** which He will communicate, and by it's attendant joy, that He is ever with us as the **SUPREME**, the **MOST BLESSED** object of our love. It is lastly to exalt Him in our *words* and *works*, where we shall soon make the happy discovery, that our words and works too are from Him, and united with Him, and that thus no faculty of our minds or bodies is separated from **HIS DIVINE PRESENCE, POWER** and **BENEDICTION**.

To conclude—What has been above said concerning the exaltation of the **BLESSED JESUS**, and concerning the **HOLY OPERATION** proceeding from that exaltation, may be beautifully and aptly illustrated by the case of *the sun of this world*, in it's connection with the earth on which it shines. For behold that sun, and observe how from it's resplendent orb are for ever proceeding the principles of natural heat and light, by which the earth and all it's contents are continually preserved, recreated and rendered fruitful. Take away now

that sun, or for a moment suppose it to be taken away, and what will be the consequence? We tremble at the idea, and we tremble justly, because we see clearly that, in such case, every beautiful form of vegetable and animal life here on earth must instantly perish and die. But have we ever considered, that the same mischiefs would inevitably follow, if the sun was *not exalted above* the earth, and that consequently *not to exalt* the sun is the same thing as *to take it away*? For suppose, for a moment, that the sun be depressed *below* the horizon, instead of being exalted *above* it, who cannot see that, in such case, the earth must be as utterly deprived both of the sun's heat and light, as if there was no sun, and must accordingly be rendered torpid, fruitless and dead?

It is then by the sun's *exaltation above* the earth, and by this exaltation *alone*, that the earth receives the full benefit and blessing of it's heat and light. But who, shall we say, has appointed this law and condition of reception? Doubtless, the GREAT CREATOR and GOVERNOR of the world, that DIVINE BEING Who first formed both the sun and the earth, and Who constituted their perpetual relations to each other. And *for what purpose*, shall we say, was this law and

condition appointed? Could it be for any other than for our instruction? For is not our instruction intended in all the works of GOD, and is it not therefore written, *The heavens declare the glory of GOD, and the firmament sheweth His handy work?* [Psalm xix. 1.]

Let us learn then, from the *exaltation* of the natural sun in the natural *firmament* of the *heavens*, the holy, the edifying lesson of instruction which that elevation was designed continually to convey to us. Let us learn, I say, that the *works of GOD* speak, in their manner and degree, the same language with the **WORD OF GOD**, and that the language which they unitedly speak is this, that as from the *exaltation* of the natural sun proceed both the preservation, the recreation and fruitfulness of the earth and of all things therein, in like manner from the exaltation of the spiritual sun, **THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**, Whose name is **JESUS CHRIST**, proceed both the preservation, the recreation and fruitfulness of heaven and of the church, and of all things therein contained: And further, that as darkness, death and destruction are the certain results of the *non-exaltation* of the natural sun above the natural horizon of the earth, in like manner, corresponding tremendous mischiefs must of necessity follow from the non-ex-

altation of the spiritual sun, above the spiritual horizon of human minds.

Who then is wise amongst us, or who is desirous of becoming so? Let him ponder well on this Divine language of the MOST HIGH: Let him accordingly exalt JESUS CHRIST in his heart, in his understanding and his life. So shall he be preserved from all evil, and as he is convinced of the existence of the sun of this world by *naturally* seeing it's light and feeling it's heat, he will be convinced also of the existence of the SUN OF HEAVEN by the spiritual sight and feeling of it's light and heat, until he be enabled to sing that heavenly song where it is written, "*The LORD is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear, the LORD is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?*" [Psalm xxvii. 1.]—
AMEN.

SERMON XXVIII.

PREPARATION NECESSARY FOR ADMISSION INTO HEAVEN.

MATT. XX. part of the 23rd verse. *But to sit on My right hand and on My left is not mine to give, but [it shall be given to them] for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

THESE words, we learn, are part of our LORD'S answer to the mother of Zebedee's children, who had said unto Him, *Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left in thy kingdom.* To this request, the LORD made this reply, "*Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*" They say unto him, "*We are able.*" And He saith unto them, "*Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with;*" and then immediately follow the words of my text, "*But to sit on my right hand and on my left is*

“ *not mine to give, but [it shall be given to those]
“ for whom it is prepared of my Father.”*”

Much useful instruction might be derived from the several particulars recorded in this singular history, as from the *request* here made by the fond mother in favour of her two sons; and from the LORD’S reply, “ *ye know not what ye ask;*” and also from his enquiry concerning the ability to “ *drink of His cup, and to be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with.*” But leaving these particulars to be the subjects of your own private meditations, I wish to bespeak your attention at this time more especially to the concluding words of the LORD in the relation, “ *But to sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, but [it shall be given to them] for whom it is prepared of MY FATHER.*”

I am the more earnest to press these words upon your present consideration, because there is every reason to believe (as I hope soon to be enabled to prove) that their real sense and important meaning has been in a great measure lost sight of; and not only so, but that from some unhappy mistake, either in the translation of the original, or in the apprehension of the reader, or both, they have been made to speak a language which they do not speak, and thus to inculcate a doctrine which is

at once dangerous in itself, and also in direct contrariety to other repeated declarations of the **WORD OF GOD**.

In treating then on these words, I propose in my following discourse to present to your view these three distinct points of consideration,

1st, What that *mistaken* sense and meaning is, to which the words, in their present form of expression, have given birth, and are still calculated to give birth ;

2ndly, What the mistake is, in the present form of expression, which has led and still leads to a mistaken sense and meaning of the words ; and

3rdly, What that true, genuine and instructive sense and meaning of the words is, which they were originally intended by the **DIVINE SPEAKER** to convey.

First then, I shall endeavour to point out that *mistaken* sense and meaning, to which the words, in their present form of expression, have given birth, and are still calculated to give birth.

It is impossible for any common reader to read the words of my text, as they at present stand expressed, without conceiving from them an idea, that *to sit on the right hand and on the left* of the **GREAT REDEEMER** in His kingdom, in other

words, to be exalted hereafter to a state of eternal glory and happiness, is not His [the REDEEMER'S] to give, but is to be given by *another*, and to those, whom that *other* has prepared for that purpose.

For let us recall the expressions—JESUS CHRIST says, (according to the present form of expressing His words) *To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared of my Father.* And what now, let me ask, must be the necessary apprehension conceived by every common reader from this mode of expression? Must he not regard the positive declaration of JESUS CHRIST, “*It is not mine to give,*” as a positive denial of His possessing any power, authority or jurisdiction in the case? And when he reads further, that the blessed privilege in question “*shall be given to those for whom it is prepared of my Father,*” must he not conclude also, that the FATHER and JESUS CHRIST are separate beings; and that the FATHER, and not JESUS CHRIST, has the disposal of eternal joys, consequently, that the FATHER, and not JESUS CHRIST, is the giver of eternal life and glory?

Here then is the *mistaken* idea, to which the words under consideration, in their present form, are calculated to give birth. For in that form,

they tend manifestly to deprive JESUS CHRIST of that *omnipotence*, which He so continually declares to be His Divine prerogative. They disallow of His power and authority, as exercised in the distribution of eternal joys and rewards. Thus they stand in direct contrariety to his own repeated assertions in other parts of the Sacred Scriptures, where He so positively insists, that *all things are delivered to him of the Father*; (Matt. xi. 27.) that *He hath power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as are given Him*; (John xvii. 2.) that *all judgment is committed to HIM, because He is the Son of Man*; (John v. 22. 27.) and lastly, that in the day of judgment, *He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.* (Matt. xxv. 33.)

Having thus then endeavoured to point out the *mistaken* sense and meaning, to which the words in my text, in their present form of expression, have given birth, and are still calculated to give birth, I shall now proceed to show what was 2ndly proposed, viz. what that mistake is in the present form of expression, which has led and still leads to such a mistaken sense and meaning.

If we consult the passage as it stands at present in our bibles, we shall find that several of the words contained in it are printed in *italic* charac-

ters, which is the same thing as saying, that those words do not occur in the original, for it was customary with the translators, whensoever they thought it expedient to insert any expression which was not in the original, to distinguish it by *italic* characters.

Now the words printed in italic characters are these, *It shall be given to them*, therefore these words are inserted by the translators, and are not to be found in the original.

Let us now omit these additional words, and read the simple passage as it stands in the original, and it will then run thus, *But to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but (or except) to those for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

JESUS CHRIST therefore, it is plain, doth not declare unreservedly that to sit on his right hand and on his left *is not his to give* ; he only declares that he cannot give it, unless there be a *preparation* to receive it, in other words, he cannot give it to the *unprepared* ; to any *but those for whom it is prepared of the Father.*

A similar instance of our LORD's manner of expressing Himself occurs in the ninth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, where we read, that "*As JESUS passed by, He saw a man who*

“*was blind from his birth ; and His disciples*
“*asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this*
“*man or his parents, that he was born blind ?*
“*JESUS answered, Neither hath this man sinned,*
“*nor his parents, but that the works of GOD*
“*should be made manifest in him.*” [John ix.
1, 2, 3.]

Now, if we are not here also upon our guard, we may be betrayed into a great mistake, because we may be led to conceive from the answer which the LORD on this occasion gives to His disciples, that He intended to declare that both the blind man and his parents were *without sin*, which is a declaration in direct contrariety to other assertions in the Sacred Scriptures which teach, that *all have sinned* ; and that *if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves* : Whereas the LORD’S answer properly considered asserts no such thing : For He only says, “*Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of GOD should be made manifest in him,*” that is to say, they have not sinned so as to be out of the reach of Divine help and protection : they have not sinned so, *but* that they may still be the subjects of Divine mercy, and by their restoration to holiness and happiness may *manifest* and show forth the wonders and blessings of the Divine operation.

It may *seem* to require an apology for taking the liberty of pointing out any mistake in our excellent translation of the Sacred Scriptures, and it *does* require an apology. Our apology then on the present occasion is this, that the sacredness of truth ought in all cases to be consulted more than respect to human authorities, and that the sacredness of truth requires, that it's own pure and simple language and meaning should be preserved as far as possible, uncorrupted and unperverted by human interpretations. Whilst therefore we regret the necessity of exposing defect in any instance of our excellent translation, we feel an obligation in the present case imposed to do so from the requirements of duty, and a concern for truth. Our regret too, on the occasion, is considerably diminished by the consideration, that the mistake in question is perhaps the only one of any importance to be met with in the sacred volume of the New Testament.

