

SERMONS

BY

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EDITED BY

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John L. Girardeau

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

Many of the admirers of Dr. Girardeau will doubtless be disappointed when they read these sermons. They will remember their emotions under the spell of his eloquence, and will be surprised that they do not experience them again as they read this volume.

Dr. Girardeau had all of the gifts that belong to the orator,—figure, voice, gesture, emotion, imagination and magnetism. When he was on his feet before an audience, the spirit of the orator dominated him. He was also a profound thinker,—analytical, logical, cautious, and clear. When he sat down to write, the spirit of the thinker dominated him. These sermons were written, and, with the exception of the one on “The Last Judgment,” are not as eloquent as those that were outlined at his desk and filled out as he spoke. It has often been said that sermons were to be heard, not read. He understood this, and seldom wrote a sermon. He was frequently urged to prepare a volume for publication, and went so far as to write a list of subjects to be treated, but he carried the scheme no further. The editor and the committee concur in the opinion that all of the sermons left by him should be published, even though they do not fully portray his power as a preacher. They show the doctrines that he preached, and his general method of presenting truth; some of them treat timely subjects, and others are connected with important events.

There is another reason for their publication. Our clearest notions of the religious life of any age are gathered from the sermons of the representative men

of that age. When the future historian of the church shall come to portray the life and experience of our time he will find here the evidence of the existence of that type of religion that has always been the glory of the kingdom of Christ.

GEORGE A. BLACKBURN.

Columbia, S. C.

INTRODUCTION

In the year 1897 a committee was appointed by the four synods having control of Columbia Theological Seminary to assist the editor, Rev. G. A. Blackburn, in examining and preparing for the press the unpublished writings of the Rev. John L. Girardeau, D. D., L.L. D. The principal function of this committee has been to determine, after a careful examination of a mass of material, what should be published and what withheld. With the present volume the labors of this committee will end. It has been a precious privilege to take some part, however humble, in giving permanent form to the thoughts of so distinguished a servant of Christ.

As this is to be a volume of sermons, perhaps the introductory words can be spoken more freely by the committee, through its chairman, than by the editor. My acquaintance with Dr. Girardeau began while I was pursuing my preparatory studies in the Theological Seminary at Columbia. At that time the Synod of South Carolina contained an unusually large number of remarkable preachers. Drs. Smythe, Thornwell, and Palmer were in their prime. A number of younger men were also coming rapidly into favor. Dr. Girardeau, in public estimation, was easily in the front rank of the younger generation; and he continued to hold the first place as long as he lived. For many years he was regarded as the great preacher of this section of the church.

Dr. John A. Broadus, of the Southern Baptist Church, relates that when he entered the ministry he

wrote to his former chaplain at the University of Virginia for some hints that would be helpful to him. To his request he received the following laconic reply: "Study Butler's Analogy and preach to the negroes, and it will make a man of you." Perhaps this counsel was never more literally followed or more thoroughly vindicated than by Dr. Girardeau. The white people of Charleston built for the colored population a large and handsome Presbyterian church. Dr. Girardeau became the pastor of the flock. It was in this field he won his great reputation as a pulpit orator. Visitors to Charleston had placed conspicuously before them the kindly relation of master and slave, as well as the profound interest felt by the white Christian for the spiritual welfare of their colored brethren. It is a mistake to suppose that great talents are wasted on plain people. To preach the gospel successfully to the poor demands an ability to bring the high themes of religion down to the level of ordinary understanding, or, rather, the capacity to quicken the sluggish intellect and elevate it to the plane of Scripture truth. Dr. Girardeau gave heed to the first part of the counsel as well as to the second. He was all his life an intense student. His bent was in the direction of those studies which most severely tax and, consequently, most effectively develop the intellectual powers. The volumes of his works already published vindicate this remark. In two of them we have the fruits of his speculations in philosophy. The other three show how profoundly he had meditated on theological problems.

Dr. Girardeau belonged, in his measure, to the highest class of great preachers. The church has never lacked effective preachers at any period in which she was alive to her great mission. But the number of

those who have greatly impressed their own generation as living preachers, and continued to impress subsequent generations through their published discourses, is small. Weight of matter is indispensable to the deepest and most abiding impression in the case of the living preacher: it is all that is left after the voice of the preacher has been silenced by death. Dr. Girardeau possessed many qualities which appeared to advantage in the pulpit. In person and voice, in intellectual vigor, in sweep of fancy, in depth of feeling, and in dramatic power he was richly endowed. But these accessories are all gone. They live only in tradition. It is believed, however, that his discourses will bear publication. That they "are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve, as in a vial, the present efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them." We believe also that there is a demand for such a volume as this. Dr. Girardeau was more widely known as a preacher than as a teacher. And many are anxious to welcome a volume of his sermons who feel no especial interest in his philosophical or theological speculations.

In the selection of these discourses regard has been had to the future usefulness of the author as well as to his reputation. Most of them are the products of his matured powers, and most of them were delivered in the ordinary course of his pulpit ministrations.

Before closing, it may be well to express the opinion that a biography of Dr. Girardeau should be furnished to the church. His piety was deep and fervent. It was perhaps his most characteristic quality. The life of such a man, carefully prepared and giving prominence to this trait, would be very helpful at this time.

If it should be found, as we apprehend may be the case, that he has preserved among his papers but little to aid the editor in such an undertaking, recourse may be had to the current history of the Southern church during the period in which he was a prominent actor. He took an earnest and influential part in the discussion and settlement of many questions affecting the worship, polity, and policy of the church.

W. T. HALL.

Columbia, S. C., June 13, 1905.

THE LAST JUDGMENT

2 Cor. v. 10. *“For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”*

I invite your attention, my brethren, to a subject of more than usual solemnity and awe. And I confess that I approach it not without fear, lest, on the one hand, a theme of terrific grandeur and transcendent interest should suffer from inadequacy of treatment, and lest, on the other, it should meet with a reception disproportionate to its claims, and only render more fearful a subsequent thoughtlessness and disregard. Conscious of this danger, I would earnestly invoke the influence of the Holy Spirit to impress upon every heart the truth which may be spoken.

The text brings to our notice the last act in the great drama of this world's history. Among minds fond of speculating upon the probable issues of the future, considerable discussion has taken place as to certain circumstances connected with the last judgment which can never be clearly ascertained before the event itself. The precise time of its arrival, the place of assembly,

NOTE.—There is nothing in the manuscript of Dr. Girardeau to show when this sermon was prepared, nor where it was preached. It always made a profound impression, and congregations frequently requested him to preach it a second time. His most judicious friends never regarded it as the equal of many of his other sermons, especially of those that dealt with the completeness of the work of Christ, and the extent of His love for His people, but unfortunately none of these were written.

and the duration of the trial are matters which, however we may speculate about them, God has never seen fit definitely to reveal.

In regard to the time when the judgment will begin we are, happily for ourselves, in total darkness. The Scriptures assure us that the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night, and that when men shall solace themselves with the cry of peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. The very ignorance which shuts out the knowledge of the time is the most powerful incentive to diligent preparation. "Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh."

As to the locality, it has been conjectured,—with how much truth I venture not to say,—from a certain passage in the First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, in which the apostle says, we shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, that the atmosphere which environs the earth will be the scene of the last great assize.

With reference to the duration of the judicial process, it has been the opinion of some that the usual phraseology in which the Scriptures advert to the day of judgment is to be received according to the interpretation of prophecy, and that from the important relation which it will sustain to the present state, the judicial process will mark a new dispensation. Most, however, understand the language of Scripture in its simplest and most obvious sense, and suppose that there will be a definite day in which the final destiny of all mankind shall, with a rapidity not impossible to almighty power and infinite knowledge, be at once

and forever settled. "For He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness."

I. There are two independent but concurrent lines of argument which furnish a powerful rational presumption in favor of a future judgment. In the first place, there is something significant in the fact that the decisions of conscience are felt not to be ultimate, but prospective and premonitory. Conscience represents God in the human soul, and derives its authority entirely from Him. It is God's law, God's court, and God's bar in the nature of man. It is this which gives it its power to bestow peace upon the righteous and to break the carnal security of the ungodly. Were it not for the felt conviction that it refers its decisions to the sanction of a higher tribunal, men might be content to flout its feeble utterances and laugh at its vain protests amidst the furious clamor and the deafening uproar of the passions. Imbecility would render the court ridiculous. But its finger points to another court and another bar. It pronounces its decisions with references to the future. This it is which clothes it with indisputable authority. It is felt to be founded on eternal rectitude and supported by the resources of omnipotence. The pervading conviction is—and it is one which cannot be shaken from the soul—that these solemn sentences will be ratified by the doom of a higher judge, and carried into execution by an invincible arm. There thus arises out of the depths of our moral nature an awful testimony to the certainty of a future and final judgment.

Nor, in the next place, ought the fact to be overlooked that a moral government, embodying in itself as an integral element the distribution of rewards and

punishments is begun but not consummated in the present life. It is clear that the providence of God, both in its natural and moral aspects, proceeds in some degree upon the principle of retribution; but it is equally clear that that principle is not employed to its legitimate extent. There does not appear to be in all cases a precise adaptation of rewards and penalties to the nature of moral actions and the conduct of moral agents. For, although it must be admitted that no suffering, however severe, is undeserved even by the most pious, still the fact cannot be disguised that some godly men are called upon to endure more frequent and protracted trials than some who are ungodly. Here lies the difficulty. And on the supposition that there will be no adequate distribution of retributive consequences in another state than the present, it would be an inexplicable anomaly. But admit the justice of God as the moral governor of mankind, and the presumption is irresistible in favor of the completion of the now existing scheme of retribution in a state beyond the grave. Of that moral government which is here begun, and enforced just enough to establish its leading principles, the consummate exhibition is laid over to another life.

The wicked and reckless transgressor of every principle of right, the man who tramples under foot every obligation to his Maker and every sacred relation to humanity, who curses God to His face, and soaks his hands in the warm and bubbling life-blood of his brother; he who revels in filth and licentiousness, and slaughters on the altar of his lusts the dearest covenants between man and man, who creeps like a viper into the bosom of virtue and fastens his poisoned fangs

upon unsuspecting and helpless innocence,—yes, the monster whom the earth groans under and the heavens frown upon, upon whose head the voice of injured and outraged humanity cries bitterly for vengeance,—this man is permitted to flourish like the green bay-tree beside quiet waters, and at last it may be without a struggle or a pang to lie down in peace and die. Is this, can this be, all that the justice of a perfect being requires?

Now turn and look. Here is a man who is actuated by a constant desire to glorify his God; who, with every morning's light and evening's shade gathers around the family-altar the wife and children whom he recognizes as the gifts of his Heavenly Father; who delights to tread the courts of the Lord's house, to sing His praise and hear His word; who respects every relation which binds him to his fellow-man; who would rather be the "trampled on than the trampler," carrying a heart from whose sweet and brimful fountain are ever gushing streams of charity to all around him; who sits and watches till the breaking day by the dying bedside of his foe: who gently wipes away the orphan's tears, and by timely compassion causes the widow's heart to sing for joy.—this man is left to drag out a life of poverty and want and squalid wretchedness, and at the last to roast in the martyr's flame or to stretch himself on the bare, cold earth, and breathe out his spirit without a friend to close his dying eye. Oh, say, is there no future judgment? Is there no tribunal beyond the grave where this man will be rewarded? Yea, there is, there must be. Justice herself rises in indignant majesty at the question, and with gathering brow and portentous finger points to a flaming bar, at which, with equal balances in hand, an impartial and

infallible Judge will rectify the inequalities of life and assign to every soul a proper and incontestable doom.

These powerful presumptions of reason in favor of the fact of a future judgment are so amply sustained by numerous and explicit testimonies of Scripture that I will not pause to signalize them, but pass on to remark in the next place:

II. Jesus Christ will be the final Judge. With respect to judicial authority it is true that the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will be the Judge. This the Psalmist magnificently sets forth when he says, "The heavens shall declare His righteousness, for God is Judge Himself. The mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof." Doubtless the terrors and splendors, the glory and the wrath of absolute and infinite Deity will be gathered around the judgment-throne, and render insufferably august and imposing the pageantry of the tremendous day. There will nothing be lacking to clothe the scene with the authority and sanction of the present Godhead. Heaven will lend its glories and hell its horrors to emphasize the proceedings of the day. Sovereign grace, heavenly mercy, spotless holiness, insulted justice, unerring truth, resistless power, and consuming wrath, will all be present and preside at the solemnities of the occasion.

But, although God in three persons will be the Judge as to original authority, we are assured that the Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, will be the Judge in respect to the immediate exercise and dispensation of the judicial prerogative. "God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." He will appear in human

nature with all the marks of His sufferings on Calvary, so as to be visible to every eye that shall behold the eventful scene. And it is no doubt eminently proper that Christ, as Mediator, should be the Judge, because the judgment will constitute an integral part of the scheme of redemption, and will be the closing act in the history of its application, and the inviolable seal of men's relations to it.

The salvation of His blood-bought people will not be completed until He comes to judgment. Many, we are taught to believe, will then be alive upon earth, and will be struggling with the world, the flesh and the Devil; and in regard to none will the formal and final sentence have been pronounced which will be the signal of their complete redemption, and of their abundant entrance in their whole personality into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Until the announcement of His second coming, all His saints cast an anxious eye to the future and look forward to the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Savior Jesus Christ. Not till then will the whole church stand confessed, the church triumphant, stripped of the sweated armor of conflict, arrayed in the white robes and crowned with the amaranth of victory. Not till then will He be admired in all them that believe, and the headstone of their salvation be brought forth with shoutings of grace, grace unto it! Then will that august temple which far outshines the glory of Solomon's, built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, cemented by atoning blood and composed of living stones, be finished, and the top-stone laid on amidst the rising hosannas of ransomed sinners and the thundering hallelujahs of angelic choirs. Then will the scaf-

folding of earthly ordinances, as no longer necessary, be removed, the veil of the upper temple be rent in twain, and the sanctities of the heavenly holy of holies, whither our forerunner had gone, become conspicuous to the ravished eyes of long expectant saints. The earthly sanctuary shall be closed, the Bible shut, the pulpit vacated, and the voice of intercession stilled. The evangelic trumpet—the melodious cheering, thrilling trump of jubilee—proclaiming deliverance to the slaves of sin and death and hell be silenced and laid aside; the Apocalyptic angel, flying mid-heaven with the everlasting Gospel, shall close his wings and cease his flight; the invitations of mercy and the calls of incarnate love shall be issued no more, and the beaming sun of the day of grace shall have set in the blackness of an everlasting night. Our Savior, as the final act of His redeeming work, shall shut the volume of grace and open that of eternal judgment.

It is also fit that Jesus should be the final Judge, because He is the Son of Man, because He possesses the nature which is to be arraigned at the bar, and having been a companion of men in the flesh, experimentally knew their temptations, though Himself without sin, and by actual observation as a man among them is acquainted with their constitution, motives, and weaknesses, their circumstances, opportunities, and chances. No foreigner to the human race will fill the judgment-seat before which that human race shall stand to receive irrevocable assignment to heaven or to hell. A man will be the judge. He knows the measure of their case.

It is moreover fit that Christ should be the Judge because His session on the judgment-throne and the exercise of the judicial prerogative are part of the

promised reward of His humiliation during the discharge of His mediatorial work. He had in view of this reward voluntarily humbled Himself to undertake the stupendous task of man's redemption. He denuded Himself of His glory, descended the ladder of humiliation, assumed our feeble flesh, was born in a stable and cradled in a manger, was destitute of a pillow on which to lay His head when the labors of each toilsome day were done, offered up prayers with strong cryings and tears, was roughly arrested like a felon, was arraigned and condemned at an iniquitous human bar, was excommunicated from His own visible church, suffered an ignominious death as a chief malefactor between two thieves, was jeered by ministers and elders in His expiring agonies, and died without a foot of ground in which His mortal part could rest. But, in that day the shame of His humiliation shall be remembered only to heighten the glory of an unparalleled reward. The apostle portrays it grandly when he says, "Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. For once, at least, shall angels, men and devils be assembled in one great congregation,—it shall be before yon blazing throne, on

bended knee, to pay a willing or reluctant homage to the glorified Nazarene.

Still, further, it is fit that Jesus Christ should be the final Judge, that the person and claims of the dishonored Savior may be vindicated before an assembled world. Although He sacrificed glory and honor and the worship of the heavenly host, and became poor that we, through His poverty, might be made rich; although He carried the cross that sinners might wear a crown, yet was our blessed Master despised and rejected of men. He is to many a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness, and when they see Him there is no beauty that they should desire Him. Albeit He was the living personification of virtue—a sight which Plato said if men could behold they would be beguiled from the path of vice and allured into that of right, and although He exemplified in His own conduct every holy precept which He inculcated, and stood forth the sole instance among men of unstained character and uncompromised principle—the blooming flower of humanity and the brilliant reflection of the divine glory, yet is He treated with contumely and scorn; and the sacred religion which He established at the expense of His life, the institute of human salvation, the infirmary for human sicknesses, the aylum from human woes, and the charter of human hope, is caricatured as an imposture and rejected as a fraud. Infidelity scruples not to laugh at miracles, which, as instances of mercy, conquered nature to relieve the wretchedness of men, and as instances of power wrought conviction in the devils themselves. He healed the sick of their every malady; He cured the leprosy with a touch, He strengthened the palsied with a word, He gave speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, and sight to the

blind; He speaks and the ravings of the tempest are hushed, the shrieking wind subsides into a whisper, and the storm-tossed and foaming billows sink into sudden and surprising peace; He arrests a funeral procession by startling the corpse from its bier, and standing at the mouth of the grave, rouses with His almighty voice the mouldering flesh from the cerements of the tomb. And yet, when He stands at Pilate's bar, derided, scourged and spitted on, the very men who had been witnesses of these amazing displays of His divine power, and these unimpeachable credentials of His divine commission, press around His mangled body and lift the cruel and pitiless shout which demands the blood of His heart. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be ye horribly afraid!

And ever since, wherever His Gospel is preached and His cross uplifted, His mercy is rejected, the offers of His dying love are disdained, nor does the holy and exalted name of Jesus cease to be bandied as a plaything and a by-word in bold blasphemers' mouths.

But, brethren, the scene ere long shall change. Let us hear the testimony of Scripture to His second glorious advent to judgment. To the disciples who stood on the mount following His receding form as it vanished through the blue heavens and ascended to God's right hand, a delegation from the skies said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (He Himself said to His earthly judges, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.") Yes, this Jesus who was shamefully entreated and crucified, this Jesus whose claims are now

despised perhaps by some in this assembly, this same Jesus shall come again. He shall come, but not to bleed. He shall come, but not to suffer shame and die. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so. Amen." He comes, surrounded by dense columns of angels, and the palm-bearing host of a triumphant church. He comes, attended by the floating ensigns of salvation and the trophies of victory wrenched from Satan, Death, and Hell. He comes, heralded by the chant of armies, the thrilling call of trumpets and the shout that wakes the dead.

"Lo, He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favored sinners slain;
Thousand, thousand saints attending,
Swell the triumph of His train.
Hallelujah!
Jesus comes, and comes to reign."

Oh, how changed from the estate of His humiliation! Once the crown of thorns was wreathed around His temples; now on His brow flashes the mediatorial diadem. Once His hands were nailed to the accursed tree; now the right hand of His omnipotence grasps a thousand thunder-shafts and wields the sceptre of universal and resistless sway. Once without a home He lay in the midnight air and His head was wet with the dews and frosts of heaven; now He sits in majesty on the great white throne, canopied with clouds and girdled with embattled cherubim. Once the silent tear of anguish trickled down His pallid face; now see!

before His withering frown the shrinking earth and heavens haste to flee away.

“The Lord, the Judge, before His throne
Bids the whole earth draw nigh;
The nations near the rising sun,
And near the western sky.

No more shall bold blasphemers say,
Judgment will ne'er begin;
No more abuse His long delay
To insolence and sin.

Throned on a cloud our God shall come,
Bright flames prepare His way;
Thunder and darkness, fire and storm,
Lead on the dreadful day.

Heaven from above His call shall hear,
Attending angels come;
And earth and hell shall know and fear
His justice and their doom.”

III. Let us now consider some of the awful circumstances which will accompany and aggrandize that day of last account. But how shall we describe them? What tongue can tell, what mind conceive, the glory and the pomp, the agitation, tumult and alarm, the surprise, the joy, the woe, which shall mark that “great day for which all other days were made”? Let us approach the fearful subject with the lamp of Scripture in our hand.

We are taught that no signal will forewarn the nations of the coming of that day, and that none shall

suspect it nigh until it bursts upon the world. Secretly and furtively will the grand consummation draw on. The world will be engaged, as it ever has been, at its business and its pleasures. "As the days of Noah were, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days of Noah they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark and knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." None shall know that the great day is at hand. All will be busied about their several employments. The infidel will be saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the foundation of the world." The student will be closeted with his books, poring over the pages of some favorite author, or absorbed in the attempt to unravel some intricate argument. The merchant will be posting up his accounts, or anxiously calculating the issue of some grand speculation. The farmer will be riding over his crop, or congratulating himself on the fullness of his barns and the plenty of the succeeding year. The politician will be wrapped up in the perusal of some recent intelligence, or striving after a higher pinnacle of fame. The military chieftain will be pushing his conquests with all "the pomp and circumstance of war." The bridegroom will be rejoicing over his bride, the mother over her new-born infant, and the mourner will be following the remains of a departed relative towards a last house which they shall never occupy. Senates will be convened, courts sitting, travel rushing, commerce driving, and the ocean whitened with many a sail.

In one part of the world the silence of midnight is reigning, save where it is broken by the music and the laugh of some festive throng. In another is the bustle and stir of busy noon, or the clash of contending armies on the ensanguined field. In another the shadows of evening are lengthening, the sun is setting no more to rise, and the evening star is shining with peerless radiance for the last time upon a doomed world; while in yet another, the early bird is waking the dawn, the dew yet gems the grass, and the sunrise is bursting in glory as it broke on that clear morning when Sodom was fired from heaven. All will be unconscious of approaching danger; when of a sudden, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, a thunder-burst breaks over the world and rocks the pillars of the earth. Hark, that terrific sound! The blast of the trump of God peals from the sky, is swept on the wings of mighty winds towards north, south, east, and west, penetrates ten thousand burial grounds, and startles "the dull, cold ear" of the quiet sleepers there.

"Doubling along the arch the mighty peal
To heaven resounds. Hell returns a groan;
And shuddering earth a moment reels confounded
From her fixed pathway, as the staggering ship,
Stunned by some mountain billow, reels. The isles
With heaving ocean rock: the mountains shake
Their ancient coronets: the avalanche
Thunders: silence succeeds throughout the nations.
Earth never listened to a sound like this;
It strikes the general pulse of nature still,
And breaks forever the dull sleep of death."¹

¹James Hillhouse's Judgment, accommodated as to tense.

At that all-arousing summons the sceptic swallows his cavils, the student starts up from his books, the merchant forsakes his accounts, the farmer forgets his harvest and his barns, the politician wakes up from his day-dreams of preferment, the warrior relaxes his grasp upon his blade, the bridegroom hurls his fainting bride from his embrace, the mother drops from her bosom her new-born babe, the mourner neglects the last offices of humanity, Senates rise in confusion, and courts adjourn to meet no more. At that dread alarm the wheels of nature stop; the flight of time is arrested; Death, in mid-career, reins up his pale horse and drops the fatal shaft.

And now what ominous sights appear! Above the firmament is cleaving asunder, and through the awful rent beam the glories of the invisible world, while "the Lord Himself descends from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." "And, lo, a mighty angel comes down from heaven clothed with a cloud and a rainbow on his head, and his face as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; and standing upon the sea and upon the earth, lifts up his hand to heaven and swears by Him that liveth forever and ever that there shall be time no longer." Awful announcement! The changes and notations of this sublunary scene will cease; the sweet vicissitudes of morning and evening fail, and the seasons roll no more. The days and weeks, the months and years of an evangelical probation shall revolve no longer, and man will enter upon the measureless duration of eternity. Thenceforward naught will remain but two unchanging forms of existence—an unbroken sabbatism, or an endless funeral of the soul.

The hour is come when all that are in the graves hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. Behold the stupendous scene! The dead are rising! From every part of this vast charnel-house the victims of death are awaking from their long sleep, and obey the summons which commands them into the presence of their Judge. Magnificent mausoleums are bursting, in which lie inurned the ashes of sceptred monarchs; moss-covered sepulchres are cleaving, beneath which moulder the remains of priests and high-priests, nobles and princes, legislators and warriors, philosophers, orators, and poets; while the grass-grown mounds under which the slave and the peasant repose in death are not disobedient to the heavenly call. From dim cathedral aisles, from every crowded churchyard, from forest burying grounds, from profoundest ocean depths, the long-forgotten dead are starting into new, immortal being amidst the thrilling realities of the judgment day. The solitary traveler rises from the lonely grave which he found in a land far distant from home; while from the narrow beds in which they slept side by side in the populous cemetery whole families rise together. The father sees his children again, the husband extends to his wife the salutations of the resurrection morning, and the mother once more clasps in her arms the babe that had slumbered with her in the same grave, and mingled its dust with hers.

And now the throne is set, the Supreme Arbiter of destiny assumes His seat, the books are opened, and mankind are convened for judgment. "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it from whose

face the earth and the heavens fled away. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." All who have ever lived, and all who will live to the farthest bounds of time, will be assembled before the judgment seat by angels who will act as marshals of the final day. From our first parents to the babe which shall draw the earliest breath of life on the resurrection morning and shall hear at the same moment the first endearing word from its mother's lips and the awful voice of the archangel,—all will be there. Not one of earth's unnumbered millions shall be absent from the dread assize. Patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, kings with their subjects, masters with their servants, parents with their children, ministers with their flocks, the goodly company of confessors and the noble army of martyrs,—all will be there. Pagans, Mohammedans and Christians, sceptics, infidels and atheists,—all will be there. The pale-faced Caucasian, the red rover of the forest, the yellow Mongolian, and the swarthy Ethiopian,—all, all will there. Band after band, throng upon throng, nations massed upon nations, with a sound like the deep and hollow roar of a storm-lashed ocean, they will crowd to the rendezvous of being and stand before the final bar.

"In one vast conflux rolled,
Wave following wave, are men of every age,
Nation and tongue: all hear the warning blast,
And led by wondrous impulse hither come."

Nor shall devils be absent from that trial. Hell shall disgorge itself of its inhabitants; the doors of the eternal prison, grating harsh thunder, shall swing open for egress to the desperate and innumerable mob. Rising

with the gloomy vapors of the bottomless pit, and clanking their everlasting chains, countless legions of lost angels shall press upward, and driven by almighty power shall be forced to join the great assembly and await the sentence of their doom.

Come with me in imagination, my hearers, as ere long you must in reality, to that scene which shall be presented before the tribunal of judgment. How unspeakably solemn! A world in one vast congregation! See, multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! Farther than the eye can reach extends a boundless sea of human beings, swayed to and fro with new and unutterable feelings. Before the august Judge are gathered all nations, and He proceeds to separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. He sets the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. All human and perishing distinctions are swept away. The mask is torn from hypocrisy, the veil stripped from secrecy, the paint and varnish expunged from the face of deceit. Missed are the strut and fret of "a little brief authority." The tiara, the mitre and the crosier, the chasuble, stole and cowl are looked for in vain. The tinselled insignia of rank and the gilded baubles of nobility, the arms of heraldry and the stars and crosses of honor are rent away from human beings, and leave them to appear as they are—"naked, unvarnished, unappendaged men." The standards, ensigns, and gonfalons of earthly parade float not in the air of the judgment morn. Beauty, wealth, and power, gifts, talents, and fame,—of what avail are they now without true and heartfelt religion? The righteous and the wicked, the followers and the foes of Christ,—these are the only distinctions which have a place in that overwhelming presence.

Each one of that immense concourse is seen. Each one is known. Each one must give account of himself to God. No one shall share responsibility with his fellows. No one shall shield himself behind the instruction, the counsel, the example of others; no one shall cover himself with the skirt of minister, parent or friend. Families are sundered; individuals are parted from individuals by a discrimination awfully searching and particular. Oh, what a sifting! Jehovah's fan is in his hand, and he winnows the chaff from the wheat: he gathers the wheat into his garner, and consigns the chaff to unquenchable fire.

Now is the day of full redemption come to those who served their Lord amidst temptations, trials, and fears, and waited and prayed and longed for His second glorious appearing. Clad in Jesus' righteousness, washed in Jesus' blood, pleading Jesus' atoning merits, they stand at His right hand and look into His smiling face. "Come," saith the King. "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger and ye took Me in: naked and ye clothed Me: I was sick and in prison and ye came unto Me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these. My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord." O welcome word! O thrice happy souls! Their tribulation is past, their conflict with the world, the flesh and the Devil is ended, the narrow way has all been trod, death, their last enemy, is conquered, and not one of them remains a tenant of the grave. The last battle has been fought, the last sin has been committed, the last tear is wiped away. The world's laugh and frown

are alike no more. No more the cross, the fire and the stake. No more the chain, the dungeon and the rack. Shout, ye ransomed sinners, shout! For yours are harps of gold, crowns of righteousness, the beatific vision of God, and the celestial glory that fadeth not away.

Now do all Christ's people meet each other at His right hand. The sundered ties of earth are reconstructed; and the scattered fragments of families are re-gathered into a union no more to be broken forever. What passionate embraces! What mutual congratulations! What ecstasies of joy! Glorious day when the whole blood-bought Church of the Redeemer meet for the first time in His immediate presence!

But, alas! across yonder dividing line stand the wretched children of doom. Their visages are clouded with the horrors of despair. They are torn by an irresistible hand from the companionship of the godly and the consolations of hope. O, fellow-sinners, take warning in time and forecast that day. How will ungodly parents part with those who were their children in the flesh, but who became the children of God in the spirit? How will unconverted children part with pious and sainted parents? How will they endure that final clasping of hands and those everlasting farewells? How will hardened sinners look in the face the ministers of Christ who besought them in vain to seek salvation in the blood of the Lamb, and who were driven by their refusals to weep in secret places over their pride? How will every sermon stare them in the face, and every broken Sabbath bear swift witness against them? How will the infidel, the sceptic, and the persecuting inquisitor look upon that abused and calumniated Bible that now lies open on the judgment-seat as the law by

which they are judged? Resisted it, opposed it, slandered it, burnt it, they may once have done, but confront it they must now, as God's unbroken and eternal word. How will the despisers of conscience meet its testimony before the final bar? How will it rise upon them like a strong man armed, and thrust its unerring finger at them, and charge them with their forgotten but now resuscitated sins? Hidden motives that lay down in the foundations of the soul, shameful thoughts and feelings that were screened from human eye in the secret chambers of the spirit, deeds of wickedness perpetrated in the darkness of night,—lo! they are now dragged forth into light and divulged before an assembled world. When God manifests Himself and pours the insufferable glory of His holiness, justice, and law upon the trembling sinner at the bar, His heart will melt within him like wax in the devouring flame. To hypocrites and false professors of religion is fulfilled that fearful word of Christ: "Many shall say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord; and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you." Too late will they wake up to the consciousness of their fatal mistake. Standing with a lie in their right hands before the judgment-seat, what infinite disappointment, chagrin and horror seize their souls when they find that "there is a way to hell even from the gates of heaven."

Ye lascivious and unclean, malicious and uncharitable, ye Sabbath-breakers and defrauders, how will ye stand before the majesty of that fiery law which once broke in flashes from the thick darkness of Sinai's mount, but now blazes in consuming brightness and terrific wrath? And O ye rejecters of Christ, how can ye confront Him who sits as your Judge with the

print of the nails in His hands and feet and of the spear which cleft His heart in twain?

“Yonder sits my slighted Savior,
With the marks of dying love;
Oh, that I had sought His favor
When I felt His Spirit move!
Golden moments,
When I felt His Spirit move!”

He offered you His Gospel; you refused it. He tendered you His hand; you thrust it from you. He shed His tears over you; you trampled them under feet and counted His most precious blood as an unholy thing. Salvation! Salvation! How unspeakably important will you then deem it? How will paleness bespread your faces and trembling make your knees to smite together? What groans of anguish will rend your hearts? What tears of blood will you weep? And are they gone? The Sabbath, the Bible, the preacher, the mercy-seat, the Gospel,—are they all clean gone forever? Yea, poor sinner, and Christ is gone, and the Spirit of grace is gone, and heaven is gone, and hope, that was wont to gild the fiercest storm with rays of light, hope that made even the thought of death, judgment and eternity tolerable, hope too is gone forever. And come is judgment, come is divine vengeance, come is the blackness of darkness and the second death. And is it come to this, that Jesus the merciful Saviour, who so loved sinners that He wept and bled for them, must now pronounce their doom? Must those lips that were wont to speak in blessing utter irrevocable curses on their souls? Alas for them! In tones of deepest thunder Jesus shall say, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.”

The sentences of destiny are pronounced; but look, what rising light is that which sheds a lurid glare over the vast assembly, throws a ruddy tint upon the blanched countenances of the doomed, and crimsones the face of the great white throne? 'Tis the world on fire! The atmosphere ablaze wraps the earth in a winding-sheet of flame, immense volumes of smoke roll upward and dim the lights of heaven; the sun is turned into darkness, the moon into blood, and the stars are falling like untimely figs. From mountain top to mountain top the flames are leaping and playing, while a deluge of fire sweeps across the face of nature whelming cities, towns and villages in its sea-like swell and roll. Water which quenches fire is itself devoured; oceans are licked up and dried to their beds like the water in the trench around Elijah's altar in the minor judgment-day of Carmel.

Alas! will there be no wailing voices to chant a fitting death hymn for a doomed and dying world? Will no kindred planet in the solar family, as it gazes upon the dread disaster, veil its lustre and clothe itself in mourning for a sister orb? Once it was a sanctuary of praise, a theatre of glory, a paradise of charms. The morning stars sang together its natal hymn, and all the sons of God shouted for joy, when, adorned by the hand of its Maker as the home of holiness, it took its co-ordinate place in the society of shining worlds, and helped to swell the doxology pealing in God's ear from the grand harmonies of the universe. But Sin entered, and Death followed after. They converted it into an Aeldama of blood and a Golgotha of bones, and at last dissolve its fair and beautiful proportions in a universal sea of flame. Pale now, and paler yet, wanes the light of the direful conflagration. Earth utters her

expiring groans in rumbling detonations from her deepest caverns; and reiterated thunders of mighty explosions seem the volleying discharges of God's artillery at the funeral of a world.

A few words more and I shall strain your attention no longer to this awful, yet delightful theme. The judicial process ends; the books are closed, the Judge rises, and the Supreme Court of the world adjourns. The separate destinies of human beings are now evolved. Collected around the person of their glorious Lord, the jubilant saints begin their triumphal march to the portals of their heavenly home. Onward they sweep in majestic array, hallelujahs are bursting from every lip, and as they come in view of the shining gates, hark! they sing: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in!" And, again, as in the ascension from Olivet of the victor of sin, death and hell, the challenge of angelic sentries is shouted from the battlements of heaven: "Who is this King of glory?" And then the response is rolled back in thunder from ten thousand times ten thousand voices: "The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in!"

It is enough. They enter, they pass beneath the arches of triumph, they tread the golden streets of the New Jerusalem lined the while with dense ranks of angels who cheer the conquerors home. They seat their Saviour-King in glory on Mount Zion, and massing, massing, massing before the eternal throne they prostrate themselves in adoring worship of the Triune God and cry: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts!"

Then rising and waving their palms of victory in the morning air of an endless day, with a sound like the noise of many waters, or the voice of mighty thunders,—hark, they chant again: “Glory and honor and power, and might and dominion, and wisdom and thanksgiving and blessing be unto Him that sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever!” Redemption is completed, and the pauseless chorus of everlasting praise begins.

“Jerusalem, my happy home,
 Name ever dear to me;
 When shall my labors have an end
 In joy and peace and Thee?

O mother, dear, Jerusalem,
 My soul still pants for thee;
 Then shall my labors have an end
 When I thy joys shall see.”

Would that we could say this is all: this is the glorious destiny of an unsevered and un mutilated race! But from the left hand of the judgment-bar a funeral procession of lost human beings, in the train of devils, slowly and reluctantly wend their way to the frowning gates of hell. They defile through those gloomy portals over which despair reads the fatal legend: “They who enter here leave hope behind.” The irrefragable bolts of the eternal jail are shot by penal justice behind them; and between them and a lost and irrecoverable paradise yawn the terrific jaws of an uncrossable chasm—a gulf wide, deep, and dark as starless midnight, save as the profound abyss is gilded by some mocking rays that may straggle into it from a far-distant and inaccessible glory.

SANCTIFICATION BY GRACE

Romans 6:1, 2. *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?”*

The Apostle Paul, in the preceding chapters of this epistle, had opened the great doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the three first chapters he shows negatively how the sinner *cannot* be justified; in the latter part of the third and in the fourth he indicates the only ground upon which he *can* be justified, and in the fifth points out the method by which the scheme of justification is applied.

He first proves, by an appeal to fact, the entire depravity of all mankind, both Jew and Gentile, and their consequent inability to bring forth a righteousness by which they should be justified. But while all are thus incapacitated to furnish a justifying righteousness, God in mercy reveals a plan by which He may be *just*, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. This plan sets aside the works of the sinner as a platform of justification, and shuts him up to the acceptance of a righteousness provided by God Himself. The righteousness which is thus graciously provided is entirely exclusive of works and is received by a

NOTE.—This sermon was prepared as a trial sermon for ordination. It was written when the author was in his twenty-fourth year; and is inserted here, not to increase his reputation as a pulpit orator, but to show his early conception of what a sermon ought to be; and because it represents his theological views at the beginning of his ministry. While the style and manner of treatment smacks of the seminary student it also prophesies the great preacher.

simple *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not being his own, but having been wrought out by Christ, the only way in which it becomes available to the sinner is by virtue of a legal imputation. He, and only he, to whom this righteousness is thus legally accounted as his own, can be accepted and justified by God. In the chapter immediately preceding that from which the text is taken, the apostle points out the channel through which this imputation flows, the specific method by which the system of saving grace is actually applied. This he designates as the federal relation in which the sinner stands to his surety, the Lord Jesus Christ. As a federal connection with Adam in the covenant of works was the ground upon which his guilt is imputed to his *natural* posterity—so a federal connection with Christ in the covenant of grace is the ground upon which His righteousness is imputed to His *spiritual* seed. As natural birth is the designation of those upon whom the covenant of works takes effect, so spiritual birth is the designation of those upon whom the covenant of grace takes effect. And as in the covenant of works, we become connected with Adam not by any personal suffrage of our own, but by the sovereign appointment of an all-wise God—so in the covenant of grace we become connected with Christ—not primarily by a personal act of ours, but by virtue of an eternal purpose of grace. The whole plan, then, upon which the sinner is justified is obviously *gratuitous*. Destitute of the ability to furnish an acceptable righteousness, he is necessarily destitute of merit. He is therefore saved, if saved at all, upon a principle of mere grace. The apostle, in the next place, anticipates, in the words of the text, the objection which in one point of view would be naturally rendered by the carnal heart to the system

of grace which he had propounded and the abuses which in another would be made of it. The misapprehension of his meaning is briefly this: If, as you affirm, we are justified and saved irrespectively of our own works, then by consequence it is not necessary for us to work at all. In fact, the less of our own works there be the more glory upon this gratuitous scheme will accrue to God, and if we continue in sin there will be an opportunity afforded for a more abundant and illustrious display of grace. Two parties would be disposed to use this language in reference to the apostle's doctrine; the Legalist who would be unwilling to receive it, as in that case he would be constrained forever to forego his legal dependencies; and the Antinomian who would gladly adopt it inasmuch as he regards it as removing every barrier to licentiousness, and affording a premium to crime. The answer of the apostle, commenced in the text and carried on in the succeeding verses, is clear and full: "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?"

The force of this reply lies, we conceive, in the construction placed upon the phrase, "dead to sin." Of these words, different interpretations have been given. By one class of commentators the expression "dead to sin" is regarded as synonymous with dead to the *power* of sin. How shall we who are dead to the power of sin, who profess to have had our lusts and sins crucified with Christ, indulge in the commission of sin? Our sins have been nailed to Christ's cross, and shall, therefore, have no more dominion over us. But although this be partially true, the apostle's argument is not presented in a right point of view. For if this exposition be adopted, it seems that he would have contradicted his own doctrine laid down so forcibly in the

seventh chapter of this epistle and confirmed by the concurrent testimony of other passages of Scripture by which we are taught that the believer, although constantly advancing in holiness, still never attains that state in which he may say that he is dead to the *power* of sin. The conflict between the new nature and the still indwelling old nature is hushed only in the silence of death—in that solemn moment when the immortal spirit ceases to be a tenant of its mortal tabernacle, and, therefore, ceases to be exposed through the avenues of the senses to the inroads of temptation.

Further, if this interpretation be adopted, the answer of the apostle, *as an argument*, loses its weight. For to be dead to the power of sin is to cease to live in the indulgence of sin. If this be the apostle's meaning, then the question would thus resolve itself: How shall we who no longer live in sin, live any longer therein? The force of the reply, we apprehend, consists in the fact that a strong contrast is drawn between two opposing states. But, according to the exposition under consideration, this contrast is overlooked, and, if we mistake not, the apostle is made to assert an identical proposition.

The true meaning of the words, "dead to sin," we take to be dead to the *guilt* of sin. It will be perceived that the word *guilt* is employed as equivalent to liability to punishment and not as equivalent to moral turpitude.

The former interpretation has been supported on the ground that the believer is often spoken of in Scripture as actually *doing* what it is only meant that he *ought to do*, and as actually *being in a state* in which it is only meant that he *ought to be*. But as yet the apostle had only been treating of the *justified state* of believers,

and not of the duties which pertain to sanctification of life, and it seems to us that his object in the present chapter is specifically to indicate the dependence of sanctification upon the previous state of justification by a gratuitous righteousness. Keeping this in view, we are able to determine the sense of the words "dead to sin," and the force of the question in which they are employed. They form the connecting link between the consideration of our justified and our sanctified states. They are the steps by which the apostle passes in the course of his high argument from the former to the latter. The train of thought appears to be this: in the covenant of grace believers are united to Christ as their federal head. This legal union, however, under a federal constitution, does not take effect upon the sinner until he is also *spiritually* united to Christ. This is done by the efficacious grace of the spirit implanting in his heart a new principle of holiness, the prime element of which is *Faith*. By means of this faith the sinner is enabled to apprehend Christ and to receive the righteousness which he has provided for all His federal constituents. Faith is the instrumental medium by which the sinner becomes an actual partaker of the federal union with all its inestimable blessings. The moment of the *spiritual* is the precise moment at which the federal relation takes effect, and at which its influence upon the sinner begins to be developed. That instant the ungodly sinner becomes a justified and accepted believer. *His state is changed*. He has passed from a legal state of condemnation and bondage to a legal state of justification and freedom. By virtue of this federal and spiritual union he becomes mystically but truly and really *one* with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is identified with Christ in law. All the acts which

Christ has performed on his behalf become putatively, but not the less on that account substantially his own; and as Christ in the work of redemption acts as a public and not a private individual, there is a transfer of His active and passive obedience to the sinner whom He has represented. Consequently whatever Christ did in His capacity as a substitute and covenant head may be properly said to have been done by the believer. As Christ lived a life of obedience to the precepts of the law, the justified sinner is regarded in law as having done the same: and as Christ died to satisfy the penalty of the violated law, the believer is considered as having legally died with Christ on the cross. Christ died to sin; that is, to that sin which, although not His own by nature, became His own by imputation; for it is only in that sense that our blessed Lord, who was "holy, harmless and undefiled," could be said to be a sinner. The moral turpitude of sin could not have attached to Him in any respect. As *God*, His nature is immaculate holiness, and as man, He was born out of the ordinary line of human descent, and, therefore, was not chargeable with the *guilt* of Adam's sin, and consequently was not obnoxious to its penalty—the loss of original righteousness and a positive tendency to transgression. But *the guilt of sin*, or its legal liability to punishment, did attach to Christ, and hence, since death is the punishment of sin, Christ died. He died to the guilt of sin. The believer, therefore, thus died to the guilt of sin with Christ, his covenant head. Hence it is, we understand the apostle to assert, that believers are "*dead to sin.*" But since a federal union with Christ is presupposed, and that federal union is indissolubly connected with the *spiritual* union as the source

of a godly life, *death to the guilt of sin* implies a corresponding *life to holiness*.

If the believer has *died* with Christ, there is a *necessity* that he should also *rise* with Him from the dead. And since Christ has risen that *He* might live to the glory of God, there is a moral necessity that the *believer's* life should be devoted to the same great end.

As the perversion of his doctrine which the apostle considers is not infrequent at the present day, we propose, with God's assistance, to indicate the connection between justification and sanctification—to show that the scheme upon which the sinner is justified by mere grace through faith, so far from being adverse to holiness of life is that by which it is effectually secured.

I. We would observe, in the first place, that this scheme is the only one which places the sinner in a condition in which he may attain to holiness of life.

1. It is evident that since the fall no man can be sanctified unless he has been previously justified upon some scheme. In the case of Adam, on the contrary, it was necessary he should be holy, or, what is the same thing, that he should have obeyed the law before he could be justified. His justification in the eye of the law depended on his perfect fulfillment of all its commands, both in the letter and in the spirit.

No less could have been required under the scheme of works upon which he relied for justification. And doubtless Adam was endued with strength sufficient to have enabled him to yield such an obedience, and had he remained in his integrity during the time appointed by God for his trial, he would have been pronounced legally righteous, and confirmed in holiness for eternity. But the moment he broke the law and failed to perform the conditions of the covenant into which he

had entered with God, that instant it became absolutely impossible for him to be justified on the scheme under which he hitherto lived. The order which had previously existed between justification and sanctification was completely reversed, and it became absolutely necessary for him to be justified before he could be sanctified. And since the sinner is now precisely in the same situation with Adam subsequent to the fall, the same necessity must still hold in every individual case. The impossibility of being sanctified before justification, consists in the fact that all are under the curse of God's violated law, and consequently in a state of present condemnation. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the law to do them." As the person and the works of the moral agent are strictly related, the one derives its complexion from the other. Now, under the first covenant, the person of the individual was accepted in consequence of the previous acceptance and justification of his works; under the last covenant, the order is directly inverted. The works of the sinner are accepted in consequence of the previous acceptance and justification of his person. Or, as has been pithily said under the covenant of works, the order was, do this and live. Under the covenant grace: live that you may do this.

But as it is a fact that the sinner's person is in a state of condemnation, all his works must also be in the same state; and if his works are not acceptable to God there is not the remotest possibility of his sanctification, since sanctification, as far as his agency is concerned, is the performance of works acceptable in God's sight. It is, therefore, necessary that the sinner should be justified upon some scheme before he can serve God

acceptably and attain that holiness of life without which "no man shall see the Lord."

Now it is equally clear that the scheme upon which the sinner is actually justified before God is that very scheme of grace which the apostle has so elaborately expounded, and one principal department of which he concisely enunciates in the expression, "dead to sin." Several distinct methods of justification have been advocated by different men and by men, too, professing to found their views upon the teaching of the inspired word. We undertake not to assert that inadequate apprehensions of the great plan of justification are invariably attended with fatal consequences to the salvation of those who entertain them. Some are more grossly and glaringly erroneous than others, and whilst a total or wilful misconception of the doctrine of Scripture on this important point must result in the most serious peril, none may venture infallibly to declare the exact amount of truth which is necessary to salvation, or the precise quantity of error which precludes its possibility. It must, however, be a concern of the last importance to approximate as closely as possible to the decisions of God's word.

The fatal delusion which exercises so baleful an influence on the practice of multitudes, that we are dependent for salvation upon our own works as a meritorious ground of justification, aside from the sacrifice of Christ, is so palpably opposed to every declaration of Scripture on the subject that it needs only to be brought into contact with "the law and the testimony" and the most cursory examination by its light to insure its final overthrow. "In thy sight shall no man living be justified." The apparent inconsistency between Paul and James while treating of faith, which to many affords

a countenance to this monstrous scheme, is seen upon investigation to be no inconsistency at all. Paul treats of the ground, James of the evidence of justification. The faith, which is exclusive of works, as far as justification is concerned, when viewed in reference to sanctification, is evidenced by works to be sincere.

But there are more specious forms in which the same principle of self-righteousness is so disguised as apparently to mingle with the grace of God in the great work of man's salvation.

The Romanist contends that the act of God by which the sinner is justified is not a judicial or forensic act, but the infusion of an inherent personal holiness or habit of grace. This act which they term the first justification is efficacious in removing original sin and expelling habits of unholiness. The faith by which we are thus first justified has itself an intrinsic virtue predisposing the soul for pardon. But the value of this justification is limited, and it is only by good works performed in subsequent life that we derive the second justification which avails in the day of final judgment.

The doctrine of the Socinian upon this point is in perfect keeping with that general view which they take of the Gospel as merely a declaration of the mercy of God,—a grand moral lesson and a promise of eternal life. Discarding as they do the satisfaction and vicarious sacrifice of Christ, they hold that the sinner is justified by faith as a great moral virtue exercising a commanding influence on a life of obedience which, through the general mercy of God, merits salvation.

The Armenian, while he regards the righteousness, or what in their view is the same thing, the death of Christ as the meritorious cause of justification, coincides with the Romanists in attributing to the faith

which takes advantage of this righteousness, an inherent virtue as a predisposing cause, or as is termed, a grace of congruity.

It will be observed that each of these respective systems attributes more or less value to human works. The broad and sweeping principle which the apostle has so elaborately expounded, that we are justified wholly by grace, exclusively of the smallest degree of human merit or the smallest amount of human works, is by no means cordially and fully admitted as the basis of their creeds. The doctrine of an infusion of personal holiness which obtains with the first, is seen at first glance to confound the distinctions between justification and sanctification, while the imperfection which they attribute to the first and the efficacy of the second justification are palpably at variance with the fundamental idea of a gratuitous salvation. The Socinian view of the whole Gospel as a merely moral lesson is so degrading to the great plan of redemption that their system of justification cannot but share the general censure which must be passed upon their creed. And the Armenian, while it certainly approximates more nearly the truth, still is not exempt from that charge of self-righteousness to which their view of faith as a righteousness exposes them, and which restrains us from acknowledging that they maintain at least theoretically the simple principle of salvation by free and sovereign grace.

The Moravian and Antinomian view which lies at the opposite extreme of an actual justification in the eternal decree of God is erroneous, inasmuch as it confounds a secret purpose existing in eternity with a positive act which can only occur in time, as justification from guilt necessarily presupposes commission of sin. And

the practical inferences which are drawn from this position are so obviously subversive of that holiness which the Gospel demands that they constitute a living proof of the falsity of their principles.

The view of justification which the apostle gives is founded, according to his own exposition, upon the legal imputation of a vicarious righteousness to the person of the sinner. It is just in this particular aspect that we regard the various systems to which we have referred as diverging from the Scriptures. They all unite in denying the imputation of Christ's righteousness as the only true ground of justification. That this is the doctrine of the apostle is clear from the parallel which he draws between Adam and Christ in the chapter immediately preceding: "If by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Just as we become unrighteous through the sin of Adam, so we become righteous through the righteousness of Christ.

The fact that some connexion does exist with these two persons is denied by none who pretend to derive their views from the Sacred Scriptures. The question is as to the precise nature and effects of that connexion.

The apostle unquestionably assumes it as the basis on the one hand of our fall into sin and consequent condemnation, and on the other of our restoration to righteousness and consequent justification, and it becomes, therefore, a matter of the most serious import to discover the true bearing of his doctrine on the subject.

It is evident from his discussion of the plan of salvation in the previous part of the Epistle, that he regarded a righteousness which should be able to stand

the test of comparison of God's holy law as the great postulate of the sinner; a righteousness which should be competent to justify before the dread tribunal of the final judge. And it is equally evident that every scheme upon which men rely for salvation derives its origin from the inquiry so loudly and urgently pressed upon the natural conscience: "How shall a man be just with God?" Whether or not we admit that view of the law which considers it as administered in the form of a covenant, we must allow its just demands can be satisfied by no less than a perfect fulfilment of the obligations it imposes, or what is equivalent, a perfect righteousness. But as it is a fact, palpable to sense, that all men have sinned and come short of meeting this first requirement, they become necessarily exposed to the threatened penalty. Whatever view we adopt of that nature, of that penalty, one thing is certain: that it involves a condemnation which dates from the first moment of transgression. Now, a state of condemnation is absolutely incompatible with any available effort to furnish a satisfactory obedience to law. Hence the state of condemnation and consequent moral impotency is of necessity perpetual, on the ground that a personal righteousness is exacted from the sinner. The very first infraction of the law is a sea-wide breach between the sinner and his God which cuts him off from communion with Him and raises a barrier durable as the eternal throne, one operating forever against his future acceptance. But as the original requisition of a perfect righteousness remains in all its force it becomes the gravest question which can occur to man: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, calves of a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" But turn which way he will, consume what means he please, and employ all the moral energies which an anguished soul can devise, the thick darkness that may be felt still shrouds his spirit, and the bitterness of disappointment still crushes him lower into the depths of despair. The insulted justice, the spotless holiness, the avenging wrath, nay, all the glorious perfections of Jehovah rise up in terrible array, and as with double flaming swords guard each separate avenue to the tree of everlasting life. The decree of the Almighty, penned as with a diamond upon the eternal rock, still frowns the uncompromising death warrant to all his hopes. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die!" The perfections of God, the unchanging penalty of His law, and the immutability of his government, conspire to render it morally impossible that the sinner can be saved on the original principle of a personal obedience. And well is it for us that those perfections, that law and that government admit a substitute in the stead of the transgressor. If we be saved it must be by virtue of the righteousness of a competent substitute, accepted by God in the sinner's place. As a righteousness cannot, in the nature of things, be furnished by himself, it must be furnished by another for him. Now it is remarkable that the principle by which we become first unrighteous is the very method by which we become righteous—that principle is legal imputation. The apostle shows in the 5th chapter that all men become sinners in the first instance not by their personal violation of the law, but on account of the acts of one to whom they sustain a

peculiar relation. Whatever that relation is admitted to be none can deny that the apostle asserts it: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It is clear that the apostle assigns as a reason for the death of all men their common connexion with the first man, and lest some should assert that the sin of Adam only introduces a tendency to sin, and that we die only in consequence of our own personal transgressions, he excludes this evasion of his doctrine by showing that death equally passes upon those who from the nature of the case cannot commit voluntary transgression in the instance of those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. The argument is briefly this: Death is the effect of sin, consequently where no sin exists there is no room for death. But those die who cannot commit voluntary transgression, as for instance infants, and therefore cannot merit death on account of personal acts. But since they do die, it is by virtue of their participation in the sin of another. They have sinned, and since sin is the transgression of the law, they have transgressed the law, and not being capable of doing it personally and voluntarily, must have done it in Adam. And just here the point of controversy exists. How is it that we become participants in Adam's sin? It is clear that we were not conscious agents in Adam's transgression, both from the fact that we did not then consciously exist, and from the fact that infants are liable to the penal consequences of that sin before they are capable of performing voluntary acts. It cannot be wholly by virtue of our natural descent from Adam as common root from whom we sprung, as in that case we would be chargeable with all his sins, whereas we

are actually involved only on his first sin, for, as Paul says: the judgment is by *one* offence to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

It does seem to us that the only possible ground upon which we become involved in Adam's sin is the ground of legal imputation. The sin is not consciously but it is really and imputatively ours. This imputation to be just must be founded upon a covenant relation in which we stand to Adam. This covenant relation or union is the ground of our responsibility for the sin of our first parent, and our actual exposure to the penal consequences of his transgression. Now, as the apostle has drawn a parallel between Adam and Christ, let us pass to the other branch of it. Having considered the method by which we become sinners, and therefore condemned, let us briefly notice the method by which we become righteous and therefore justified. We have already seen that the crying demand of the guilty sinners is a justifying righteousness, and we have also seen that the possibility of attaining such a righteousness on the ground of personal obedience to law is absolutely precluded. If he be justified it must be by the righteousness of another. The question arises as to the method by which we are made possessors of such a vicarious righteousness. We take the apostle's answer: Just as we become unrighteous in Adam, so we become righteous in Christ. Or, to use the words of the same apostle in another place: "As in Adam all die, so even in Christ shall all be made alive."

By virtue of that union by which believers are connected with Christ, his righteousness is imputed to them, and they are regarded as having performed it in Him. It is not a conscious righteousness, for we are not consciously one with Christ. But it is a legal righteous-

ness, accounted to them as if they had furnished it themselves. As natural birth is the general medium by which we are related to Adam, so spiritual birth is the medium by which we are related to Christ. Faith, one of the chief elements of the new nature, created by the Holy Ghost, is the specific means by which we are united to Christ; it is the bond on the sinner's part, as the Spirit is on Christ's, the ligament which binds him to Christ.

Faith is the instrument by which we receive the righteousness for which, as sinners beggared of spiritual food, we apply to God, and which he bestows upon us "without money and without price." We regard this faith not as itself a righteousness, for in that case it would be a work, and according to the apostle could have no influence upon our salvation, but as the ability to receive the imputed righteousness of Christ produced in the heart by the efficacious grace of the spirit; and thus both the righteousness which justifies and the faith through which we are justified are the free gifts of God's favor. "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Thus is the whole scheme by which the sinner is justified one of mere grace. The only seeming objection to the view which contemplates this plan as one entirely of grace, is that as a perfect fulfilment of the claims of the law entitles, on the score of justice, to a merited reward, and as the sinner by imputation becomes possessed of this righteousness he is entitled to eternal life on the platform of strict justice and not of grace. But this objection is at once obviated by considering that it was an act of free grace and mercy on the part of the Father to commission His well beloved Son to perform the work of

redemption, and equally an act of amazing grace and unspeakable love on the part of the Son to "undertake" for sinners and consent to die. So that, while in one aspect, the sinner by virtue of the finished work of Christ has a right and title to eternal life, in another, that claim is seen based on the boundless mercy of God.

Thus have we endeavored, briefly and imperfectly, to show that to be sanctified we must be previously justified, and that the scheme of free grace is that upon which we are justified and, therefore, is essential to sanctification. This view is confirmed by the representation which the Scriptures give of the order of the different parts of the work of redemption. Thus, it declares that whom God predestinates He calls; and and whom He calls, He next justifies. So that justification comes next in order to effectual calling, or regeneration and conversion; and thus, also, Christ is represented as being first our wisdom to instruct and enlighten; next our righteousness, to justify; and subsequently our sanctification and redemption—and as sanctification is necessarily prior to redemption, so justification is necessarily prior to sanctification.

And, consequently, as the scheme of free grace which the apostle lays down is that upon which we are actually justified, it follows that it is necessary to our sanctification. And that the scheme of justification which we have defended is the scheme which the apostle propounds is proved, if on no other ground, by the striking fact that the identical objection which is urged at the present day against this scheme was urged against the doctrines of the apostle. The applicability of the objection to each proves their identity.

II. We remark in the next place that the union of the believer with Christ which has been contemplated as the prominent feature in the plan of justification involves considerations which show the intimate harmony which subsists between that plan and our sanctification.

This union of Christ and His people is not to be regarded as a merely civil or political connexion, as of subjects with their king, or people with their leader, as the representations of sacred Scriptures are too strong for such a view. Nor is it to be considered a union of essence, as that would be blasphemous; nor, lastly, as a union of person, for as Christ is a divine person from eternity such a union would be impossible, but it is a federal and spiritual union. Given to Christ by the Father in an eternal covenant, all His people, in the fullness of time, become actual partakers of that covenant by the regenerating grace of the Spirit, through faith which, as a spiritual union, introduces them into the blessings of the federal communion. In both these aspects, as federal and spiritual, the believer's union with Christ becomes the spring of his salvation. Faith is the instrument by which he becomes a partaker of the blessings of the federal union—justification and adoption—and is the great principle by means of which he attains the equally important blessings of sanctification. It is a great mistake with many to regard faith as merely the individual act by which the sinner apprehends Christ in the moment of justification, which is needed no further as its function has been discharged, or if it be necessary in subsequent life it is a faith which, in some way or other, differs from that which justifies. The error of this view is that it makes faith merely an act, whereas, it is a grace of

the Holy Spirit, controlling the whole subsequent life of the justified believer. And the great point of connexion between our justified and sanctified states seems to us to consist in the fact that the same blood which becomes available through faith to justify is applied through faith to sanctification. The blood of Christ both frees from wrath and purges the conscience from dead works. The chief difference which exists between faith as exercised in justification and as employed in sanctification is that in the former case, it regards Christ mainly in His priestly office; and in the latter, regards Him in all His offices, as prophet, priest and king. Christ, as priest, offers an atonement and provides a righteousness which faith leans on for justification. But in the progressive work of sanctification, the believer, by faith, looks to Christ as his priest, to intercede for him; his prophet, to instruct; and his king to defend him. The great principle, "without faith it is impossible to please God," is equally applicable to our justified and our sanctified states. Through that faith, which receives a graciously imputed righteousness, we are freed from a guilt-burdened conscience and the fearful apprehensions of a coming wrath, and this is the victory that overcometh the world—even our faith. Not the most untiring expenditure of human effort—not watching, striving, prayers and tears—but simple faith in the free grace of the crucified Savior. Looking unto Jesus, the author and the furnisher of our faith, is the grand secret, both of freedom from wrath and holiness of life.

But not only is the faith which is instrumental in justification necessary to sanctification, but there are other principles with regard to which the same observation holds. By virtue of this union with Christ we

are adopted into the family of God, and being brethren of Christ become sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ to a glorious inheritance. Without the spirit of adoption it is impossible to serve God acceptably; without it every effort made by the awakened sinner or the self-sustaining is prompted by a fear of wrath, and springs from a servile dread of God as the final judge. It is only when we cry Abba, Father, only when we approach Him as reconciled through the blood of His Son, that we are enabled to bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The twinges of conscience, the stings of remorse and the alarming dread of Hell can never be the motives of a truly sober, righteous, and godly life. The spirit by which we become followers of God as dear children, coupled with a sense of pardon and reconciliation with Him through the blood of Jesus Christ, are absolutely necessary to holiness in life and peace in death. And that man is to be pitied whom the spirit of bondage and the fear of a coming wrath goad on to a forced conformity to the externals of religion, to a life relieved by no earthly enjoyment, and sweetened by no joys of pardon, and to a dying bed racked with awful uncertainty with reference to the tremendous issues of eternity. A constant reliance upon the blood of Christ which justifieth is the only thing that robs life of its gloom and death of its sting.

But there is still another consideration which evinces the harmony between justification by free grace and santification of life. The obedience of Christ unto death as it has produced remission of guilt and a title to life, has also purchased for the believer the santifying influences of the Holy Spirit. It is the meritorious cause of our santification.

It is only by virtue of Jesus' sufferings and death that we obtain the grace of the Spirit. His great atoning sacrifice was the reason of the impartation of the Spirit as the immediate agent in the production of holiness. Aside from Christ's obedience and perfect righteousness, God is a consuming fire, nor would the Spirit, while the sinner lives under the curse of the law, impart his graces in his heart. To him who has died with Christ to the guilt of sin, the Spirit is imparted to enable him to die to its power. There is thus a beautiful consistency in the whole scheme of redemption. As God has determined to save the sinner, and that can only be done through the righteousness of a substitute, it is necessary that the sinner should be invested with that righteousness; but as this avails only the justification of his person in law, it is equally necessary that his heart should be sanctified and prepared for the eternal presence of God. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the application of those blessings which Christ has purchased with His blood. Thus, my brethren, does Christ become to us our whole salvation; our wisdom to instruct us, and righteousness to justify us, and sanctification to make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

III. But as it has with strange inconsistency been urged by those who object to justification upon a scheme of free grace that Christ by His sufferings and death has introduced a new law of grace and procured for us easier conditions of salvation, we would remark in the next place, that the scheme of justification by free grace, against which the objection is advanced, establishes the moral law in its integrity as a rule of life and duty to believers. The opponents of this system of grace show their leaning to works by this theory,

and as if convinced both from the teaching of Sacred Scriptures and their own experience, that it is impossible to furnish an obedience which will abide the rigid demands of God's law, adopt a view of the law itself which relaxes the bonds of moral obligation. It being necessary to obey the law in order to salvation, and experience convinces that it cannot be obeyed in its original state, they are forced to regard the death of Christ as slacking off its unbending claims and accommodating it to the weakness and imperfection of their moral strength, and as only partial conformity can be expected to its requisitions even in this lowered state, what is wanting will be made up by the merits of Christ. In short, God will accept a sincere instead of a perfect obedience. But the view of justification given by the apostle, so far from inducing a conviction that the claims of the law are thus compromised, establishes those claims in all their force. For, in order that the sinner should escape the penalty of the law, it was necessary that a righteousness without a flaw should be provided. And the obedience of Christ, being infinite in value, was alone sufficient to meet the exigency. That obedience could have been no less than perfect, as the person who rendered it was incapable of failure or imperfection. An infinitely perfect obedience was absolutely demanded by the righteous law of God. Nothing short of this could have been satisfactory. The law is but an exact external representation of the nature and perfections of the Almighty, and it is scarcely less than impiety to assert that its original rectitude could be so far compromised as to admit a partial obedience. There is undoubtedly a sense obvious to every reader of Sacred Scriptures in which the law is nullified. But that sense presupposes a

certain necessary condition to have been performed. It is true that, in consequence of the obedience and death of the Son of God, as the surety of the elect, the condemning sentence of the law is forever removed from them. As He has incurred their debt and paid it, justice is satisfied; nor would it demand of the believer the fulfilment of a claim which Christ has discharged in his place. There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. The law as it is administered under the form of a covenant of works actually exists no longer to the believer in Christ. The law which still exercises its sway over his life is administered by Christ as mediator, and hence the believer is said to be "under the law to Christ." As the sinner owed obedience to the law as a covenant of works, and as Christ assumed his obligations and rendered a perfect obedience to it under that form of administration, it is clear that the believer is freed from its claims, and hence the apostle, under the figure of the marriage relation, represents the death of the law, as a covenant of works, by the death of the first husband, and the marriage of the believer to Christ as by the marriage of the wife to a second husband. As Luther observes, "The law is bound, dead, and crucified in me; it is not overcome, condemned and slain unto Christ; but unto me believing in Him, unto whom He hath freely given the victory." The fact is, that Christ having voluntarily subjected himself to the law, as a covenant of works, and having perfectly obeyed it, was justified on the ground of that obedience. And as the guilt of sin had been imputed to Him He was justified from that guilt, or "dead to sin," and it is in this sense that the apostle says we are "dead to sin," for being in Christ we were justified with Him from its

guilt. While, however, he thus unequivocally asserts the nullification of the law in this point of view, he is careful to determine its continued existence as a rule of life in the hands of Christ. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid—yea, we establish the law." The law derives its immutable character from the immutability of that nature which is the only ultimate ground of moral distinctions. Its complexion is reflected from the radiant perfections of the Almighty. And as it is a specific rule to the creature, embodying the distinctions of right and wrong which exist necessarily in God's nature, it can never be relaxed until that nature itself has ceased to be unchangeable. In the cross of Christ we behold the strongest proof of the unyielding nature of the law. It being determined to save sinners, nothing could obviate the difficulty but the death of God's eternal Son. And as long as that accursed tree shall stand the only refuge of the guilt-burdened sinner, as long as that bleeding victim to justice shall be lifted up that all men may come unto Him, so long will there be the most striking monument that omnipotence itself could raise to the eternal sanctions of His law. That crown of thorns, that bloody robe, that pierced side, that agonizing cry, that awful head which bowed in death, shall conspire forever to "magnify the law and to make it honorable" in the sight of God's moral universe.

The words of our Savior himself are: "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." No, my brethren, these heavens which stretch above us shall pass away, those "everlasting lamps" shall each go out in the blackness of darkness; yea, the firm pillars of this earth shall totter and crumble and fall, but not one jot or one

tittle of that law, as a rule of life and duty, shall ever be compromised.

The death of Christ, so far from abrogating the law or lowering its requirements, establishes it as a rule of life which the believer is bound to regard as the perfect standard to which all his works ought to conform. But as his obedience is necessarily imperfect, as his best performances cannot abide a comparison with this standard, he relies not on them for acceptance, but on the blood of his glorious substitute. Thus, so far from depressing the standard of duty, this scheme of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ imparts a higher sanction to the law, clothes it with a more august and commanding authority and perpetuates it as an indispensable rule of life and measure of obligation.

IV. Lastly, we observe that this scheme of justification by mere grace presents motives to holiness of life which could be secured on no other scheme.

It is not denied that even if the death of Christ be regarded as not of a strictly vicarious character, that motives of some force may be derived from its contemplation, but we do say that the motives to holiness which the plan of justification proposed by the apostle suggests, are the most powerful that can possibly operate upon the human heart. It is readily acknowledged that they are not of such a character as those which ordinarily prompt to effort. The love of distinction, the desire of happiness, the fear of ill, are not the principal motives which spring from a view by faith of the Lamb of God. But to have been given to Jesus in the covenant of redemption without our personal suffrage, to be regarded as in Him obeying the precept and fulfilling the penalty of the

law which we had violated, to have this all-perfect righteousness imputed to us and thrown as a spotless wedding garment around our souls, to have died on Calvary with Him to the guilt and penalty of our own sins and thus to be plucked by sovereign grace as brands from the everlasting burnings, to be made joint-heirs with Christ to an inheritance that fadeth not away—these considerations are suited to inspire that love and gratitude which constitute the only true motives to acceptable obedience. An unmerited favor cannot fail to generate gratitude in a generous heart and that love which unsolicited showers benefits on an enemy can be requited with indifference only by a soul dead to all sense of right. Such favor and such love is conspicuous in the cross of Christ.

The objection to the plan of salvation by mere grace fails to recognize the validity of the choicest motives to action, or at least it seems to be based on the supposition that the scheme of the apostle is characterized by an utter destitution of all motive to holiness, and tends to produce that "ease in Zion," which is fatal to an evangelical effort. But where shall we discover sufficient motive if the free, boundless, undeserved mercy of the Father, the infinite, the unutterable love of the Son, and the long suffering grace of the Spirit which speak from the cradle of Bethlehem, the Garden of Gethsemane, the cross of Calvary and the Ebenezers of our own experience are not competent to produce it? If the spectacle of a bleeding Savior expiring in agonies and blood on the accursed tree for our worthless souls, if this does not move us, what in heaven, earth, or hell can do it? If the love of Christ does not constrain us, in vain will we appeal to the desire of happiness, to the dread

of judgment and the fear of hell. This plan of justification by mere grace does not supply those motives which are based in selfishness, but it does provide others which, while they humble self, assimilate our nature to the character of God. Gratitude to God for His unspeakable gift, love to that blessed Savior who gave Himself a ransom for us, a joyful persuasion of our personal interest in His death, and a blood-bought hope of joining that general assembly and church of the first born who night and day in the upper temple cry, Grace! Grace! these are the motives, these the powerful incentives which induce the believer to follow Christ, to pursue holiness, and to go on from strength to strength till he "appears in Zion before God."

It will be perceived that we have only defended the scheme of salvation by grace from the objection urged against it, in the single point of justification by the righteousness of Christ, as that is the only subject which, up to the time of his notice of the objection, he had handled. But the tendency to holiness of all the other doctrines grace is as manifest as that of justification. If we are elected in the eternal purpose of God it is that we "should be holy and without blame before Him in love." If we have been effectually called by the efficacious grace of God's spirit it is that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. If we are assured that none shall ever pluck us from His hand it is because He who has begun a good work in us will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ, because we are kept by His power through faith unto salvation.