Having thus then endeavoured to point out both the *mistaken* sense of the passage under consideration, and also the *mistake* in which it originates, I shall now bespeak your further attention, whilst I endeavour lastly to show what that true, genuine, and instructive sense and meaning is, which the words of my text were originally intended by the DIVINE SPEAKER to convey.

This sense and meaning has been already hinted at, and flows immediately, and without any doubt or ambiguity, from the LORD'S words themselves as above stated, and expressed in their primitive simplicity.

For when JESUS CHRIST said, *To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, except to those for whom it is prepared of my Father*, He plainly taught us this most instructive and important truth, that the joys and glories of His eternal kingdom are not dispensed by Him in an arbitrary or capricious manner ; they are not imparted without the nicest and most strict regard to the qualifications of those who are to receive them ; but are always conferred according to an eternal law or condition, which law or condition requires, that the person, on whom they are conferred, shall be previously *prepared* to receive them.

The LORD indeed speaks of the joy or glory being *prepared*, and so it really is, but then it ought surely to be considered *for whom* it is prepared, and the slightest consideration must surely teach, that it can only be *prepared* for those who are *prepared* for it. For can we suppose that a just and all-wise God is *preparing* joys and glories and eternal rewards for the thoughtless, for the

impenitent and disobedient ? The very idea of such a preparation, whilst it is contrary to the tenor of all the Divine attestations, is shocking also and repugnant to all our notions both of justice and of wisdom.

For what wise and just man here below, in the appointment of another to any office, dignity and honour, is not determined by the qualities of the person to be appointed ? Can we imagine, for instance, that a wise and just king would admit into his counsels, and ennoble by his authority, a thief, a robber, or a murderer ? How much more then, are we forced to conclude, that the **GOD** of **INFINITE WISDOM** and **INFINITE JUSTICE** must be directed accordingly in the *preparation* and distribution of His eternal glories, and that consequently He will admit none into His counsels ; He will call none to sit with Him on His throne, but who are properly *prepared* and eminently qualified for so high and distinguished dignities !

Let us stand still a moment to contemplate the interesting conclusion at which we are now arrived.

It is the voice both of reason and of religion, and it can never be sufficiently attended to by the sons of men, that a bright crown of eternal glory, a state of inconceivable and everlasting bliss, is

preparing by an infinite love and as infinite a wisdom for the faithful and obedient. But it is the voice too both of reason and of religion, which in like manner demands all our concern, that this bright crown of eternal glory, this state of inconceivable and everlasting bliss, *preparing* by the GREAT ALMIGHTY, implies and involves in it another *preparation*, as a qualification to receive it, viz. the preparation of the person who is to receive it, so that the *prepared crown* and the *prepared person* always keeps pace with each other in *preparation*, and the preparations are in the most exact agreement.

It is therefore the further voice both of reason and of religion, that the preparation of the crown is determined by the preparation of the person, and not the preparation of the person by the preparation of the crown, in other words, that every man makes or unmakes his own crown, according as he is faithful or unfaithful to the requirements of that God who prepares the crown.

As for example—let us suppose a man to live a careless and thoughtless life below, uninfluenced by the Divine law, unprincipled in the Divine spirit, more intent upon earthly gain than heavenly, and loving himself and the world better than God and his neighbour. The conjoined voice

then both of reason and religion in respect to this careless and thoughtless man is, that he despoils himself of a crown of glory, and for this plain reason, because the preparation of that crown must necessarily depend on the preparation of his life, and since his life is unprepared for the crown, the crown too must also be unprepared for him.

On the other hand, let us suppose another man to live in the fear and the love of God, and in obedience to his holy commandments ; let us suppose him humble, wise, heavenly-minded, and cherishing all the other graces of the DIVINE SPIRIT, as things of infinitely higher importance than all the gain and glory of this world ; it is then the united testimony both of reason and of religion, that this wise and humble Christian is continually both creating his future crown, and adding to the splendour of it's eternal glory, and for this plain and everlasting reason, because the GOD, who *prepares* that crown, always prepares it to fit exactly the head of him who is to wear it, in other words, the preparation of the crown is always in the most exact agreement with the preparation of man's life.

And would we know the deep and solid ground of this *harmonizing preparation* ? It is manifestly this. A crown of eternal glory, like a

seat at the right hand of God, is a spiritual *emblem*, for it is an emblem of spiritual dominion, that is to say, of dominion over sin and folly, and over every corruption of the human heart in connection with them. No man therefore can possibly be put in possession of this *heavenly emblem*, unless he have first attained to the dominion of which it is an emblem, since we must of course suppose that in the heavenly kingdom all external types and figures of dignity, of pre-eminence and of bliss, are in the most perfect agreement with the internal principles which give them birth. To set a heavenly crown then on the head of sin and folly would be to reverse all heavenly order, and thus to destroy heaven itself. Therefore it must be an everlasting law of the blessed kingdom, that none but the wise and the good can wear the crown, because none but the wise and good can attain to the spiritual dominion represented by the crown. And since none are wise and good in the sight of God but the humble, the sincere, the penitent, the regenerate, who through the DIVINE SPIRIT have gained the victory over their corruptions, therefore none but these inherit the crown of glory, and *sit at the right hand of God*.

To conclude—We are all of us concerned in the doctrine as above stated, to a degree which no

words can express. A delusive and dangerous opinion too generally prevails, even in the Christian world, that the joys and glories of heaven are dependent rather on the arbitrary appointment of God, than on the dispositions and qualifications of man. The terrible consequences of this mistaken idea are, that we many of us, it is to be feared, remain thoughtless and careless about our eternal destination, and perhaps the best of us do not bestir ourselves as we ought, and as we have power given us to do, in the great work of our purification, regeneration, and consequent preparation for a crown of glory.

Would we shun the mistake which leads to these terrible consequences? Let us then treasure up in our minds the LORD'S weighty words in my text, "*To sit on my right hand and on my left,*" &c. &c. Let us no longer mis-interpret these words, by supposing them to teach, that the distribution of eternal glory doth not belong to JESUS CHRIST. For JESUS CHRIST declares in a thousand passages of His Word, that He is the sole giver of everlasting life and joy. Let us rather then learn from those words, to go immediately to JESUS CHRIST for the heavenly and eternal gift, but let us learn also *how* to go to Him: Let us learn, I say, to go in a *prepared* state of mind and

life, from a full conviction, that as our *preparation* is, such will be our *crown* ; as our *qualifications* are, such will be our *rewards* : And since nothing can be called *preparation* for heaven, but *purification* from our corruptions ; and nothing a *qualification for reward*, but the fear and the love of that God Who dispenses it, leading us to *renewal* and *regeneration* of heart and life ; let us further go to JESUS CHRIST in humble supplication for His HOLY SPIRIT, that we may become thereby thoroughly *purified, renewed, and regenerated*.

Then shall we know what is meant by a crown of glory, and by a seat at the right hand of God, because then being exalted to dominion over sin and folly, through the Divine power and life in us, we shall know this to be our eternal reward, our highest glory, and brightest crown of rejoicing, agreeable to those words of JESUS CHRIST, “ *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my FATHER on His throne.*” [Rev. iii. 21.]—AMEN.

The first of these was the discovery of gold in California in 1848. This discovery led to a great influx of people to California, and the state became a free state in 1850. The second was the discovery of gold in Colorado in 1859. This discovery led to a great influx of people to Colorado, and the state became a free state in 1876. The third was the discovery of gold in Nevada in 1846. This discovery led to a great influx of people to Nevada, and the state became a free state in 1864. The fourth was the discovery of gold in Idaho in 1860. This discovery led to a great influx of people to Idaho, and the state became a free state in 1890. The fifth was the discovery of gold in Montana in 1862. This discovery led to a great influx of people to Montana, and the state became a free state in 1889. The sixth was the discovery of gold in Arizona in 1863. This discovery led to a great influx of people to Arizona, and the state became a free state in 1909. The seventh was the discovery of gold in New Mexico in 1861. This discovery led to a great influx of people to New Mexico, and the state became a free state in 1906. The eighth was the discovery of gold in Utah in 1864. This discovery led to a great influx of people to Utah, and the state became a free state in 1896. The ninth was the discovery of gold in Wyoming in 1869. This discovery led to a great influx of people to Wyoming, and the state became a free state in 1890. The tenth was the discovery of gold in Oregon in 1847. This discovery led to a great influx of people to Oregon, and the state became a free state in 1859. The eleventh was the discovery of gold in Washington in 1847. This discovery led to a great influx of people to Washington, and the state became a free state in 1889. The twelfth was the discovery of gold in California in 1848. This discovery led to a great influx of people to California, and the state became a free state in 1850.

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

SERMON XXIX.

WHAT IS MEANT BY COMING TO CHRIST.

MATT. xi. 28. *Come unto ME all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

IT is impossible for the serious mind to read or to hear these words of the GREAT REDEEMER, and not to be tenderly affected by the spirit in which they are spoken. God divests himself of the authority of a SOVEREIGN, and he assumes the more venerable and attractive character of a FATHER: He no longer expresses his will in the form of a *command*, but he manifests his ardent desire of our salvation in the language of the most *persuasive kindness*: He *invites* us to *come unto HIM*, and though He might have uttered His voice again in *thunder*, as He once did from the top of *Sinai*, yet He chooses rather to lay aside the terrors of His majesty, that He may the more effectually secure our obedience by the endearing mildness of parental affection.

There is another consideration, which must of necessity beget attention in every thinking mind to the tenor of the above words, and that is the *importance* of the invitation, as well as the *spirit* in which it is dictated. For to *come unto CHRIST* is an act on the part of man, which cannot but involve in it every thing that is most excellent and most blessed: It is a summary of Christian duty, and at the same time it constitutes the fulness and substance of Christian felicity. Could we therefore be prevailed upon to comply with this brief but affectionate request of our God and SAVIOUR, every thing from that moment would assuredly go well with us: We should fulfil all the Divine precepts and requirements, and we should secure our own eternal happiness.