The whole plan so viewed, instead of depressing the standard of morals, relaxing the bonds of obligation and affording an unqualified license to the carnal desires of the heart, ratifies the immutable distinctions

of right and wrong, elevates the measure of holiness, and furnishes motives to holiness of life which can be equally secured on no other scheme.

It follows from what has been said that the true method by which believers should mortify sin is to maintain the constant persuasion of their union with Christ and their death in Him to the guilt of sin. The apostle enjoins it upon them to reckon themselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. A constant view by faith of a crucified Savior and a joyful sense of our personal interest in His sufferings, death and resurrection is the only thing which can relieve the soul of that sense of guilt and apprehension of wrath that cripples our efforts, beclouds our hope and bows the head in despondency and gloom.

My brethren, let us strive to feel with the apostle when he exclaims, "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all then were all dead, and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."

THE OFFICE OF WORKS OF CHARITY IN THE LAST JUDGMENT

Matt. xxv. 40. *“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”*

These words were spoken by Him who is the Prophet of the church and the light of the world. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” But not only is information in regard to the judicial process of the last day communicated to us by one who is the accredited revealer of God’s will, with the extraordinary credentials of His divine commission suspended around His person, but it is extended by one who is also constituted the final judge of the human race. “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son”; “and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the son of man.”

NOTE.—This sermon was preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, S. C., on Sabbath night, January 29, 1882. It was prepared at the request of the Ladies’ Benevolent Society, and was delivered in the interest of its work. This was the only occasion on which it was preached in exactly this form.

He will discharge the judicial function, who is a partaker of the nature which will be arraigned at the bar; who, having suffered humiliation, disgrace and death in the prosecution of His work as the Savior of men, will have His claims vindicated and His glory illustrated by presiding at the last assize; who, having, in accordance with the eternal counsels of the Godhead, conducted all of the previous stages of redemption, will perform the last, decisive act by which the economy of grace will be closed.

He, who promulgated the law on Mount Sinai, who expounded the law on the Mount of Beatitudes, who fulfilled the law on Mount Calvary, who administers the law on Mount Zion, and who will execute the law on the Mount of final judgment,—He it is, who lifts the awful curtain hanging between us and the everlasting future, and lets in light upon the throne of justice and the procedures of the day of doom. The Judge himself ascertains us beforehand of what we are to expect. It is a striking consideration, that the passage, from which the text is extracted, furnishes a particular account of the order and the steps which will obtain in the final trial that is to stamp the complexion of our destiny—the most minute description of the judicial process which is contained in the Bible. It deserves the most careful scrutiny, for it meets and satisfies the strong craving of our minds for knowledge of the future, and at the same time renders inexcusable our ignorance of the manner in which we will be dealt with in the great judicial day.

Nor can it fail at once to arrest our attention, that the order which, as we are informed, will be pursued, is the inverse of that adopted in human courts; so far as their decisions are not merely grounded in the arbi-

trary will of an autocratic despot. In them, in consequence of human ignorance, the testimony is first taken, in order that the innocence or guilt of the party at the bar may be collected from the investigation of the facts in the case, and then the sentence is pronounced. But in that final court, the Judge will first pronounce the sentences, "Come, ye blessed," or "Depart, ye cursed," and then will Himself adduce the testimony which will manifest the justice of His decisions.

From the nature of the case, no one can be tried by his peers, for all will be equally impleaded before the bar—all will be on trial. Nor can it be requisite that a preliminary investigation of facts should be instituted, for, the Judge is alike omniscient and infinitely righteous. All the facts are perfectly known to Him, and the justice of the findings will be admitted and enforced by the consciousness of every individual at the bar. What there may be of momentary dissent or protest will instantly be dissipated by the incontrovertible testimony which the Judge Himself will proceed to adduce.

The passage before us, and concurrent utterances of the Word of God, assure us that men will be judged according to their works. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." It is of the very last consequence that just here we should make no mistake. Reason would convince us, and the Scriptures definitely

declare, that no transgressor of the divine law can be justified on the ground of his own works. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." There has been but one doer of the law, in order to justification. Christ, as the divinely appointed substitute of sinners, has completely obeyed it both as to its precept and its penalty; and his vicarious righteousness, received by faith, constitutes the only ground of acceptance with God, either in this world or at the judgment-bar. When, therefore, the Bible asserts that men shall be judged according to their works the meaning is, not that they will be pronounced in the great day to be justified and acquitted on the ground of, or on account of, their works. The meaning is, that the works of the righteous will furnish the evidence that they are justified on the ground of, or on account of, Christ's merits; and that they possess a character, which makes them meet for the enjoyment of God's presence and the fellowship of heaven. The case of the unbelieving wicked is different. They will be condemned on the ground of their works, as not only intrinsically blameworthy, but as furnishing the evidence that they had rejected the merits of Christ as the ground of their acceptance, and that they possess a character which makes them deserving of banishment from the presence of God and from the glory of His power. They will be judged not only according to, but on account of, their works. I beseech you, brethren, to commit no blunder in this matter, for it must entail disastrous consequences upon your eternal interests.

The question now springs up and challenges attention, What sort of works are those which Christ tells us will afford the evidence of the justice of the judicial

sentences? The answer is, works of charity; and it is an answer which merits our maturest consideration.

Let us, first, notice the singularly conspicuous place which will be assigned to offices of charity in the inquisition of the last, great day. Turning to those on His right hand, the King will utter the thrilling words, "Come, ye blessed!" But why? What title have they to such a welcome? Does the King say, Ye were just, ye were true, ye were faithful, ye were temperate, ye were orthodox, ye adhered to my church in life, and ye died in its communion? No. All *that* may be involved in the character of those whom He will approve and receive amidst the solemnities of that day. But He does not say that He will signalize those traits. What will the King say to the righteous? Ye fed the hungry, ye gave drink to the thirsty, ye entertained the stranger, ye clothed the naked, ye visited the sick and those who were in prison. What a marvellous preëminence will be accorded to charity in the last day! Surely it cannot be that the other Christian graces are not worthy to be mentioned on that day, but it is that charity is more worthy of distinction than they. "And now," says the apostle Paul, "abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity." Great is faith. Is it not the grace which unites us to Christ as a Savior? Is it not the victory that overcometh the world? Did not the ancient heroes of Christ's cause on earth triumph by faith over every difficulty, and vanquish every foe? Did they not live by faith, and was it not by faith they died? Great is hope. Does it not sustain us under life's burdens, animate us for its conflicts, cheer us amidst its afflictions, comfort us as we walk through the valley of the death-shade, and make the darkness of the dying hour blush

with the morning light of heaven? Yea. Great is faith, and great is hope, but the distinction of charity is that it is greater even than they. Noble grace! It is the chief feature in that image of God which the divine Spirit stamps upon the regenerated soul. The very expression of unselfishness, it asks nothing and gives everything. The most useful of all the virtues, it leads its possessor to live for the good of others. It is emphatically the grace which contemplates the duties relating us to this present world of sin and wretchedness, while faith and hope are aspiring to the rewards of the future. It is content to hang upon a cross, while they are looking for a crown. Itself destined to chief honor in the day when the fire of an impartial judgment will try all pretensions to virtue, and calcine to ashes all the gauds and pomps of merely human and civil works, it is unconscious of its own value, and will be surprised at its recognition by the final judge. Entitled to the palm in the sisterhood of divine graces, it will modestly disown all claim to it, and shrink from its bestowal. Heavenly charity! its hand, which was opened to every plea of human want, will put back the amaranth of eternal honor which will be placed upon its head with the sanction of the Godhead, and amidst the thunders of angelic acclamations; while its human beneficiaries—the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned, now relieved from every earthly woe, stand ready to escort it to the gates of glory and welcome it to the abodes of bliss. Such is the distinction that will be conferred upon this grace of Charity, which in itself gentle, humble, self-renouncing, will ultimately be crowned as the impersonation in human form of the genius of Christianity! Such the honor that will be, amidst the solemnities of

the last judgment, bestowed upon this self-denying but sublime virtue, which brings our poor, imperfect nature into closest likeness to Him, who dwelt among men and shared their sorrows, who healed the sick and the crippled, the deaf, the dumb and the blind, who groaned in sympathy with the bereaved and wept with them over their dead, and who at last, although entitled to universal homage, laid down His life in agony and shame to redeem His enemies from sin and death and hell!

But we have only touched the skirts of this subject. We must, in the next place, inquire what is the nature of this charity, and what the character of these works which will receive mention so conspicuous in the day of final accounts. Let us not deceive ourselves. Men are cheated by the merely superficial and phenomenal circumstances of actions—their tinsel and paint and varnish, but the divine Judge, with his omniscient eye, looks down into the profound recesses of the soul in which lurk hidden from human inspection those springs of thought and feeling, those intentions, motives and governing principles, that impart a real and permanent value to our deeds. Many are the acts emblazoned with the beautiful name of charity which can lay but a hollow claim to the illustrious title; many the deeds of splendid beneficence that extort the encomiums of the world, but which will be reduced to nothing by the solvent of the last fire.

Here, however, we are obliged to distinguish. There is the distinction between an act as it appears to man, and as it appears to God; and there is the distinction between an act materially considered—that is, as to the thing itself which is done, and the same act formally considered—that is, as to the motive which led to its

performance. Generally, that which alone appears to the eye of the human observer is the outward act itself. When we witness the performance of an act of charity, we see the material benefit which is conferred, the pecuniary alms, the food, the drink, the raiment, the visit to the sick and the imprisoned, the entertainment of the strangers; and we may be able to notice the joy of the beneficiary and the material relief he experiences. And with this we should ordinarily be satisfied. It is not our province to hunt for the latent motive, which lies back of the external act and veiled from our perception. It may be a good one, it may be a bad one, but we are neither qualified nor authorized to discharge the function of judges. In most cases, we ought to infer from the material goodness of the deed the worthiness of the motive which prompted it. But there may be cases, in which the informing motive emerges from latency, and is so obtrusively thrust upon our observation, that it is impossible that it should elude our knowledge. In such cases we are compelled to take the seat of the judge, and pronounce upon the formal value of the acts. If, for example, we see alms extended to the poor, manifestly for the purpose of securing votes for office, or of eliciting applause from spectators, while we approve the material results of the benefaction, we are obliged to regard the act as possessed of no formal value as a fruit of principle and a test of character. On the contrary, contemplating it from the point of view of its internal relations, we are under the necessity of disapproving it. We feel that the outward and material benefit conferred, although it be good and deserving of applause, furnishes no evidence that the principle of charity

exists as an element of character, and a spring of action.

Now, those instances, in which our knowledge is limited to the merely material and outward features of acts, afford no analogy whatever to the mode in which they are estimated by the divine judgment. "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." He cannot be deceived as to the subtle relation which subsists between the outward action and the inward principle. To him there is no distinction, as with us, between the apparent and the real—the visible and the invisible. All is phenomenal and visible to his omniscient eye. The soul is more intimately known by Him than by its own consciousness. Its fundamental laws, its most secret thoughts, its most fugitive phases of feeling, are intuitively apprehended by Him, whose knowledge has no limitations, but like His being is infinite. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." The morning sun does not as clearly reveal the features of a landscape which had been veiled by the darkness of night, as does the blazing light of God's face the obscurest emotions and purposes of the human heart.

But those cases, in which we at once possess a knowledge of outward acts and of the motives which inspired them, are a shadow—an imperfect illustration, of the mode in which the moral qualities of actions are weighed in the unerring balances of the divine judgment. It should, however, not be forgotten that, as to degree, God's knowledge is infinitely clearer than ours can be, and that as to mode, he is never dependent upon inference, as we often are, for insight into the secret condition of the creature. He gazes in one undivided

intuition upon the material and the formal qualities of actions, upon the outward deed itself and the intention which impresses its moral type.

Let us now apply these distinctions to the office which, Christ tells us, will be discharged by works of charity in the day of judgment. Their material and outward qualities will be, as we have already seen, recognized and mentioned by the Judge—feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, lodging the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and prisoners. But this is by no means all. He will uncover and bring out into light and distinctly state the principle from which these acts proceeded, the motive which dictated them and fixed their moral value. Addressing the righteous He will say: “I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Wonderful words! Let us pause and mark their significance. There are at least two things which they enforce upon our attention:

In the first place, they shed the light of the last judgment upon the nature of that charity which the Judge himself will approve, and the kind of charitable offices which he will adduce as evidences of a justified state and a holy character. The charity which will pass inspection, and will play so distinguished a part in that judicial day, is not one which was a mere complement—a mechanically united bundle of outward acts of beneficence. It is a deep-seated principle of the soul, a permanent habitude, which expressed itself in

benefactions to the poor. But what sort of principle? what kind of habitude? The answer is—and it is furnished by the Judge himself—love for Christ. It was for my sake ye did your charitable works; they sprang from the love ye bore for me. And, therefore, I cite them from my book of remembrance, to evidence and prove your possession of the principle of love to me. This, then, is the nature of that charity which will retain its name and read its title in the revealing light of the judgment-day: it is love for Christ, a principle, a grace, an all-informing motive, which originated, characterized and transfigured mere outward and material benefactions to the poor. But love to Christ will prove the existence of faith in Christ, for “faith worketh by love”; and faith in Christ will prove the possession of his righteousness, which is the sole ground of justification and acceptance with God. Still more, love to Christ proves the existence of love to God, and love to God is “the fulfilling of the law,” and the fulfilling of the law proves the possession of the temper of universal obedience to all the divine requirements—a condition of the soul which renders it meet for the society of the Trinity, the fellowship of angels and “the inheritance of the saints in light.” Grand sorities! beginning with offices of charity to the poor, and running back by an irrefragable chain of evidence, on the one hand, to a justified relation of the person to God, and, on the other, to a character of holiness which qualifies its possessors for endless communion with God and the blissful enjoyment of His presence.

It ought not to be supposed, that the words of the Judge impose the obligation of relieving only those who are followers of Christ and members of His body. We cannot know whether one who now makes no pro-

fession of faith in the Savior will not do it before he dies; nor can we be sure that all who bear the Christian name are really brethren of Christ. The great matter is, that we help them from the motive of love to Him. There is indeed a peculiar tie which binds us to the members of the family of God into which we trust we have been adopted by the love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost. They are emphatically our brethren, our rather's children, to whom we are linked by a closer and a tenderer bond than that of blood. But while we are required by divine command and by the instinctive affections of the renewed nature to do good, especially to them who are of the household of faith, we are also enjoined to communicate to the necessities of all men. That unhappily large community, whose name is the Poor, whose bill of rights is their wants, whose appeals are not to justice but to mercy, and whose ensigns are the famished body and the extended palm, belong peculiarly to no church or religion, no nation, tribe or tongue, but represent all shades of character, all forms of creed, all types of race. They are human. That validates their plea before a humanity whose kinship is stamped by a relation to one God, and the nexus of one bond of hope—the mediation of the man, Christ Jesus. The fact of need is what appeals to our sympathies; and in relieving it, whether found in the Christian or the infidel, the wicked or the good, we tread in the footsteps of Him who throughout a life of wondrous beneficence rejected no petition for help, and at the first keen accession of the pangs of crucifixion and the shame of a felon's death, poured our alike His prayers and blood for the inflictors of His woes. What is insisted on is, that it is the motive of love for Christ,

which will impart real value to our works of charity in the day of final reckoning.

How do these words of Jesus, the appointed judge of mankind, fall like thunder-bolts upon many of those pretending and ostentatious offices, which pass current in this sophistical world under the charming guise of charity! God forbid, that we should disparage any beneficent deed by which a single human want is supplied, a single human ache is cured, a single human tear is wiped away! Let it be that its only value is the material relief it affords. The importance of that in a world of suffering like this cannot be exaggerated. The hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the sick, the dying, are around us on every hand. The mournful procession has never gone by; its tread is ever in our ear. Were society to resolve itself into a vast eleemosynary institute in the effort to extinguish human woe, its united energies would not avail to make the poor man an unwonted spectacle, the sick bed a curiosity, and the grave a wonder. Poverty, disease and death are the inheritance of the race, and whatever may be the motive as it appears to omniscience, philanthropy hails every legitimate attempt to diminish the mass of wretchedness which rolls like a sea over the world. Let the generous and compassionate gratify the instincts of nature by extending material relief to the suffering and the needy. The more of this the better.

But let us not make the tremendous blunder of mistaking an ephemeral impulse for the heaven-born and undying principle of love; and by calling it charity, magnify its offices into a preparative for the trial of the last, great day. No act of charity, however laudable and splendid in the eyes of men, will have any significance in the final reckoning, if it sprang not from

love to Christ. Nor can acts of beneficence which were incited by the motive of pride, or vain-glory, or the love of applause, constitute, in the day of judgment, evidences of a justified state or of meetness for the companionship of heaven. "Inasmuch"—the eternal judge will thunder—"inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment."

One cannot forbear, in connexion with this subject, to remark upon the folly of those philosophical writers on morals, who although they live under the conditioning influence of Christianity, yet, in their analyses of the great principle of benevolence, throw out of account the love of Christ as a controlling motive to action, and expel His name from their works. They seem to forget the gigantic fact of sin, and the consequent need of redemption; and perpetuate the stupendous fallacy of treating the case of man as though he were still standing in innocence. These philosophers appear to think that the dignity of their utterances would be lowered, and the classic polish of their pages be sullied, by an allusion to the crucified Nazarene. They forget that the mediation of Christ has impressed an all-pervading type upon the divine government of the world, which nothing but utter perversity of the heart can fail to recognize, or stark blindness of the intellect can refuse to see.

It has been said, with equal truth and beauty, that the great "name of God is very close to us." It is written as with the divine finger itself upon the nature within us and the nature without us. But, in itself, it is not a name which is a representative of hope, or an object of delightful contemplation, to a race which is conscious of sin and crime. As it stands indelibly

recorded upon the foundation laws and beliefs of our souls, and proclaims itself in the penalties of conscience—fear, shame, remorse, despair; as it is spelled in the flaming characters of the heavens, or darkly frowns in their appalling omens; utters itself in the ghastly terrors of famine, pestilence and death which afflict the earth, and is heard in the crash of the thunder, the rumble of the earthquake and the roar of the storm, it is the symbol of retribution and the prophecy of doom. In our natural condition what are we, but a collection of criminals, marching under guard to the judgment-bar and the prison of hell? It is one of the most astounding facts in the history of our unhappy race, that the question of God's existence has ever been raised; and still more astounding is it, that, having been raised, it has given birth to a controversy scarcely surpassed in bulk by any other which has been waged upon a single subject. If sin had never occurred, Atheism would have been an impossibility. And could even now the idea of retributive justice be abstracted from the conception of God, the likelihood is that it would vanish from the field of speculation. It is a God of retributive justice, the registry of whose name the conscious transgressor would expunge from his own works, and whom he would thrust out, if he could, from his own habitation. As long as justice is recognized, the inseparable connexion between guilt and punishment must be felt. And as long as that terror is experienced which drives the sinner from the presence of a divine Judge, all successful endeavors after obedience to God are hopelessly excluded. There can be no love to a Being whose justice is armed for our destruction, and without love to him there can be no worship which would be accepted, no obedience which

would be approved. Under such circumstances, of what avail are philosophical analyses of the principles or morals, or ethical digests of the rules of duty? They are prelections uttered in the lecture-room of the sepulchre, and addressed to the ears of the dead. Or if the intellectual and moral existence of the auditors be insisted on, they are arguments to the culprit why he should love the judge who sentences him, exhortations to him to obey the law which hangs him.

But the awful name of God is translated and interpreted to sinners by another name, which is the emblem of reconciliation and the pledge of love. Need it be mentioned? Is it not Jesus Christ? This is the name which indeed comes very close to the sinner, and close to him in ineffable tenderness and power. The mediation, the sufferings and death of Christ, have revolutionized our relations to God. The wonder is, that the name of the sinner's Savior is not seen to be inscribed on the heavens above, on the earth beneath, and on the profoundest principles of the human soul. The wonder is, that the man of science does not read it ciphered in starry letters upon the nocturnal sky, and chronicled in every element and force of the physical globe; and that the philosopher, bending the ear of consciousness to the phenomena of inward experience, does not hear it cried out from the lowest depths of his moral being. The wonder is, that he does not think as in the shadow of the Cross, and write as if his pen were dipped in atoning blood. The love of Christ is the expression of God's love to the guilty, and the responsive love which it evokes from the heart of the sinner, as it completes our reconciliation to God, and renders possible an acceptable obedience to His law. It becomes along with faith a root, and by itself, peculiar and distinguished in this

regard, the very complement of all holy acts. The philosopher, who had contemptuously banished it from the category of moral virtues, will be dismayed to see it signally emphasized and magnificently crowned in that day when all human speculations, principles and actions will pass under searching and final review.

In the second place, these wonderful words of the Lord Jesus, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," enforce upon our attention His identification of himself with His poor and needy members on earth. This is almost incredible to us circumstanced as we now are. Even though we may have reason to feel that we have renounced every other ground of dependence, and have heartily embraced Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel, as the only hope of our souls, it is a tax upon our faith to admit the oneness of so glorious a Savior with ourselves. It requires the assuming witness of His Spirit to scatter our doubts and convince us that He acknowledges us as His brethren, the adopted children of His Father, and joint-heirs with Him to all the riches of His Father's house, the boundless inheritance of God. Conscious of sin, of backsliding, of treachery, as we are, we are often ashamed to lift up our faces before Him, and would fain, like Peter under the remembrance of His fall, bow our heads and weep in the bitterness of our souls. We feel that we are unworthy of a look of recognition, of a single token of His love, and are surprised, like the dejected and penitent apostle, when we receive some reassuring message from our risen Lord, which lifts us from dust and ashes and thrills us with gratitude and joy.

We limit the merits of Jesus' righteousness, we apply the poor measure of our sympathies to those which throb in a Savior's heart, we bound the fulness, and circumscribe the out-goings, of infinite love. Exalted as He now is, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world, but in that which is to come, He identifies himself with the meanest of His people, and makes common cause with them as they wrestle with the world, the flesh and the Devil. From the throne of glory, as once He did from the mount of transfiguration, He comes down to the low plane of their conflicts, difficulties and woes, and takes their part and bears a hand with them in their hopeless struggle against odds. As old John Owen in effect says, He appears upon the scene, plants himself on their side, and challenges their adversaries with the demand, "What question ye with them?" Hands off! These are my brethren, these are my Father's children. I am their Savior and their Advocate. If ye have anything against them, deal with me; I am here to answer for them. What is done to them is done to me.

Nor is this all. He declares the wants of His brethren, of the least of His brethren, to be His wants. It is not only that He, the compassionate minister to the necessities of afflicted human beings during His sojourn with them in this vale of tears, still remembers and commiserates them, although He sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high and listens to the chorus of heaven as it rolls its billows of praise to His feet. We need not be surprised that the great heart which beat on earth with sympathy for human sufferers and broke at length in a sacrificial death for their redemption, is not alienated from them by the possession of heav-

only glory and universal dominion, but unchanged and unchangeable pours out upon them its wealth of love and pity from the mediatorial throne. This does not put our faith to the strain; but this is not the whole case. The ascended and glorified Redeemer identifies himself with His poor brethren on earth. In all their affliction He is afflicted. "They fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" in their flesh. They are His exponents and representatives, in whom He still, so to speak, lingers in this world and walks among men, not now imparting blessings to the needy, but asking succor in His need. The hand which gave mercy is now extended to receive it; the mouth which spoke healing to soul and body now asks for bread and water; He who clothes us with the wedding-garment of righteousness now solicits raiment to cover His nakedness; and the great Physician who cured all manner of sickness now lies stretched on the pallet of suffering and the bed of death. Is this hard to believe? Hear, how He will, in the great day, prove the meetness of His people for His welcome of them to everlasting joy: when, in yonder scene of suffering, ye fed the hungry, it was me ye gave meat to; when ye gave drink to the thirsty, it was me whose thirst ye slaked; when ye lodged the stranger, it was me ye entertained; when ye clothed the naked, it was me to whom ye furnished raiment; when ye visited the sick, it was me ye nursed; when ye came to the prisoner, it was me of whose chain ye were not ashamed. Lord, they will exclaim, when was that? We never saw thee in the body on earth. Yea, the King will answer, yea, ye did. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. "These, my brethren," he affectionally calls them, as with the

royal sceptre in His grasp and the royal diadem upon His head, he effects the irreparable division of the human race and pronounces the changeless sentences of doom.

There is but one other thought which I shall notice as suggested by these wonderful words of Jesus. It is that no office of charity, however slight it may be, which springs from the motive of love to Christ, will ever be forgotten or overlooked by Him. It may have been lost sight of by him who did it, but it will be sure to reappear in the last day, and will not fail of meeting a gracious and everlasting reward. There are many reasons which tend to produce forgetfulness of these acts of charity by those who performed them. In a world so full as this is of suffering and want appeals for help follow each other in rapid succession, and one benefaction coming close upon another obliterates its trace from memory, as tracks imprinted upon the ocean beach are washed out by every bursting wave. Moreover, the same sense of sinfulness and unworthiness which renders His people slow to apprehend the intimate union between their exalted Savior and themselves, blunts their perception of His fellowship in want with their poor and needy neighbors, and of the fact that they minister to His necessities when they communicate to theirs. And further, the fear of inflaming spiritual pride prevents that determinate attention to the acts which is necessary to fix their impression upon the memory. They are felt not to be worthy of registration or even of mention, no account is kept of them by their performers, and so, for one reason or another, the recollection of these deeds of beneficence fades away into what seems an irrecoverable past.

But vanished though they be from the records of our memory, these acts of charity are not forgotten, not one of them. Oh, no! That loaf of bread given to the hungry, that cup of cold water handed to the thirsty, that garment thrown around the emaciated form to protect it from the wintry blast, that dose of medicine administered to the parched lips of the sufferer on his couch of sickness, that cooling of the fevered brow, that gentle smoothing of the dying pillow,—lo! they appear again. The tattered pauper whose timid knock once brought us to the door, the poor needle-woman who worked her fingers sore to get bread for herself and her children, and whose eyes glistened at the sight of the plate of food, the friendless stranger who lay on a cot under our roof, the widow who would have shivered over a cheerless hearth but for the fuel sent to her desolate home,—behold, they appear again. When? Where? In that great day of doom, before yon flaming bar, in the presence of angels, men and devils, assembled to hear the sentences of destiny, as they fall from the lips of the eternal Judge. Summoned by Him who forgets nothing done for His sake, they will appear as witnesses, to prove that the love of Christ was a moving and operative principle in sinful men, which made them meet for the plaudits of the Judge, and the rewards of the blest.

Where is our faith? Where is our love to Jesus? Who of us, in view of results so transcendent, would not share His earthly means with the suffering, the sick, the poor? I say not, let us give that we *may* receive; but, let us give, and we *will* receive—good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over, poured into our bosoms by a hand which has the bliss of immortality at its disposal. The sacri-

fices of earth forever past, the welcome of the King extended to us, the rapture of acceptance thrilling our hearts, with what transports of joy shall we look upon the happy objects of our earthly charities, and with them join the procession of the glorified, which will move with triumphal anthems to the pearly gates and the golden streets of that city of God, where no poor shall be found, no inhabitant shall say, I am sick, no sufferer press the bed of death. O mammon of unrighteousness, we will make of thee friends in this scene of want, that when we fail they may receive us to everlasting habitations!

Go on, my friends of the Benevolent Society, go on in the fulfilment of your Christ-like mission. You reach a class of cases which are not touched by State provision, and are only met by such delicate offices as those which you discharge. You may seek no other reward than the privilege of expressing your love for your Savior, and the intrinsic gratification—the sweet satisfaction, which flows from abating human want; but for every pang you assuage on earth there may await you a joy in heaven, for every tear you wipe from the cheek of suffering, a smile from the face of your Lord.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES—IN THE WORLD

Matt. xvi. 3: "*O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*"

In these words, in which our Savior rebukes the Sadducees and the Pharisees, three things are taught: First, That as the signs of the weather are observable, so are the signs of the times: as there is a natural meteorology, there may be a sacred sematology; secondly, that we both have the right and are under obligation to observe the signs of the times: that in doing so we are not enthusiasts and fanatics, but discharge a legitimate and praiseworthy function; thirdly, that not to observe the signs of the times implies negligence and guilt. As every age has its own characteristic genius, dispositions and tempers, which we call the spirit of the times, and which no philosophic mind can afford to disregard, so there are peculiar signs that mark every religious period which no pious mind is at liberty to slight.

I. In considering this subject, let us first notice some of the prominent qualifications for a proper observation and discernment of the signs of the times, in their religious bearings.

NOTE.—This sermon and the one following were first preached in the Second Presbyterian Church, now the Arsenal Hill Presbyterian Church, Columbia, S. C., on the Sabbath afternoons of January 31, and February 7, 1892. They were afterwards preached, probably as one sermon, in Manning, McClellanville, Mt. Pleasant, and Charleston, South Carolina, and in Savannah, Georgia.

1. Spiritual sagacity is required. Some sagacity, some sound common sense, some calm, solid, practical judgment is of fundamental importance in any attempt to discern the governmental, political, social signs of an age, viewed in their secular relations. Together with this quality should be associated some knowledge of the principles of human society and of the progress of historical events, so that one age may be compared with another in view of certain well-ascertained standards of appeal. So is it in the religious sphere. Some spiritual sagacity, some sanctified common sense, some practical judgment enlightened by the Holy Ghost, combined with some acquaintance with the truths of God's Word, the principles of the church as a supernatural society, and the development of ecclesiastical history, are necessary to scan the signs of the religious firmament, to institute a judicious comparison of our own times, religiously considered, with those which have now passed away. Without these qualifications for the study of the signs of the times we would be prone to superstition with its brood of erroneous conclusions. We should be in the moral and religious sphere like those in the natural, who construe an eclipse, an unusual conjunction of the planets, a shower of meteors, into a portent of some disastrous change in the order of nature. Especially ought there to be, in connection with these qualifications, a reverent, sober, devout study of the prophecies of Scripture. It has been sneeringly said in regard to unfulfilled prophecy, that "its study either finds men mad or leaves them so." The answer to that profane jibe is the didactic statements of the Bible. "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy,

and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." "And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." He that reads the prophecies on his knees, and has the eye of faith open to see, will understand what, instead of making him mad, will save him from the insane frenzy of a carnal indifference to the momentous issues of the future. It behooves us to be like "the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding to know what Israel ought to do."

2. Thoroughness of observation is requisite. This is demanded in every domain of inquiry in order to the attainment of correct generalizations. It is necessary, therefore, to the formation of proper conclusions touching the signs of the times. Two things are supposed: patience in the prosecution of our inquiries, for hastiness here, as in every other exploration of a field, is death; and a wide induction of particular facts. An induction too narrow makes the conclusion top-heavy.

3. Freedom from prejudice and passion is necessary. This is so obvious, it is so often insisted upon by writers in every department of inquiry, that it needs not to be pressed at length. Nothing is more common than that men are governed in their views by the prejudgments derived from early training, from the instructions of parents and teachers, and from the circumstances of their environment, and not by an unprejudiced, independent examination of evidence. Look, for instance, upon the religious denominations. How many of the adherents of a particular sect have subjected its claims to a patient and unbiased examination? There are few

who are not controlled simply by their antecedents. This also leads to party feeling, not unfrequently amounting to passion. It need scarcely be said that if one, so conditioned, is right, he is not consciously right because he has fairly and impartially examined his position.

If I may without offence allude to personal experience, I would remark that in relation to the special question before us, the conclusions which will be announced in this discourse are the opposite of those which were imbibed from influences exerted upon my early education and even ministry. That fact, it is true, does not prove those conclusions to be right; but it does prove that they have been reached in the teeth of prejudice and in consequence of candid investigation. To a like temper I humbly but confidently submit them.

4. Earnest prayer for divine illumination is also demanded. A right discernment of the signs of the times, is only possible to one possessed of those spiritual qualities which have been already mentioned, and they are God's gifts. They must, therefore, be sought by prayer, and the proper direction of them by the Holy Ghost, in accordance with His inspired Word, must also be an object of importunate supplication. For one, without prayer for special guidance with reference to this subject, to say: "I think so," "Such is my opinion," is to be presumptuous and profane. Only the student of the Scriptures and the suppliant for divine light is entitled either to form or to utter any conclusion in regard to the question.

II. What are the materials of judgment in discerning the signs of the times?

1. The tendencies of the age. There must be marked and striking, not obscure and insignificant; and they must be wide-spread, not narrow and provincial, especially not merely local.

2. The facts of the times. There must be certain and indubitable, not doubtful and impeachable; and, further, they must be extensive in their scope, not circumscribed as to the sphere of their occurrence. Our observation must sweep the horizon all around, and must read the whole face of the sky.

3. Our study must be directed to these tendencies and facts alike in the world and in the church.

Such are at least some of the leading qualifications which constitute a condition precedent to a correct discernment of the signs of the times, the materials for forming a judgment, and the scope of our observation.

III. Something must be said in answer to the questions—what is the future event to which these signs are believed to point? What are their relations and bearings? What is our standard of judgment in our effort to discern them? and, What is the precise end aimed at in this discourse?

1. The great future event to which the signs of the times are believed to point is the beginning of the Millennium,—a period to be characterized by certain distinctive features, such as the extrusion of the Devil from this world for a thousand years, and the reintroduction of his influence at the close of that period; the cessation of war and the universal prevalence of peace; the general outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the nations; the restoration of the Jews and the Israelites to their own land, and their conversion to Christianity and incorporation into the Christian Church as the true and full development of their own ancient church; the

overthrow of Mohammedanism and its elimination from the world; the downfall and utter destruction and passing away of the Papal apostasy; the obliteration of Paganism with all its hydra-headed idolatry; the banishment from the world of all false forms of Christianity and all manifestations of infidelity in its protean shapes; the suppression of all that can be called Antichrist, either organized or personal; and the universal reign of Christ with the subjection of all kings, organizations and nations to Him. This is the future period, the introduction of which is the event to which the signs of the present time are pointing.

Its beginning, however, will, the Scriptures inform us, be preceded by a great tribulation to the world involving revolutions, disorganizations and conflicts on a gigantic scale, culminating in "the battle of that great day of God Almighty"—the battle of Armageddon. When one period is passing into another, it does not lapse gently into it by a process of assimilation, as a river peacefully flows into a calm, bright ocean; but as a ship crossing a stormy bar in order to reach the blue harbor beyond, it effects the change with a catastrophe of dislocation which the Scriptures characterize as a shaking. Thus the Ante-diluvian period made its transition to the Noachian through a cataclysm which nearly destroyed the race. The pre-Jewish period passed into the Jewish with a mighty shaking of the Egyptian and other opposing powers. The Jewish gave way to the Christian with throes which shook down the Jewish church-state and polity. The Reformation was introduced with convulsions which shook Europe, and shook down the Papal church in several parts of that continent. And so, the present period of the Christian dispensation will accomplish

the change to the Millennial with a prodigious shaking—through unprecedented conflicts, the toppling down of hoary systems, and the crash of “thrones, principalities and powers.” It is a law that changes from one great dispensation or period to another are accompanied by upheavals that unhinge the customary order of things. The signs of our times point ultimately to the introduction of the Millennium, proximately to the period of great trouble which will forerun it.

2. What are the relations and bearings of the signs of the times as here considered? The answer is, that they are contemplated as relating to and bearing upon the cause and kingdom of Christ, the Mediatorial Sovereign, the Saviour and Monarch of Zion, and the King of kings and Lord of lords. They are not viewed in their merely secular relations and bearings.

3. What is our standard of judgment in our effort to discern them? The reply is, the Word of God, and more especially the prophetic Scriptures. There is no other standard possible. Our appeal is to the Law and the Testimony. Here Christ himself gives us the history, past and future, of His own kingdom on this earth which he purchased and marked with His blood. Men pompously talk of the philosophy of history. They do but babble. The only philosophy of history worth the name is that found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. History apart from this key is a mere set of chronicles. “So Tibni died, and Omri reigned.” So Babylon died, and Greece reigned. So Greece died, and Rome reigned. So Rome Pagan died, and Rome ecclesiastical reigned. What does it all amount to? Nothing, but a long series of failures due to sin, unless the kingdom of Christ be the end. All has been but a preparation for the dominion of Him

who is destined to reign—as no mortal has yet reigned—from sea to sea and from pole to pole. Wearing upon his brow a manifold crown blazing with the blended lustre of every gem, and seated upon the throne of world-wide empire, Jesus shall gather up into the hands that were nailed to the tree the threads of universal history. Here history will meet its unity. The Bible is the statute-book of His kingdom and the history of its development. This is our standard of judgment.

4. What is the end aimed at in this discourse? It scarcely needs remark that it is to show, that the signs of the times indicate the approach of those critical changes which will usher in the period of Christ's Millennial reign.

IV. Let us begin with the signs of the times in the world at large.

1. Notice the status of the great Eastern and Western apostasies from Christianity—Mohammedanism and Popery. And let it be remembered that our standard of comparison is the prophecies of Scripture. To each of these systems these prophecies assign a living period of 1260 years. It must here be assumed—what is well-nigh universally conceded, and what could easily be proved, did time permit—that 1260 “days” of prophecy are 1260 years. It must also be assumed—for the time allotted to this discourse is limited—what is also generally admitted, that the 1260 years apply both to the career of Mohammedanism and that of the Papacy. Let one study the book of Revelation and he will probably be convinced of this.¹

¹For a fuller discussion of this interesting subject see “Appendix to the Discussion of Romanism” in *Discussions of Theological Questions* by the author, page 228.

The forty and two months of Daniel are 1260 years. Multiply forty-two by thirty—the average number of days to a month, and you have 1260. Daniel's time, times and a half are probably also 1260 years.

The great difficulty experienced in regard to this period of 1260 years has been in fixing the date from which it began to run. On the supposition that Mohammedanism and Popery commenced their ascendancy at about the same time this difficulty vanishes. For profane history definitely informs us that Mohammed was born in 570, that he retired into the cave of Hera in 606, and that the Hegira or his removal from Mecca to Medina occurred in 622. Taking this latest date of 622 as the point of departure, the 1260 years expired in 1882, and that is now nearly 10 years past.

How does this bear upon the times of the Papacy? Not alone because of the assumption that the beginnings of the careers of the two systems were synchronous, but chiefly because of the fact, that the fifth vial of Revelation poured out on the seat of the beast precedes in time the sixth vial discharged upon the Euphrates and effecting its drying up. It is significant that, according to that representation in the Apocalypse, Rome is fatally damaged before Mohammedanism.

Now what are the facts which constitute, in this relation, impressive signs of the times? The first is, that in 1866 the temporal power of the Pope was destroyed. How? Victor Emmanuel and his great prime minister the Count di Cavour had been laboring to secure the unification of the states of Italy into one kingdom. This the Pope opposed and he was powerfully supported by Austria. But in 1866 the eventful

battle of Sadowa was fought, in which the power of Austria was so seriously crippled by Prussia, that it could no longer be used to thwart the designs of Cavour and Emmanuel. The main body of the French army which had protected the Pope was withdrawn from Rome. This utterly broke the temporal sovereignty of the Pope. The Papal States were absorbed into the unified kingdom of Italy, and in 1870 King Victor Emmanuel—significant name!—entered Rome in triumph and made it the capital of his kingdom. Here, then, was the most striking sign of the times—the temporal sovereignty of the Pope was destroyed; and this was 1260 years from the date of the decree of the Emperor Phocas (606) which invested the Bishop of Rome with supreme authority over the Latin church. I cite attention to this stupendous sign of the times. For more than a thousand years the Popes had reigned in Rome. Now, the Pope is, civilly speaking, a mere denizen of that city, with his spiritual rights reserved to him.

I have no right to dogmatize upon the subject, but it is probable—there are indications of it now—that a great effort will be made to restore the temporal sovereignty of the Pope. If so, a conflict must ensue attended by tremendous results, and leading on to the battle of the great day of God Almighty, in which Antichrist, whatever form he may then assume, will, with all his forces, be finally extinguished.

Further, it is also a sign of the times, that the temporal supremacy of the Pope, which is not to be confounded with his temporal sovereignty over the Papal States,—his temporal supremacy over nations and rulers has been reduced almost to naught.

The second noteworthy fact is one in the recent history of the Mohammedan power. The very day on which, in 1882, the despatch of Lord Dufferin to the Home Office, announcing the fall of Alexandria under the British bombardment, was exactly 1260 years from the date of the Hegira. That, as has been already stated, occurred in 622. Add to that number 1260 and you have 1882. Moreover, the very day of the year and month on which Alexandria fell was the day of the year and month on which the Hegira took place. The latter date is precisely fixed as it is that from which the Mohammedan notation starts, just as ours does from the date of the birth of Christ. Now, the fall of Alexandria broke the Moslem power in Egypt and virtually subjected that country to English domination. The inference is obvious, and it is confirmed by the general decadence of the Turkish power. Here again we perceive another marked sign of the times, concurrent with the first mentioned, indicating the drying up of Mohammedanism, as the first does the downfall of the temporal power of the Papacy—both pointing to the near approach of the close of this period. We cannot shut our eyes to these signs. They are too obtrusive.

It may be asked, How is it that if the temporal power of the Papacy has been already broken, the end has not already come? The answer is twofold: first, because if the temporal power is destroyed of the Woman drunken with the blood of the saints, the saints of the Most High are, as predicted, delivered out of her persecuting hand; she can fulminate anathemas, but she cannot burn a Protestant; secondly, because Daniel expressly indicates a period of limited duration supplementary to the 1260 years. That sup-

plementary period is one of preparation for the final, decisive conflict; and I believe that we are living in it now. Let us not solace ourselves with the cry of Peace! Peace! The great guns of a mighty contest, which no well-meant but futile resort to arbitration can avert, will ere long begin to boom.

It deserves remark that another line of calculation founded on Daniel's prophecy, as this is upon Revelation, brings the period which closes this age to about the end of the present century. The substantial coincidence of the two lines is remarkable. But let it be observed that I have not spoken alone of the prophetic times, but have directed attention to undeniable facts, falling in with the generally adopted interpretation of those times. It is the facts, viewed in connection with the prophecies, which constitute phenomenal signs.

I have dwelt, at what may prove disproportionate length, upon these signs, because I deem them the most important of our time.

2. The fact must be signalized as one of the signs of our times, that the Jews are, to some extent, returning to their own land.

The prophecies of the Old Testament declare that they will be restored to their ancient inheritance—the country which in covenant was given to Abraham and his seed for a perpetual possession. These predictions are far too literal to be applied to their spiritual incorporation into the same church with Gentile Christians. It is hardly a distinctive characteristic of Christians to own lands and plant vineyards; and it is certain that such is not the tendency of Jews in their expatriated condition; nor can they be regarded as having been exhaustively fulfilled in the return from the Babylonian captivity. One or two considerations

would seem decisive. One is that God repeatedly asserts that He will gather to their own land again both Israel and Judah—making a clear discrimination between them. That certainly has not yet been realized. Another is, that God assures His ancient people that when He shall bring them again to their own land and settle them after their old estates, He will do better unto them than at their beginnings. That has not yet received fulfilment. Another is, that the land shall no more be bereaved of men, and that restored Judah and Israel shall no more be plucked up out of their land. And still another is, that they shall be gathered out of all the heathen countries whither they had been dispersed. None of these predictions were fulfilled in the restoration from Babylon. They, therefore, await fulfilment.

Now, what, in this relation, are the discernible signs of the times?

I have often said in the past, "When you see the Jews moving to Palestine, then look for the coming end of this period." But a few years since there was a Turkish inhibition upon any large immigration of Jews into the Holy Land. That has to a considerable extent been removed. A few years ago there were only 15,000 Jews in Palestine. Recent accounts show that they now number 80,000 and more. This is very remarkable. True, they may yet be expelled; but the presumption is mightily against that supposition. They are engaging in agricultural pursuits—another singular fact. It is reported that the rains which had so long ceased are again falling, and by distintegrating the rock that is everywhere found imparting a rich fertilizer to the soil. Hotels are said to be going up at prominent points. It is stated that a railway is in

operation from the Mediterranean to Damascus, that one is building from Jaffa to Jerusalem, and that still another is projected from Egypt to Syria. One is reminded of the prophecy of Isaiah: "In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria." The expulsion of the Jews from Russia is causing many of them to seek an asylum in their ancient land. Societies transportation of Jews to Palestine. Verily, these are said to be organized in England to assist in the significant facts of our times. Do they not look to the occurrence of some great change?

3. Another conspicuous sign of the times is the rapidly increasing evangelization of the world. It has been often said that this is the age of missions, that the Foreign Missionary enterprize is the glory of the Nineteenth century. See what a change has in this respect taken place since 1794, when William Carey was ridiculed by his brethren for undertaking a mission to India, and asked them to hold the rope for him while he ventured down into the well! As late as 1833, in this section of our favored country, it was considered foolhardy for Wilson to risk himself among the savage jungles and the more savage tribes of the African coast, and useless for Adger to waste his time and strength in the effort to enlighten the benighted Armenians. It was ten years after the beginning of this century that Mills, Judson, Nott and Newell presented an address to the General Association of Massachusetts calling attention to the wants of the heathen world. It was after that the first suggestions were offered which subsequently led to the formation of the American Bible Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. What behold we now? The grey dawn of a century ago has passed through the flush

of rising morn, and our eyes look upon the bursting glories of the sunrise. It is not meridian day, but the light that is glancing on headlands and suffusing banks of darkness is with the sure prophecy of morning destined to illuminate the mountain tops and bathe the valleys in splendor. Is not this an illustrious sign of the times?

But this is not all. The chief impressiveness of this sign is derived from the fact that our Lord declared: "This gospel of the kingdom must be first preached for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come." Now, to what preaching of the gospel did Jesus allude? Was it the apostolic propagation of it? The end did not then come. Those glorious missionaries have been dead for eighteen centuries, and the end is not yet. Was it the Mellennial propagation of the gospel? Was it the end of the Millennium He spoke of? Will the preaching of the gospel during that period be attended with opposition, persecution and martyrdom? Did the Savior say that there will occur the conversion of vast multitudes and the evangelization of all men, and then the end shall come? Nay. The gospel shall be preached for a witness and then shall the end come. The erection of its testimony in all nations is the condition precedent to the coming of the end.

Look now at some of the facts. The Bible is published in nearly 300 human dialects. Every Protéstant country is swarming with missionary organizations. More than that every Protestant church is, or ought to be, a missionary society. What a host of centres radiating gospel light! Thousands of volunteers are offering themselves to go on Foreign Missions, outrunning the available means—I say not the means which ought

to exist—of the church to send them. Converted churches of the heathen are becoming centres of missionary propagation. Every native church is a fountain of gospel influence. Let us not be told that every man must be individually approached with the tidings of redemption. The Lord Jesus does not specify that as the condition to the coming end. The erection of the gospel testimony in every land so as to be accessible to all, if they will, this is what He mentions. Soon, soon, without some remarkable interposition of providence, must this condition be fulfilled. Wherever a caravan winds its way across a trackless desert, that testimony *may* go with it. Wherever the agent of a trading company goes, that testimony *may* go with him. Wherever a traveler, led by curiosity, or the quest for gain, wends his way, thither that testimony may and ought to go with him. The near approach to the erection of the Gospel testimony in all nations is a clearly discernible sign that the predicted end of this age is coming.

Akin to this sign of increasing evangelization, is one which shines so brightly that it commends itself to the most ordinary observation,—the swift and marvellous advancement of the facilities of international communication. The first passenger railway is said to have been operated in 1821; now the world is becoming reticulated with railway lines. Some of the meshes of the network are even reaching to poor old Palestine, once the land of milk and honey, of the fig and the grape—a sinner's Paradise, but for ages no better than a public common, and so long ridden down and browsed over by Bedouins that its sterility has occasioned the infidel doubt whether God himself can restore it to fertility. But why paint the means of

international transit? What with transcontinental railroads and transoceanic steamship lines, with telegraphs and telephones, the nations are getting to be like next-door neighbors hailing each other from their door-steps. It has been frequently remarked that the Roman military roads opened the way for the rapid extension of early Christianity; but what were they, compared with that world-wide system of quick inter-communication which is now preparing the nations for the fellowship of the gospel and the golden age of the earth? for a delightful, Christian communion of the peoples of the globe, unobstructed by Papal bigotry, Mohammedan ferocity, and Pagan idolatry, by infidel godlessness, formal churchism and the hostilities of sects?

4. Another cosmic sign to which attention is directed is the highest conclusions of modern philosophy and philosophic science.

In the "fulness of time" God introduced Christianity into the world. Among the elements which went to make up this fulness of time was the exhaustive attempt of the Greek philosophy, upon grounds of natural reason, to solve the problem of the universe. If it had been possible for mere philosophy to have found out God, it is probable that the discovery would have been made by the master minds of Greece. No more subtle intellects ever existed on earth. But the result was, as the apostle Paul says, that "the world by wisdom knew not God." A brilliant historian of the course of philosophy has observed, that the Greek philosophy early began to develop itself in the two forms of Idealism on the one hand, and Sensualism, or Empiricism on the other. Plato, although not exclusively, was predominantly, an Idealist. Aristotle, his great pupil,

although not exclusively, was predominantly an Empiricist. Neither of these supreme thinkers, pursuing his own peculiar path of speculation, found out God. Why? Because both asserted the eternity of matter. The God they affirmed was not the Creator of matter; and therefore was limited and conditioned by it as co-eternal with himself. He could not, therefore, be infinite, and a God not infinite is no God at all. The Greek philosophy both as Idealistic and Empirical had expended its amazing strength, and yet failed to know God. Then came the manifestation of God in the person of His Incarnate Son, and in the gospel which is His wisdom and His power.

How is it with modern philosophy? The same accomplished historian of philosophy, to whom allusion has already been made, makes the noteworthy remark that modern philosophy, upon the removal of the shackles of mediæval ecclesiasticism and the revival of letters, developed itself precisely as the Greek philosophy had, along the lines of Idealism and Empiricism. Of the one tendency Descartes was the leading originator and exponent, of the other Lord Bacon. Now, has philosophy, thus projected afresh upon independent principles, succeeded better in its quest for God as its ultimate of ultimates than did the Greek philosophy in the hands of Plato, Aristotle and their distinguished followers? The answer to that question must be sought, so far as the Idealistic philosophy is concerned, in the Transcendental or Absolutist school of Germany. Here we have a magnificent galaxy of philosophers, who for ripe scholarship, habits of patient investigation, and the subtlest and profoundest powers of abstract thought, have never been surpassed, if indeed equalled, in ancient or modern times. Here if anywhere were

the conditions for the quest of God by speculation. This illustrious school began with Immanuel Kant. How did he succeed? He reached the conclusion that the being of God is indemonstrable upon grounds of the theoretical or speculative reason. Did his next follower do any better? Fichte first came to the conclusion that God is nothing more than the moral order of the world—an abstract law without personality. He ended with holding that God is merely Life as the beginning of all things. Then came Schelling, whose final conclusion, after much elephantine floundering, was that God is the impersonal Absolute who develops himself into Nature and then, by a wonderful circumgyration, reabsorbs himself as nature into himself as the Absolute. One cannot help thinking of a blind horse in a mill, going round and round.

Finally came Hegel, the climax of this brilliant succession. His ultimate conclusion was that God is pure Idea. But as pure Idea is no substance and no person, it follows that there is nothing to have an idea—God is Nothing! Well may we exclaim, You have taken away our God and left us nothing in His place. This vaunted school of modern Idealistic philosophy has exhausted itself, and all its Titanic efforts have ended in nothing. Verily, again it is true that the world by wisdom knows not God.

Turn we now to the school of Philosophic Science, which in England and Germany—Protestant England and Germany—has pushed the principles of Empiricism to their latest development. Part of it affirms bald, undisguised Atheism, saying openly, No God! no God! and part of it maintains the practical equivalent of professed Atheism—the doctrine of an impersonal, unintelligent, Infinite Force. This is the posi-

tion of Tyndal, Huxley, and Herbert Spencer, the confessed philosopher of the school of Evolutionary Science. They have boxed the compass, have by an evolution of centuries of speculative deduction from the phenomenal facts of science, returned to the old Greek doctrine of the eternity of matter; with this advantage, however, in favor of the ancient pagans—that they distinguished between an eternal matter and God as an eternal, personal Spirit. There are many scientific men who reverently accept the Bible and Christianity. I speak now of the philosophers of the Empirical school. Herbert Spencer professes to develop the philosophy of that school; and he scouts the Bible, Christianity, an atoning Savior, the Holy Ghost and a personal God. These two philosophic schools, notwithstanding that they enjoyed the advantage of the history of Greek philosophy, and the still more signal advantage of the conditions furnished by Christianity, have refused to profit by the errors of the one and the truths of the other, and have formulated the conclusion of either a disguised or an open Atheism. Here, then, we behold another prodigious sign of the times. Another “fulness of time” has been reached, the world by wisdom knows not God, and there is an imperative call for a new interposition of Christ. Oh, the patience and forbearance of God, which, after all He has done for our fallen race, endures the monsters who, frocked and capped as philosophers, blaspheme His Name and deny His Being! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, and abate the horrible nuisance!

5. Another flaming sign of the times is the Lawless Radicalism, which manifests itself in Communism, Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism. Not one word would

I say against the assertion of the just rights of the working-classes. Were they not so old, oppression and tyranny might be signalized, but they are not peculiar signs of our times. They are as old as the hills. But this fell Spirit fears not God, neither regards man. Not satisfied with the maintenance of republican rights, it inflames a "fierce democratic," and threatens to tear down the pillars of God's throne, and to level to the dust every form of human government, secular and ecclesiastical. Despising every command of the Decalogue, in both its tables, obliterating the worship of God, sponging out the Sabbath, violating property-rights, burning up the marriage covenant in the wild fire of passion, flouting the Mediatorial King whom God hath set upon His holy hill of Zion, its cry will be, Down with the Cross! and down with the Bible! Under its frenzied inspiration see how the masses fret and foam like an ocean lashed into fury. They are, in the figure of Scripture, a tumultuous sea with roaring waves. They will yet assert themselves. They will wipe out the Pope himself, for he is a government. The Beast that carries the woman arrayed in scarlet, and holding out the cup of her enchantments to the nations, will throw her down and trample her under its feet. Emerging from the seething crater of the mighty revolution, some great and wicked genius, elected by the plebiscite of the triumphant democracy, or seizing the reins of empire by arbitrary will, will put himself at the head of innumerable hosts, and advance to the destruction of the church of Christ both in its Jewish and Gentile wings. Nor will his victorious career be checked, until on the fateful field of Armageddon, his pendent horsebridles are dabbled in tides of blood, and his hopes are sunk in the lake that burns with brim-

stone and with fire. Such is the predicted doom of the supreme and final Antichrist.

Along with this, as cognate to it, may be mentioned another sign of the times—the fearful growth of Occultism, the hellish art of black magic and necromancy. Millions now profess Spiritualism as a religion. It cannot be laughed away, it cannot be sneered down, it cannot be explained away upon reputed scientific grounds. It is based in a natural craving of the human mind to read the dread secrets of the invisible world, and to hold communion with the dead. That departed human beings communicate with the so-called mediums is a delusion of the Devil. But demoniacal influence is a stern reality. As devils possessed the bodies and souls of men at the first advent, so may they exert an extraordinary and phenomenal power just before the glorious establishment of Jesus' millennial kingdom. The Scriptures lead us to expect it. Before that great Beast, the Antichrist already described, we are told that the False Prophet will work miracles. Not that they will be real, genuine miracles, for they can only be wrought by God's immediate efficiency and hence their value as divine credentials; but they will be counterfeits so ingenious that the masses of unbelievers will be imposed upon by them, and even the very elect, were it possible, would be deceived. Armed with this demoniacal, necromantic, magical support, the great Antichristian Beast will delude the superstitious peoples, and threaten to sweep all before him. Let none who fear God have anything to do with fortune-tellers and conjurers with the dead. The Word of God says that "sorcerers" shall have their part in the burning lake. The whole, wretched thing is of the Devil, and is a sign of Antichristian apostasy.

6. The only other sign of the times to which I shall briefly advert is the awful and monitory portents of nature.

The prophets and our blessed Lord himself lead us to look for them as signs of the crisis that is coming. It will be said, They have always occurred. This is utterly rash. There may be some that will be wholly new. But granted that others have taken place in the past, they may be intensified in degree, and multiplied in number. I allude to but one kind of them now. Let it serve as a sample. Jesus says that there shall be earthquakes in divers places. Do you say, Earthquakes have occurred all along in the past. Listen to this statement. From the year 1500 to 1800—three centuries—there were 2,804 earthquakes. From 1800 to 1882—little more than three-quarters of a century—there were 6,637.¹ Is not that significant? This poor, sin-cursed earth is groaning and travailing to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and it is no marvel if natural portents indicate the approaching hour of her millennial redemption.

But enough! Yet a little while and he shall come, will come and will not tarry. Even so. Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

¹From Canon Fausset's article in the London *Theological Monthly* for February, 1889, who cites as authority Mr. Mallet, C. E.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES—IN THE CHURCH

Matt. xvi. 3: "*O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*"

In the discourse upon these words of the Lord Jesus, which was delivered on the last Sabbath, attention was directed to the signs of the times in the world at large. The face of the secular sky was scanned, and marked indications were discovered of the approach of a great, critical change in the world's history and attitude, which is the predicted forerunner of the Millennial period.

V. Let us now turn our gaze towards the signs of the times in the sphere of the Church.

In order to avert misapprehension and to secure definiteness, certain considerations need to be premised.

First, One who undertakes to discern and note the signs of the times in the ecclesiastical sky, and who is conscious of his own imperfections and sins, must shrink from assuming the office of a censorious critic of the Church, and deprecate being regarded in that light. He is no fierce inquisitor searching for grounds of accusation against the church, no unfeeling prosecutor filing an indictment against her. On the contrary, if he follow the example of prophets and apostles and even of Jesus Himself, he will weep while he points out the sins of the church and warns her of the judgments which follow in their train. Like Jeremiah he will exclaim, "Oh, that my head were waters

and my eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" and, with our Lord at the gate of guilty and doomed Jerusalem, break forth into the pathetic lament, "Oh, that thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!"

At the same time, if he be clad with zeal as a cloak, and is penetrated by a regard for the glory of God and for His cause on earth, how can he refrain from a holy indignation, when he beholds His commands violated and His truth fallen in the street, His sanctuary desecrated, His ordinances perverted, and a society professing to be the fair bride of the Lamb defiled by unhallowed fellowship with a Christless world? How can he forbear to cry out and spare not, to lift up his voice like a trumpet, and show the Lord's people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins? Appointed a watchman on the walls of Zion, under orders to warn of the approaching sword, commissioned as a witness for the truth of God and charged to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, how, if he suppress his warnings and sink his testimony, can he escape the sentence of a dumb dog that will not bark, lying down and loving to slumber? How will he get quit of the blood of the poor innocents when inquisition shall be made for it in the Lord's avenging day? Brethren, I confess that popularity is sweet and the esteem of one's fellowmen delightful to a naturally aspiring heart, but when one fixes his eye on the gory sacrifice of the Cross, and hears in his ear the bray of the judgment trump, all other motives, all other considerations fade into nothingness in comparison with fidelity to Jesus and the souls of men. Such ought to be the temper of one who essays to point out threaten-

ing signs in the firmament and the atmosphere of the church.

Secondly, The question must here be settled, What is the church in the sphere of which the attempt is now essayed to discern the signs of the times? I answer, The Protestant Church. In the preceding discourse, Mohammedanism and the Papacy were together viewed as belonging to the world and not to the church of God. The Roman communion professes to be the Christian Church, and anathematizes all who do not belong to it. Loosely speaking, it is common to denominate it a part of the nominal or professing church. But, strictly speaking, if it be characterized in the Scriptures as Antichristian, how can it be a part of the true church? Surely the Babylon of the Apocalypse is Antichristian or language conveys no meaning. Now, is the Church of Rome the Babylon described in the Book of Revelation? If any Protestant is in doubt on that question, let him read the argument of a High-churchman, a canon in the Church of England, Dr. Wordsworth, and if he can be convinced by any argument, he will by that.

All other false forms of Christianity were also included in the sphere of the world. They are labelled Christian, and that is all. Judas was called an apostle, but he betrayed his Master, lost his office, and went to his own place. That place was not heaven, as his place on earth had not been the church.

It is, then, the Protestant Church of which I now speak, whatever may be the opinions held by others as to the scope of the visible church. Protestantism was not simply, as the name might suggest, a protest against Romanism; it was more than that. It was a positive affirmation of two great complementary principles:

first, the right, before man's bar, of private judgment, involving liberty of conscience, and, secondly, the infallibility and supremacy of the Scriptures. The Protestant is a man never addicted to swear according to the words of any *human* master; always addicted to swear according to the words of a *divine* Master. The judgment and the conscience are not bound by reason speaking apart from the church, the position of the Rationalist, nor by reason speaking through the church, the position of the Romanist; that is, they are not bound by the dictates of man, but they *are* bound by the dictates of God, and the dictates of God are found in the Scriptures and in the Scriptures alone. The ultimate standard of authority as to religious truth is precisely the Scriptures. The private judgment, whether of the individual or of the church collectively, is never that ultimate standard or rule of faith and practice. It is true that if the question be, What is the Supreme Judge that determines all differences as to the meaning of the supreme standard and rule, the answer is, in the words of the Westminster Confession: The Supreme Judge is the Holy Ghost speaking in the Scriptures. Now, granted that the judgment of the Holy Ghost speaking in the Scriptures is certified and attested to the soul by the inward witness of the spirit, that witness is delivered *to* the soul, not derived *from* it. It is in this respect like the gospel which is God's report, His saying to man, not a religion evolved from within man. The Scriptures are an external, ultimately authoritative standard or rule. They are the inspired product of the Holy Ghost. To that standard or rule the Holy Spirit, who alone is capable of judging of its true meaning, as it is His product, bears witness to the believer's soul. The witness, therefore,

comes from without and is brought by supernatural power into the soul. It is, accordingly, not faith, which, as our own, springs from within.

Here is the mistake of some of the Lutheran and Dutch theologians, and of some British and American writers who follow them. They make faith the same as the witness of the Spirit, and take the ground that while the authority of the Scriptures is what they term the normative principle of religion, faith is the material principle. The plain meaning is that there are two standards or rules co-ordinate with each other. No. There is but one standard, the Bible, and faith, as receiving and obeying that standard, is subordinate to it.

I have dwelt thus long upon this subject because a clear conception of it is vital to the position taken in this discussion. If the Bible is one standard, and our experience is another, or if our experience determines the Bible and not the Bible our experience, there is an end of discussion. We are at sea; every man makes his own Bible—has his own standard. But if the Bible be the sole, ultimate, supreme standard, then the church's experience, doctrines, life must conform to it or be wrong. This determines the posture of the church as pure or not. If she conforms to the Scriptures she is a pure church; if she does not, she is in declension and is in danger of apostasy. This is the Protestant position, and as we profess to be Protestants, this is our accepted standard of judgment. Let it be observed, then, that in speaking of the signs of the times in the church, the comparison is made of her condition with the requirements of the Scriptures.

Thirdly, there must be some special principle, some rule of thinking, by which we are to be guided in estimating the bearing of the signs of the times in the

church, in accordance with which we can tell whether they are pointing to some great change. Let it be remembered that, as has been already announced, the purpose of this discussion is to show that the signs of the times *are* pointing to such a critical change.

That guiding principle or rule for our thinking on the subject is this: Facts and Scripture alike prove that the closing of one period and the beginning of another are foreshadowed by great degeneracy in the church—that is, by a signal departure of the church from conformity with the standard of God's word, and a marked diminution rather than an increase in her spiritual growth, a downward tendency to hopeless corruption in doctrine and in practice. Let us expand and illuminate this position, which constitutes our point of view.

In the first place, there is the law—for such it must be considered—that, in the history of the church, declension has been followed by revival, corruption by restoration. In nothing, perhaps, are the obstinate malignity of sin and the marvellous grace of God more conspicuously manifested than in the steady operation of this law. The Adamic probation closed with the horror of the Fall, and was at once succeeded by the creation of hope in the bosom of despair by the revelation of the first promise of redemption. The Patriarchal dispensation began with the pure worship and service of God, but ere long pitched downward into the devilish wickedness that provoked the catastrophe of the Flood. Immediately the Noachian period commenced with a fresh outburst of Gospel light, which was before long extinguished in the black darkness of idolatry. The Abrahamic period emerged from that idolatrous night, and sunk into the mud-yards of

Egypt and the besotted glutting of the chosen people with the fish, cucumbers and melons, the leeks, onions and garlic of a debasing servitude to a godless power. The Jewish dispensation opened with the redemption of the church, her passage through the cleft but roaring waters of the Red Sea, the blaze of constellations of miracles in her sky, and the promulgation of the law amidst awful solemnities and the magnificent emblems of the divine presence which shot from Sinai like horns of light and astonished the surrounding nations.

What now? Hardly were the elders who outlived Joshua cold in their graves before there began a series of defections to idolatry and succeeding restorations until the patience of God was exhausted, the ten tribes were broken up and scattered to the winds, and the Jews were dragged into Babylonian captivity. Judah and Benjamin are restored to their own land, and their temple and city rebuilt, they are started upon a new career. True, the hard blows of the divine judgments had snapped from their stiff necks the yoke of open idolatry, and they were projected afresh upon conditions the most auspicious, but they soon rushed upon that downgrade of defection and apostasy which culminated first in the murder of their Messiah and incarnate God, and finally in the demolition of the Jewish church-state and polity amid throes of anguish and gulfs of blood.

The remnant, according to the election of grace, after the resurrection of Jesus, were organized into the nascent Christian church; the baptism of the Spirit was poured out on the golden day of Pentecost; numbers were added to the infant communion, a holy, loving, evangelistic genius was infused into it, and such a won-

derful propagation of the Christian faith by apostolic missionaries took place as entitled Paul to appropriate to it the glowing language of the nineteenth Psalm, "Their sound has gone out into all the world, and their words to the ends of the world." Glorious renaissance! Could it be followed by another descent into corruption and apostasy? Alas! the development of heresy began in the first churches organized by the apostles, calling forth their solemn admonitions before they fell asleep; and that development never ceased until the night of Romish apostasy and of the dark ages enveloped the church as with a pall, only a thin line of witnesses being left to preserve the thread of connection with apostolic times.

Once more the mercy of God interposed, the sun of the reformation broke forth from the gross darkness that enshrouded Christendom, and, lo! a new restoration was effected. The Protestant Church, born of that regeneration, has, with alternate declensions and revivals, come away almost four centuries from that critical change, almost the same time that elapsed from the return of the Jews from Babylonish captivity to the first advent of Christ. This history of the church's defections and recoveries in all the past challenges our serious reflection; and the question now springs up before us and must be confronted, Has not the Protestant Church degenerated from her early standard of conformity to the word of God, and are there not signs now appearing that the church is approaching another great revolution?

In the second place, strengthening that rule for our thinking in an attempt to estimate the signs of the times, are the New Testament predictions that in the last days great defections shall take place in the church

from the pure standard of the Scriptures, especially that teachers shall arise who will inculcate false doctrines and draw away the people with them. There is not time to quote the passages, and perhaps there is no need to do so, as they are well known to every reader of the Bible. The ground may be taken that these predictions are to be restricted to the Romish Church, to which they do certainly refer in part, and that there is no reason to include the Protestant Church in their scope. This cannot be maintained, since it is an historical fact, as well as one of present observation, that in the Protestant Church defections have occurred, false doctrines have been taught and unscriptural practices have obtained.

These preliminary statements have been necessary to clear the way intelligently for the particular inquiry, What are the signs of the times in the Protestant Church which forebode the approach of those critical events that will herald the Millennial period? The subject will be treated in accordance with the ordinary distribution into doctrine, government, discipline, and worship.

I. What are the signs in the sphere of Doctrine?

It is a noteworthy fact that not only was the Protestant reformation confined, at its inception, to certain sections of Europe, but that it never thoroughly pervaded those countries in which it originated, and that its doctrinal influence has, to a great extent, been suppressed in some of those which at first were dominated by it. Protestantism has, since the reformation, suffered considerable territorial losses in Europe. Bohemia, the Palatinate, Hungary, and notably France, passed under the doctrinal control of the Romish Church and the influence of infidelity. True, nominal

Protestantism gained on the North American continent, but it will be seen before we get through that that accession to its numerical strength is hardly now an occasion for boasting.

Let us take a rapid glance at those countries in which the Protestant faith was established. Begin we with Germany, the land in which the reformation was started by the immortal Luther, concurrently with its origination in Switzerland by the heroic efforts of Zwingle. Germany, numerically considered, was never wholly reformed. A considerable part of her population adhered to Popery, as they do to this day. That portion of it which is Protestant has had a remarkable history. The school of rationalism, which was really a school of free-thinking, supported by scholarship and philosophy, spread with great rapidity, infected the church and threatened to subvert the foundations of the Protestant religion. The school of that name, after a bitter struggle, no longer exists, but its principles live. It is now reported that the great universities are returning to evangelical principles. But what does that really mean? Let the current writings of so-called evangelical or orthodox scholars and theologians answer. They maintain neither the orthodoxy of the early Protestant German Church nor of the French, nor of the Scotch, nor of the English Puritans, nor of the American, so far as it reproduces the doctrines of those great standard-bearers of the faith. Tried by the symbols of the first Protestant Church, they are found grievously wanting. The virus of rationalism has never been thoroughly purged out. Take the great commentary of Lange. "From one, estimate all."

Switzerland, like Germany, was, as to territory, only half reformed. It passed through a season of great

doctrinal declension under the influence of rationalism and socinianism. Geneva, where the genius of Calvin organized the reformation, the stronghold and radiating centre of the Protestant faith, was honey-combed with heterodoxy when in this century Robert Haldane, a Scotchman, by his zealous instructions, started an evangelical movement, which under the auspices of the Evangelical Society has continued to the present time, but with the limited doctrinal purity of a body which is undenominational. The Venerable Association of Pastors, first established by Calvin, is rationalistic in its influence. Such men as Gaussen and Merle D'Aubigne were not tolerated by them. That fact speaks volumes in regard to the orthodoxy of Switzerland.

Holland, which was well-nigh entirely reformed, Holland, the country which, with an outpouring of blood that incarnadined her canals, resisted the attempts of the Duke of Alva to subjugate her to the Papal yoke, the land of William the Silent, of Voetius van Maastricht, and the illustrious Witsius,—what of her? According to the testimony of the historian of rationalism, she has been pervaded by that poisonous system. Like the sea when it breaks through her dikes and inundates her harvest fields, rationalism has broken down the metes and bounds of her old orthodoxy and swamped her churches with its cold and desolating flood. And now her professedly evangelical theologians, like Van Oosterzee, are by no means fair exponents of a pure Protestant faith.

Of France, little need be said. Protestantism, which once flourished in her bosom, was, by the butcheries of Charles IX, and the protracted dragonnades of Louis XIV and the Guises, almost extirpated from her soil. The Protestants who now exist are divided in doctrine,

even the Reformed Church being split into two wings, one of which is rationalistic; while the professedly orthodox party, if represented by Pressensé, cannot be regarded as strictly so. The nominal Protestant Church in that country can hardly be taken into account except as it contains a remnant that waits for the consolation of Israel. The population is largely made up of Romanists and skeptics.