It is not possible however to comply with the request of JESUS CHRIST, until we attend to and consider well the tenor and import of it. The words of the ALMIGHTY must be understood before they can be obeyed; and therefore if we wish to attain the sanctity, and to experience the consolation annexed to the high and holy character of those who may be properly said to *come to the GREAT SAVIOUR*, we must endeavour to comprehend

1st, What is implied in His invitation, *Come unto ME*;

2ndly, To what description of persons the invitation is addressed, *All ye that labour and are heavy laden.*

3rdly, What is the reward annexed to a compliance with the invitation, "*Ye shall find rest to your souls.*"

Let us begin then with the first consideration, viz. what we are to understand by these words of our REDEEMING LORD, "*Come unto ME.*"

The words present to our attention two distinct subjects, 1st, the *invitation*, expressed in the word *come*; 2ndly, the object of the invitation, or the person to Whom we are to come, "*Come unto ME.*"

I shall endeavour to take such a view of both these subjects, as may be most conducive to our present edification, and shall begin with the 1st, viz. the invitation expressed in the word *Come.*

When JESUS CHRIST said to his disciples, *Come unto ME*, He certainly meant to apply Himself to their *spirits*, and not to their *bodies*, for their bodies were already come unto Him.

In like manner when He saith unto us at this day, *Come unto ME*, He cannot mean by this invitation to call our *bodies* to Him, but our *minds*, for it is impossible for us at this day, in regard to

our bodies, to comply with this invitation, and *come unto Him.*

But how shall we *come* unto JESUS CHRIST with our *minds*? This is a question which infinitely concerns us all, because it involves in it whatsoever can be most dear to us, our salvation and eternal life.

Howbeit, none can answer this question, but such as have been at the pains diligently to attend to and consider the nature of the workings, tendencies, and motions of their minds or spirits, and who have discovered, in consequence of such attention and consideration, that the mind, as well as the body, is in a continual motion, advancing towards some objects, and receding from others, and this according to the predominant affection by which it is governed. Let us consider this point a little more particularly.

It was a maxim of ancient wisdom, that *every man is drawn by, and follows, his ruling gratification*; in other words, that as to his *mind*, which is his real self, he is always in motion towards the supreme object of his delight, nor can he possibly move in any other direction.

As for example—if the world and the things of the world engage his chief affections; if his principal joy be placed in the objects of time and

sense, in the gratification of appetite, of ambition, of avarice, of voluptuousness, or of any other inordinate passion ; the certain but miserable effect will be, that his mind, or immortal spirit will approach near unto the earthly objects which create it's bliss ; it will attach itself closely to them ; and will in the same proportion recede from **JESUS CHRIST** and all those heavenly objects of his kingdom and glory, which the Gospel presents to it's view and it's acceptance.

But on the contrary, if he be wise to discover, and resolute to resist, the dangerous but fascinating allurements of mere earthly joys ; if he believes so much of the Gospel testimony, as to be convinced that **JESUS CHRIST** and the things of his kingdom are objects, not only of more lasting endurance, but of more solid consolation, than any other ; and if in consequence of this conviction, he hath begun to renounce vanity, and to find his chief delight in the great, the real things of eternity ; in this case, he may have the happiness to be assured, that his mind, or immortal spirit, is ever receding from the objects of uncertainty, and instability, and approaching, by the same degrees, to the throne of the **MOST HIGH**, to the presence, the kingdom, and unfading glories of the **GREAT REDEEMER**.

That the mind is thus always following and

acceding to the supreme objects of it's delight, whatsoever may be the position and tendency of the body, is confirmed to us also by the language and testimony of the **WORD OF GOD**.

Thus **JESUS CHRIST** makes this awful declaration to the Jews, *Ye will not come unto ME that ye might have life*, (John v. 40.) when yet as to their *bodies* they were already come unto Him, and were standing around Him. By *not coming* to Him therefore, it is plain He must mean, that they did *not come* to Him with their minds, that is to say, with their best affections: Their minds alas! were wandering far from Him into the regions of vanity and false joys, and thus, although their bodies were near and in his presence, the men themselves were really and truly at a distance, and in another place. And so it is also at this day. **JESUS CHRIST** still says to all, who are not led to Him by affection, *Ye will not come unto ME, that ye might have life*; inasmuch as it is not any system of speculative opinion; still less is it any spirit of curious enquiry, any code of doctrine, or external form of worship, which can conduct us to his presence. Nothing but the heart can come to the **MAKER OF HEARTS**; and the heart cannot come to him, whilst it's attachment to other objects draws it in a contrary direction, and

gives a melancholy proof that salvation, howsoever it may occasionally engage the attention, is not yet become the principal and supreme concern.

So again ; in relating the conversion and repentance of the *returning prodigal*, when he had determined, like a wise child, *to arise and go to his father*, our BLESSED LORD describes the penitent state of the young man's mind in these singular words, "WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF, *he said, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger !"*" (Luke xv. 17.)—What now are we here to understand by the young man's *coming to himself*, but this, that he had before, in the pursuit of vanity, *gone out of himself* ; in other words, he had suffered his best affections, which were his real self, to wander from home amongst forbidden joys, and therefore when these affections returned to taste their true satisfactions, in their FATHER'S HOUSE, the possessor of them might with the utmost propriety be said to *come to himself*.

Let us here stand still awhile to contemplate the sublime the edifying conclusions at which we are now arrived.

Every man, it appears, is his ruling affection, and his real motion, tendency and place of abode is according to that affection. This affection is

infinitely active in it's operations, and no possible limits can be assigned to it's progress. It may indeed, and alas! it too often doth, confine itself to the narrow sphere of the things of this world, and forgetting the place of it's proper, it's higher destination, it deprives itself, in the gratification of appetite, of all it's heavenly energies; it clips it's own wings, if we may be allowed the expression, and remains in consequence a mere creeping insect in this lower, this perishable earth.

But it can also, and the experience of all ages demonstrates such ability; it can, I say, ascend; it can rise above the regions of sin, of vanity and uncertainty; it can move forward, and never stop in it's career, until it reaches the throne of the MOST HIGH GOD. It can there place itself in the presence of JESUS CHRIST; it can implore his healing mercy, favour and protection; it can take it's seat amongst those holy beings, who worship GOD for ever and ever, and it can join in their hallelujahs of endless praise and thanksgiving. It can thus assert the spirituality of it's nature, and convince it's happy possessor, even to a demonstration, that there is a GOD, that there is a heaven, and that all the things of this present *world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.*

Let it not however be supposed, that any affection of man, merely of itself, and independent of DIVINE AID, is capable of these high flights into the eternal world. No—JESUS CHRIST hath declared, “*No man cometh to ME, except My FATHER which hath sent ME draw him,*” [John vi. 44.] and in another place, “*I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto ME.*” [John xii. 32.] The power therefore, by which the affection of man can ascend into the Divine presence, and come to JESUS CHRIST, is from JESUS CHRIST. It is the effect of his unutterable mercy and pure love to his creatures. It is that *drawing* of his grace, by which he continually expresses his ardent will to save us, and accomplishes his blessed purpose, so far as we cease to obstruct, and endeavour to comply with his Divine operations.

I should now proceed to consider the 2nd thing suggested to our attention from these words of JESUS CHRIST, “*Come unto ME,*” but the present time will only allow me to press what has been already said upon your most diligent practice and observation.

It appears that we have all of us from JESUS CHRIST the power continually, to go to JESUS CHRIST, or not to go to Him ; to place ourselves

in His presence and kingdom, or to live at a lamentable distance both from Him, and His holy habitation. This reflection, whilst it is the most animating, so is it likewise the most awful, that can enter into the human mind. But have we well considered this faculty, with which JESUS CHRIST in His mercy supplies us, and have we used it agreeably to the blessed and heavenly purposes for which it is given? A serious attention to the state of our own hearts will at once determine these questions. We have only to discover our ruling affection, and we shall then know at once, whether we are complying with, or rejecting, the gracious invitation, "*Come unto ME.*" I say the *ruling* affection, because this must of necessity lead the whole man; it must govern our thoughts, our prayers, our desires, our works, our faith, none of which can by any possibility bring us unto CHRIST, only so far as the ruling affection is in them; and therefore according as this our affection is, so will our place be, either in the presence of JESUS CHRIST, and within the sphere of His BLESSING, or amongst those unhappy ones of whom it is written, "*Ye will not come unto ME, that ye might have life.*"

Be this then henceforth our principal care, and the chief object of our concern, to discover by

what affection we are led and governed. Let us for this purpose never cease to supplicate the **GOD OF MERCY**, to give us a right knowledge of ourselves, to enable us to see in what direction, whether upwards or downwards, we are moving; whether we are tending towards the **GREAT REDEEMER** and His kingdom, or departing from them into the regions of vanity, misery and sin. Then will He soon open our eyes to discern our real place and motion; and being convinced that the penitent, the humble, the charitable affection can alone introduce us to Him, and place us in His presence, we shall make it the great business of our lives to cherish such a holy guest in our bosoms, till by delivering us from all our sins, and the vanity of worldly expectations, it puts us in the everlasting possession of all that blessedness of which **JESUS CHRIST** spake when He said, "*He that cometh to ME shall never hunger, and he that believeth on ME shall never thirst.*" [John vi. 35.]—**AMEN.**



SERMON XXX.

JESUS CHRIST THE ONLY OBJECT OF DIVINE WORSHIP.

MATT. xi. 28. *Come unto ME, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

IN a former discourse on these words I endeavoured to show what we are here to understand by *coming* to CHRIST, and how the expression has relation to our *minds* or *spirits*, and not to our *bodies*. It was further shown how the *mind* or *spirit* of every man is ever led by it's ruling affection, and *comes* or *goes* according to such affection. If therefore this affection be earthly ; if it be seeking it's supreme bliss in the things of this world only, or in the gratification of mere fleshly appetites, it then departs from the presence and bosom of JESUS CHRIST, and plunges headlong down a dreadful precipice which leads to destruction : But if this affection be heavenly ; if it see through the vanity of mere earthly attachments, and begins to pant

after the eternal goods for which it was created ; if it seeks it's chief happiness in God, and in the communications of his holy and regenerating influences ; in this case it is always departing from the regions of sin and misery, and drawing nearer and nearer unto the kingdom, the throne and presence of JESUS CHRIST and all his blessed angels.