Cross the channel and take a brief survey of Great Britain. Had England heeded her great reformers—Jewel, for example—she would have been purged of Popery, but it is well known that she was very inadequately reformed. For some time the type of the Protestant faith was mainly Calvinistic; but from the restoration of the unprincipled Charles II, when, as Bishop Burnet intimates, almost the whole nation got drunk, the Church of England began her recession from Calvinism and lapsed into Arminianism. In Bishop Butler's time religion was, as he tells us, studiously banished from society, so that it was a breach of good manners to allude to it in polite circles. Deism reigned. Then came what is called the Great Revival under Wesley and Whitefield, which, no doubt, to a considerable extent, wrought a restoration of experimental religion, especially in the middle and lower classes. But it should not be forgotten that through the same movement was originated a powerful organization which has vastly increased the propagation of the Arminian system of doctrines in Britain and America. To the extent to which that system involves a departure from the pure doctrines of Scripture, as they were formulated in the early Protestant creeds, a large section of Protestant Christendom now participates in that defection. It deserves notice that the latest type

of Arminian doctrine, as may easily be proved by citations from leading theologians, has gone down far below that of Wesley, both in England and America. A somewhat recent convocation in England denied the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures.

The Presbyterian Church in England was almost destroyed by defection into Unitarianism. As now resuscitated, whatever may be its doctrinal posture, it is numerically too small to affect our general estimate of the signs of the times in the sphere of doctrine. The attitude of Congregationalism in England may be gauged from the fun made of the orthodox sermon of Dr. Goodwin, of Chicago, not long since preached by him before a Congregationalist convention in London, by the most prominent minister of that denomination in that city. Charles Spurgeon—and I cannot mention his name without groaning out a lamentation that that great evangelical light, that brilliant star in Jesus' right hand, has ceased to shine in the centre of civilization—Spurgeon withdrew from the English Baptist Union because of his conviction of its latitudinarianism in doctrine—what he expressively termed its “down-grade” tendency.

In Wales the doctrinal attitude of other denominations being left out of account, that of the Calvinistic denomination may be measured by the late call to the theological school of a rationalistic professor from a Presbyterian Seminary in this country.

Scotland, notwithstanding her persecutions in the past for maintaining the pure religion, and notwithstanding her bitter experience of the evils of moderatism, is exhibiting evidences of a relaxing hold upon her glorious standards. Very loose speculations are winked at in the Established Church, and the General

Assembly of the Free Church not long since white-washed those teachers of false doctrine, Dr. Dods, of Edinburgh, and Dr. Bruce, of Glasgow, in spite of their impeachment by the faithful Presbytery of Dingwald, sending the Highlanders back in disappointment to their northern glens; and while these witnesses for the truth are discountenanced, Henry Drummond is tolerated in his heretical vagaries. Are these not ominous signs in old Scotia's sky?

Of the doctrinal condition of Protestant Ireland, in the general, I am not prepared to speak advisedly. The Presbyterian Church in that country some time ago came nigh being overwhelmed by an eruption of Socinianism under the lead of the insinuating Montgomery, from which peril she was, with God's blessing, saved by the noble stand for truth made by the heroic Henry Cook. She has for years been passing through a great conflict upon the field of worship, but, under the wholesome guidance of such theologians as Robert Watts, of Belfast, and his compeers, she seems to be still holding her ground of conformity with the standard of Scripture truth as erected in her venerable doctrinal confession.

Let us now come nearer home in our review. In America the Protestant Church, in its purest form, had its origin in New England. President Edwards preached his celebrated sermons on the "Work of Redemption" in 1739, about a century and a half ago. He then used these words: "Another thing in which things are altered for the worse from what was in the former times of the reformation, is the prevailing of licentiousness in principles and opinions. There is not now that spirit of orthodoxy which there was then; there is very little appearance of zeal for the myste-

rious and spiritual doctrines of Christianity; and they never were so ridiculed and had in contempt as they are in the present age." After speaking of the prevalence of "Socinianism, Arminianism, and Deism," he goes on to say: "Now there is an exceeding great decay of vital piety; yea, it seems to be despised, called *enthusiasm*, *whimsy* and *fanaticism*. Those who are truly religious are commonly looked upon to be crack-brained, and beside their right mind; and vice and profaneness dreadfully prevail, like a flood which threatens to bear down all before it." Since Edwards's time, Unitarianism has been organized in a denominational form and has been enthroned in the Athens of America and at Harvard University. The Arminianism which Edwards deprecated has more and more gained foothold in New England; Universalism has taken organized and aggressive shape, and future probationism and rationalistic views of the inspiration of the Scriptures have established a centre of distribution at that great school of Congregationalism, Andover Theological Seminary, founded, chartered, and endowed for the inculcation of orthodox views.

In other parts of the country Protestantism, with alternate revivals and declensions, has almost universally diffused itself. But it has broken asunder into numerous fragments, into sects, denominations, and subdivisions of denominations. And let it be remembered that as all these differing bodies cannot possibly be equally orthodox, orthodoxy has necessarily suffered in proportion to their multiplication. Arminian doctrines, not restricted to any one denomination, but more or less existing in all, have spread from sea to sea. High church exclusivism, not confined to one sectarian organization, has steadily advanced. The pulpit, that

great mouthpiece of divine truth, is more and more suppressing its testimony to the future punishment of sin—the eternal sanction of God's moral government. The verbal inspiration of the Bible is generally denied, and that gone, the great bulwark of Protestantism is down. A common outcry is raised against doctrinal preaching—a sure presage of growing defection and coming wrath. A clamor like the noise of many waters is lifted up against the enslaving tyranny of creeds and confessions, which means, Down with God's authority, and Up with man's! In short, the demand is made that the glory of God—His own last end and the end of the whole creation—must give way to the happiness of the sinner, and the sovereignty of the free, untrammelled human will must take precedence of the will of Him who shakes the universe with His nod.

The Presbyterian Church, which has usually been regarded as the chief conservator of the orthodox faith, is beginning to yield to the paralyzing influence of the fell, rationalistic spirit, and to bow to the dictates of science, falsely so-called, the higher criticism, the sophistries of and the shout for the universal Fatherhood of God and universal love. Witness the extraordinary developments in the Briggs case. Will she give way? If she does, the phalanx with locked shields that moved with resistless force against the hosts of error is disintegrated, scattered, defeated.

Such are some of the signs of the times in the doctrinal sphere of the church, portending the night before the Millennial day. There are some, as in the day of Israel's great reformer, who are faithful among the faithless found; their loyalty they keep, their love, their zeal. Few they are, but they are the seed corn of

the Millennial harvest, the prophets and forerunners of the Millennial morn.

II. What are the signs in the sphere of Government? The doctrinal aspect of the question has been dwelt upon at length because doctrine lies at the foundation of everything pertaining to the church. It is a doctrine that whatsoever Christ commands is to be observed by the church; whatsoever He has not commanded, either expressly or impliedly, is forbidden to her; and that is the doctrinal cornerstone of the true church. What remains to be said must be compressed into small compass.

What is the fundamental principle of government in comparison with which the church's purity or corruption, in that sphere, is to be determined? I have no hesitation in answering, The Representative Principle. That is a principle, it deserves to be noticed, of very wide employment in the moral government of God. It runs through the whole of it, in all its aspects. It was employed in man's first religion. Adam was the representative of the race. It is employed in redemption.

Christ is the representative of the redeemed. It pleased God to employ this principle of representation, with necessary adaptations, in the constitution of the visible church. The view is maintained by some that the church is simply a monarchy, for Christ is her King and He, of course, is not elective. The true view is that on the divine side the church is a kingdom with Christ as her sole and absolute King, but, on the human side, she is a free, representative commonwealth. Her divinely given constitution creates her a body of free electors, empowered by its suffrages to choose its rulers. They are, therefore, representative rulers. When elected they constitute a parliament, characterized by

the absolute parity of its members, with no visible dictatorial head. The church thus, on the plane of a human society, reflects that great representative principle which has been incorporated in all religion. This is the touchstone of the church's purity in government. It excludes a one-man's government and consequently rules out prelacy in all its forms. The extent to which the Protestant Church departs from this principle is the extent to which it fails to be conformed to the Scriptures; nor ought it to be forgotten that it was just here that the early church commenced its career of corruption which terminated in the Papacy. The simple Presbyter became the Prelate, and the Prelate became a Pope.

But, moreover, even where, as in the Presbyterian Church, this representative principle is professedly employed, it is, to a very large extent, perverted by the suppression of the parity of the rulers and the subordination of one class to another class. What is called the lay element is held to be inferior to what is termed the clerical. The distinction has no place in Scripture. It is a corrupt device of man. Jesus Christ created by His will the government of His church, and any departure from that will is an affirmation of man's will in disobedience to it, and is an ominous sign in the church's sky.

III. What are the signs of the times in the sphere of Discipline? "Discipline is the exercise of that authority and the application of that system of laws which the Lord Jesus Christ has appointed in His church." The ends which the church aims at in the administration of discipline are the glory of God, the honor of Christ, the purity and edification of the church, and the spiritual good of offenders themselves. In dispens-

ing it, as the name implies, she acts not upon the principle of retributive justice. She is not a judge emitting punitive sentences. She never punishes. Reflecting the fatherly justice of God and the pastoral rule of Jesus, the good Shepherd, over the sheep of His fold, she, like a tender mother, corrects her children in order to reclaim and save them. As to the discharge of the duty of discipline, she is bound by obedience to God, obligation to her Saviour, and love for the souls committed to her care, it is evident that neglect of its performance argues a defection from conformity with the Scriptures and consequently from true religion.

To one who discerns the signs of the times, it is painfully apparent that there is a growing relaxation of the administration of discipline in the Protestant Church, and a corresponding depression in the tone of her spiritual life. Of this, two kinds of proofs will be briefly submitted.

The first is that, for the most part, the censures of the world precede and condition the censures of the church. Where the world condemns, the church condemns. Her sentences are sustained, perhaps demanded, by the verdict of society. For the most part—for there are exceptions—the church seems to be more careful to prevent her disgrace than to maintain the honor of Christ, more solicitous to keep her members than the favor of her Lord.

The second is that not only does the church condition judicial discipline upon the censures of the world, but she tolerates where the world tolerates. One or two specifications in support of this remark must suffice.

In the first place, greater and greater license is allowed by the Protestant Church to the infraction of the Sabbath law. Her members are, on God's day,

indulged in the visitation of their places of business, riding out for pleasure, boating excursions, promenades in parks, traveling on railways, going for their mail, reading secular newspapers, social visiting, engaging in business pursuits in connection with railroads, telegraph lines, express companies, and post-offices,—on the plea of making a livelihood, notwithstanding the words of a crucified Saviour: “Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”

In the second place, the Protestant Church is more and more conniving at participation by her members in the open, public, justified amusements of the world which in her purer days she forbade, such as attendance at theatres and at balls, dancing parties, and other vain diversions. True, she testifies against it from the pulpit; but when discipline might arrest it, she refuses to discipline. “Be not conformed to this world.” says the Holy Apostle. “Be not conformed to this world.” echoes the church. But when her members conform to the world that is the end of it. She condemns by her words what she sanctions by her acts. The acts prevail. The bars of discipline are let down. The sheep go out at that gate to the world, and at that gate the world comes into the church. This evil is increasing, and is one of the most prominent signs of the times.

IV. What are the signs of the times in the sphere of Worship? I confess that upon this subject I scarcely dare trust myself to speak. The movement of our times strikes me with astonishment. There was nothing in the past about which God was so jealous as the mode of His worship. There was nothing around which He

threw guards and fences so awful as around His worship. His wrath leaped forth as a vehement flame against those who asserted their wills in His worship. He reserved to Himself the high prerogative of appointing the ways in which men should approach Him in His public worship, and instantly resented every invasion of that prerogative. But all that is now changed, we are told. We have passed under the milder sanctions of the New Testament dispensation, and more discretionary power is granted to the church. Hold! Did not Christ enjoin it upon His apostles to teach the church to observe all things whatsoever *He* had commanded? And does not that necessarily imply that they were to teach the church to abstain from all things whatsoever *He* had *not* commanded? to do nothing which He had not commanded? Did not the apostles organize the church according to His will? Did they not appoint her whole order, including her public worship? And are we not bound by Christ's will thus expressed? Did the apostolic church know anything of instrumental music in public worship, of liturgies, of the decorations of church edifices? How come we to know them except by breaking with the apostolic order and the will of our King?

Hearken, men and brethren! Let us take just one of these elements of innovation upon the primitive order of worship and rapidly trace its history. For 1,200 years the Christian church knew nothing of instrumental music in her public worship. In the thirteenth century its proposed introduction into the Church of Rome—corrupt as it then was—was ineffectually resisted by some of her most eminent theologians. At the reformation the Swiss Protestant Church cast it out; the French Protestant Church cast it out; the

Dutch Church cast it out; the Scotch Church cast it out; the English Puritans cast it out; and the Church of England came very nigh casting it out. At its first planting, the American Evangelical Church refused to adopt it. What do we now behold? Its use by nearly all the leading churches of Protestantism, in opposition to the Scriptures and the venerable precedents which have just been recited. What a change! What a blazing sign in the sky of the Protestant Church! What is to stop the tendency? The beginning is the mother of the end. What end? The full orchestra of Rome.

So with the liturgy. Not commanded by the apostles, the Evangelical Protestant Church has long discarded it. What now? It is beginning stealthily to creep in under the guise of a permissive liturgy. If adopted it will acquire the force of prescription; and what then? Why, the Holy Ghost will vacate His office, and give way to Archbishop Cranmer and the committees of evangelical churches, who will teach us "what things to pray for as we ought, and make intercessions for us with groanings that cannot be uttered!"

So also with the ornamenting and decoration of church buildings; something new to evangelical Protestantism. Did you, whose heads are just beginning to be sprinkled with grey, know anything of it when your mothers led you by the hand to the simple worship of their God? At first, as if conscious that it was an intruder, it came with a modest bouquet; then with many of them; then, behold! banks of flowers and plants cover pulpit and platform, and festoons and branches bedeck the walls. The first step was taken unchallenged, then the second; why not the third, and on, on, to the paintings, the statues, and all the gorgeous paraphernalia of Rome?

But I must close. Signs have been pointed out in the spheres of doctrine, government, discipline, and worship, which indicate the progress of a great defection in the Protestant Church, and the approach of those tempestuous changes which will herald the rising of the Millennial star. I am getting to be more and more "lonesome;" my voice is very feeble and cannot be heard far against the storm; but humbly standing in my narrow, provincial lot, I lift up a warning against the growing defection, and call attention to the dark cloud of judgments that is flashing with lightning and growling with wrath. I have said that the temporal power of the Pope is broken, but that there may be a tremendous effort made to restore it. There are reported to be 200,000,000 of adherents to the Papacy. How will a degenerate Protestantism meet its massed onset? Say, shall we throw over the generous pail of gospel milk filled at the reformation, and return to suck the dugs of the woman drunk with Protestant blood?

O thou remnant, weak and small, faithful to Jesus, His truth and His cause, what will become of thee? Trust in that covenant love which has never forsaken God's true people in the past, and will not forsake them in the future. Almighty arms are around thee, and will keep thee by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

FAMILY RELIGION

Col. iii. 18-21: *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger lest they be discouraged.”*

Eph. vi. 4: *“Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*

Acts ii. 39: *“For the promise is unto you and to your children.”*

Jer. x. 25: *“Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name.”*

The subject assigned for treatment on this occasion is Family Religion. In considering it I shall, first and by way of introduction, briefly contemplate the family in its relations, of difference and similarity, to other social organisms, and, secondly, more fully set forth its special and practical aspects as a separate religious institute.

I. There are, in the present order of things, three great social institutes, the Family, the State, and the Church; in the present order of things, for in a different conceivable constitution of human affairs, into

NOTE.—This is really a discussion. The Charleston Presbytery, realizing the decline of family religion, and desiring to check the falling away in our Christian homes, appointed Dr. Girardeau to preach a sermon on the subject. As a result of this appointment the following carefully prepared sermon was preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Charleston, at the Spring meeting of the Presbytery in 1885.

which sin would not have entered as a factor, it may at least be doubted whether the same sharp and unavoidable distinctions would have obtained as now exist between the state and the church. Had the human race, as represented in its first progenitor and subjected to its probation in him, stood in innocence during the specified time of trial and been confirmed in holiness and happiness, its families, as they would have been multiplied, would probably have naturally passed into the condition of one great social organism. This might not have been a mere aggregate of families as units, but assumed the form of an organized institute of government. But it may be a question whether it would have been either logically or really divisible into the state and the church. The necessity for civil and political government arising out of the conflict of individual interests would not have existed, for as, according to the supposition, there would have been no sin, there could have been no conflict to be prevented or adjusted. It might have been requisite to affix to individual and municipal interests certain metes and bounds, but the great principles of truth, justice, and benevolence would have pervaded and regulated society and, as a consequence, these limitations would have been spontaneously respected, and no clash of contending claims could have emerged. It is certain that the *penal* element of retributive government would have been entirely absent; the sword never could have been as now the symbol and badge of rule, for there could have been no violation of law, and, therefore, no room for punishment. Crime would have been unknown.

These suppositions are rendered the more likely by what we know from revelation of heaven. It is the city of God, a polity of the redeemed, in which the

distinctions of civil and ecclesiastical, of disciplinary and retributive government are impossible. There God's state is his church, his church his state. We may fairly infer that as without sin the world would have been like heaven, the distinctions would have been wanting which at present actually obtain. Now, redemption proceeds upon the pre-supposition of sin. It recognizes the disjunction between the two institutes effected by man's rebellion; but at the same time it proposes for its ultimate end to heal the unnatural schism, so far as God's redeemed subjects are concerned, and restore our fallen and disrupted nature to its original and normal idea; and, moreover, to confer upon it the peculiar benefits resulting from its union with Christ the eternal and archetypal Son, and so to confirm it in a closer and tenderer union with God Himself. The church, as composed of God's children, is destined to be one perfect, undivided family.

But taking human society as it is, as conditioned and modified by sin, we find it existing in three organic institutes which are distinct from each other. The State is in its origin natural, and although it is capable of being influenced, ought to be influenced, and in the Millennial period will be influenced by spiritual sanctions, yet it is designed in this world to operate in the natural sphere and to be conversant with the political and civil relations of men. The family is also in its origin natural, is susceptible under the moulding power of grace of becoming spiritual, but from the nature of the case, must ever in this world move in the natural sphere and be concerned about natural relations. The church is in its origin supernatural and spiritual, ought in its character to be spiritual, and is designed to operate in the spiritual sphere. It is composed, in-

deed, so far as it is a visible and external organization, of men in the flesh, and, therefore, has a temporal side and temporal functions, but even in these respects it is controlled by spiritual relations and spiritual ends. The rule of government is different in these respective institutes. That of the State, on the one hand, although it may incorporate into itself elements of God's moral law, is still distinctively a political constitution and a civil and criminal code. On the other hand, the rule of government in the family and the church is the divine law as embodied in the Scriptures. The rulers are also different. In the State the ruler is the magistrate; in the family and the church, the father. They are, in fine, different kinds of government. The State is mainly an instance of retributive government, proceeding by rewards and penalties; the family and the church are specimens of disciplinary government operating by rewards and chastisements. In the one case penal justice is prominent; in the other it is excluded. The family, like the church, is a disciplinary and not a penal institute.

Having glanced at some of the most important differences between these organisms, let us briefly consider the relation in which the family stands to the state and the church, and the principles which originating in it ought to pass into and influence them.

These institutes, although in themselves distinct, are in a certain sense related. They all have a common origin in the will of God, are organs through which His manifold government of the world is mediately administered, are accountable to Him for the manner in which their subordinate rule is exercised, and are, in the discharge of their legitimate functions, supported by the sanction of His authority. One common

feature characterizes them all—they are ordinances of God. No association of personal beings in the universe has a right to be godless. In a future and more perfect condition of human society no organization, governmental or merely social, secular or sacred, will deny its relation to God or assume to act independently of religious sanctions. The more nearly society approaches to its original idea and its destined perfection, the farther will it recede from the atheistic claim to be irresponsible to God, and the more will it tend to that condition in which He will be confessed to be all in all, a condition in which His name will be impressed upon every corporation, company, and employment, when holiness to the Lord shall be written upon the bells of the horses. When? do you ask? When the star of the Millennial morn shall blaze on the dark and stormy horizon of human sin and strife. Sin has effected the monstrous schism betwixt man and God, and betwixt men and men. This fearful cleavage will be closed up, but closed up only so far as the predestinating purpose of God shall operate through the provisions of redemption. Neither at present is the scheme of optimism nor that of pessimism practically true. Heaven will realize the former, hell the latter. Human society is the preparation for one or the other, accordingly as it is or is not governed by the principles of the Bible. The acknowledgment of God will find its consummation in heaven, the denial of Him will reach its climax in hell. But whatever may be the actual facts in the development of our fallen race, the idea of human society was that it should conform to the divine will, and express the principles of the divine government. All men, whether regarded individually or collectively, are, by the conditions of their being, bound

to acknowledge, obey and glorify God. There is no logical medium between this doctrine and Atheism. The Family, the State, and the Church are correlated institutes in God's great plan of government—a plan by which He pleases ordinarily to administer rule, not immediately, but through the medium of human organisms, each intended to promote His glory and man's good in its own prescribed sphere, and all contributing together to the accomplishment of these ends.

It is, furthermore, obvious to remark that of these institutes, the family is fundamental, radical, germinal. It is the primary point of unity to the others. It is the origin and propagator of the race, and it is the first organism from which the others started and received their development. Had not sin occurred, the terms *human family* would have had a significance which they do not and cannot now possess. All mankind would have been one family, not only as having expanded from a common centre, developed from a common stock, but as being allied by feelings the most tender and affectionate. They would have spoken the same language, obeyed the same law and worshipped at the same altar. Society would have been a perfect brotherhood. Wherever one human being would have been met by another in all the wide world, although personally a stranger, he would have experienced the welcome of a brother's heart and the embrace of a brother's arms. If there could have been a heaven without Jesus, the earth would have been heaven. At least, it would have been a universal paradise.

But, conditioned disastrously by sin as it actually is, the human race is not a heterogeneous collection of individual units, but a great aggregation of families; and through whatever of conservative influence still

results from the laws impressed upon the family relation, that relation exercises a restraining and wholesome effect upon society. Were the population of the earth not thus composed of families, it would be a wild and ungovernable mob destitute of the first principles of law and order, of religion and morals, a promiscuous herd of human wild beasts,—nay, worse, for beasts of prey are not wont to rend their own species, and animals are controlled infallibly by the law of instinct beyond which they cannot pass. But when human beings transgress, as they do, the laws imposed upon their nature, the evil multiplies itself until the genius of license, misrule, and disorder riots in undisputed and unlimited sway, and sweeps its hapless victims, as if possessed of demons, onward to every social excess and agitation, communistic, socialistic, anarchistic, nihilistic—to universal revolution, amidst the terrific explosions of which all legitimate, time-honored and venerable institutions are in danger of being whelmed in one common and fearful ruin. In illustration of this, one need only cite the recent attempt to destroy the British parliament house and the tower of London.

The time allotted to these remarks will not allow more than a few passing words upon a theme tempting in itself and meriting serious consideration. I allude to the principles which, imbedded in the family constitution, make it a propædæutic for every form of the social fabric; principles which were designed to be of far-reaching value, to diffuse themselves beyond the limits of the family, and to be incorporated into the State and the church. There is the principle of obedience to law and to divinely appointed authority, of veneration for age, wisdom and sanctity, of deference to all who have the right to be the superiors of others.

The family is precisely the school in which this fundamental virtue ought to be fostered. The neglect to cultivate it there must tell injuriously upon the other relations of life, while the failure of the State and the church to insist upon it would bode nothing but evil to the future. Without it government would be impotent, except as enforced by the bayonet and the cannon. Society would perish at the top.

There is the principle of scrupulous respect for the refinement and purity of woman which finds a peculiar field for expression in the family circle, in the relation of the child to his mother, of the brother to his sister, of the husband to his wife, and which is entitled to be regarded as the palladium of social life. There is the principle of the headship of man, which divinely ordained to operate in the family is also divinely enjoined upon the church. It is also implied that woman was not intended by her Maker to enter as a public factor into political contests and open crusades for the melioration of moral evils,—to hurl herself into the fierce arena of gladiatorial strife. That would be to impair the beautiful quality of dependence and modesty which is the talisman of her power, as a rough touch of the hand irreparably brushes off the down from the petal of the flower. Were this to become the general custom—and may God preserve our Southern land from such an inversion of her traditions!—the cry of the ancient pagan persecutors of Christians would, with the change of a single word, be transmuted into the scarcely less cruel shout of modern society: Women to the lions! Their proper influence would be gone. But were general success to attend this ill-starred effort to clothe them with an improper influence, the result must be that the Graces would be transformed

into the Fates. The doom of society would be sealed. It is of vital interest to the State and the church that woman should exert her magical influence only in that sphere which God has assigned her, and in which she may wear the crown and wield the sceptre of a queen.

“There woman reigns, the mother, daughter, wife;
Strews with fresh flowers the narrow way of life;
Around her knees domestic virtues meet,
And fireside pleasures gambol at her feet.”

There is also the principle of monogamy, the law by which marriage is legitimated only between one man and one woman, an ordinance enforced alike by God the Creator and God the Redeemer. Vital as its observance is to the peace and harmony of the family, it is of no less importance to the purity of the church and the welfare of the State. It is a matter for thanksgiving that no church and no Christian government theoretically tolerates the evil of polygamy. But its existence as a fact among the American people is a blot upon their civilization. It is at once a fret and a shame to the age. There is further the principle of the perpetuity, under limitations, of the marriage bond. That bond is designed to be, and ought to be, perpetual; but it is liable to dissolution by reason of sin. When it has been wickedly disrupted, the question arises in regard to the legitimacy of divorce. There are two vicious extremes into which human legislation actually runs—the one of legalizing divorce upon insufficient grounds, that is, grounds not warranted by the Divine Lawgiver; the other, of permitting it upon no grounds. God, in His word, recognizes one and but one ground of divorce—the dissolution of the bond of

marriage, and specifies two ways in which that may occur; first, infidelity to the marriage covenant; and, secondly, causeless, wilful and irremediable desertion. Those States, therefore, which grant divorce upon other grounds than these are looser than the divine law, and those which refuse it upon these grounds are stricter than it. In either case, mischief must be the result. Would that legislators had the grace to regard themselves as neither wiser nor more merciful nor more careful of morality than God Himself!

II. I pass on now to the consideration of the special and practical aspects of the family as a separate religious organism.

Let us, first, contemplate the family as an Institute of Instruction.

It is not necessary to spend time in discussing the question of the natural obligation resting upon parents to teach their children. Whether they do or do not address themselves formally and methodically to the discharge of this parental function they are, from the nature of the case, teachers, and teachers exerting a prodigious influence upon their children. The school is one of nature's construction, and not a product of conventional arrangement. The pupils are born into it, have no vacations, and never leave it until they arrive at an age when they are prepared to become teachers in a similar school with similar students. The near and tender relations involved, the almost god-like authority of the parent, the assimilating disposition of the child causing it with sponge-like facility to absorb the influence of the daily words, and acts and life of the father and mother,—all these considerations show that the family is necessarily a potent institute of in-

struction. This is obvious. But the duty resting upon the parent in a stricter and more formal sense to teach his children will also be generally conceded. As, however, in consequence of our weakness and imperfection we are liable to the neglect of even admitted duties, let us look at some of the reasons which bind us to the conscientious performance of this obligation.

The Scriptures are not silent in regard to this primal duty of religion. There can be no doubt that the first family which existed on earth was a school of religious indoctrination. The narrative in Genesis confirms the antecedent probabilities in the case. The pious Abel conformed his practice to the evangelical instructions of his parents when he offered in his worship an animal as significant of his faith in the Lamb of God, who should, in accordance with the purpose of redemption, render himself a propitiatory sacrifice for sin; and his wicked brother sinned against the gospel delivered to him by the same instructions, when he furnished the first and leading instance of will-worship in his infidel presentation of a bloodless offering. Through the Patriarchal dispensation believing parents handed down to their children, generation by generation, the first glorious promise of redemption; and even when the professed people of God had lapsed into an almost universal apostasy from the truth, there remained one family in which the torch was still kept burning that was kindled at the altar of Adam and Eve. The same sacred light shed its rays in the ark when shut in by God's hand, and when borne upward by the swelling waters of a mighty deluge, with the corpses of a drowned world floating around it and heaved up against its sides. That family school, thus miraculously preserved, became the distributing centre

of gospel truth to a new world, alas, so soon by the force of corruption to repeat the crime of its predecessor, and in the face of its doom to plunge into an idolatrous apostasy from God! Yet here and there in that desert of defection the truth of the gospel maintained its supremacy in some family seminary. The venerable patriarch of Uz taught his children the scheme of salvation in which all his personal hopes were grounded. Abraham, when called of God to be the founder of the church under new sanctions, became an exemplar of fidelity in the duty of parental instruction. By express and solemn statute, the Mosaic code constituted every family in Israel a school of religious training. "Only take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them, thy sons and thy sons' sons." "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." The illustrious captain who led the host of Israel across Jordan into the promised land, said in his last, affecting address to his countrymen: "Choose you this day whom we will serve. . . . As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

The royal Psalmist declared that he would "walk within his house with a perfect heart," implying that he would in his family both inculcate by precept and exemplify in his conduct the principles of the religion he professed. His son, the wisest of men, who well knew, from his own experience, the benefits of family tuition and the disastrous effects of its neglect, fur-

nishes the salutary admonition: "Train up a child in the way he should go," and appends the promise that "when he is old he will not depart from it;" intimating that the habits engendered in the young by faithful parental instruction may ordinarily be expected to bear corresponding fruits in maturer life. The same great man, speaking by the Holy Ghost, also charmingly counsels the young: "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." The evangelic prophet records "the writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness," in which the restored monarch says: "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth," as though he esteemed it one of the chief offices for which his life was prolonged to impress upon his children the ways of the Lord. It is worthy of notice that the last of the prophets, in the very closing words of the Old Testament Scriptures emphasizes the discharge or neglect of parental and filial obligations and the consent or disagreement of parents and children in supporting the true religion, as conditioning God's blessing or His curse: "Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." The practice of the pious in training their

children in the knowledge of the Scriptures, after the Old Testament canon was completed, is evinced by the case of Timothy, to whom Paul says: "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus;" and he had previously intimated who Timothy's instructors were when he alluded to the unfeigned faith which dwelt in his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice. The Spirit of New Testament teachings on this subject is expressed in Paul's exhortation to parents to "bring up" their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"; that is, to give them a Christian education—to train them in the school and for the service of Christ, their Savior and Lord.

Having taken this hasty survey of Scripture teachings on this subject, let us also look at some of the considerations which exhibit the inexpressible importance of the family as a school, and the gigantic responsibilities of parents as its divinely appointed preceptors.

The most superficial attention to the matter must impress upon us the fact that the family school exerts an incalculable influence, because it is the very first in which human beings are trained for time and eternity. From the nature of the case, it takes chronological precedence of all others, secular or ecclesiastical. It is one into which the pupils enter at birth. Their first sense-perceptions are connected with the faces and the voices of their mothers and their fathers. From them they acquire, by absorption, their vernacular tongue with all the ideas which it symbolizes. Their first type of thinking is assimilated involuntarily from that of their parents. They know them before they know God, and derive their first knowledge of God Himself from

them. They are in a school in which their teachers are their parents. Their parents are to them the first interpreters alike of nature and the Bible. The conditions of instruction are the most favorable that can be conceived. On the one hand, there is the forming and impressible state of childhood, its boundless credulity as yet unchecked by the experience of untruth and deception, its readiness to accept the testimony of all with whom it comes in contact; and on the other, the undisputed authority and influence of its parental instructors, founded in admittedly superior will and wielded in tenderness and love. No wonder it has passed into a proverb, that our earliest impressions are the strongest. Like the bottom inscriptions upon some old parchments, however overlaid and crossed, they remain clear when the later are obscured, or abide when they are obliterated. As the experienced Christian turns in the mysterious process of death to the happy time when first he knew the Lord, so it is an affecting natural fact that on the dying bed men reproduce, in imagination, the scenes of early life. Even the abandoned profligate who has gone through gulfs of impurity, and whose mind and conscience are defiled, reverts at last to the sweet associations of his boyhood's home, and "babbles o' green fields" over which he once roamed an uncontaminated child. Who can measure the influence of that first school in which we receive our earliest and profoundest impressions? A fragment of Scripture, a bit of a hymn, a scrap of a prayer, taught by a mother's lips to the child lying in her lap or bowing at her knee, sometimes comes up to the consciousness of the despairing sinner in life's last struggles, and leads to the clutch of faith upon the promise of salvation through the merits of Christ. And, on the contrary,

the remembrance of wicked words and infidel expressions which fell from a parent's lips upon the ready ear of the child, may arise into the latest consciousness of life to deepen unbelief and thicken the gloom of death.

This leads to the further remark, that the school of childhood is not only a source of enduring impressions, but a nursery of fundamental and regulative ideas. Is not this abundantly attested by facts? The child is almost sure, unless through the operation of some exceptional and revolutionary force, to adopt and maintain the doctrines, views and opinions of its parents. They are absorbed without difficulty and, almost as a matter of course, are incorporated into his intellectual being, and stamp the complexion of his future thinking. The child of the Pagan naturally becomes a Pagan; the child of a Mohammedan, a believer in the Koran. He who is so unfortunate as to be born of an Atheist naturally acts upon the testimony of his earthly father that he has no heavenly. John Stuart Mill, having been bred in a family school in which Atheism was taught, naturally became an Atheist. One who is taught by nominally Christian parents absorbs, in accordance with the same law, nominally Christian views; and it is a matter of the commonest observation that the sects and denominations into which nominal Christianity is divided, in the main perpetuate their existence by virtue of birth and education, rather than by the examination of evidence and judgment rendered upon it. It is true—and God be praised that it is!—that the almighty grace of the ever-blessed Spirit is not tied to the laws of a merely natural development, but sovereignly operates not only to the reversal of false regulative ideas and views which are derived from education, but to

the destruction of the fundamental principle of inherent sin itself, from which all religious errors and all actual transgressions of the divine law proceed. It is left on record for our instruction that Saul, the persecuting inquisitor, was thus miraculously converted; and without this doctrine delivered to us clearly in God's word, the whole cause of foreign missions would be a wild vagary. But while this is true, and must be insisted on, it must also be admitted that ordinarily the operations of God's saving grace are concurrent with the line of family descent and family culture. The promise of salvation by Jesus Christ is indeed unto all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call, but it is chiefly and emphatically to those who profess the true religion and to their children.

It must also be remarked, by way of qualification, that the correct views and principles instilled by parental instruction into their children cannot be expected of themselves to preserve them in future life from the adoption of erroneous opinions or the formation of evil characters. That result might fairly be looked for if their development were unimpeded by antagonistic forces. But that development is counteracted and hindered by the all-conditioning law of inherent depravity, which can only be overcome by supernatural grace. Still, with all the limitations which justice requires to be imposed upon it, the position in the main is unquestionably true, that the doctrines, ideas and opinions which the parent inserts into the mind of the child are fundamental and regulative in their influence. Beyond doubt, they exercise a powerful influence upon the future career of the child. If right, they act as barriers in the way of the development of wickedness both

in speculation and in practice; and they become the moulds to which a true religious system easily adjusts itself, the forms in which a true religious life finds its legitimate expression. If wrong, they fall in with the fatal tendency to sin, and hasten it to its consummation in open heresy or immorality.

This becomes still more evident when we consider the implicit faith of the child in the authority of the parent as a teacher. Not yet arrived at that period of mental growth when he becomes individually responsible for his beliefs and opinions in consequence of his ability to investigate evidence and his obligation to follow it, he looks up to his parent as being to him the vicar and representative of God. He has not the right to question the parent's authority. To him his father is infallible. There is no appeal possible to any higher human authority, for there is to him no higher human authority. If the father should teach his young child that the Bible does not deliver the doctrine of the deity of Christ, or of an expiatory atonement, or of the supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit, or of the eternal punishment of the wicked, how, in his immature condition, could the child possibly know the incorrectness of these instructions? Would they not be the Bible's teachings to him? Is not his father the unerring expounder of truth to him? No scholars are so ready to imbibe the views of teachers as are the young members of the family school those of their parents. They listen to them as they would to God.

This implicit faith is moreover enhanced immensely by the love and veneration which the youthful learner cherishes for his parent. And as he grows there naturally springs up a partisan feeling of prodigious power which leads him to maintain and vindicate the ideas

and opinions received from so dear and so venerable a source. The tendency, even when started by conviction, to depart from them is held in check by the almost irresistible feeling that injustice would be done to his parents and duty to them would be infringed by a breach with their instructions; a sentiment which is heightened if they be dead, and can no more speak for themselves. Their graves are seals of their instructions, and the monuments above them are protests against their abandonment. He who in mature life embraces truth in opposition to error taught by a parent's lips, pays as striking a tribute as can well be furnished on earth to the majestic authority of evidence, and the imperious force of conviction. It will readily be conceded by us who profess to be Christians, that our little children are bound by filial dependence and obligation to accept the Bible at our hands, and to receive those interpretations of its meaning which we put upon it. But if we take a broad view of the subject, we must also allow that the general rule holds in regard to the religious instruction of all children by their parents. The child of the Mohammedan, in his tender and unthinking years, is bound to comply with the authority of his father which delivers to him the Koran as his directory of faith and duty. The rule holds in the various special applications of which it is capable. The mere child has no right to affirm independence of his father's instructions. It may be questioned whether he has the right to adopt opinions from any human quarter which contradict those of his parents. Indeed, from the nature of the case, it is difficult to see how he could. The conditions do not exist for an intelligent comparison of opinions and tenets. He is the helpless receiver of his father's faith. His re-

ligion is determined by the nod of his father's head. If this be true, it is seen that the responsibility of the parental teacher is nothing less than tremendous. His magisterial authority may, no doubt often does, project his child into a path of development, the logical result of which is hell. Oh, how urgent is the necessity for the parent to settle the views which he impresses upon the plastic mind of his child upon candid and patient examination of the truth, with humble dependence upon God and earnest supplication for His guidance! He cannot, if wrong, plead the authority of his own parents. That plea will vanish into smoke at the touch of the last fire. The religious beliefs of the adult man are not evolved, like the instincts of animals, by a law of imminent necessity operating along the line of parental propagation. A point is inevitably reached in the progress of every human individual when his own personal responsibility emerges for the kind of religion which he adopts.

But, when that point has been reached, the question presses, What value ought to be attached to the religious ideas which have been derived from parental instruction? I venture to answer that they ought not to be held as settled and ultimate conclusions in accordance with which one's personal faith and practice must be determined. Nor, on the other hand, ought they to be treated as possessed of no value. They are venerable presumptions which must, on solid grounds of evidence, be rebutted before they can be legitimately discarded. They are tentative, working hypotheses which are to be tested by comparison with facts, and sustained or rejected in view of the whole evidence which is accessible to the inquirer after truth. The mind ought to hold the position of neutrality, of in-

difference—not to the truth, for that, as the very end of the inquiry, is of supreme consequence—but of indifference as to what shall prove to be the truth amidst the rival claims of conflicting opinions after an unprejudiced and sober, a painstaking and prayerful examination. Even when these conditions are complied with—as complied with they certainly ought to be—the inquirer starts out with the weight of presumption vastly preponderating in favor of opinions sanctioned and, as it were, consecrated by parental authority and by filial obedience and love. Here again we cannot fail to be struck by the responsibility of the parent. But it is a fact that in the great majority of instances no such investigation is instituted. The man is content with the views which as a child he received from the lips of his father and mother, lips, perhaps, mute in the grave, and he goes on treading the path beaten by the generations which preceded him. Like herds of cattle following other herds of cattle, the mass of men tramp on until the light of eternity blazes upon them and reveals, when too late, their suicidal folly and guilt. In this view of the subject no language can exaggerate the awful accountability resting upon parents for the instruction they communicate to their children.

In connection with this strain of remark we cannot but be impressed by the thought that in the family school, more by far than in any other, the force is peculiarly felt of teaching by example. Allusion is not here made to the concurrence of example with didactic precept, though that is worthy of serious reflection, but to the powerful teaching of example itself. The child is imitative, and very naturally copies the example of the parent. It is to this law Paul adverts

when he exhorts Christians to be "imitators of God as dear children." The life of his parents is a daily study to the child. It is ever before him. The words spoken, the acts done by the father and the mother in the unrestrained freedom of the family circle are like a steady rain falling, not upon the rock, but upon the thirsty earth. They are drunk in and appropriated by the imitative and assimilating powers of the child. This aspect of the subject might be copiously illustrated, but time would fail, and it is so plain to the barest observation as to render expansion almost needless.

I cannot dismiss this special topic without calling attention to the enormous *diffusive* and *traditional* influence of the family as an institute of instruction. Each family tends to diffuse its influence by ramifying its connections through intermarriage, until a congeries of circles is formed intersecting one another and widening out, who can calculate whither? The ideas and doctrines asserted in one family may in this way receive a dissemination which will reach to the ends of the earth.

The traditional power of the family is equally incalculable. The sacrifice offered by Noah in the bosom of his family on Mount Ararat has by this power impressed itself upon the nations, and continues to affect their religious views and rites to the present hour. The usages of Abraham's family are observed by the Jews to this day. The ideas and doctrines once taught in the family school are handed down from father to son to distant generations. Those, my brethren, which we deliver to our families will project themselves into the future, and will affect the immortal destinies of souls. The stream of traditional influence, running through

successive family lines, will not cease until it ripples against the judgment throne; nor will it be arrested there, but rolling around it, it will flow on forever, either mingling with the waters of the river of life proceeding from the blest seat of God and the Lamb or with the Styx and the Acheron of hell.

Let us next consider the Family as an Institute of Government.

The word of God speaks expressly upon this subject. It clearly conveys the right to the parent, and enjoins upon him the duty to exercise government over his children, and enforces upon children the obligation to honor and obey their parents. God, in Genesis, says: "For I know him [Abraham] that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." Of so great consequence did He esteem this primal duty of all religion that He gave it a formal and permanent enforcement in the Ten Commandments: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." It is an acknowledged principle in accordance with which the Commandments are expounded, that an eminent instance of a class of relations, with their corresponding obligations, is singled out and emphasized as representative and inclusive of the whole class. Here the class is inferiors, superiors, and equals. It challenges notice that God signalized the special relation of parents and children as the highest and most important of the whole class. This furnishes us the divine estimate of the relative duties of parents and children.

Can I, just at this point, do better than simply to cite the felicitous, impressive and exhaustive statement of the duties enjoined by this Commandment, given in the Westminster Larger Catechism, substituting for the general words inferiors and superiors where they occur in that venerable formulary the special terms children and parents?

“The honor which children owe to their parents is, all due reverence in heart, word, and behavior; prayer and thanksgiving for them; imitation of their virtues and graces; willing obedience to their lawful commands and counsels; due submission to their corrections; fidelity to, defence and maintenance of their persons and authority . . . bearing with their infirmities and covering them in love, so that they may be an honor to them and their government.”

“The sins of children against their parents are, all neglect of the duties required toward them; envying at, contempt of, and rebellion against their persons . . . in their lawful counsels, commands, and corrections; cursing, mocking, and all such refractory and scandalous carriage, as proves a shame and dishonor to them and their government.”

“It is required of parents . . . to love, pray for and bless their children; to instruct, counsel and admonish them; countenancing, commending, and rewarding such as do well; and discountenancing, reproving, and chastising such as do ill; protecting, and providing for them all things necessary for soul and body; and by grave, wise, holy, and exemplary carriage, to procure glory to God, honor to themselves, and so to preserve that authority which God hath put upon them.”

“The sins of parents are, besides the neglect of the duties required of them, an inordinate seeking of themselves, their own glory, ease, profit, or pleasure; commanding things unlawful, or not in the power of children to perform; counselling, encouraging or favoring them in that which is evil; dissuading, discouraging, or discountenancing them in that which is good; correcting them unduly; careless exposing, or leaving them to wrong, temptation and danger; provoking them to wrath; or in any way dishonoring themselves, or lessening their authority by an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous, or remiss behavior.” And to this it must be added that God has annexed a special and explicit promise of long life and prosperity, as far as it shall serve for his glory and their own good, to all such as keep this Commandment—a promise repeated in the New Testament, to which children should pay peculiar heed, if they would enjoy God’s blessing in the preservation and success of their lives. Like the pillar which protected and guided ancient Israel, it has as well a face of threatening darkness as of cheering light, and impliedly denounces the signal displeasure of God upon those who dishonor and disobey their parents. It may be that many a young, hopeful life has been blighted and many an early grave been filled in consequence of the transgression of this divine command.

The woful case of Eli, the venerable priest, furnishes a solemn and affecting warning to parents who neglect the duties of family government. The record is: “And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken against his house: when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him

that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And, therefore, I have sworn unto the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever." The awful judgment did not tarry. The army of Israel was routed by the Philistines with great slaughter, the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were slain. The alarming tidings borne hastily to the poor old man brought his life to a sudden and tragic termination.

The duties of family government are clearly enjoined in the New Testament. Not only are parents commanded to exercise towards their children that sort of discipline suggested by the words "nurture of the Lord"—a discipline by which the growth of their faculties and the increase of their knowledge is secured, but also that which is supposed in the words, "admonition of the Lord"—a discipline of warning and censure, of restraint and government.

After what has been quoted from the Westminster Standards, there is no need, and there would be no time, to enter into a detailed specification of the duties and offences connected with the government of households. But I cannot forbear indicating a few thoughts bearing upon the inexpressible responsibilities of parents in relation to that divinely appointed office. The reflection ought solemnly to arrest their attention, that the family is peculiarly an institute in which habits are daily forming which must tend to stamp the whole complexion of their children's lives. We all know, who have encountered the duties and conflicts of life, what the force of early habit is, from our own happy or bitter experience. How often have we thanked God

for habits induced in our youth—that of daily prayer, for example—under the training of pious and perhaps departed parents! How often groaned in anguish of soul over vicious and injurious habits established in that period now irrevocably gone, or the failure to form better when the favorable opportunity was ours! Alas, the silken thread which was then easily bent has now hardened into a rigid band of iron! What different mental power, what different attainments, what different characters we might have had if our early habits had been rightly moulded! The chance is gone, and no lamentations can bring it back. Especially is this true of the particular habit of obedience. It is one which it is emphatically the province of family government to form. The will of the child ought to conform to the superior will of the parent, and the season to accomplish this is when that of the former is the most flexible. There nearly always comes a time when an issue occurs between these two wills which must be settled or the supremacy of the parent is abdicated; and once lost, it is seldom recovered. So at the origin of the race the will of our first parents was confronted with the naked will of God unsupported by any ostensible reason other than that of divine authority. Such was the test of obedience to which they, and we represented by them, were subjected. They refused compliance with their Maker's will, and the temper of universal disobedience was infused like a virus into the race. It is to be feared that the neglect of parents to insist upon this habit of obedience in their children may more and more engender a spirit of lawless insubordination which even now threatens to be the dynamite of social order, an explosive force under the foundations of all regulated government, ecclesiastical and secular. The

true cure of this fell tendency would be most effectually sought in the proper government of the young.

It is also a consideration that should deeply impress the minds of parents, that their government of the family makes it a court, the decisions of which constitute a body of precedents tending to determine the judgments and conduct of children in their subsequent lives. These decisions form a code of unwritten law to which it is natural that children should refer. Is it not to be presumed by them that these decisions of the family court were right? And would not every sentiment of veneration and affection lead the filial subjects of this rule to regulate by them their personal decisions of the actual cases which arise in their own experience? And to heighten the force of this thought, it is only necessary to remember that the parent combines in his single person, in this little sphere of government, all the functions which on a larger field are usually distributed among different officers. He is at the same time clothed with legislative, judicial and executive powers. He gives the law, he expounds, applies and executes it. Whenever a case comes up for trial and decision in this unique parental court, he is both judge and jury; he decides questions both of law and of fact. It is true that in enlightened civil governments the father's sovereignty is limited by the law of the land; he is not invested with the power of life and death. But in all ordinary cases his will is supreme, his decisions ultimate. There is no appeal competent to the child. Whatever hardship or injustice his natural sense of right may lead him to conceive that he has suffered, naught is left him but implicitly to submit. He must bear the blows under which he writhes and weep in secret over his wrongs. The parent may

be choleric, hasty and extremē in administering chastisement; the poor urchin has no redress. He must content himself with squirming under the birch and perhaps making rash and unredeemable promises in order to abridge the suffering; as was said to have been the case with the sweet singer of the British Calvinistic churches who, when a child, was peremptorily forbidden by his father to make any more verses. While smarting under the correction inflicted for his violation of the command, he piteously cried:

“Pray, father, do some pity take,
And I will no more verses make.”

Mighty little supreme court! Powerful little empire! Only the ferule may be its sceptre and the darkened chamber its dungeon; but its autocracy is as potent as that of the Cæsars; its sanctions well-nigh as formidable as those which are wielded over his vassals by the Czar of all the Russians. Is it not easy to see how such a government, so manifold, so nearly unlimited in its power, so strongly seconded by the natural affections, exercised during the forming period of childhood, must impress itself, and impress itself almost determinatively, upon the future career of its youthful subjects? Callous must be the sensibilities, inhuman the heart of the parent who is not affected by the responsibilities which this view of the subject thrusts upon his mind. There *is* a tribunal before which he must stand at last to give an account of the manner in which on earth he discharged the momentous trusts reposed in his hands. Tremendous Bar of God! Who of us shall appear before Thee with consciences guiltless in this thing? Who of us shall dare to confront Thee without a hope

in the mercy of a heavenly Father and the blood of an Elder Brother?

Let us, in the last place, view the Family as an Institute of Worship.

We would be disappointed were we to look in the Scriptures for many express inculcations of the duty of family worship. The reason is plain. That duty is enforced by the most obvious dictates of nature itself; it is one of the elements of natural religion which the Bible, as a supernatural revelation, of necessity presupposes. Its very silence, so far as the formal injunction of the duty is concerned, is exceedingly significant. For a like reason no doubt it is that Scripture nowhere presents an elaborate argument for the existence of God or even for the Trinity. These were fundamental doctrines of the religion of nature, and are treated as great presuppositions to be universally and unhesitatingly assumed. Yet the awful imprecation, "Pour out Thy fury upon the heathen that know Thee not, and upon the families that call not on Thy name," while it furnishes support to the view just expressed, also enforces, under sanctions of the most dreadful character, the duty of family worship. It is like a flash of lightning on a dark night that at once lights up the whole face of a landscape. They who neglect this obligation are classed with heathen, and are threatened with the fury of the Almighty poured upon them like a storm. It is not worth while to argue the case. He who theoretically denies this obligation, subverts religion and cannot decently appropriate to himself the Christian name. But we are apt, through weakness, to neglect acknowledged duties, and a few things may appropriately be said concerning the rea-

sons for the discharge of this office and the motives which incite to its performance.

The parent is by the appointment of nature, and in conformity with the feelings implanted by nature, the minister of worship for his family. He is not only God's representative of them, but their representative to God. The congregation for which he officiates is the beloved little flock, every one of whom is tied to him by the tenderest bonds—is bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. His function it is to read to them the blessed word of God, and expound it for their understanding. His function it is to collect their praises and their prayers, and bowing with them at their own household altar, to present their joint worship to his Father and their Father, to his Redeemer and theirs. What moving considerations impel him to its discharge! How can he refuse to lead them in offering thanksgiving to the Father of mercies for perpetually recurring benefits, new every morning and fresh, every evening; for daily bread, for the comforts of life, for the preservation of health, for protection against a thousand dangers, for deliverance from innumerable calamities which are ever impending, and, above all, for the unspeakable blessings of redemption? Will he, by omitting so plain a duty, teach them, through his example, to trample down the feeling of dependence on their God and Saviour, and indoctrinate them in the dark crime of ingratitude? The perils at birth, the contingencies environing the cradle, the stormy exigencies of life, the prospect of the bed of death, of the family gathering in anguish and tears around some dying member of the beloved little circle, of the sad funeral procession following the dust of the departed to the devouring grave; the temptations incident to

childhood and youth, the need of atoning blood to cleanse from guilt, and of the grace of the Holy Ghost to convert, and sanctify, to strengthen and console,—all, all urge him to erect and maintain the altar of worship in his house, and to render there his morning and his evening incense of adoration, thanksgiving and prayer.

It deserves, moreover, to be remarked, that in conducting family worship, the parent enjoys the special and eminent advantage of pleading before God his peculiar promise to his people and their seed, of throwing himself and them upon the provisions of that eternal covenant which is ordered in all things and sure. It is true that this may be done, and ought continually to be done, in his own private approaches to the throne of grace. But there is a singular propriety in his pressing in the midst of his children their common relation with him to God's covenant and its promises. Besides the answer which might, by faith, be expected to be returned to these joint petitions, in itself no small consideration, these desirable results would be also secured,—God's covenant would be recognized and honored by the concerted worship of the whole family, the instructions touching its blessed provisions and promises didactically impressed upon the children would receive additional and affecting enforcement by praise and prayer; their own connection with the covenant would be daily brought to their attention, and so be inworked into their habits of thought and feeling; and it might be fairly hoped that they, following the example of their parents, would themselves be led to plead with the God of the covenant their own interest in his promise of salvation.

In conclusion, suffer me, brethren and friends, to address to those of you who are parents, a few plain, practical counsels suggested by this subject.

In the first place, I entreat you to remember that the obligation resting upon you to teach your children the religion you profess is divinely appointed, indestructible and inalienable. It is God who says: Bring up your children. That in which you are to bring them up is the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The relation of these beloved pupils to you ordinarily terminates only at death. It is you who are enjoined to do this duty: "Ye fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Consequently you cannot, without guilt, transfer this office to others. Every institute and means of instruction has its own allotted place. Yours is the family. However useful in its way the Sabbath School may be, its teachers are not the parents of your children. You cannot roll off upon them the function your Lord assigns to you. I need not say, Teach your children the word of God and the Gospel of your salvation. But I counsel you to tread in the steps of those who have gone before you to glory, and see to it that they commit to memory and recite the Shorter Catechism. Cause them also to memorize some choice Psalms and Hymns, containing the essential features of the plan of salvation. Verse is more easily retained than prose, and it is a well known fact that the sweet songs of Zion linger upon the lips of the dying and sustain and refresh them in their departing moments.

In the second place, rule your children in the fear of the Lord. Do not, like poor old Eli, allow them to make themselves vile because you restrain them not. Suffer the word of plainness. If they have grown

beyond the reach of parental correction, use authoritative command, plead with them, pray with them. Restrain them from all sin that comes under your eye, especially from open and presumptuous transgression. Restrain them from pleasure promenades, and from riding and boating excursions on God's holy day. Restrain them within your doors when the shades of night allure the wicked to prowl. Restrain them from unchristian companionship; from godless clubs and drinking parties; from the theatre, the race course, and the circus; from the gambling saloon, the dancing hall, and the skating rink. Restrain them from the dancing school. Say not, Is it not a little one? Yes, but, like little Zoar, it is too near to Sodom. It is a nursery of greater evils. Grace of body—what is it in comparison of the grace of God, which adorns and saves the soul? Your children belong to Christ and His church; train them not by your parental government as subjects of the devil and votaries of the world. Bring them up in the admonition of the Lord Jesus Christ. God forbid that I should assume the harsh tone of the censor! Oh, no. I come short in all things, and am less than the least of all saints; but this has always been my testimony, and this is my testimony now. This is narrow, it may be said. Yea, but not narrower than that straight gate and that narrow way through which a few enter into life. One would not wish to be broader than Jesus. Whatever may be the case in the sphere of doctrine, in the sphere of life, the church of the present day is in danger of defection and apostasy because of her compliance with the practices of the world. O Christian fathers and mothers, it is largely in your hands to arrest the fatal tendency.

In the third place, maintain family worship. Like Noah on Ararat, building his altar, and in the midst of his family offering praise for their great deliverance, erect your altar, and in the bosom of your household render thanksgivings to God for the greater redemption effected by His Son. Like Job, invoke upon the children of your loins the sprinkling of atoning blood. Do this while you live, and when the offices of piety on earth are drawing to a close, like the dying Jacob, lean upon the staff of your pilgrimage and in the midst of your children pay your last homage to your covenant God and Saviour. Will you plead that you are ashamed to pray with your family? What! When you remember the shame to which your incarnate God went down for you? Will you plead timidity? What! Would you not, in defence of your family, face an armed and ferocious mob? Afraid? Then ask your wives to officiate for you. Will you plead poverty of language? What! Were you dumb, would it not be your duty to kneel in the midst of your family and lift your eyes and hands to heaven and groan? As for those quack remedies for bashfulness—books of forms—it is enough to say that they are neither suggested by nature nor prescribed in our divine dispensatory. Will you plead the want of time? What! When you think of the death-bed, the meeting at the bar of judgment, and the unending ages of eternity? Let those of us who have from whatever cause neglected this great duty overcome our difficulties and address ourselves to its discharge. God will help those who make the effort. The grace of the Lord Jesus will be sufficient for them, and His strength will be made perfect in their weakness. Thus treating our families as institutes of religious instruction, government and

worship, we shall make our homes on earth preparatory schools for our glorious home in heaven. Our Father's house! There Himself will preside at the table He shall spread, and our Elder Brother will serve at the banquet of an ineffable communion. There glorified parents and children will together recount the mercies of their earthly pilgrimage, together unravel the mysteries of their afflictions below, and deriving from the review ever fresh reasons for gratitude shall blend their praises at the throne of God and of the Lamb.

THE DYING CORN OF WHEAT AND ITS GLORIOUS HARVEST

John xii, 24: "*Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*"

The words of the text were occasioned by an application of certain Greeks, who were in attendance upon one of the feasts, to be allowed an interview with Jesus. Knowing that He was approaching His last passion, our Savior replied by stating the necessity of His death to the attainment of the grand results of redemption, and the painful conditions of that service which these applicants seemed disposed to render Him. His response contained the enunciation of a great and universal law in this world of sin—the law that sorrow is in order to joy, and death in order to life.

Its statement is in the form of an analogous law of the vegetable kingdom. The grain of wheat which we deposit in the ground does not spring up and bear the stalk, the blade, the ear, except it first passes through a process of decay. To all appearance it must die in order to live. All that is merely accidental must perish, that the vital and seminal principle may be set free, and, according to the law of species, germinate and develop itself into a new and glorious form of life.

NOTE.—There is nothing to indicate the special purpose for which this sermon was prepared. It is written in a very large hand, on every other line, and dated 1865. As Dr. Girardeau never preached from manuscript except on special occasions, there was evidently some particular reason for its preparation.

This is true of all the processes of nature, and it is equally true of our intellectual, moral and religious being. Sacrifice and mortification must be undergone in order to the production of the highest results of which our faculties are capable. Without this, as the grain unburied and undecaying would abide alone, remaining in a separate and unproductive condition, we would simply retain an isolated individuality, subsisting only for the present, and bringing forth no fruit to the glory of God or the good of man.

This law by which life is attained through death the Savior applies to His own case in view of His expected sufferings; and it is the most illustrious instance of its operation that has ever been afforded. It will now be considered, in its limited application to the case of Jesus, although it is susceptible of a much wider extension.

There are evidently two things suggested by the words of the text which demand our attention: the greatness of the sacrifice made by Christ; and the sublime and glorious results which it enabled Him to secure.

I. It must be obvious to every reflecting mind that, on the supposition of the supreme deity of the Son of God, the sacrifice which He made when He undertook to suffer and to die for sinners, is of so stupendous a nature that our conceptions of it must, at best, be but feeble and inadequate. It was one which only God could make, and was, therefore, godlike in its design and execution. And it is, perhaps, not irreverent to say that if it be competent to Deity to make a sacrifice, *that* of the Son of God was the greatest that divine wisdom could devise, or divine power could achieve.

In order to reach some apprehension of its greatness, it will be requisite to contrast the previous condition of perfect exaltation, glory and life which the Savior enjoyed, with that of subjection, shame, and death to which He bowed Himself when He undertook the work of man's redemption.

In the first place, it may be observed that He was possessed from eternity of absolute supremacy and universal dominion. Before the mountains were brought forth or ever He made the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting He is God. "Being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God." "The brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person, He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name" than all the created intelligences in the universe. As He is divine, His nature is the ground of moral distinctions, and His bosom the primal source of law. Angelic hierarchies, thronedoms, principalities and powers, minister in His presence. Worlds and systems innumerable, that "wheel unshaken through the void immense," revolve around His throne; and as they perform their appointed courses express, in the grand harmony of their movements, allegiance to His will. Wherever a holy creature exists amid all the shining hosts of worlds His law is acknowledged and His rule confessed to be supreme.

But, behold the wondrous nature of His sacrifice! Thus invested with universal empire, the author and dispenser of universal rule, He voluntarily lays out of His hands the rod of dominion, and subjects Himself to the authority of that law which was issued and administered by Himself. Instead of the aspect of a lawgiver and a sovereign, He assumes that of a subject

and a servant, He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Born of a woman and made under the law, the sceptre which His own hands had wielded descended upon Himself; the lightnings which had flashed from His throne blazed around His own soul; and the thunder of His own awful mandate against transgressors sends Him a reputed culprit to imprisonment, scourging and death.

Another feature in the extraordinary sacrifice made by the Son of God was His relinquishment of glory, and His assumption of inexpressible shame. His glory was eternally divine. Whatever of homage, adoration and praise were rendered to Deity were paid to Him. He inhabiteth the praises of eternity. The sublime worship of heavenly hosts was incessantly poured out as a tribute at His feet. The exalted faculties of sinless intelligences were employed in His service, and the choicest and most magnificent offerings which their powers could furnish, or their love could suggest, were lavished in His presence. The rapturous chants of angelic choirs, and the choral songs of the morning stars, rehearsed His infinite perfections, the glory of His deeds and the praises of His name. Countless worlds of light reflected the radiance of His face, and suns and stars shone with a lustre which they borrowed from His throne.

This glory the Son of God consented to veil when He humiliated Himself and became incarnate that He might die for men. His intrinsic or essential glory, that is, the glory which attends His own contemplation

of His being and character as God, can suffer no change; but his extrinsic or declarative glory, that is, the effulgent manifestation of His perfections, the reflection of His beauty and the celebration of His praises by the universe of creatures,—this was mysteriously eclipsed and suspended by His incarnation, by the wonderful connection of the divine nature with the human in a common relation to the personality of the great Mediator. It may be difficult, although the fact be a revealed one, to apprehend how the declarative glory of the Son of God should be held in abeyance considered as *divine*, for it would seem to have involved an arrest for a time of the praises rendered to Him as God; but there is a glory which the Scriptures clearly teach us was temporarily sacrificed through the incarnation and death of Christ. This was the *Mediatorial* glory.

As eternally designated to the execution of the scheme of redemption—the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, He possessed a glory which was peculiar to Him in the capacity of Mediator. This He laid aside when He assumed our nature and underwent our sufferings; and He resumed it only upon the completion of His mediatorial work on earth, and His triumphal ascension into heaven. The worship paid Him by celestial armies, the honors rendered Him by the universe of holy creatures, and the radiant exhibition of His glories the incarnate Redeemer sacrificed for shame, reproach, and contempt. He was born in a low estate and cradled in the lap of poverty; was calumniated as one in league with devils in the performance of the most extraordinary and beneficent miracles; was vilified as a glutton and a wine-bibber; was misrepresented as a rebel and an insurgent against

lawful authority; was arrested as a common malefactor; was excommunicated from His own visible church by the officers who derived from Him their right to rule; was beaten at the common whipping-post of culprits; was struck in the face and spitted on by the rabble soldiery of a foreign government; and, finally, the song of drunkards and the by-word of scoffers, was under guard led out, attended by an insulting mob, to execution, and amidst taunts and jests was nailed to the accursed tree in company with thieves—a spectacle in death to devils and to men.

It ought to be remembered, further, in estimating the greatness of this sacrifice, that the Lord of life consented to become obedient to death, and to experience it in its most cruel and ignominious form. “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.” “By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” Containing in Himself the fountain of being, He giveth to all life and breath and all things. His wonderful providence, as by a perpetual miracle, vitalizes all the processes of nature and conserves in existence organisms which would otherwise sink into their original nothingness, or into masses of inert and dissolving matter. All creatures derive from His inspiration the beginnings of life, and from His hand the bounty of continued existence.

Incarnated in the form of Jesus of Nazareth, His touch communicated healing to the sick, and His word

startled the dead from their graves. And yet He consented Himself to die. The author and prince of life, invested with supreme dominion over the realm of Death, He passed under the yoke of the monarch whose palace is the tomb, bows His head in token of allegiance to his authority, and descends at his command into the prison of the grave. The Giver of life, He succumbs to the extinguisher of it, and the very principle of being appears to submit to the stroke of death.

There is something, moreover, extremely affecting in the consideration that the sinless Savior consented to the sacrifice of His reputation for integrity. The only perfect specimen of humanity that the world, since the fall, had known, He merited singular honors from His fellow men. If the respect, the admiration, and the love of mankind could have been challenged by uprightness the most unblemished, beneficence the most tender, philanthropy the most untiring, charity the most unselfish, and virtue the most unsullied,—they were due to Jesus of Nazareth.

In place of them He meets misrepresentation, slander and abuse. Conscious of perfect rectitude, of immaculate holiness, He sacrificed His right to vindicate Himself; and when He stood before His accusers falsified and maligned, He answered nothing, but consented to be treated as an offender against God and a culprit before men. He suffered Himself to be convicted by a criminal process, and as a condemned criminal went out to execution to expiate His reputed crimes by a judicial death. There is, if I mistake not, one most touching instance in which He appeared to offer a protest against the injury to which His personal character was subjected. It occurred during His agony

on the cross. Persecuted by His foes, deserted by His friends, and now assailed by the heartless jeers of those who would not let Him die in peace, He turns, with a most pathetic appeal to His God, in which He seems to assert His conscious integrity, while enduring for others a mingled tempest of human malice and divine wrath, which was beating Him downwards to hell. The loftiest, purest, noblest spirit that had ever graced and dignified a polluted world by its presence, the ornament and glory of human nature, He was treated as the meanest, the lowest, the most despicable of slaves, and was regarded by His own countrymen as justly doomed to the disgraceful end of a felon. O deed of indescribable wickedness! His native soil, which received His dripping blood, blushed in crimson, and the face of nature blackened into a frown of indignation. Wonder of wonders! Earth spewed Him out of her mouth, and no vindication is granted Him from heaven.

The dreadful mystery is solved, and His sacrifice is seen to rise to its sublimest proportions when it is perceived that He voluntarily assumed the guilt of men in order that being adjudged in law to be a sinner, He might undergo their penal sufferings and be made a curse for them. He whose nature is holiness itself, in whose presence the very heavens are not clean, and in whose sight the least sin is an utter abomination, allies Himself to humanity, and in His mediatorial person takes upon Himself the accumulated guilt of His people. That He should have consented to bring His spotless sanctity into such connection with human sins as to render it proper that He should be judicially treated as the chief of sinners, and to die under the imputation of the most fearful guilt, amidst a storm

of opprobrium, hate and scorn,—is an instance of self-sacrifice which astonishes the universe, and is witnessed with indifference by man alone. What a strange and marvellous spectacle it exhibited is the cross of the dying sufferer! What affecting contrasts are presented by the amazing scene! What do we behold? Instead of the diadem of universal empire, a crown of thorns upon His head; instead of the sceptre of limitless dominion, His hands nailed to the tree; instead of the countenance whose brightness abashes adoring Seraphim, a visage disfigured with spittle and clotted with gore; instead of the smile in which angels find their bliss, the pallor and the tears of an unutterable anguish; instead of the rising hallelujahs of heavenly hosts and the songs of the morning stars, the hooting clamor of a human multitude who comment upon His execution as that of a criminal, and with mingled abuse and jibe make sport of His dying throes.

In the person of the bleeding victim on the cross we see supreme authority beaten down under law, infinite glory eclipsed by shame, stainless holiness pressed down under guilt, and the Lord of Life trampled into the dust under the victorious heel of Death. Is it any wonder that, in the absence of human sympathy, the frame of nature should be thrilled to its centre, and display the ensigns of a universal grief? The heavens are clothed with blackness, the sun refuses to shine, the stars of the firmament burn with the sickly hue of funereal lamps, the adamantine rocks are rent, and the inanimate earth trembles as in a paroxysm of terror at the death of her God.

The awful tragedy closes, the sacrifice is completed. The corpse of Jesus is taken from the cross and deposited in the tomb, and the hope of the church and

the world appears to lie down beside it. The light of life seems to be extinguished in the gloom of His sepulchre. His disciples are smitten with inconsolable grief; their expectations are blasted, and all seems to be lost. The "corn of wheat" has fallen into the ground and died; but it did not abide alone.

It brought forth much fruit. A dead Jesus is still the representative of His people's salvation. His sepulchre is an object of intensest interest. Angels watched it in hope, and devils and men in dread, that it might be opened again. The dawn of the third day begins to break,—and it is the dawn of a new and glorious hope for a sinful world,—the sleeping Saviour arises, bursts the fetters of the grave, unbars the gates of death, and comes forth proclaiming: "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore: and have the keys of hell and of death." The powers of darkness shrink awe-struck from the presence of the rising conqueror. Earth, inspired with a joy it never since creation knew, sings her resurrection anthem; and heaven, from ten thousand times ten thousand tongues, pours through the portals of the sky her answering tide of rapturous and triumphant song.

II. Let us now inquire what are some of the rich and glorious fruits which Jesus secured by the sacrifice of Himself?

The first great effect of His sacrifice which will be noticed is the personal exaltation and glory which He won for Himself. Having successfully closed His conflict with sin, death, and hell, He prepares to assume His glorious reward. Spoiling principalities and powers by His cross, He makes a show of them openly. Collecting around Himself the trophies of His victory,

He rises from earth leading captivity captive, and is attended by ten thousand of His holy ones in His triumphant passage to heaven. When the patriot and the hero, who has finished the battles of his country and achieved a conquest over her foes, returns to his home, a grateful people pour forth to greet him, and the air is rent with resounding plaudits. It is not extravagant to suppose that, when the victorious Redeemer, after the sufferings and labors of His mortal life, the passion of Gethsemane and the tragedy of the cross, ascended to heaven, angels and justified spirits prepared to welcome His return to the skies. The battlements of the celestial city on this glorious occasion are thronged with expectant thousands. They catch from afar the anthem of the triumphal procession that sweeps upward through the shining orbs of space: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in!" "Who," is the thundering challenge from the heavenly walls. "Who is this King of glory?" And again, as the head of the ascending column flashes into light, the mighty refrain as the sound of many waters breaks forth: "The Lord, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in!"

The massy portals are unfurled for the reception of Him who is at once the Lamb that was slain and the victor over Satan, sin and death. The splendid retinue attend Him through the golden streets and conduct Him to His resplendent throne. Crowned with honor, and taking his seat amidst the shouts of thousands and the music of innumerable harps, He receives the prostrate worship of myriads, ascribing to Him glory and

honor, and power and might and dominion, and wisdom, thanksgiving and blessing.

The great Mediator has, moreover, won for Himself that peculiar and ineffable love of the Father which results from His cheerful sacrifice of Himself in obedience to that Father's will. "Therefore," says the Savior in His beautiful and pathetic discourse on His pastoral office, "therefore doth my Father love Me because I lay down my life that I might take it again." Called of His Father to undertake the transcendent work of redemption, He cordially responded to the vocation, although He knew its acceptance required that he should waive His claim to equality in the Godhead, and subject Himself, with the unquestioning docility of a servant, to His Father's commands; although He knew that in fulfilling the conditions imposed upon Him, He must sacrifice His glory to shame, His honor to reproach, and His life to death. And now that having discharged to the letter all the requirements of filial obedience, and from shame, agony, and the grave He returns to resume His glory, the Father receives Him with peculiar honors, and delights to lavish upon His Mediatorial Son the tender and exhaustless love of a paternal heart.