Having thus then considered what is implied in the term of the Divine invitation *come*, I shall now bespeak your further serious attention, whilst I endeavour to point out and to press the further lesson of heavenly instruction which the GREAT REDEEMER intended for us when he added, *Come unto Me*.

When JESUS CHRIST said, *Come unto Me*, He must certainly mean that we should come unto Him as our God, for otherwise it is impossible either to assign a reason *why* we should *come unto Him*, or to explain the manner *how* we should *come unto Him*, since the *coming* here spoken of, as hath been already shewn, relates to our *minds* or *spirits*, and not to our *bodies*.

And if we are to *come unto Him* as our God, then we are to come unto Him also as the DIVINE SOURCE and FOUNTAIN of all spiritual life ; as the giver of every good gift, consequently as our

sole deliverer from sin and death, the sole opener of heaven to us, thus as our **REDEEMER**, our **SAVIOUR**, and our **CREATOR** to the newness of a holy and heavenly life.

Agreeable to these ideas of *coming to Him*, He utters this awful reproof against the Jews, *Ye will not come unto ME that ye might have life ;* (John v. 40.) and announces in another place the extraordinary blessings attending those who are wise to accept his invitation and come unto Him, *He that cometh to ME shall never hunger, and he that believeth in ME shall never thirst.* (John vi. 35.)

How plain is it from these declarations, that **JESUS CHRIST** is the **MOST HIGH GOD**, or as He Himself expresseth it, that **HE and the FATHER** are **ONE**; that **HE is in the FATHER and the FATHER in HIM!** (John x. 30. chap. xiv. 10.) for had it not been so, how could He with any truth or reason have declared Himself the **GIVER OF LIFE**, and the communicator of all things needful to support and satisfy the eternal life of man?

And yet plain as this great truth is, it is lamentable to observe how, in our evil days, it's plainness is overlooked, and it's great and interesting reality denied, whilst some are blind and bold

enough even to utter the dreadful blasphemy and say, that **JESUS CHRIST** was a mere man like ourselves, only with this difference, that he was a good man, accepted and favoured of **GOD**, highly gifted with his gifts, and enriched with his wisdom, like the prophets of old, nevertheless, that He was still but a man.

To say nothing of the impiety of this assertion, it is impossible not to be surprised at the gross ignorance and mis-interpretation of the **WORD OF GOD**, in which it is grounded. For if **JESUS CHRIST** be but a man like ourselves, in what sense could He ever say of Himself, "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life?*" [John xiv. 6.] How could He ever assert, "*Except ye eat My flesh, and drink My blood, ye have no life in you?*" [John vi. 53.] What could be His meaning when He declared to His disciples, "*Without ME ye can do nothing?*" [John xv. 5.] And again, "*All power is given to ME in heaven and in earth; Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world.*" [Matt. xxviii. 18, 20.] Could a mere man, without the most dreadful blasphemy and even insanity, make these declarations? Could any but **GOD** say that He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and the giver of life, power, and truth?

But perhaps you are convinced, from the plain testimony of the Sacred Writings, that **JESUS CHRIST** must be more than a mere man, and nothing less than **GOD**. Nevertheless possibly you do not yet draw nigh, and *come unto HIM* in your worship, as the supreme object of your adoration : Possibly, in your approaches to heaven you address your prayers immediately to another being whom you call the **FATHER**, and not directly to **JESUS CHRIST**, Whom you regard only as a mediatory or interceding **GOD** with the **FATHER**.

But let me admonish you, from the words of my text, to be upon your guard, and to take good heed unto yourselves, in a point so exceedingly interesting, and of so much concern to you. **JESUS CHRIST** says expressly, *Come unto ME* ; and in another place, *Abide in ME* ; [John xv. 4.] and again, *No man cometh unto the FATHER, but by ME* ; [John xiv. 6.] and lastly, *He that seeth ME, seeth the FATHER* ; *I and my FATHER are One* ; *believe ME, that I am in the FATHER, and the FATHER in ME*. [John xiv. 9. Chap. x. 30. Chap. xiv. 11.] And after these plain declarations of **JESUS CHRIST**, can any one, who professes to believe in Him, think it safe to approach to, or worship, or call upon any other Being but Him ? Or rather must it not be evident

to every considerate reader of the Sacred Writings, that **JESUS CHRIST** is the *Only* proper object of Christian adoration, and that whosoever approaches unto Him, approaches at the same time unto all the fulness of **GOD**, because as St. Paul testifies, *In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily.* [Col. ii. 9.]

The mistake therefore of those who, in their addresses to heaven, do not go immediately to **JESUS CHRIST**, but to some other Being, Whom they call the **FATHER**, appears to lie here. They consider the **FATHER** *out of*, and *separate from* **JESUS CHRIST**, instead of believing and acknowledging what the Scriptures testify, that the **FATHER** is in **JESUS CHRIST**, and *One* with Him. For did all Christians really see and confess this great Gospel truth, that the **ETERNAL FATHER**, called in the Old Testament **JEHOVAH**, dwelleth with all his fulness *in* the **SON**, and is *one* with Him, it would then be impossible for them to think of approaching to or finding the **FATHER** *out of* and *separate from* the **SON**, but they would be convinced to their inexpressible comfort, that in approaching to the **SON**, or **DIVINE HUMANITY**, they must of necessity approach to and find the **FATHER**, at the same time, agreeable to the Apostolic declaration, *Through Him*, (viz. **JESUS**

CHRIST) *we have access by one Spirit unto the FATHER.*

And here it would be seen, clear of all dispute and mis-interpretation, and with a brightness of light at once most edifying and consolatory, in what sense **JESUS CHRIST** is properly called, in the Sacred Scriptures, our **MEDIATOR**, our **INTERCESSOR**, and our **ADVOCATE** with the **FATHER**. It would be seen, I say, that these high names are assigned to Him, not according to the gross human idea of one man mediating and interceding with another, after the manner of men, for no such idea can apply at all to the Divine mediation and intercession; as it is written, *My ways are not as your ways, neither my thoughts as your thoughts, saith the LORD*: but **JESUS CHRIST** is called our **MEDIATOR**, **INTERCESSOR**, and **ADVOCATE**, and really is so, because there is no other **MEAN** or **MEDIUM** whereby fallen creatures can approach to and have any communication with the hidden invisible **FATHER**, but that visible **FLESH** or **HUMANITY**, which He assumed here on earth, and afterwards **GLORIFIED** or made **DIVINE**; and therefore, in agreement with this idea, **JESUS CHRIST**, as to this **FLESH** or **HUMANITY**, calls Himself *the Door*, and declares at the same time this awful truth, *He that entereth not in by the door into the sheepfold,*

but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber ; (John x. 1.) and then adds, as our encouragement to come unto HIM, By ME, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. (Verse 9.)

What then remains for us, beloved, but that in compliance with the injunction of the GREAT REDEEMER, we enter in by the DOOR which HE has opened, viz. His DIVINE FLESH, BODY, or HUMANITY? What remains for us, but that in all our prayers and approaches to heaven for Divine grace and protection, we draw nigh unto Him *Who hath all power in heaven and in earth*, even the SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, *in Whom dwelleth personally and bodily all the fulness, glory and blessing of the invisible FATHER, and by Whom this fulness, glory and blessing are communicated unto us?* It may be we have hitherto *climbed up some other way* ; it may be we have approached immediately to the FATHER, *separate from, and out of JESUS CHRIST*, contrary to the express command of the Saviour, *Come unto ME ; I am the DOOR.* It is time then, that we now correct our errors, that we open our eyes, and enter in by the ONLY TRUE DOOR *into the heavenly sheepfold.* It is time, I say, that we should obey the injunction of the GREAT SAVIOUR,

and *come unto HIM*, under the full persuasion that in so doing, we at the same time approach unto, and have conjunction with the **ETERNAL FATHER**, Who *dwelleth in*, and is *one* with **HIM**.

But who are they that are invited thus to come unto Him? *Come unto ME*, saith the **BLESSED JESUS**, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden*. Are we then of this character? Do we begin to feel the *burden* of our corruptions, and do we *labour* earnestly to be delivered from the *load* of our sins, our guilt and our miseries, by a new birth of the Spirit from above? If we have never yet experienced any sensations and desires of this sort stirring within us, we are not yet in a state to come unto **JESUS CHRIST**, and it will of course be a matter of indifference to us whether we approach unto Him or not. But if it be our blessed character to be of the number of those who *labour and are heavy laden*; if we really feel the want and necessity of a **POWER FROM ABOVE**, to rectify our disorders, to purge our corruptions, to help our infirmities, to enlighten our darkness, to comfort us in our sorrows, to remove the guilt of sin, and restore us to righteousness, life and peace—if such, I say, be the state and sensation of our minds, we shall then most gladly accept the Divine invitation, which saith, *Come unto ME*; and in approaching

immediately to the BLESSED JESUS as our GOD and SAVIOUR, and MANIFESTED FATHER, we shall be delighted, we shall be astonished to find our faith more confirmed, our love more kindled, a fuller communication of DIVINE GRACE, a more absolute victory over our passions, a greater elevation of our affections, a purer intercourse with heaven, and a more plentiful reception of power to become the sons of GOD. Thus shall we be convinced by a testimony in our own bosoms, that the BLESSED JESUS is indeed our GOD, our SAVIOUR, and our only help, and abiding continually in Him by faith and love and obedience, we shall join our voices eternally with the heavenly host and say, “ *Worthy is the LAMB that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and blessing ; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*” [Rev. v. 10.]—**AMEN.**

SERMON XXXI.

CHRIST A REFUGE FOR THE AFFLICTED.

MATT. xi. 28. *Come unto ME all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

IN two former discourses on these words, I have endeavoured to show what is implied in the invitation here delivered by the GREAT REDEEMER, "*Come unto ME.*"

It remains now to consider, as was before proposed, what is further implied in the character of those to whom the invitation is addressed, "*Come unto ME ALL YE THAT LABOUR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN.*"

A most consolatory reflection must hence be suggested to every serious and attentive mind, viz. that the religion of JESUS CHRIST is an application to the *miseries* of man, and is designed in an infinite mercy for the removal of them all. Agreeable to this view of the gracious intentions of the gospel, we find it long before predicted of

it's Divine Author, that He was "*anointed to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to comfort all that mourn; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*" (Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, 3.)

From this animating description of the blessed purposes of the REDEEMER'S coming, one would naturally suppose that every human being must feel himself infinitely interested in his reception of such a COMFORTER. One would naturally suppose, that every individual amongst the nations of the earth would willingly and gladly cast himself down at the feet of the HOLY JESUS to receive his blessings,

For who is there that can be in love with *misery*? What child of man but must rejoice to discover and to possess a remedy for all his *troubles*?

Yet alas! we are forced to confess that our most reasonable expectations on this occasion are disappointed. For misery and sorrow still prevail amongst the children of men, and the invitation of the GRACIOUS REDEEMER to those who *labour and are heavy laden* is not accepted to the extent and degree in which it is proposed.

But how shall we account for this strange inconsistency on the part of man? What can be the reason, why a being, who is naturally averse to misery, and intent on securing the greatest possible portion of happiness, should, in this case, act in such direct contrariety to the constitution of his own nature, and thereby plunge himself deeper and deeper into the gulph of that wretchedness which he is so desirous to avoid?

A moment's serious thought will resolve these enquiries, because a moment's serious thought will teach us, that although all mankind naturally shun misery, yet the generality are grossly blinded concerning it's true source. Such is the effect of that dreadful corruption which sin hath introduced into our natures. We are wretched, and until our eyes are opened by the ETERNAL TRUTH, we do not know what it is which gives birth to and constitutes our wretchedness. Like men walking in the dark, we mistake phantoms for realities, and realities for phantoms. And the unhappy consequence is, that although we seek most studiously to shun sorrow and trouble, yet for want of right information respecting their true *cause* and their true *cure*, we remain still involved in calamity, and strangers to peace, verifying the sad description given in the Book of Revelation, "*Thou sayest,*

“ *I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked.*” (Rev. iii. 17.)

It may perhaps seem strange to some to be told that they are miserable, and the subjects of misery, and yet that they are unacquainted with the true source of their misery, or what it is in which their misery consists. In this however there is nothing strange, because it is perfectly agreeable to the whole constitution of human nature. A man, for instance, may have a dreadful and fatal distemper in his body, and yet possibly it may for a time not discover itself. We have every one of us concealed in us the seeds of that death, which is to destroy our present mortal frames, but yet how few are acquainted with the particular natures of those latent seeds ! For the same reason, and agreeable to the analogy of nature, it is possible there may be in man a *latent seed* of misery, and at the same time the man may be in the most complete ignorance concerning such a seed.

And doth not daily experience evince, that this is frequently the case ? For every individual of the human race confessedly shuns misery, and runs away from it as fast as he can. Our business

and our recreations, our labours and our rests, our exertions and our indolences, are nothing else but the various methods we employ of placing ourselves out of the reach of sorrow. But are these methods always successful? or rather doth it not frequently happen, that with all our endeavours to escape misery, we only bind it's chains the faster upon us? Doth it not frequently happen, that in the best concerted plans of human happiness, there is disappointment; and that even in the very hour of festivity and apparent joy, the worm of latent sorrow is preying on the heart? And what can be a surer proof than this, that men either are ignorant of or overlook their true misery? What can more fully demonstrate, that they are not yet acquainted with the deep and real source of their wretchedness?

It appears then that there is in man some hidden ground of *labour* and of *sorrow*, which is in general concealed from his observation, in consequence of the blindness in which he is naturally born, and that until his eyes are opened to discover and see what this hidden ground of labour and sorrow is, he must of necessity remain a miserable stranger to himself, and to all the consolations which the GOSPEL presents to his acceptance.

But what then shall we say is this lurking, this latent malady in man, which it is so difficult to detect? What is this primary, this deep-rooted trouble, which is the only true spring and fountain of all that restlessness and wretchedness, which in so many variegated shapes and forms disturb the empire of peace in the human bosom, and first gave birth to the invitation of the Divine mercy, "*Come unto ME all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?*"

Adored be the God of consolation and of light, we are not left to seek an answer to these questions in the dark, since the WORD of the ETERNAL TRUTH holds forth to our intellectual view the clearest and fullest information on this important subject. For let us hear now the awful sentence, "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.*" [Gen. iii. 17, 19.] Such were the declared consequences, from the mouth of God Himself, of the primary transgression of his covenant of life. Such are the terrible effects of sin, which is nothing else but a departure of the human heart from God: And hence we are fully authorised to establish this sure conclusion, that sin, or a sepa-

ration from **GOD** and His **BLESSED LIFE**, is the latent, but only true source of all human misery and sorrow.

Accordingly we find it written in other parts of the Sacred Scriptures, “ *There is no peace, saith my GOD, for the wicked. Your sins have withholden good things from you. Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein, but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them ; therefore thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the GOD of Israel, behold I will feed them even this people with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.*”

[Jer. ix. 13, 14, 15.] Endless are the passages to the same purport in the **WORD** of the **ETERNAL WISDOM**, all confirming this sure truth, that all the *wormwood* and the *gall* of human life originate in some wrong state of the human heart respecting **GOD** and the communications of his peace ; in other words, that labour and sorrow are the sure consequences of not receiving the **LIFE OF GOD**, and not abiding thereby in conjunction with Him, agreeable to that holy covenant of mercy and truth which he hath from the beginning established.

Behold here then the depth of our **BLESSED**

LORD'S DIVINE meaning, when He addressed his invitation to *all that labour and are heavy laden*. He intended hereby to lead us to the discovery of our primary, our radical misery, as originating in a transgression of his covenant, and a consequent separation of our spiritual faculties and powers from Him and from his blessed life. He intended thus to *lay the axe to the root* of our sorrows, by striking first at the root of our corruptions. He would teach us this lesson of wisdom never to be forgotten, that *separation from God* is the deep source of all our troubles, and that their remedy can never be found, but in renouncing vain affections, and returning unto the ALMIGHTY with *all our heart, and mind, and soul and strength*. Thus, like a wise physician, He would not *heal the hurt of the daughter of his people slightly, saying Peace, peace, when there was no peace*, but calling us from the intemperance and disorder of our selfish passions, to drink the wholesome medicines of his saving mercy and truth, He would give us to taste of that real, that eternal peace from Himself, of which He declares, "*My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth.*" (John xiv. 27.)

And here it merits our most profound consideration, that JESUS CHRIST, in describing the children of affliction to whom He presents His in-

vitation to *rest*, distinguishes them into two classes, one of which He calls "*them that labour*," and the other, "*them that are heavy laden*." But what shall we say is the ground of this *distinction*, or what is the proper reason why some children of sorrow are said to *labour*, whilst others are said to be *heavy laden*? It is impossible to give a satisfactory answer to these questions, until it be seen, and seen clearly, that man is a compound of two distinct principles, called *will* and *understanding*, and that each of these principles is naturally in *disorder*, in other words, is naturally opposed to the *order* and *rest* of heaven. Disorder in the *will* therefore is here said to *labour*, whilst disorder in the *understanding* is said to be *heavy laden*, and the proffered *rest* includes in it a remedy for both disorders, and thus a remedy for all the miseries of man, since there is every reason to conclude that all human sorrows originate in one or other, or both of these disorders. For let man only be wise to come unto JESUS CHRIST, and by obedience to and faith in this REDEEMING GOD, to remove all the disorders of his natural *will* and *understanding*, and he will quickly be made sensible of what that REDEEMER meant when he said, "*I will give you rest*," because he will then quickly be made sensible that he is in possession of

a healing medicine from heaven for the cure of all his troubles.

Be it then our happiness, beloved, as it is our duty, to comply with these saving purposes of our GOD and REDEEMER ! Do we feel the pressure of any sorrow, of any distress or calamity ? Are we sensibly convinced thereby that something or other is in disorder in the little kingdom of our own minds ? Let us attend to the instructive language which it speaks to us, and let us be wise to act accordingly. For it is the voice of GOD to inform us that we are fallen and sinful creatures, and that we are not in that state of conjunction with GOD, and reception of his life, to which he lovingly and continually invites us. Be it our wisdom henceforth to profit by this information, and then all our miseries will be the blessed means of leading us to JESUS CHRIST. Every trouble will be a fresh spur to holiness, every pang will tend to destroy the empire of sin, and to set up the kingdom of the EVERLASTING GOD and his peace in it's stead. Only let us take good heed, that we do not seek *to heal our wounds slightly*. Let us take good heed, lest we look to the world or to ourselves for a cure, and not to the LIVING GOD, by a sincere renunciation of sin, and an entire conversion of our hearts to Him, to receive his life. Thus may

we hope finally to experience in ourselves the blessedness of those holy ones, of whom it is written, "*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.*" [Rev. vii. 14, 15.]—AMEN.



SERMON XXXII.

(PREACHED ON CHRISTMAS DAY.)

WHAT IS MEANT BY SPIRITUAL REST.

MATT. xi. 28. *Come unto ME, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

IN three former discourses on these words, we have considered what we are to understand by *coming to JESUS CHRIST*; and also what is the peculiar character of those who are invited to come, as expressed in the terms *all ye that labour and are heavy laden*. It remains now to consider what that *rest* is, of which **JESUS CHRIST** speaks when He says, *I will give you rest*; and as this subject is closely connected with the great design of that *manifestation of GOD in the flesh*, which we this day celebrate, I have therefore reserved it for our present consideration and most serious attention.

When **JESUS CHRIST** saith to His disciples *I will give you rest*, the words naturally suggest to

the thinking mind two distinct objects of contemplation ;

1st, What is to be understood by the *rest*, of which JESUS CHRIST here speaks ;

2ndly, What is implied in JESUS CHRIST being the *giver* of this rest.

May I bespeak your patient hearing, whilst I endeavour to satisfy your enquiries on both these important objects ; and 1st, on what is to be understood by the *rest*, of which JESUS CHRIST here speaks.