In consequence, too, of the extraordinary humiliation to which the Mediator had subjected Himself in obedience to His will in the accomplishment of the mediatorial engagements, the Father highly exalts Him, confers on Him a name which is above every name, invests Him with supreme dominion, and summons the powers of heaven, earth and hell to bow the knee to Him, and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In the next place, the sacrifice of Himself made by Christ effected a manifestation of the glory of the divine perfections which is secured by no other means. The sublime frame of the heavens, the wonderful fabric of the earth, the exquisite structure of our bodily organisms, and the still nobler constitution of our minds proclaim the power, the wisdom, the greatness, and the majesty of their Almighty Maker. The scheme of law illustrates His justice, His truth, and His holiness. The grand system of providence does all this—it imparts the lessons which physical nature and the moral law communicate in regard to the divine perfections, and it adds to them some intimations of the goodness and mercy of the Supreme Ruler. There is, for example, in some of its arrangements, a hint of the great principle of mediation as an element in the moral government of God; and, in the suspension of the execution of judgment upon transgressors, and the bestowal of natural blessings upon the wicked and ill-deserving, it appears to reveal something of grace and mercy. These facts must be admitted, for they are open to observation. And yet, I confess, there is to my mind a doubt whether these hints of a mediatorial principle, and these indications of the merciful disposition of God towards sinners, would have any existence at all, were not the system of providence affected by the arrangements of the scheme of grace, and all the divine acts towards our guilty race influenced by a reference to the mediation of Christ. If so, it is not natural providence, as such, that discloses the mercy of God towards sinners, but those elements of the scheme of redemption which are either actually incorporated into it, or exercise a modifying influence upon it. But, be this as it may, the cross of Christ more powerfully than

the systems of nature, law and providence proclaims the divine perfections which it is their undoubted office to reveal, and it does infinitely more,—it manifests those attributes which contemplate the pardon of the guilty and the eternal salvation of the lost.

The vicarious death of the Son of God, as a being of infinite dignity, in the room of the sinner, sheds conspicuous and peculiar lustre upon the government of God, abundantly satisfies the demands and magnifies the authority of the divine law, reconciles the indestructible principle of the inseparable connection between guilt and punishment with the pardon of the transgressor, and harmonizes the apparently conflicting claims of infinite mercy and infinite truth, of infinite justice and infinite grace. “Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other,” at the cross of Jesus Christ. And meeting the guilty and despairing sinner at that cross, the great God shows him His glory, reveals His glorious name, and proclaims Himself “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin,” though He “will by no means clear the guilty.”

Were it not for the death of Jesus we could never, as sinners, have experimentally known anything of the love, the mercy and the grace of God, as they are eternal and glorious perfections of His nature, or as they are the sources of hope and salvation to ourselves. The highest manifestation of the perfections of God as contributing to the glory of His name, and the saving knowledge of them by ruined sinners as necessary to their everlasting felicity, is among the rich and glorious fruits which Jesus secured by the sacrifice of Himself.

Another result acquired by the death of Christ was the reconciliation of heaven and earth. The inhabitants of this world, as rebels against the divine government, were necessarily cut off by their revolt from the sympathy and fellowship of angels. The act which severed their connection with their God sundered the bonds which allied them to the angelic world. As long as they continued in a common service to Him, angels and men might take sweet counsel together, and mingle their worship in the same sanctuary as brethren and friends. The inexcusable rebellion of men alienated the regard of those unfallen and loyal spirits, and opened a chasm which forbade the interchange of kindly offices and the culture of a fraternal communion. The death of Jesus breaks down the middle wall of partition between them; His blood reconciles them again; and, on the mystical ladder of His mediation which rests on earth and reaches to heaven, angels come down once more in ministrations of love to men. Heaven reaches down its hands to earth, and earth is raised to heaven. The incarnate substitute of sinners, and in some sort representative of the elect angels, gathers them into the same glorious church and recapitulates them under the same mediatorial headship. Equally indebted to Jesus for the grace which enables them to stand, and secures their happiness against future contingency, and forgetting their past estrangement in the common love they bear to Him, they shall sit together in affectionate intercourse around His glorified person, and blend in sweet accord their everlasting praises to His name.

“According to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ,” says Paul sublimely in Ephesians, God “raised Him from the dead, and set

Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." And speaking in the same exalted strain in Colossians he says, "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." These inspired utterances have a profound significance and a majestic sweep. They indicate the fact that the merits of Christ's atoning death are not confined in their effect to the salvation of human sinners, but reach upwards through the scale of unfallen creatures, and broaden out in their conservative and confirming influence upon the universe of sinless being. It is certain that they extend to angels. And if, as a great theologian thinks, by angels the Scriptures signify all non-human ranks and orders of intelligent spirits, it would appear that the cross of Jesus is stamped upon every unrevolted world in the universal system. The case of devils and lost human beings may be singular, their prison-house the only jail in the universe, and the innumerable populations of loyal subjects of God's illimitable government be secured in holiness and bliss by the merit of Jesus' death.

Inconceivably great as this result may be considered, it is not too great to have been achieved by the blood that was shed on Calvary. The obedience to the divine law, which culminated in the pouring out of that pre-

cious blood, was absolutely exhaustive, and capable of comprehending in its merit every interest of every world. The immutable foundation of creaturely happiness will not rest upon creaturely virtue, but upon the righteousness of Christ. What a glorious fruit of the sacrifice of Jesus! What a wonderful harvest springing from the corn of wheat which fell into the ground on Calvary! It will shake, not alone like Lebanon tossed by mountain storms; it will shake like the congregation of rolling worlds swept by the tempests of universal and unending praise. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever."

It must be added, in conclusion, that the sacrifice of Himself by the great Redeemer secures the eternal salvation of millions of our race. His death was necessary to the attainment of this result. Without it the race must have sunk into despair and perished in their sins. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and as all are ungodly and unrighteous, all are subjected to wrath and liable to perish. Guilt is linked to punishment by the inexorable requirements of infinite justice and truth, and the irreversible penalty of an

eternal law. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith. The atonement of Christ alone removes the difficulties which oppose the salvation of sinners. It alone renders salvation possible by making it consistent with the perfections of His nature that God should pardon the guilty and admit them to His favor. The vicarious obedience of the Savior, deriving an infinite value from the infinite dignity of His person, satisfies the demands of justice, truth and law. He obeys, He suffers, He dies, as the substitute of sinners; and they, who by faith receive His perfect righteousness and rest upon it alone, are in Him absolved from guilt and invested with a title to eternal life. Nor does the saving office of Jesus stop here. It was necessary that, upon the completion of His mediatorial work on earth and His appearance in the heavens, He should have somewhat to offer. He must not present Himself in the holiest of all without blood. Accordingly, having as the merciful and faithful high priest of His people freely sacrificed Himself for them, He presents Himself in the heavenly sanctuary with His own most precious blood. Entering into the presence of His Father in the holy of holies, and pressing His sacerdotal pleas, enforced by the affecting memorials of His great sacrifice, He obtains the promised Spirit of grace, and from His mediatorial throne He sends forth to apply the benefits of His death to His people, and to gather them to Himself, their federal head, representative and Savior, from every kindred, tribe and tongue of earth.

Relying by faith upon the atoning death of Jesus, whether as a future or as a past reality, sinners have

been saved in every age. We have reason to believe that our first parents experienced rest from their tremendous guilt and relief from their gigantic affliction by reposing on the bosom of the first great promise; and, parallel with the development of the grand dispensations of the Covenant of Redemption, a growing multitude of believers have marched, each clime and country, like the tributary streams which swell the mighty river, contributing its numbers to augment the thickening host. They go from strength to strength until each one appears in Zion before God. An innumerable congregation of disembodied spirits, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and redeemed from bondage to Satan, sin and death, are already gathered to glory and throng the heavenly Jerusalem. The wise and the unwise, the Jew and the Gentile, Barbarians, Scythians, bond and free, are collected into the kingdom of God, speak the one dialect of heaven, and mingle their worship before the throne. And myriads more shall be brought in. They shall come from the east and the west, the north and the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Thousands yet unborn, down to the verge of time and the consummation of the world, shall press upward to the heavenly gates. Every day and every hour witnesses a fresh accession of ransomed spirits to the blood-washed and triumphant church. While these words are uttered, it is probable that many a wearied soul, long buffeted by temptation and tormented by satanic malice, is bursting away from its earthly tenement, and from the dying chamber and the bed of death, and is soaring as on eagles' wings to its eternal home. Denser and broader grow the shining masses of the celestial

host, as from every nation, people and tongue of earth fresh numbers are gathering, not at the summons of the martial trump, nor to the strife of gory fields, but at the call of the glorified Savior and to the peaceful rest of heaven. "I beheld," said the Seer of Patmos, "and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands: and cried, with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. . . . And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Brethren, this is philanthropy, noble, sublime, god-like. To discharge one genuine office of charity, however humble, to the needy, the suffering, the dying, is worth more than the splendid triumphs of wickedness though heralded by trumpets and applauded by thousands. But to purge unnumbered millions of deathless spirits from guilt, to rescue them from eternal burnings, to lift them to the holiness, the glory and the bliss of heaven, and to accomplish this by the sacrifice of Himself, and His own passage through the fiery furnace of divine wrath,—this is an achievement which shall forever crown the Savior with honors, call forth the rapturous praises of angels, and attract the ineffable affection, gratitude and homage of a redeemed and glorified church.

The corn of wheat has fallen into the ground and died; and the fruits of the glorious harvest springing from it are the supreme exaltation of the sufferer, the highest glory of the divine perfections, the reconciliation of heaven and earth, and the eternal salvation of a countless seed.

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD

1 Timothy, i: 11. "*The glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.*"

It has been frequently observed that man is essentially a religious being. At no time, and in no place, has he existed without some notion of a Deity, and some form of worship by which he has approached Him and sought to propitiate His favor. An attentive examination of the different schemes of religion which prevail in the world will disclose to us the fact, that they are all, to a greater or less extent, based upon the fundamental principle of the first religion communicated to man—that of personal obedience to the divine law, as the ground of acceptance with God. For although it should be admitted that the worship of even Pagan nations, conducted, in part, through sacrifices, evinces some acquaintance with a religious element foreign to the genius of natural religion; and although it should be confessed that this element belongs properly to the Gospel, and may have been adopted by the heathen as one of its traditionary fragments passing down from the patriarchal era, it must

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still be acknowledged that, in their case, even the offering of sacrifices is part of a system which proceeds on the principle of personal obedience, and supposes the acquisition of reward in consequence of the services of the worshipper. Whatever may be the material aspect of certain elements in the religious systems of mankind, the principle in which they are founded, and by which they are characterized, is that which has now been attributed to them. They may be said, therefore, to be corruptions of the original scheme of natural religion. There is one system, however, which is grounded in a principle radically and completely different—a system denominated by the apostle in the text, “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.” Coeval with the fall, it was originally communicated to man in the form of a promise, administered during the patriarchal era through the medium of sacrifices, more clearly imparted through the elaborate ritual and the prophetic instructions of the Mosaic dispensation, and, finally, “spoken by the Lord Himself,” and fulfilled in His life, death, and resurrection, it “was confirmed to us by them that heard Him, God, also, bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will.” This Gospel, coming down to us through the ages marked by distinctive peculiarities, maintaining a position wholly individual and singular, and refusing to coalesce with the religions by which it has ever been encompassed—this Gospel of the blessed God, in opposition to all other schemes of faith, we embrace as that from which we derive our consolations in time and our hopes for eternity. We accept it as the only authoritative communication of God’s will to sinful man—rest upon it as the divine testimony in

regard to our most precious interests, and not reluctantly stake upon the truth of it our everlasting destinies. Exclusive and uncompromising amidst various and conflicting forms of religion, and standing, as it does, in an attitude of solemn protest against them all, it is a question of no mean interest to its adherents, What is it that peculiarly characterizes the Gospel, and discriminates it from the original scheme of natural religion, and the corruptions of that scheme which may now exist in the world?

I. The Gospel is not peculiarly distinguished by the fact that it is a revealed religion. Any communication of God's will in an authentic form is a revelation of that will. When man first came from the hand of his Maker, he received a moral nature, in the very fabric of which were inlaid those fundamental beliefs which lie originally at the basis of all religion. We cannot suppose that God left His creature—the subject of His government—destitute of an acquaintance with the nature of his Creator, with the relations he sustained to His law, and with that peculiar religious constitution which was involved in the covenant under which he stood as the head and representative of his posterity. It makes no difference, in regard to the bare fact of revelation, that those credentials which authenticate the Gospel were absent in the case of man's primitive religion. For, apart from the view that the earliest communication of the Gospel itself was not accompanied with these extraordinary external proofs, it may be doubted whether they would at all be required, were it not for the very material difference between the recipients of these respective revelations growing out of the distinction betwixt them as holy and sinful beings. Nor, in reference to the simple

fact of revelation, does it make any difference that the particular modes by which God imparted a knowledge of His will in the two cases were widely distinct. For in one respect—and that a most important one—the two schemes of religion which we are considering are characterized by a common feature—the immediacy of the revelation from God of, at least, some of the principal elements of which they consist. In each case God himself immediately and personally delivered a communication of the knowledge of Himself to man. Under the primitive religion, Adam, we are informed, had free access to his God, who condescended to hold personal intercourse with him; and it is conceded that the Gospel, in its latest and highest development, began to be spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Nor is the Gospel characteristically distinguished by the fact that all the elements which compose it are peculiarly and solely its own. There are certain fundamental truths incorporated with its matter which lie at the foundation of all religion, are essential to all worship, and were, therefore, component parts of the scheme of natural religion. Adam, in his primitive condition, was, doubtless, acquainted with the doctrines of the divine existence, of the trinal existence of God, of his own federal relations, of the immortality of the soul, and of the retribution of rewards and punishments founded in the principle of distributive justice. And were it the distinctive office of the Gospel to republish, with clearer light, and more commanding authority, these original truths which, it is admitted, have been obscured, or even comparatively obliterated, in consequence of the fall, its province would simply consist in the restoration and re-establishment of a system of religion which, in itself considered, could

afford no shadow of relief to the miseries of man, as a sinner against God. The republication and authoritative enforcement of these great articles of religious belief is an important, but subordinate part, of the office of that scheme which the apostle designates as "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." My brethren, it does infinitely more than this. The very first and most obvious fact connected with its character is, that it is a religion which contemplates man in his fallen, sinful, and ruined estate. It derives its complexion from the mercy of God, from the bosom of which it springs, and all its arrangements, pervaded by this aspect, look to the salvation of those who are not only undeserving of the divine favor, but merit everlasting banishment from His presence, and the severest inflictions of His wrath. Its prime characteristic, therefore, is, that it is a scheme of mercy and not of law; and in correspondence with this, its all-pervading feature, it proposes the accomplishment of two great ends entirely peculiar to itself—the re-instatement of man, a guilty sinner, in the favor of God, and the restoration of man, a pardoned sinner, to the image of God. The mode by which it achieves these ends respectively is characteristic of itself—the employment of the principle of substitution in order to the justification of the person of the sinner, and the exertion of a divine and supernatural influence upon his nature, in order to its renewal in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. The incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the mission, supernatural influence and new-creating energy of the Holy Ghost—all tending to secure the redemption of miserable sinners, to the glory of God's grace,—these, I take it, are the vital and potential facts which stamp the Gospel with individu-

ality, discriminate it from all other systems of faith, and impart to it those peculiar and distinguishing qualities which render it "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God."

Having thus briefly considered the nature of the Gospel, let us pass on to inquire more particularly into some of the reasons which constitute it "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," or, as the words of the text may be rendered, "the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God."

II. It deserves, in the first place, to be remarked, that there is no other source than the Gospel from which we may derive any satisfactory information in regard to those attributes of the divine nature which are immediately concerned in the salvation of sinners. It is conceivable that it might have pleased God from eternity to have refrained from exercising His creative power and bringing subordinate and dependent existences into being. Possessed of infinite resources of happiness, essentially and everlastingly resident in Himself, and of an incomprehensible but unutterably blissful society, springing from the personal relations of the ever blessed Godhead, He might have remained forever satisfied with His own intrinsic glory, and ineffably happy in the enjoyment of Himself. But it has pleased Him to stretch forth His creating arm, and to stud the amplitude of space with hosts of worlds. It has pleased Him to bring into being intelligent creatures of His power, and responsible subjects of His moral government. It is, consequently, the office of created substances, both animate and inanimate, both material and spiritual, to make known the glorious perfections of their Maker; and it is clear that the scheme or constitution which most fully discharges this

great office brings the largest revenue of glory to His name. It is the very essence, too, of the well-being of intelligent creatures that they should know the nature and character of God; for communion with Him is the life of the soul. "In Thy favor is life, and Thy loving kindness is better than life." Now, when we contemplate man in his condition as a ruined sinner, it is evident that the Gospel alone reveals to him those attributes of the divine nature which contemplate his case with an aspect of beneficence, and from the knowledge of which he derives alike his happiness and his ability to glorify God. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Man, as a sinner, needs light in his ignorance, relief in his misery, and salvation in his ruin. Shall he appeal to nature to furnish him information in regard to God's willingness to help him in these his moral exigencies?

It is cheerfully conceded that the noble frame of external nature, and the sublime lessons it imparts, conduct us to some acquaintance with the natural attributes of God. No one can behold the sun marching in flaming glory through the heavens, or look upon the moon walking in queenly grace through the nocturnal firmament, or scan the countless hosts of the stars as they hang like lamps of heaven in the air of night; no one can stand on the shore of the ocean and stretch his vision over its boundless expanse, or listen to the thunder of its mighty billows; no one can watch the ever-changing hues of beauty which flit across the everlasting mountains, or mark the gorgeous tints which adorn the forests, the plants, the flowers of the earth; no one can contemplate these glories of the fabric of nature, and fail to be impressed with the transcendent

majesty, the wondrous skill, and the matchless wisdom of the Divine Architect, to whom they evermore render the inarticulate but eloquent tribute of their praise.

“The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.”

And that is all they do proclaim. The over-arching heavens, the rolling seas, the eternal hills, the beautiful garniture of the earth—what utterance do they give forth, what trustworthy lesson do they furnish, in reference to the grace and the mercy of God, from which alone the slightest ray of hope shines on the benighted, wretched, undone heart of the dying sinner? Alas! the oracles of nature are dumb in response to the most pressing demands of the human soul. We ask them for knowledge as to the gracious willingness of God to pardon and accept the sinner, and they answer—not a word. The way to the solution of the tremendous difficulty lies not through nature. “There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen: the lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lions passed by it.” No laborious search, no human alchymy, can discover to us this secret of secrets. “The depth saith, it is not in me; and the sea saith, it is not with me. Destruction and death say, we have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof, and unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”

Let it be remembered, moreover, that the elements of nature are not unfrequently made the ministers of destruction to man. The sun, which is at one time the cause of life, is, at another, the occasion of death; the moon blights the eye of the sleeper with its silvery beam; the stars which guide the feet of the benighted wayfarer become obscured with clouds, and mock his wanderings; the ocean, which bears the commerce of man on its smooth bosom is lashed by tempests into wrath, and swallows up his hoarded treasures and the dearest objects of his love; the winds, which now breathe with the softness of the zephyr at summer eventide, anon rise into fury and sweep the earth with the besom of destruction; the ground, which brings forth fruit, is cursed with thorns and thistles; and the plants, which attract the eye by the delicate beauty of their structure, may conceal the deadly poison of the hemlock and the nightshade. If external nature afford us any definite hint in regard to a single moral perfection of God, that attribute would appear to be His retributive justice, which employs natural agencies to execute its sentences; and the inference would seem to be reasonable, that the God who can use the ministries of nature for the destruction of man, may not be willing to manifest the quality of mercy in the pardon and salvation of the sinner.

We may, however, be pointed to the moral nature of man, as that which reflects, to some extent at least, the moral perfections of God. I am not unwilling to admit that were it not for our moral constitution, we might be unable even to conceive of those moral attributes of God to which they may bear some distant resemblance. But the question is, whether from this source we can derive any satisfactory information in

reference to the mercy of God, from which alone the hope of a sinner can arise. Now, conscience condemning what is wrong, and the sense of justice sanctioning, sometimes against our strongest affections, the punishment of evil-doers, shadow forth the existence in the divine nature of the great principle of distributive justice; and as that principle in God must be infinitely perfect and uncompromising, our own moral nature would lead us to infer, on the supposition of guilt in a subject of the divine government, the hopeless estate of the offender. It has been contended, however, that the disposition on the part of a human parent to forgive the offence of his child, upon condition of repentance, would lead us to conclude that God would not be unwilling, under like circumstances, to pardon the returning sinner. I will not now advert to the impossibility of adequate repentance on the part of the sinner, though that might, without difficulty, be proved. Reflection will convince us that the pretended analogy, in the case which has been mentioned, is a deceptive one, and that the inference drawn from it is hasty and inconclusive. There is an infinite difference between the parties who are offended. In the one case we have a human being, pervaded by sin and encompassed with infirmity, who, it might be supposed, would be induced by the consciousness of his own frailty to extend indulgence to another; in the other case we have a Divine Being, characterized by spotless holiness and uncompromising justice, upholding the integrity of His own government and conserving the interests of the universe. The offence, too, in one instance, is immensely diverse from the offence in the other. But aside from these considerations, an extreme, though supposable case, will entirely subvert the analogy. It is not diffi-

cult to conceive of the commission of certain aggravated crimes by the child against a human parent which would justly doom him to perpetual exclusion from parental regard, and forever preclude the hope of reconciliation. Such a case would furnish a fairer analogy by which to judge the relation of a sinner to a being of infinite holiness and justice. It deserves, further, to be seriously considered, whether the very first act of sin does not necessarily destroy the possibility of the existence of the parental and filial relation between God and the sinner, and leave the latter in the simple condition of a creature—a fallen and condemned creature—until adopted into the family of God through the intervention of the principle of mediation in the person of Him who is the only begotten Son of God. If this view be correct, then the very ground of the analogy is swept away. On the whole, we are driven to the conclusion that nature imparts no definite information in regard to those attributes of God which contemplate the salvation of a sinner.

Shall we, then, appeal to Providence for light on this momentous subject? Here we are met at the very threshold by difficulties of so formidable a character that it is unnecessary to dwell, except very briefly, on this point. Even on the supposition that the principle of grace pervades and influences the scheme of Providence, it is, confessedly, a very difficult matter rightly to interpret the lessons it imparts. There is an apparent inequality in the distribution of blessings and chastisements, so great as at times to confuse the judgment, and perplex the faith of the most pious and exemplary servants of God. Job, the venerable patriarch, of whom God Himself bore witness that he was perfect and upright, was, in one gigantic afflic-

tion, stripped of his possessions, bereaved of his children, and driven, under the violence of a loathsome disease, to sit in the dust, to cover his head with ashes, and to scrape his body with a potsherd; nothing, apparently, being left him in his well-nigh exhaustive desolation but friends who misinterpreted Providence in his case, and a wife who counseled him to die with blasphemy on his lips. Aside from the instructions of the Gospel, what sinner may infer, from the dealings of Divine Providence, a disposition on the part of God to pardon his guilt and receive him to favor? He dwells in the land of the curse, and evils in a thousand forms attest the existence, and avouch the scope, of the law of retribution. Famine, war, pestilence, and death, proclaim themselves the ministers of distributive justice. There is no escape from the conclusion, uttered as with trumpet tongues on every side, that God will punish the guilty. It is true, that even to the wicked "He leaves not Himself without witness in that He does good and gives them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." But these providential dealings appear to be tokens of the beneficence of God exercised only for a season even towards incorrigible offenders, as a testimony against them, leaving them without excuse, rather than proofs of His merciful disposition to pardon the guilty without reparation to His justice. Nothing can be determined from Providential blessings which are common to the just and the unjust, and indicate no discrimination betwixt them. No, my brethren, the providence of God, apart from the Gospel, furnishes no illustration of those adorable perfections of the divine nature which are conspicuously magnified in the salvation of sinners. Its native language is not that of grace and

mercy. When it speaks to us of them it borrows its dialect from the Gospel.

Shall we, then, look to the law? Let us take our place with the Israelites, as, in response to the divine summons, they assembled at the base of Mount Sinai. The preparations for meeting God, and receiving His law, are stringent and awful. On the appointed day the trumpet peals forth from the mountain on the startled ear of the congregation, and waxing louder and louder shakes the camp with terror. Thick clouds and impenetrable darkness enshroud the seat of the august Lawgiver, while breaking forth from them, quick, keen flashes of lightning and tremendous thunders strike horror into the very heart of the people. The mountain quakes to its centre, and hark! there issues from the darkness, smoke and flame, that awful "voice of words, which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more." The congregation shrinks away appalled. They had been confronted with that law which reflects with dazzling lustre the insufferable purity and the inexorable justice of God. Do or die is the only alternative it presents. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." That scene is now not seldom re-enacted in the sinner's case, when conscience, waking up in near view of death and the last judgment, affirms the sentence of the law, presses in its terrible sanctions upon the impenitent soul, and binds the sinner over to everlasting despair. The law utters not one syllable of grace or mercy. Its office is to convince the sinner of guilt, to condemn him for his sins, and to shut him up, either to despair, or to the acceptance of a vicarious righteousness, which God may be pleased in mercy to

provide. That it affords light in regard to some of the attributes of God is true, but it is such light as shines upon the criminal who is sentenced to be burned to death, from the midst of the fire which consumes him.

It is evident, my brethren, that not the frame of nature, nor the scheme of Providence, nor the utterances of the divine law, nor all of them combined, considered merely in themselves, can represent to the sinner the glory of the blessed God so as to elicit his gratitude for saving grace, and call forth his thanksgivings for redeeming love. It is reserved for the Gospel, and for it alone, to reflect those glorious properties of the divine nature which exhibit God in an aspect of infinite mercy towards the guilty and the lost. With what beauty and force does the Psalmist describe the difference between the teachings of nature and Providence on the one hand, and of the Gospel on the other, touching the perfections of God in their relation to the spiritual interests of man! "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." Such are the lessons which nature imparts. The power, wisdom, and majesty of God the Creator and Providential Ruler, are magnificently proclaimed; but not a word is uttered in regard to the grace, the love, the mercy of God the Savior.

But the Psalmist continues in another strain: "The law of the Lord"—and by the law, I conceive, he means the great principles, both legal and gracious, which are embodied in the Gospel—"the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Most clearly, too, does the apostle contrast the terrific deliverances of the law with the peace-speaking provisions of the Gospel, in a passage as remarkable for its eloquence and sublimity as for the consolatory and elevating instructions it conveys:—"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more (for they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart; and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake). But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

III. I would further remark, that the Gospel is the representative of the glory of God, as it reveals all the attributes of the divine nature harmonized in the person and work of the glorious Redeemer. The glory of God is the collective result of all His perfections meeting in unison in His own most blessed nature, and shining forth in perfect harmony in the fulness of their manifestation to His intelligent creatures. If it be asked, where this effulgent glory is the most conspicuously and illustriously displayed, I answer—in the wonderful person and atoning work of the incarnate Savior of sinners. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” There is no attribute of the divine character of which we have any knowledge from nature, from Providence, from the law, or from the Scriptures themselves, which is not gloriously magnified by the great Mediator; but above all do the redeeming grace and mercy of God, which are no where else displayed, shine in the face of Jesus Christ. The plan of redemption has its foundation in the mercy of God. Sinners might have been left eternally to perish and divine justice would have been glorified in their destruction. But God, having, in infinite mercy, determined to save them, there were formidable difficulties opposing the fulfilment of that purpose, growing out of the insulted perfections of His nature and the claims of His violated law. It was in meeting and removing these difficulties, that the eternal Son of God at once magnified the holiness, the justice, and the veracity of God, and secured the end which was contemplated by free and unmerited mercy. Let us briefly consider the means by which this result was achieved.

If wisdom, in its loftiest exercise, be the adaptation of the best means to the acquisition of the most difficult, and, at the same time, the noblest ends, then is this attribute of the divine nature most signally illustrated in the mysterious constitution of the person of Christ. Look at the exigencies which must be met, and the apparently opposite qualifications which must concur to the accomplishment of the end which was proposed: He who should undertake to be the mediator must have a human nature, that he might die, and a divine nature, that he might be sustained in existence while enduring the tremendous pressure of the sentence of the law. He must represent the perfections of God and the interests of sinners—uphold the authority of the divine government, and secure the salvation of those who had outraged it; he must, therefore, be allied by nature, on the one side, to God and on the other to the miserable race of rebels. He must, antecedently to undertaking the mediatorial work, be above law, by the conditions of His being, and he must, subsequently, be under the law, that He might render a vicarious obedience which is capable of being transferred to the persons of sinners. And as the love and gratitude of those for whom an atoning sacrifice might be offered would inevitably be paid to him who should render it, it was necessary that he should be a person of the godhead, so that God, who demanded the punishment of the substitute, might receive the adoration, homage, and love, which the substitute himself would acquire. All these conditions, as well as others that might be mentioned, incongruous and self-contradictory as they may appear, are met by that arrangement of consummate wisdom by which, into connection with the divine person of the Savior, a human nature was assumed.

No delicately constructed organisms, no nicely balanced adaptations of nature or of Providence, can sustain any comparison to this wonderful adjustment of the personal constitution of the Redeemer to the stupendous work which He had undertaken to perform.

Behold, moreover, how the divine holiness shines in the person of Christ. Perfectly fulfilling every requirement of the law in His life, adorned by every grace and virtue, and characterized by stainless purity, He enables us, more clearly than would otherwise be possible, to realize the nature of the divine holiness as it met a palpable and concrete manifestation in His person and character. He thus not only satisfied the demands of the divine holiness in order to the salvation of sinners, but, as far as was possible through the medium of human nature, afforded a perfect exemplification of that attribute, particularly in those gentler and lovelier aspects of it which are not apt to strike us as reflected by the law.

The divine justice, too, is more abundantly glorified in the person and work of Christ than by the judgments of Providence or the retributions of the law. The person who obeyed the divine law, by fulfilling its preceptive requirements, and by enduring its awful penalty, was characterized by infinite dignity, and so more gloriously honored and magnified it than could have been done had the whole race of sinners been offered up an eternal holocaust to the insulted justice of God. The law is satisfied, justice is appeased, and the divine veracity no more interposes itself between the sinner and the favor of God, for the sentence, "the soul that sinneth it shall die," has been virtually fulfilled in the person of "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

But, brethren, what low and inadequate conceptions have we of that glory of the love and mercy of God which so transcendently shines in the face of the suffering and dying Savior! The record of the Gospel is, that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." And why did God so love us? Violators of His law, abusers of His goodness, coming short of His glory in all things, trampling under foot His kindly and parental rule, filled with hostility to His government and pervaded by enmity to His nature,—why did God so love us? "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Why was it that He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation—stripped Himself of that fame which was rehearsed by cherubim and seraphim, sounded through flaming worlds of light, and celebrated in rapturous strains in the worship of all pure and intelligent existences? Why, when He had thus divested Himself of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, did He stoop so low as to take upon Him the form of a servant, and subject Himself to the law which He Himself had administered in incomparable majesty? Why, when He had thus bowed His neck to assume the yoke of His own law, did He still pass down the descending scale of this wondrous humiliation, and being made in the likeness of men, join Himself to the "accursed company" of hell-deserving sinners? Why, when found in fashion as a man, went He yet farther down into the abysses of

this surpassing shame, and consent to be esteemed “a worm and no man” in the eyes of the vilest of the sons of men? And why did He even then humble Himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross? Why? “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich.” In that life of Jesus of Nazareth, which designated Him “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief”—in His bitter conflict in the wilderness—in His intolerable agony on that dark and doleful night in Gethsemane—in the buffeting and scourging and spitting which, with wanton prodigality, were lavished on Him at Pilate’s bar—in His condemnation by the supreme authorities of His own visible church—in the derision of foes, the desertion of friends, and His abandonment by His Father, read the love, the grace, the mercy of God to the dying children of men. Oh, my brethren, what a wonderful revelation of all the glorious perfections of God is made in the cross of Jesus Christ! Wisdom, holiness, justice, truth, mercy, and grace, beam with blended and concentrated light in that face of the crucified Redeemer which was marred with human spittle, and reddened with human gore. Mercy, which, with divinest eloquence, had pleaded the cause of the guilty, and truth, which had thundered in opposition to the voice of mercy, “the soul that sinneth it shall die”—mercy and truth have met. Righteousness, which had raised the flames of eternal justice in the face of the approaching sinner, and peace, which allays the fierceness of those flames with atoning blood, righteousness and peace have kissed each other at the cross of the dying Savior. Matchless Redeemer! Brightness of the Father’s glory

and compassionate friend of undone sinners! We worship Thee! we bless Thee! we laud and magnify Thy name! Let all the ministries of nature praise His name; let the winds whisper it; let the seas thunder it forth; let sun, moon, and stars proclaim it as they roll on in their everlasting harmonies! Bless Him, "ye His angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word!" And come, fellow-sinners, let us bring hither our willing trophies, for He redeems our souls from sin and death and hell. Blessed Lord Jesus, had we gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, we would lay them at Thy feet; had we honors we would heap them up before Thee; and, as we have poor, worthless hearts, we would offer them to Thee, and dedicate them forever to Thy service!

IV. I would briefly remark, furthermore, that the glory of God will be everlastingly displayed in the salvation of a ransomed church, accomplished through the instrumentality of the Gospel. Even in the first creation, the grandest object in the new-formed world was man, made as he was in the image of God, and reflecting, in some degree, the glorious perfections of his maker. Distinguished by knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, his soul mirrored forth those attributes in the divine nature of which these were a faint but noble transcript. But when the likeness of God was effaced by sin, the restoration of its lost lineaments involved not only the renewal of that image in man which reflects the divine perfections, but supposed the exercise of infinite grace and mercy in the redemption and recovery of the sinner. It is a greater and sublimer work to reproduce the divine image in a lost and polluted soul than at first it was to stamp it on a sinless

nature; and the skill, the wisdom, and the power of God, which are displayed in its restoration, are only exceeded in glory by the splendid lustre of that redeeming mercy which prompted their exercise, and harmonized their operations with the claims of offended justice and unbending truth. To have created a living, intelligent being out of nothing was an effect of almighty power which staggers reason by its incomprehensibility, and requires the assent of a faith which relies on the simple testimony of God to the fact of its production. But to evoke a living and holy soul from one already dead in sin, and contrary to its inherent tendency to perpetual corruption and vice, to infuse into it the vigor of an eternal life, to cause it to advance in every grace, and, in its complete restoration, to furnish a perfect exemplification of the Godlike principles of truth, justice, and charity,—this is the result not merely of inconceivable power, but of unutterable mercy and surpassing love. A redeemed and regenerated soul is the noblest work of God. The simple fact of its production more clearly illustrates the divine wisdom, power and goodness, than the grand mechanism of the external world, and the sublime procedures of natural Providence; while the graces implanted by the Spirit in its nature image forth the beneficent perfections of God more gloriously than the virtues which adorned the innocent soul of Adam, or shine in the unerring spirit of an angel. These results are accomplished by the instrumentality of that Gospel which the apostle justly regards as affording the most complete representation of the glory of the blessed God. We are able now to perceive them only very inadequately. But the day is coming when they will be fully developed—a day when the whole number of the redeemed, gathered out of

every kindred, tribe and tongue of earth, washed from sin in the blood of the Lamb, and made perfect in the beauty of holiness, shall assemble around the person of their enthroned and glorified Lord. Each ransomed saint in that immense multitude, like a polished mirror, shall perfectly reflect the image of his glorious Head, and the Savior shall look upon the purified souls before Him and be satisfied. That joy shall fill His heart for which He underwent the shame of humiliation, the temptations of the wilderness, and the agonies of Calvary. Nor will a single heart in that myriad throng be unmoved, nor a single tongue be silent. A saved church will forever show forth the glory of her God as it shall be everlastingly unfolded in the fruits of redemption. The hymn of justice and the anthem of grace will blend in the great chorus of salvation—the song of Moses and the Lamb; and all the glorious perfections of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Ghost, will be rapturously and eternally celebrated by the united choir of angels and ransomed sinners.