It must be obvious to the most common understanding, that the *rest* here spoken of by the GREAT REDEEMER relates to our *minds*, and not to our *bodies*, in other words, that it is *spiritual* rest, or the *rest* of our *spirits*, and not merely *corporeal* rest, or the *rest* of our *corporeal organs*.

But though this be plain and obvious to the most ordinary apprehension, yet it is to be feared that very few Christians comparatively have been at the pains to enquire within themselves what *spiritual rest* is, and in what it consists. We all know both the nature and the comforts of *bodily rest*, because this is the daily object of our senses, and is taught us by continual experience : But we are not so well acquainted all of us, it is to be feared, with the nature and comforts of *spiritual*

rest, because alas ! in too many instances we are less attentive to our *minds* than to our *bodies*, acting thus in opposition to the counsel of that Divine wisdom which hath said, *Take no thought for the body.* (Matt. vi. 25.) The unhappy consequence is, that we are altogether insensible to the state of our better part, our immortal souls, and therefore are alike ignorant of the nature of *spiritual labour* and *spiritual rest*.

For did we but attend seriously, and in the fear of God, to what is continually passing within ourselves, how plain would it be to discern, that our minds are the subjects both of *labour* and of *rest*, as well as our bodies, with this only difference, that the labour and rest of our minds are *spiritual*, but of our bodies, *natural* ! How plainly too might we in such case discern further, that our minds are never at *rest*, nor can be so, until they are *fully contented* ; and that they are never fully contented, nor can be so, but *in the possession of the SUPREME GOOD* ; and that this SUPREME GOOD is no where else to be found but *in the love of God*, and in a consequent dutiful submission to the guidance and government of His Divine providence, life and order, as it is written, "*He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.*" (Micah vi. 8.)

If we examine therefore attentively into the cause and ground of all that *restlessness, disquietude* and *perturbation*, by which the minds of the generality of mankind are so perpetually vexed and disturbed, in this lower world, we shall find it to be this, and this alone, that they have not as yet, attained unto *full contentment*; and if we enquire further, why they have not yet attained unto a full contentment, we shall discover, *that they are not as yet in possession of the SUPREME GOOD*: And if we ask yet further, why they are not in possession of the SUPREME GOOD, we shall receive no satisfactory answer to our question, but this, that they are seeking after other goods more than the SUPREME, and thus are following the guidance of their own passions, and corrupt affections, more than of the ETERNAL GOD and His righteous administration, agreeable to the awful testimony of the prophet of old, "*They have taken counsel, but not of ME, and have covered with a covering, but not of my spirit, saith the LORD.*" (Isaiah xxx. 1.)

Thus we see one man led by his avarice, another by his ambition, another by his sensuality, another by his love of pleasure, all of them indeed seeking *rest*, but yet not one of them able to find it, for this plain reason, because alas! they seek

it where it never can be found, in the possession of those *inferior goods*, which, when separated from the SUPREME, that is, from GOD and the communications of His MERCY and TRUTH, are not goods, but rather the fruitful sources of every mischief and destruction, as it is written, "*The things which should have been for their wealth, are unto them an occasion of falling.*"

It is therefore an eternal truth, that so long as we continue to be led by our *passions*, or, what is the same thing, by the powers of darkness, who make one with our passions, more than by GOD and by His HOLY SPIRIT, we must of necessity be *restless, unsatisfied, and disturbed*, because our passions, being in connection with infernal agency, are the most cruel tyrants, and the severest task-masters, ever promising us *rest*, but yet never performing what they promise. Whereas, the moment we are wise to renounce this guidance of our corruptions, or rather the guidance of diabolical influence, that we may be at liberty to be led of GOD to the possession of that SUPREME, that ETERNAL GOOD for which He created and redeemed us, in that happy moment, I say, we are made sensible of our *true and proper rest*, because in that happy moment the tyranny of the powers of darkness is destroyed,

their miserable chains are broken, and we are made free to pursue and regain in the FATHER of our being that *blessed rest* of which the Apostle spake when he said, *There remaineth a rest for the people of God*; [Heb. iv. 9.] and which is thus further expressed in the Divine language of the Prophet, *In returning and REST shall ye be saved, in QUIETNESS and in confidence shall be your strength.* [Isaiah xxx. 15.]

Behold here then what we are to understand by that *rest* which the GREAT REDEEMER announced, when He said to His disciples, *I will give you rest!*

The *rest*, which JESUS CHRIST gives, is *spiritual rest*, a rest from the turbulence of our corruptions; a *rest* from the *stormy wind* and *tempest* of infernal agency; a *rest* from all that foolish anxiety, solicitude, and perturbation of mind, which must of necessity molest and vex us, whilst we seek inferior goods more than the SUPREME; a *rest*, in short, of full *contentment* and *satisfaction*, because in rescuing us from the tyranny of infernal association, which is at work in our passions, it conducts us unto the GREAT and HOLY GOD, to receive from Him all that fulness of benediction, consolation, and life, which can alone *content* and *satisfy* the desires of an

immortal being, agreeable to that animated exclamation of the Psalmist, *When I awake up after thy likeness, I shall be SATISFIED with it.* [Psalm xvii. 15.]

Having thus then considered what we are to understand by the *rest* spoken of in the words of my text, I shall now proceed to consider what was 2ndly proposed, viz. what is implied in the declaration of JESUS CHRIST, that HE is the *giver* of this *rest*.

It has been already shown, that no man can attain unto *spiritual rest*, only so far as he is rescued from the *tyranny of his passions*, that is to say, from the tyranny of the *spirits of darkness*, who are at all times in league and confederacy with his passions.

When JESUS CHRIST therefore said to his disciples, *I will give you rest*, He manifestly announced to them at the same time His Divine power over hell and it's infernal inhabitants, agreeable to the description which He afterwards gave of Himself in the Book of the Revelations, where He saith, "*I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and death.*" (Rev. i. 18.)

But whereas no one but the MOST HIGH GOD can possibly have power over the kingdom and

spirits of darkness, therefore when **JESUS CHRIST** declared Himself in possession of this power, (as He most assuredly did declare Himself when He said, *I will give you rest,*) He announced at the same time, by the plainest inference, that He Himself is the **MOST HIGH GOD**.

Again—It has been further shown that no man can attain unto spiritual or eternal *rest*, only so far as he hath communication and conjunction in his mind and life with the **SUPREME GOOD**, that is to say, with **GOD** and **HEAVEN**, for as *there is none good but one, and that is GOD*, so no man can have communication and conjunction with the **SUPREME GOOD**, but who hath communication and conjunction of mind and life with the **ETERNAL GOD** and His invisible kingdom.

When **JESUS CHRIST** therefore said to His disciples, *“I will give you rest,”* He announced further to them His **DIVINE POWER** to admit them to conjunction with **GOD** and His everlasting kingdom, and thus to open heaven to them, agreeable to the description given of Him by the Prophet, where it is written, *“The key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder ; so He shall open, and none shall shut ; and He shall shut, and none shall open :”* [Isaiah xxii. 22.] Or, as it is thus expressed by Himself in the Book of the Revelations, (iii. 7.) *“These*

“ *things saith He that is holy, He that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth :*” He therefore beareth this further testimony concerning Himself, where He saith, “ *The SON OF MAN is LORD also of the Sabbath,*” for Sabbath signifies *rest*, and *rest* consists in being conjoined with GOD and heaven, in will, in thought, in word and work.

But since no one can thus open heaven, and admit to conjunction with GOD, but GOD Himself, therefore when JESUS CHRIST further declared that He had this power, as is manifestly implied in His declaration, *I will give you rest*, He exhibited another most indisputable proof that He is indeed what the inspired Prophet had before called Him, viz. “ **WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE.**” (Isaiah ix. 6.)

Let us here stand still awhile to contemplate on the sublime and edifying conclusions at which we are now arrived, and on the sacred obligations imposed on us by those conclusions.

It appears from what hath been above observed, as well as from the concurrent testimony of the Sacred Scriptures throughout, that the Wonderful Person, whose nativity we this day celebrate, was indeed the MOST HIGH GOD ; and

further, that He was **GOD** *made Man*, for the purpose of calling us His sinful and lost creatures back again to our proper *rest*, and also to give us power to recover that *rest*.

Accordingly, when this **INCARNATE GOD** was desirous of leading His disciples to confirm in themselves this heavenly persuasion of His Divinity, He asked them the solemn, but profitable question, “*Whom do ye say that I am?*” (Matt. xvi. 15.) He proposeth the same interesting question to every one of us at this day, as if He should say, “Are ye
 “sensible of the High Dignity of my birth and
 “character? Do ye distinguish well between **ME**
 “and all others who have come before **ME**? Do
 “ye know that I am indeed that **GOD**, Whom the
 “prophets of old announced should come to save
 “the world? And do ye accordingly *come unto*
 “**ME** as your **ONLY GOD** and **SAVIOUR**? Or are
 “ye yet of the unhappy number of those deluded
 “ones, *who will not come unto ME that ye might*
 “*have life*, but like *thieves* and *robbers* would
 “*climb up into the sheepfold some other way?*”

But further—it has been shown above, agreeable to the testimony of the Sacred Scriptures throughout, that the violent and disturbed spirit of man can never find *rest*, but so far as he is delivered

from the tyranny of his *passions* ; that is to say, of the powers of darkness ; and that no power in heaven or in earth can deliver him from that tyranny, but the Omnipotence of JESUS CHRIST.

Let us fancy then that we hear JESUS CHRIST again further pressing His solemn enquiry, and asking every one of us, “ Have ye as yet *come unto* “ ME to receive from ME power over your cor-
 “ rptions? Do ye, through My humility, re-
 “ nounce and crucify your own natural pride ;
 “ through My contentment overcome your own
 “ natural covetousness ; through My Divine patience
 “ resist your own natural impetuosities? Or are
 “ ye still of the number of those infatuated ones,
 “ who either seek to be saved by their own strength,
 “ or who entertain the vain hope of finding *rest*,
 “ before they have gained the victory over them-
 “ selves and their corrupt propensities ?”

Lastly—it has been shown, and the constant voice of the WORD of the MOST HIGH confirms the interesting truth, that *heavenly rest* can never enter into and find a place in the disturbed bosom of man, until his mind and life be open to and have conjunction with the SUPREME GOOD, that is to say, with GOD, His LIFE, His SPIRIT, and His KINGDOM.

Let us then again imagine that we hear JESUS CHRIST ask, "Have ye attained my children to this blessed communication and conjunction? And do ye see that it is only attainable by coming unto ME? Do ye see that *all the fulness* of the EVERLASTING FATHER *dwells bodily* in ME, so that I and *my* FATHER are ONE? and that therefore it is impossible for you to have any communication or conjunction with the MOST HIGH GOD and His kingdom only so far as ye seek it in my glorified body and person, since *no one cometh to the FATHER but by ME?* Do ye see therefore, that it is in vain for you to think of *finding rest unto your souls*, until ye come unto ME, your manifested, visible, and approachable GOD, in whom the unmanifested, invisible and unapproachable is made known and brought nigh unto you; for *he that seeth ME, seeth the FATHER*, and therefore *By ME, if any man enter-in, he shall go in and out, and find pasture?*"

Happy is the man who, from the solemnity of the present holy festival, is taught thus to approach and draw nigh unto the INCARNATE GOD, as his ONLY GOD and SAVIOUR! Happy is he who, from the example, the precepts, the combats, the

victories of this **INCARNATE GOD**, is led to seek dominion over his corruptions, and is enabled to attain it! Yea, thrice happy is he who, through the mysterious union of the **DIVINE** and **HUMAN** natures in the **GOD-MAN JESUS CHRIST**, finds a *door* perpetually open to the **SUPREME GOOD**, and entering in at that *door*, experiences in his peaceful bosom the fulfilment of the **REDEEMER'S** promise in my text, "*I will give you rest.*"—**AMEN.**



SERMON XXXIII.

(PREACHED ON PALM SUNDAY.)

THE CHRISTIAN'S EXALTATION TO A THRONE.

REV. iii. 21. *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my FATHER in his throne.*

By *him that overcometh* is here manifestly meant the conqueror of his corruptions, or the subduer of all those natural evils, which are contrary to God, and which separate him from God. That every Christian is called to be such a conqueror, is plain from the concurrent testimony of the Sacred Scriptures, in which are to be found so many admonitions to *fight the good fight of faith*; to *take up the daily cross*; to *endure afflictions patiently fighting against sin*; to *put on the whole armour of God*; to *be good soldiers of JESUS CHRIST*, with many other similar expressions, all of them announcing that the Christian life is a life of combat, and that consequently every Christian

is called to act in the double character of combatant and conqueror.

Much might be said, and said to edification, on the nature, progress and effects both of the Christian combat and the Christian victory ; but what I wish at present to press more particularly upon your attention, is the encouragement given in the words of my text to engage in such combat, and to attain such victory.

This encouragement may be regarded in a *two-fold* point of view ;

1st. The encouragement presented in these words of JESUS CHRIST, *To him that overcometh will I give to sit with ME in my throne ;* and

2ndly. The encouragement further held out to all Christians in these words, *As I also overcame, and am set down with my FATHER in His throne.*

I shall begin with the encouragement expressed in these words, *To him that overcometh will I give to sit with ME in my throne.*

JESUS CHRIST had before, during His abode on earth, given this same encouragement to His disciples, where He says, “ *Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed ME in the regeneration, when the SON of MAN shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones,*

judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matt. xix. 28.) And accordingly, when the beloved disciple of old was permitted to take a view of the eternal world, and to behold the great realities which there existed, and the interesting events which were there accomplishing, he also speaks of *thrones*, which it was allowed him to see, for thus he testifies in the Book of Revelation written by him, "*I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.*" (Rev. xx. 4.)

It is a great certainty therefore that there are *thrones* in heaven, and that they, who have *followed JESUS CHRIST in the regeneration*, will sit upon them, and exercise *judgment*. But what enlightened eye cannot discern, that both the *thrones* which shall be sat upon, and the *judgment* which shall be exercised, like all other external appearances in the invisible world, are *types* and *figures* of spiritual and eternal realities; and that the spiritual and eternal realities, which they figure and represent, are things altogether perfectly distinct from the types and figures themselves? Thus *a throne*, we know, is the type and figure of *dominion*, and to *exercise judgment* is the type and figure of *prudence*, discretion and discrimination, in the use of that dominion. The two expressions therefore of *sitting on a throne* with JESUS CHRIST

and *exercising judgment*, when taken unitedly, denote 1st, *spiritual dominion*, derived from the Divine Love and Wisdom of JESUS CHRIST, over all evil principles and false persuasions of life and faith; and 2ndly, *spiritual light and truth*, derived from the same Divine Love and Wisdom, enabling man, in all cases, and under all circumstances, to *judge righteous judgment*, and to act in agreement with it's dictates.

For according to any other view of the subject, what could be the delight or reward of *sitting upon a throne*, and *judging the twelve tribes of Israel*? If nothing else was involved in *sitting upon a throne*, and *exercising judgment*, but the mere external acts themselves, separate from the internal and spiritual things which those acts represented, in this case the promised recompense would be nothing more than a mere natural and temporal pre-eminence, such as is enjoyed by the powers and princes of this world, and not a spiritual and eternal pre-eminence. Besides, JESUS CHRIST hath declared, that all judgment belongs unto Himself, because He is the SON OF MAN, consequently it cannot be exercised by any angel or spirit.

That the spiritual and eternal rewards of the righteous are thus expressed under *natural figures*

and *images*, as in this case under the figure and image of a *throne* and of *judgment*, and that each such distinct figure and image involves in it some distinct reward, is manifest from the mode of expression adopted in other parts of the Sacred Scriptures, and especially in the chapter from whence my text is taken, and also in the preceding chapter. Thus to the church of Ephesus it is said in the preceding chapter, *To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life.* Again to the church of Smyrna, *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* Again to the church of Pergamos, *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written.* So likewise to the church of Thyatira, *To him that overcometh will I give power over the nations, and I will give him the morning star.* And in the chapter from whence my text is taken, it is said to the church of Sardis, *He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment.* In like manner to the church in Philadelphia, *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.* To which instances may be added the remarkable one in the parable, where *Lazarus* is described as *lying in Abraham's bosom.* In all these passages, I say, it is manifest,

that some distinct eternal spiritual reward is expressed under each natural image and figure, for according to any other idea, what recompense can be conceived as annexed to *eating of a tree*; to *wearing a crown*; to *eating hidden manna*; to *having a white stone and in the stone a new name written*; to *having power over the nations*, and to *be gifted with the morning star*; also to *being cloathed with white raiment, and made a pillar in the temple of God*; and lastly to *lying in Abraham's bosom*? Who therefore cannot see plainly that all the above natural expressions of reward and of blessedness are merely *figurative*, and that to understand them aright, we must first discover the **GREAT ETERNAL and SPIRITUAL REALITIES** which those figures were designed to express and make manifest?

But to return to the reward promised in my text to him that overcometh, under the striking figure of *sitting with JESUS CHRIST in His throne*.

This figure also, like those above mentioned, involves in it spiritual and eternal recompense of bliss, and the distinct recompense of bliss which it involves is this, *first*, that to him that overcometh it will be given to have conjunction with **JESUS CHRIST**, in his eternal rest and peace, signified by *sitting with* that **GREAT CONQUERING GOD**:

Secondly, that to him that overcometh it will be given to have dominion over all evil, both internal and external, both of mind and body, signified by sitting with JESUS CHRIST in His throne, for the throne of JESUS CHRIST manifestly involves in it such spiritual, blessed and eternal dominion.

Behold here then the animating encouragement held out to all Christians to combat and overcome their corruptions, and thus to gain the victory over all their spiritual enemies ! Every exertion in this interesting warfare leads immediately to conjunction with JESUS CHRIST in His eternal rest, peace and dominion. Every bad passion subdued, every bad temper mortified, every rebellious inclination and thought opposed, has the happy tendency to elevate man above himself, and exalt him to communion with the ETERNAL. For the true Christian is not left to struggle in his own strength only, when engaged in combat with his corruptions and the powers of darkness ; because an OMNIPOTENT GOD is with him, aiding him in all his struggles, and raising him to a throne, agreeable to the gracious promise of that GOD, when he saith to His disciples, *Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy.* [Lake x. 19.] By virtue of this delegated power of the GREAT

REDEEMER, the true Christian is enabled to go on *conquering and to conquer*, until *all enemies are subdued under his feet*. He ascends thus *the throne of DIVINE AUTHORITY and ADMINISTRATION*, and from this throne he *exercises judgment*, but then it is a judgment not over others, but over himself, and especially over the principles of evil, of disorder, and of error in himself. For with respect to others, he is all tenderness, compassion and forbearance, recollecting his own infirmities, but with respect to himself he is all rigour, and the strictness of unrelenting justice, but then it is a rigour and a justice qualified and softened by the sweetest love and charity, because requiring no sacrifice but that of selfish and worldly love at the altar of the Divine mercy, goodness and truth. Thus the true Christian lives free and happy in the possession of an eternal sovereignty; sitting with **JESUS CHRIST** *in His throne*, and from that *throne judging right*; ruling over the little kingdom of his own mind with the golden sceptre of heavenly wisdom; and over the kingdoms of other minds with the gentle sway of the most forbearing patience and charity; hating nothing but sin, and loving and rejoicing in every thing that has a tendency to destroy the

tyranny of passion, and to erect in it's place the empire of universal order, peace and love.

I should now proceed to the consideration of the further encouragement presented in the words of my text to all Christians, to engage in combat against their corruptions and disorders, which encouragement is expressed in these words, *As I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne*: But as the service of the morning has been already protracted to a considerable length, and as the above subject seems well calculated for our attention on the approaching festival of our LORD'S resurrection, I shall defer the discussion of it till that day.

SERMON XXXIV.

(PREACHED ON EASTER DAY.)

THE CHRISTIAN'S EXALTATION TO A THRONE.

REV. iii. 21. *To him that overcometh will I give to sit with ME in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my FATHER in his throne.*

IN a former discourse on these words, we considered the encouragement which they presented to all Christians, to engage manfully in combat against their corruptions. This encouragement was pointed out more particularly from the former part of my text, *To him that overcometh will I give to sit with ME in my throne*, by which words, it was shown, is expressed a promise of everlasting conjunction with JESUS CHRIST in His rest, in His peace, and in His dominion, to all those who, through His Divine grace and power, gain the victory over their spiritual enemies.

I shall now proceed to consider, as a subject peculiarly adapted to the solemn festival which we

this day celebrate, the further encouragement given to all Christians to engage in the same important combat, from the concluding words of my text, "*As I also overcame, and am set down with my FATHER in His throne.*"

The words present to our view two distinct objects of most weighty consideration ;

1st, The combats and victories of JESUS CHRIST, as expressed in these words, *As I also overcame ; and*

2ndly, The blessed effect of those combats and victories in exalting Him, as to His HUMANITY, to an eternal union with His DIVINITY in power and in dominion, as expressed in these words, "*And am set down with my FATHER in His Throne.*"

In regard to the first of these objects, viz. the combats and victories of JESUS CHRIST, it is impossible to conceive any other object of equal importance, magnificence and edification. For what are all the combats and victories of the kings and princes of this world, when compared with the combats and victories of the OMNIPOTENT GOD, subduing the powers of darkness ; rescuing His beloved children from their tyranny ; saying unto death, "*I will be thy plagues, and to the grave, I will be thy destruction,*" thus opening

in triumphant glory the gates of heaven and eternal life to all his penitent and believing creatures ?

But possibly it will be asked by some, How could an OMNIPOTENT GOD be engaged in combat ? How durst any enemy rise up against Him, and how was He to be approached by such an enemy ?

To these questions I beg leave to reply, that no enemy *durst*, and no enemy *could* approach the OMNIPOTENT GOD to fight against Him ; consequently the OMNIPOTENT GOD, as GOD, could never be engaged in combat. But it is well to be considered, that JESUS CHRIST was both GOD and *Man* ; in other words, He had both a *Divine* and *Human* nature ; and though His *Divine nature* was out of the reach of all assault, yet His *Human nature*, before it became fully GLO-RIFIED, or made DIVINE, was *compassed with infirmity*, was exposed to the malice of wicked men, and also of the powers of darkness, and thus made subject to trials, to temptations and sufferings.

Behold here then the true source of all the *combats* of the GREAT REDEEMER, and the true source likewise of all His *victories* ! His *combats* were the consequences of His assuming the *human nature*, for the purpose of saving mankind. For

had not God been thus manifested in the flesh, the powers of darkness could never have been subdued and removed from man; and if the powers of darkness had never been subdued and removed from man, then man must needs have perished everlastingly. JESUS CHRIST therefore, in His astonishing mercy, submitted to engage in this dreadful conflict against the enemies of man's salvation. With this blessed view He assumed our flesh, He yielded up Himself to be tried and tempted in every possible manner, even unto death. But mark now the glorious fruits of all this warfare! Through His INDWELLING DIVINITY, every combat was crowned with victory. The powers of darkness were thus subdued and removed from man, agreeable to the declaration of the GREAT CONQUEROR, where He says on the occasion, "*Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*" (John xii. 31.) The HUMANITY of the GLORIFIED JESUS became thus the receptacle and abode of the SUPREME GODHEAD, being eternally united with It, agreeable to those other words of the same DIVINE CONQUEROR, "*Now is the SON OF MAN glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify*

“*Him.*” (John xiii. 31, 32.) Thus in and through this VISIBLE, this GLORIFIED or DIVINE HUMANITY, all were to have access to the hidden invisible DIVINITY dwelling in It, agreeable to those other words of the same GOD-MAN, “*I am the door ; by ME if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*” (John x. 9.) Heaven therefore was opened through the triumphs of this INCARNATE GOD, because all who did the work of repentance, and believed in Him, received from Him “*power to become the sons of God.*” (John i. 12.)

And this leads me to the second point of consideration suggested by the words of my text, viz : the blessed effect of the above combats and victories, as expressed in these words, “*And am set down with my Father in His throne.*”

It has been already shown in a former discourse, that to sit on a throne is a *figurative* expression, in the Sacred Scriptures, involving in it the fulness of peace and dominion. When this expression therefore is applied to JESUS CHRIST, and He is represented as *sitting on His FATHER’S throne*, it must doubtless denote Divine peace and dominion communicated to the GLORIFIED HUMANITY of JESUS CHRIST, by virtue of His inseparable union with the ETERNAL FATHER dwelling in Him.

For such is the uniform testimony of the Sacred Scriptures on this most interesting and edifying subject. In the LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, the DIVINE and HUMAN natures, of the FATHER and the SON, are made One, so that JESUS CHRIST may properly be called GOD-MAN, or MAN-GOD, His very BODY or HUMANITY being made DIVINE, or as He Himself terms it, being *Glorified*. Thus He is said to *sit in His FATHER'S THRONE*, or as it is otherwise expressed, to have *all power in heaven and in earth*, because, in consequence of the above union, the Divine power and dominion of the ETERNAL FATHER is transferred to the SON in His GLORIFIED HUMANITY, as the SON Himself testifies where He says, "FATHER *all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine*;" [John xvii. 10.] and as the Apostle testifies when he says, "*In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily.*" [Col. ii. 9.] The HUMANITY of JESUS CHRIST therefore is totally distinct from the humanity of other men, because it is a DIVINE HUMANITY; by virtue of it's receiving and containing "*all the fulness of the GODHEAD*;" and thus It is "*Life in Itself*," [John v. 26.] whereas the humanity of every other man is only a *recipient* of life.

Such then is the true and proper idea of

JESUS CHRIST “ *sitting with his Father in His throne.*” I would add, such is the *spiritual* idea ; for it is well to be noted, that on all subjects of a religious nature, there are always *two* ideas, the one natural, and the other *spiritual*, the *natural idea* being the idea of the natural mind, and the *spiritual idea* being the idea of the spiritual mind. It is further to be noted, that the natural idea is always grounded in the letter of the Sacred Scriptures, whereas the spiritual idea is always grounded in the *spirit* of those holy records. When therefore the mere natural mind thinks of **JESUS CHRIST** *sitting with his Father in His throne*, it always thinks of Him according to a mere *natural* idea, and in agreement with that idea, it figures to itself the **FATHER** and the **SON**, as two distinct separate beings, sitting on the same throne: Whereas when the spiritual mind thinks on the same interesting subject, it always thinks according to a *spiritual* idea, grounded in the *spirit* of the **ETERNAL WORD**, and in agreement with that idea, it figures to itself the **FATHER** and the **SON**, or the **DIVINE** and **HUMAN** natures of **JESUS CHRIST**, as **ONE**, because it sees the whole of the **GODHEAD** incorporated in the **GLORIFIED BODY** OF **HUMANITY** OF **JESUS CHRIST**, and thus sees this **BODY** OF **HUMANITY** exalted to all

Divine power and sovereignty, by virtue of it's full and complete union with the **ETERNAL FATHER** dwelling in It.

Behold here then the additional blessed encouragement held forth to every Christian to combat and overcome his natural corruptions and disorders ! For by such warfare and victory he is not only exalted to spiritual rest and dominion, according to what was shown in a former discourse, as expressed by *sitting with JESUS CHRIST in His throne*, but he is admitted to the high honour and distinguished privilege of walking in the footsteps of that **GREAT REDEEMING GOD**, and following Him. He goes thus hand in hand with **JESUS CHRIST** in the same path to glory and immortality. As he dies with Him unto sin, he rises with Him unto righteousness ; as he enters with Him into combat, he is partaker with Him in His victories. Every part therefore of his life is a faithful transcript of the life of his **GOD** and **SAVIOUR**. His self-denials, his oppositions to the powers of darkness, his resistance against temptation, his watchings, his prayers, his jealousy over himself, his good works, all these testify the **DIVINE PATTERN** which he imitates, and the **DIVINE ORIGINAL** which he copies. Whilst therefore the careless children of this world, in forgetting the example

of JESUS CHRIST, lose sight of the way that leadeth to heaven, and go down, without knowing it, to the gates of death, the true Christian, by following that example, turns his back by degrees on the regions of misery, and ascends in the same proportion to the bright mansions of everlasting bliss. For as JESUS CHRIST by His combats and victories, was finally admitted, as to His HUMANITY, to an eternal union of rest and dominion with His INDWELLING DIVINITY, so the true Christian, by his combats and victories, is finally admitted to an eternal conjunction with JESUS CHRIST in all that Divine life and peace and power, by which he was enabled to tread in His footsteps and follow His example.

To conclude—Do we aspire then after the distinguished honour of *sitting with JESUS CHRIST in His throne*? Would we attain thus unto everlasting dominion over all the enemies of our salvation, and enter into the eternal rest *which remaineth for the people of God*? Is it our wish to become real partakers of the glory of this day's solemnity, by experiencing a resurrection in ourselves from the death of sin unto the newness and blessedness of heavenly life? We must then recollect that the promise of all these high privileges and favours

is made exclusively to *him that overcometh*. We must recollect at the same time that to *overcome* implies spiritual combat, and that spiritual combat implies resistance to the powers of temptation; a patient unremitted warfare against our natural corruptions; the restraint of every inclination, thought, word and work, which is not in agreement with the **LIFE**, the **SPiRIT**, the **PURiTY** and the **TRUTH** of **JESUS CHRIST**.

Behold here the blessed, the direct path to victory, to dominion, to everlasting rest and peace for all Christians! Behold the way which **JESUS CHRIST** Himself went, and in which He has called all His disciples to follow Him! Behold therefore the true glory, the exalted dignity, the sublime transcending sovereignty to which we are all invited! It is to *sit on a throne*, and on a throne infinitely exceeding in splendour, in pre-eminence and in dominion the highest thrones of all the princes of this world, because it is the throne of **JESUS CHRIST**, conferring upon us power over our corruptions, the conquest of our passions, rest from sin, and the tranquillity of heaven. Can any human glory equal this? Is there any greatness, any happiness in this world to be compared with it? Blessed then are all they who form their lives

according to the tenor of the Divine words of the GREAT REDEEMER in my text, "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with ME in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my FATHER in His throne.*"—AMEN.

FINIS.