It only remains, in the last place, to observe—and the remark may not inappropriately constitute the application of this discourse—that the responsibility of preaching the Gospel rests upon sinful men. The apostle declares that the glorious Gospel of the blessed God was committed to his trust. It would appear to be obvious that there is eminent fitness and profoundest wisdom in the divine arrangement by which men rather than angels are commissioned to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. It might have pleased God to have assigned this office to the latter; and doubtless they would have proclaimed the wonderful condescension and the amazing mercy of God to sinners with hearts of seraphic love and tongues of living fire. But

not conscious themselves, by personal experience, of the evil and misery of sin, how could they sympathize with the fallen state of man? It is for a sinner who has himself been "snatched as a brand from the burning" to appreciate the difficulties, the temptations, the wants of sinners: with a patience which never tires, and a charity which "hopeth all things," to bear with their obstinate indifference and persistent unbelief. It is precisely this consideration which sustained and animated the great preacher to the Gentiles when tempted to sink under the weight of his work, and to faint under the discouragements to which in its prosecution he was ceaselessly exposed. "Seeing then we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not." Yes, brethren, this is the resistless argument which, springing from the bosom of our own experience, forbids despair in the presentation of the claims of the Gospel upon our dying fellowmen. We speak that we do know when we declare the wondrous grace and mercy of God in Christ. Have we not in time past resisted the love of Jesus, refused to believe in His name, and turned a deaf ear alike to the moving appeals and the tremendous threatenings of the Gospel? How can we despond? What right have we to faint? No, we must preach the mercy of God, the love of Christ, the hope of salvation, to our unbelieving fellow-sinners, until either they or we are laid in the grave, and pass from the sweet influences of grace to the changeless destinies of eternity. He who has had no experimental knowledge of the discipline of the law, of the anguish of the spiritual conflict, and of the rest of the conscience in Christ, may yield to discouragement, and faint under a task with which he never had any true and heartfelt sympathy; and woe! woe! woe! to that man who,

without such experience, impelled by ambition, or a mere intellectual relish for the sublime truths of redemption, or by any other carnal motive, ventures to invade the sacred precincts of the pulpit, to stand between the living and the dead, and to assume the awful responsibility involved in preaching the glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the deathless souls of men. But they who have felt that God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in their hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, may well be content to bear all discouragement, and endure all trials, in accomplishing their high vocation, and, with the apostle, exclaim: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. . . . We having the same spirit of faith according as it is written, I believed and therefore have I spoken; we also believe and therefore speak."

We see, too, in the light of this subject, what it is that the preachers of the Gospel are commissioned to proclaim. It is not the facts of nature, the speculations of philosophy, or the theories of science, physical or political, it is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God that is committed to their trust. I do not mean to convey the impression that science and philosophy constitute a tree of knowledge the fruit of which is forbidden to those who preach the Gospel of Christ. But these are not the Gospel. A dying Savior, a risen Savior, an exalted and immortal Savior,—repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, these are the themes which are to be pressed upon the attention of sinful men, in view of their solemn relations to God and to the eternal world. And oh, my brethren, what respon-

sibilities thicken upon those who preach this Gospel! Standing between God and the sinner, between the Cross of Calvary and the Judgment bar, between the glories of heaven and the glooms of hell, dealing on the one side with the perfections of God, and on the other with the immortal destinies of men, who of them is sufficient for these things? How shall they secure the glory of Him who has commissioned them to preach, and the eternal welfare of those to whom they minister? Ere long preachers and people shall stand before that bar at which all human ties and human duties will be subjected to a rigid and impartial scrutiny; and of all the solemn relations which will there be reviewed, none will appear to be so big with momentous issues, springing into light amidst the splendors and terrors of that day, as that which has existed between a preacher of the Gospel and immortal souls. The complexion of eternity must largely depend upon the manner in which the Gospel has been proclaimed and received. Were it not that he who has been called of God to preach, is constrained to exclaim, with Paul, "necessity is laid upon me: yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel," would it be any marvel that, conscious of his weakness and short-comings, he should sometimes be tempted to shrink back in dismay from the gigantic work, and even pray that he may be released from farther incurring its all but intolerable responsibilities?

But if these responsibilities are confessedly not less than awful, the reward which, through grace, will be conferred on the faithful preacher of the Cross will be proportionately great. To be called of God to minister in the Gospel of His Son, is to be possessed of an honor which he who enjoys it may well prefer to the thrones

and diadems of earth. To win one immortal spirit to Christ is to perform an office with which no worldly labor can compare, and to attain an end which richly compensates a weary life-time of toil. It will afford ineffable satisfaction to be conscious of having been the instrument of adding a single crown-jewel to the treasures of a Savior once crucified, now despised, but destined to reign King of kings and Lord of lords. To be impelled to labor by the love of sinners is to partake of the spirit of Jesus, to undergo in this work discouragement, self-denial and pain, is to share the sufferings of Jesus, and to prosecute it unto the end through watchings, fastings, temptations, and tears, will be to participate in the joy of Jesus and reign with Him forevermore. Brethren, the day in which we are privileged to labor for our blessed Master, with some of us at least, is sensibly passing away. "The night cometh when no man can work." Happy, thrice happy will he be who, standing on the extreme verge of life, and looking back upon his mortal history, can feel that its record of sins and short-comings in the ministry is expunged in the blood of atonement, and looking forward to the future, opening upon him with the glories of a celestial morning, can exclaim with the dying apostle,—“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day!”

THE PROSPERITY AND EFFICIENCY OF A CHURCH

Ephesians iv, 15, 16: "*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*"

In the previous part of this chapter the apostle furnishes an exposition of the unity of the church and of the different offices which for her edification and perfection had been conferred upon her by the ascended Savior. In the text, he sets forth the nature of her relation to Christ, of her own organic constitution, and of the process by which her vital energy is communicated and increased. In introducing, my brethren, on this occasion some reflections growing out of the past history of this congregation, your attention is directed to the question,—How may the prosperity and efficiency of a church be secured?—a sufficiently full and comprehensive answer to which inquiry is afforded in the words of the text.

NOTE.—To this sermon, preached in 1860, is appended the following note: "Preached in the Second Presbyterian Church, Charleston, at the request of the pastor, the Rev. Dr. Smyth, at the expiration of the fiftieth year of the existence of the church. It was expected that on that occasion a series of discourses would be preached by those who had formerly been connected with the church, and that so an aggregate of personal reminiscences would be attained. The coming on of the war prevented the arrangement from being fully carried out. This justifies the amount of personal allusion in the concluding part of the sermon."

I. The first point which claims our notice is the fact asserted by the apostle that the church as the body of Christ derives all her life and vigor from Him as her head.

The Scriptures represent, by means of various striking analogies, falling within the scope of ordinary observation, the intimate relation which subsists between Christ and His church. At one time this union is compared to that between the branch and its parent stem. "I am the vine," said the Savior, in His valedictory discourse to His disciples, "ye are the branches. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me." As long as the branch is united to the vine the vital juices which constitute the life and vigor of the parent stock are by natural processes conveyed to it. Its life depends on its connection with the vine. Destroy this union, sunder the branch from the vine, and it instantly begins to wither and die. In like manner the church, sustaining an intimate union to Christ, derives from Him those vital influences without which she could not for a moment exist in her spiritual integrity and power.

At another time this union between the Savior and His church is likened to that which exists between a husband and his wife, who, upon the constitution of the matrimonial bond, by the ordinance of God, cease to be twain and become one flesh: and in this point of view marriage rises above the ordinary relations of life and becomes a significant type of the union which exists between Christ and His elect and ransomed bride. "For this cause," says Paul in this same epistle, "shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is

a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." But perhaps the most forcible and instructive analogy which is employed to describe this relation is that which is derived from the connection between the human body and its head. This is the illustration furnished in the text, and very strikingly expressed in a parallel passage which occurs in the Epistle to the Colossians,—“and not holding the head from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” In consequence of the connection existing between them, the vital influence descending from the head is communicated to the body, pervades every member and secures the regular and healthful discharge of all the bodily functions. Destroy this union and the body at once becomes paralyzed and ceases to perform its offices. It is no longer a living thing—it is a corpse. This beautifully illustrates the relation between Christ and the church. He is the head, of which she is the mystical but real body. A living influence, an operative energy flows down from Him to the church, diffuses itself through her whole being, animates all her members, and enables her to accomplish all those salutary ministries for which her very existence was designed. If this vital union exists in its native force, the church is alive and vigorous. If not, she dies. She may be adorned with the garniture and beauty of imposing rites, ceremonies and sacraments, but they are the ornaments which deck the corpse for the grave.

If now the question be raised in regard to the nature of that living influence which is dispensed from Christ as the head of the church as his body, the answer is plain. The Scriptures uniformly represent

the life of the church to be the Holy Spirit. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

How the Spirit is the life of Christ, by virtue of whom Christ is our life, it is not now necessary to inquire. This we know, that in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and that, therefore, in Him the fulness of the Spirit dwells. As mediator, the Spirit of the Lord God was upon Him; to Him the Spirit was not given by measure; in the day of His solemn induction by baptism into His mediatorial offices, the Spirit descended and rested on Him, and we have reason to believe that by the indwelling influence of the Holy Ghost He was qualified for the accomplishment of that glorious mission upon which He came as the incarnate Savior into the world. The exceeding greatness of that power by which Christ was raised from the dead was immediately exercised by the Spirit of God. The Savior having accomplished His mediatorial work on earth, purchased, according to the stipulations of the everlasting covenant, the influences of the Holy Spirit, and being by the right hand of God exalted He sues out by His intercessions the saving grace of the Spirit and dispenses it with princely munificence to His body the church. The Spirit thus dwelling in Christ, comes down with the commission of the exalted Redeemer, endorsed, so to speak, with the seal of the Father, and by His new-creating energy communicates a new life—the life of Christ—to the dead sinner, empowers him to exercise faith in the Son of God and constitutes a vital relation between him and his Savior. Then establishing His permanent residence in the believer, the Spirit sanctifies him in Christ Jesus, forms in him Christ the hope of glory, assimilates him to the image of Christ and endures him

with the strength of Christ through which, though impotent in himself, he is enabled to "do all things." The believer thus united to Christ becomes one of His members. His possession of spiritual life and his ability to discharge spiritual functions are derived to him from Christ, his head, through the vital operation of the Holy Ghost. As men enjoy natural life because in God they live and move and have their being, so do believers enjoy spiritual life because in Christ they live and move and have their being. The Spirit of holiness is the very essence of their spiritual life.

Since, then, the Spirit of Christ is the life of each individual believer, it is clear that He is the life of the collective society of saints. The church, however, let it be observed, is not a mere community of isolated units gathered by a sort of mechanical or local union into an aggregated mass. It is an organic whole, pervaded and actuated by a common life which imparts to it the characteristic of unity. Each of its members is dependent on Christ the head, and connected by the vital bond of His spirit with every other member of His mystical body. The analogy of the human body indicated in the text is here again in point. Each member has an individual life as derived from the head, but not as considered separately from the body as an organic whole. The life of one is the life of the whole. The church is an organism the animating principle of which is the Spirit of Christ. Whatever of life she has, whatever of power to put forth spiritual energies and to discharge spiritual functions, is derived from the pervading and vitalizing influence of the Holy Ghost. The church, according to the representation of the text, as the whole body of Christ is "fitly

joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth."

II. The next great point brought to our notice in the text, and deserving our attention, is the fact, that there are instrumentalities in the church as the body of Christ, through which, as appointed channels, the vital influence descending from her head is communicated and diffused, in order to the full development of her life and power. These instrumentalities may be distributed into two kinds,—first, the graces of the Spirit; secondly, the personal gifts and ministry of the officers and members of the church. Considerable discussion has been had, and, for aught that appears to the contrary, somewhat unnecessarily, in regard to the nature of what the apostle, in the text, terms the joints, and, in the twin passage in Colossians, the joints and bands, through which the vital influence is communicated from the head to the body, and through which the unity and increase of the church is secured. It would seem to be obvious that whatever divinely appointed instrumentality exists in the organization of the church by means of which her vital force is transmitted, her unity conserved and her growth advanced, may be regarded as intended in these figurative and illustrative expressions, which, from their very nature, should not be expressed with an excessive rigor and literalness of interpretation. There can scarcely be any just reason for excluding from these categories any instituted means in the organism of the church by which these several ends are attained. All are included which serve to maintain the union and communion between the body and the head, and between the several members of the body itself.

Prominent among the sacred bonds which unite the church to her Divine Head must be ranked those eminent graces of the Spirit, faith and love. It is the very office of faith instrumentally to unite to Christ. Its peculiar and distinguishing efficacy is derived not from any intrinsic excellence in itself, but from its immediate relation to Him. It is the joint which articulates the church as a body to her glorious head, and through which flows down to her the supply of that divine influence which vitalizes and invigorates her. What is true in this respect of the individual believer is equally true of the church as a whole. Faith in Christ is the grand instrument through which all spiritual strength and sustenance are derived.

A co-ordinate office, though dissimilar in its mode of operation, is discharged by the grace of love. It binds the church to Christ, her head, by the band of a holy, grateful, and undying affection. Her love to Him resistlessly impels her to engage with untiring devotion in His service, and by leading her to contemplate with unceasing admiration, His loveliness, excellency and glory, enables her to "grow up into Him in all things who is her Head." It is evident, therefore, that the prosperity and efficiency of a church must largely depend upon the fidelity with which she cultivates and strengthens these bonds of union to her Savior. Implanted and sustained by the blessed Spirit who is emphatically her life, they are at once the fruits of that life and the means by which it is developed.

Another class of instrumentalities through which the life of the church is diffused and her vigor maintained is the personal ministry of her officers and members. It is not intended to convey the impression that the persons of the office-bearers of the church are

the necessary media of transmission through which the vital influence from her Head is communicated, or that their ministry, as by the force of a charm, must always convey a divine and saving energy; but that those offices are conferred upon the church by her exalted Head, as appointed instruments, through which He is pleased to accomplish gracious and salutary results. They are simply organs, but organs which He has ordained, for the glory of His name and the salvation of His body. Nor can the church, without manifest disobedience to Him, or a detrimental course towards herself, either repudiate or lightly esteem them. There is the pastoral office involving the joint functions of preaching and ruling, through which the word is ministered, which is at once the instrument of conversion and the aliment of spiritual growth, and through which government is dispensed for the benefit of the church. There is the ruling office by means of which government is dispensed, a watchful care exercised over the interests of the flock, and a just and tender discipline is administered. There is the diaconal office through which provision is made and alms supplied for the sustenance and comfort of the poor and needy members of Christ. Nor ought the gifts conferred and the obligations entailed upon the private members of the body to be disregarded. The living influence proceeding from the Head, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to its edification in love. To each and every member, whether official or not, appropriate spheres of influence are assigned, appropriate gifts communicated, and appropriate obligations attached, an account for which must be rendered when the Master shall come. Each member has his own ministry to accomplish.

Those parts of the body which are directive may not dispense with those that are locomotive. The head may not despise the foot. Animated by a common life, invigorated by a common strength, and seeking a common end, all the members should co-operate for the edification of the body and the glory of the Head. The minister, preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, visiting the flock, exercising watch over their spiritual interests; the ruling elder, in company with the pastor, discharging his appropriate offices of joint rule and in his several capacity admonishing, counselling and entreating; the deacon dispensing alms for the relief of the poor, and managing the temporal affairs of the church; the private member, in his own place, and subject to the limitations of his condition, assisting at social meetings, engaging in prayer, speaking the word of fraternal exhortation, aiding in the instruction of the young and the ignorant, and discharging the thousand nameless and unostentatious ministries of Christian love; these all, under the influence of the Divine Spirit contribute to the well-being of the whole. The organism is complete, not only in its informing life, and its constituent elements, but in the regulated and harmonious development of its several activities. It is too obvious to require remark that upon the faithfulness with which these instrumentalities are employed, upon the unction, devotion and fidelity of her office-bearers and the unobtrusive but conscientious discharge of their proper duties by her private members, the prosperity and efficiency of a church will, under God, to a great degree depend.

Another of those joints and bands through which the increase of the church in prosperity and efficiency is secured, is the love which its members are bound to

exercise toward one another. Every community is founded partly in the grand conception of mutual love. It is the very cement of society, the bond of association. It is the oft-quoted observation of a great writer that the voice of law is the harmony of the world. This is true, if under the term law be included every sort of affinity—the attraction which binds worlds together, the affiliation of related species for one another, animate and inanimate, and the great and all-pervading force of affection which irresistibly draws intelligent and moral beings into intercourse with each other. This powerful principle of love, which in the general was designed to operate through the universe, is employed under special relations and sanctions in that peculiar society which is organized by the Spirit of God as the living body of Jesus Christ. The members of it are bound together, not by a common natural but a common spiritual life. The tie is not the domestic, not the merely social or civil one which links men together in the organizations of earth. It is one which immediately grows out of a common relation to Christ as Redeemer and Head. The members of the church are one in Christ. They love each other for Christ's sake. They recognize in one another the image of a glorious Savior, and thus the possession of a common, though peculiar, attribute attracts them powerfully to each other. It is the strongest, as it is destined to be the most permanent, of all kinds of love. And it is a debt which the more it is paid the more it increases.

In proportion to the increase of this great principle on which Christian fellowship is founded, and on which all Christian offices of charity and tenderness

depend, will be the prosperity and efficiency of a church.

III. Hitherto in these remarks attention has been directed to the internal relations of the church and their corresponding duties. But there are also external relations which she sustains, relations to the unconverted world, conveying most solemn trusts the discharge of which is necessary to the full development of her spiritual life. The love which she bears to Christ, and in which she grows up in conformity to Him as her Head, must lead her alike to imitate His beneficent example and to seek its own exercise in efforts which contemplate the salvation of the ignorant, the wretched and the lost. Commissioned by her Head to convey the Gospel to every creature, she cannot, without impairing her own welfare, refuse compliance with this, His last command. While disobedience to it would cripple her energies and suppress her growth, conformity to its requirements assimilates her to Him, and furnishes scope for the exercise of her loveliest graces and her most Christlike acts. The cultivation of the habit of systematic benevolence as opposed to spasmodic and evanescent impulses; the fostering of the grace of giving, involving in its exercise the culture of gracious tempers, the rendering of acts of worship and the performance of Christian duties; the offering of importunate and concerted prayer for the salvation of the destitute in regions adjacent; the redemption of the heathen in benighted lands, and the speedy and triumphant establishment of Christ's glorious and peaceful kingdom; the making of stated collections practically to advance the sublime objects for the attainment of which she prays;—these are almost necessary features of a prosperous and effi-

cient church. Without them there may be a church, but not a church which increases in love and grows up in the generous exercise of that leading grace in conformity to Him who was love incarnate.

If she be Christ's she must have Christ's spirit and must love like Christ. A lost world appeals to her for help. To be indifferent to that thrilling appeal, breaking upon her like the dying wail of souls, is to close her ear to a call which brought Christ from heaven, to shut up her bowels of compassion against an object for which the heart of Jesus broke, and to withhold her earthly substance from the attainment of an end which her Savior gave Himself to gain.

If these remarks be correct, it follows that the prosperity and efficiency of a church chiefly depend upon the degree in which she realizes her relation to Christ, her head, and enjoys the quickening and sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. No church can exist without this living influence, and no church can be prosperous and efficient without possessing it to at least some considerable extent. The measure of her energy is the degree in which the Holy Spirit lives and acts within her. This is her true and inner life. Springing from the very center and source of her inward being it develops itself in all those fruits and graces which adorn, ennoble and enrich her. Nothing, therefore, can compensate a church for the absence of this vital power. Numbers may crowd her gates and throng her solemn feasts, incense may roll up from her altars and perfume the atmosphere, and sacramental rites may be dispensed with the decorous pomps of priestly ministrations; but alas! she is barren of spiritual children, the genuine graces of religion are caricatured, and her fruits hang in withered clusters around her. Her life

is gone, her light extinguished, and her glory departed.

It is obvious, too, that all mere human machinery, all ordinances and institutes of man's appointment, and all unscriptural alliances with the world, must serve only to encumber the church and impede the development of her inner life, obscuring her perceptions of her immediate relation to Christ and diminishing her sense of implicit dependence upon the Spirit, they cannot but prove disastrous to her spiritual interests. Let a church, then, cultivate a living and active faith in her Lord and Head, let her honor the Spirit who, descending from Him, communicates her life and vigor, let her put forth the strength of her heaven-born charity, and she cannot fail to be prosperous and efficient. She will "arise and shine, her light being come, and the glory of the Lord being risen upon her."

While seeking the increase of her love to Christ, the church will also be led to cultivate a cordial sympathy and a catholic communion with all His saints. A narrow and bigoted temper equally foreign to the spirit of her Head and repugnant to her own best instincts must tend to cramp her energies, disfigure her beauty and obscure her light. While contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, it is her duty as well as her policy to break through the fetters of sectarian prejudice and to embrace all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in the arms of a tender and heartfelt affection.

So much has already been said in the course of the previous observations in regard to the utility and the necessity of a faithful and co-operative employment of the ministries of the several officers and members of the church, as parts of Christ's body, that I shall not stay

to insist at length upon the practical enforcement of that obligation.

Before passing, however, from the brief consideration of this department of the subject, permit me to advert to the fact that nothing can supply to a church the lack of attention to the divinely-instituted means of grace, the Word, the sacraments and prayer. Neglect of these must result in dwarfing her spiritual life and in shearing her gifts and ministries of their legitimate power. Let the church profoundly study the Word of God, which is at once her constitutional charter, her rule of faith, and her directory of practice. Let its public ministrations be devotedly and reverently received. Nor let its instructions be confined to the great congregations and the days of solemn assembly, but faithfully impressed upon the family, which, after all, is the true, the divinely-appointed nursery of the church. Let parents be indoctrinated in their responsible and important duties, and the baptized children of the church be led to appreciate their relation to the covenant and their inalienable privileges and obligations. Let the instrumentality of the Sabbath school be faithfully employed which, though holding a subordinate place to the family as a school of religious instruction, is yet highly and beneficently useful in the nurture of the children of the church; and to be regarded with especial attention as affording a sphere of labor for the private members of the body of Christ, and as looking with a tender missionary spirit to the wants of those little ones, the stray lambs, for whose welfare no man cares. Nor let the church be indifferent to the claims of those who, from the peculiar structure of our civil society, appeal to her for religious instruction with arguments of resistless power and pathetic

force. The Southern church is now solemnly called, in the providence of God, to enter yet more fully into a field which she alone can occupy, and to afford to the servile and dependent class of our population the salutary instructions and the heavenly consolations of the Gospel.

Devout regard to the sacraments is another important means of developing the life and powers of a church. Teaching the truth of the Gospel and sealing the promises of the covenant by sensible signs, they are eminently suited to impress alike the understanding and the heart. And as they set forth more clearly, perhaps, than any other ordinance the near and tender union between Christ and His members, a believing attendance upon them cannot fail to lead the church to a more realizing sense of her dependence on her Head for the spiritual influence which she needs.

Nor can the church be indifferent to the great, the all-important duty of prayer. A faithful attention to this eminent means of grace will tend to preserve her from spiritual declension, to foster her communion with Christ, to draw into her heart the saving grace of the Holy Ghost, and to invest her with that spiritual strength which she needs for the discharge of duty and the endurance of trial. While every convocation of Christ's people, on stated occasions, is a meeting for worship including prayer, it behooves her also faithfully to employ the instrumentality of the social prayer-meeting, by means of which her graces will be revived, her zeal stimulated, the pulse of her communion with Christ and His members quickened, and the great objects of petition pressed with special urgency and importunate pleas. And as she looks out with an eye of pity upon a world lying in sin and rush-

ing to ruin, let her raise unintermitting supplications for the spread of the Gospel, the ingathering of the elect, and the inauguration of Christ's long-expected reign over the nations of a regenerated earth.

In giving these remarks, necessarily hurried, on so wide a subject, a particular direction in reference to the topics suggested by this occasion, I feel that you will concede the privilege of suggesting a few thoughts in regard to the past history of this church, to one who early removed by Providence from the rural scenes of childhood found in this venerable sanctuary a new home, and received from the hand of this church, as from a tender mother, the bread and the water of another and a holier life. Some of the earliest religious impressions of him who now addresses you were derived from this sacred desk and from him who then occupied it, and who has since in the good providence of God ministered in it to this auspicious day. Nor can he ever, while memory has power with its magical wand to summon back the past, forget the restraining and hallowing influences exerted upon a youthful mind by the faithful instructions of the Sabbath school held in yonder room. The tender manner, the melting eye, the soft, persuasive tones of the teacher addressing his class in the fresh hour of the early Sabbath morning, it is not now difficult to recall; while the hearty words, the sonorous and melodious voice, the warm, impassioned and affectionate exhortations of the superintendent of other days, identify, among the clustering images of that now enchanting past, the gifted and eloquent Vardell. Time rolls on, and the noble form of a college classmate and friend, where every grace seemed to set its seal "to give the world assurance of a man," is borne in the slow, funereal train into yonder

door, and deposited in this aisle. The dirge-like sound of the hymn :

“When blooming youth is snatched away
By Death’s resistless hand,”

loads the atmosphere with the burden of sadness, solemn words of warning to the young are spoken by the pastor, the affecting service is concluded, and all that remained on earth of Arthur Robinson is placed in its narrow house.

“Alas ! he is dead,
Gone to his death-bed
All under yon willow-tree.”

There, in the shadow of this sanctuary, in the same sanctified bed of rest with those who gave him birth and whom this church delighted to honor, he sleeps well until the awakening call of the descending Savior and the thrilling peal of the archangel’s trump.

Here, too, the speaker cannot fail to remember it was that three of his nearest kindred were brought by the grace of God to feel for the first time the influence of a Savior’s dying love, and two of them to profess publicly their faith in His adorable name; and that here it has been his privilege to sit down at the communion table with those whose hands no longer take the touching memorials of that Savior’s death, but moulder in the silent grave.

Nor can he forget that it was at the call of the session of this church he felt constrained, though not without tears and pain, to leave a beloved charge, that he might minister to the souls of the colored people

of this fold, and to enter more largely upon a field of labor that appealed to him with all the solemnity of a divine vocation, and in which he would fain hope that his imperfect ministry has not been unattended with some spiritual benefit to the sons of Ham: nor does there now arise one bitter recollection to mar the pleasure with which he looks back upon the period during which it was his privilege to lead them to the sacramental board which was spread for them in this house of God. Affected by such reminiscences and pervaded by such emotions, he cannot now feel that he is an intruder within the sanctities of this place and hour, but would rather indulge the thought that he is, after a sort, a member of your spiritual family, and would, in company with you, on this propitious and festal day, rejoice at the tokens of signal favor with which a Covenant-God has freighted the past history of your church, and assist in the erection of an Ebenezer-stone inscribed with the record of the Redeemer's love.

One could not at a season like this be well-suspected of flattering or of indulging in the phraseology of empty adulation who should remind a church of the graces which have marked its past course, the faith, charity, and activity which have first been imparted as divine gifts and have then been employed by the Spirit who inspired them, to the glory of God through human instrumentalities. They who could entertain emotions of pride or vain-glory at the retrospect which is now suggested, would be seriously wanting in that profound gratitude to God which should, on an occasion like this, be the pervading sentiment of every heart. The very purpose of a commemorative festival like the present, implying as it does a review of God's dealings with a church, is to rehearse in grateful strains

His marvellous loving kindness to our fathers, to rescue from the fading recollections of the past the incidents which are sinking into oblivion, and to construct from them a many-stringed harp with which to chant the praises of sovereign mercy and redeeming love.

Not the least among the evidences of that spiritual prosperity which has been graciously bestowed upon this church are the revivals of pure and undefiled religion which she has been, through the operation of the Divine Spirit, permitted to enjoy. Such seasons are points of light along the track of her history, on which the gaze of memory delights to dwell. Happily for this church, she is able to point to more than one in which the power of the Spirit and the subduing influence of the Savior's love were conspicuously displayed. Who of us can forget the wonderful scenes of the great revival of 1846? Springing like a river from the small and hidden fountain, it gradually rose and swelled until the mighty current seemed to sweep everything in its onward and impetuous course. The hardest hearts were melted, the eye unused to weep poured forth the waters of penitence, and the most stubborn will yielded with patience to the Savior's yoke. Prayer meetings were multiplied and crowded. The tongue of the dumb was loosed and prayers and exhortations spontaneously gushed forth from the lips of the sensitive and the diffident.

The sacramental Sabbath—a high and memorable day—arrived, and over one hundred hopeful converts crowded those aisles and publicly professed the Savior's name. O glorious days of the Son of Man, long be ye remembered! Then indeed was this Zion a Bochim of penitential tears, a birthplace of immortal spirits, a Bethel of near communion with God, a vestibule of

heaven! The remembrance of those scenes in which the wonderful power of the Spirit was displayed and numbers were added to the church of such as shall be saved, should on this occasion in which God's dealings are reviewed awaken special gratitude and stimulate the desire and the prayer that the exalted Savior would again afford similar manifestations of His grace.

In the course of these remarks it has been urged that one of the principal elements in the prosperity of a church is the ability and fidelity of its pastors. In taking a retrospect from this day, it cannot fail to impress you, my brethren, as one of the chief evidences of the favor which the Head of the church has manifested to this Zion, that He has bestowed upon her most freely His choicest ascension gifts—evangelical, efficient, and accomplished pastors. The candlesticks of this sanctuary have ever been supplied with pure oil, and have continued through succeeding years, and the changes incident to human labor, to burn with a clear, steady, undimmed flame. The record inscribed by gratitude and affection on the memorial tablets which adorn these venerable walls will attest to generations yet to be born the worth of your departed and now glorified ministers: but there be many now here who need no such remembrances, bearing as they do that registry of their virtues engraven deeply and indelibly upon “fleshly tables of the heart.” There are some now, perhaps, in this house who have carried with them through life, and will bear to their graves, the remembrance of the strong, manly, catholic soul, the fervid, bold, and impassioned genius of a Flinn, in whose ministrations it were difficult to say whether the voices of Sinai spake more awfully, or the pleadings of Calvary more meltingly; and under whose pastorate this new-born

church early shook from her vigorous limbs the swathing bands of infancy and rapidly rose to the full proportions of maturity. Honored and distinguished name! It yet remains impressed in lustrous characters upon the page of memory under the watchful guardianship of love, and will be spoken in connection with the early history of this church as long as this noble edifice shall stand.

There are many, too, who will not willingly let die the recollections of the polished, elegant, and scholarly Ashmead, a prince in intellect who, guided by the star of Bethlehem, brought hither the gold, frankincense and myrrh of sanctified genius and classical culture to lay them reverently at the Savior's feet; and under the magical attractions of whose speech many of the intelligent and cultivated of this city were led to take the place of stated worshippers in this sanctuary. But another form rises from the shadows of the past and presses nearer to the foreground of the picture. It wears the noble mien, the graceful carriage, the winning aspect of Charlton Henry. But how, in fewer words than would make a discourse, shall we allude to this accomplished and devoted pastor? Versed in theological literature, a master of several languages, possessed of an acute, penetrating and analytic mind, and characterized by all the qualities of an impressive, pathetic, persuasive oratory, he covered all his dazzling gifts with the mantle of genuine humility and laid the plaudits of admiring friends with cheerful gratitude before the Savior's throne. His ministry was richly endowed with that greatest of all pastoral qualifications—the unction of the Spirit, without which, it was the pious Bernard's wont to say, reading is useless and erudition vain; and numerous converts, lured through

his instrumentality to the Savior's service, bore witness to the fervor of his apostolic spirit and the gracious words which proceeded from his lips. In him was realized the beautiful portraiture of a faithful pastor drawn so graphically by the pencil of Goldsmith:

“And as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies;
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds and led the way.”

As evidence at once of his watchful and assiduous care over the members of his flock, of the subtle and analytical power of his intellect, and of the grace of his style, let me advert to the fact that he has left behind him another legacy than the force of his fragrant example: I allude to that masterly treatise contained in his “Letters to an Anxious Inquirer,” a work which might be well made a text-book in one of the too much neglected departments of pastoral theology, and deserves to be ranked as a sister to the admirable “Sketches of a Pastor,” by which the lamented Spencer “being dead yet speaketh.” In all the qualities which should characterize a work on so delicate and difficult a subject, these letters of Dr. Henry stand pre-eminent. I have little hesitation in saying that they will bear a comparison with the better known work on the same theme of John Angell James, which, in the judgment of candid critics, might not be unfavorable to its merits.

It richly deserves a more extensive circulation through which its gifted author may again address to inquiring spirits those affectionate and judicious counsels which are suited to guide them to the knowledge of salvation and the attainment of everlasting life.

Like his predecessors, Dr. Henry was destined in the mysterious providence of the King of the church, to an end which in human phrase we are apt to term untimely. He was stricken down by the ruthless and irreverent hand of the pestilential angel while nobly laboring for the comfort of his people amid the thickly falling arrows of the Destroyer. It is within the memory of many that after a brief struggle with disease which closed with his peaceful and triumphant departure, his unexpected death, like the sudden tolling of a midnight alarm, smote the heart of the congregation and caused it to beat with a fainter pulsation; that men were moved by the feelings with which they are accustomed to look upon the eclipse of a great luminary, and that persons of differing creeds conspired to mourn the extinction of a light which had shone in the religious firmament with the glory of a morning star. Beneath that aisle over which their feet were wont to pass to this pulpit, the first pastor and the last who died in the service of this flock sleep side by side. Flinn and Henry together rest in death in the bosom of the church for whose welfare in life they had toiled and wept. Together they will arise and salute their waking people at the morning call of the resurrection trump. Above their ashes no monumental pile raises

[NOTE.—These remarks in reference to this lamented pastor are founded alike on traditional recollections and the statements given in an exquisitely written memoir from the practiced hand of one who knew him well—the Rev. Benjamin Gildersleeve—who supplied this pulpit after the decease of Dr. Henry, and who yet lives to enjoy the honor, as he has long held the position of the Nestor of the Southern religious press. Identified during his residence in this city with the interests of this church, his name will not be suffered by her to die; a veteran bearing the honorable scars of many a conflict in the cause of truth and righteousness, he will long be held in grateful remembrance by Christ's people in this land.]

its stately head to be bathed in the rays of the rising and the setting sun; but the sanctuary which they loved is their venerable mausoleum; the feet of the worshippers who frequent these courts tread softly and reverently above their honored heads; and the recollections of the sleeping servants of Christ mingle with the emotions of sacramental services, the prayers and praises of the Sabbath and the inspiring hopes of the heavenly communion of saints.

It would only remain to finish this allusion to the honored roll of your departed pastors by adverting to the ministry of one who, for about thirty years, has labored among you in the gospel of the kingdom, and who is yet continued among you in answer to your prayers. But delicacy and propriety forbid to be uttered what justice would require and affection would freely dictate to be spoken. This, however, I may be permitted to say: that having in youth sat at his feet to learn, and regarding him now as a father in the ministry whose evening shadow has begun to lengthen, and whose thoughts, finding daily rest in the heavenly world, may be presumed to remove him from the aspirations of earth, I may, without exposure to the suspicion of bandying empty compliment, briefly allude to the course of his ministry which he has been called to fulfil among you. You, my brethren, would not on this occasion ignore that pastorate as one of the many and prominent causes of the thanksgivings which your hearts now gratefully render to our Divine Lord and Master, and as one of the most important elements of that efficiency and prosperity with which this church has been blessed. It were sufficient to say that in his ministry the dignity of this pulpit has been fully sustained, and that in his hands the prestige of your

former pastorates has suffered no loss. Endowed by nature and by grace with gifts which eminently fitted him to labor in the pulpit, on the platform and in the deliberative assembly, he has, under God, acquitted himself in all these relations with distinguished ability, usefulness, and honor; while by the unremitting toils of the pen, he has given to the church the treasures of a vigorous and fertile intellect and the fruits of indefatigable study and patient research.

But I must forbear lest modesty should rebuke what rising emotions impel to be uttered. The language of just and impartial eulogy must be postponed to another day when he and most of us here present shall have fallen asleep, and when other eyes shall look upon scenes akin to this, and other tongues shall rehearse the deeds and recall the memories of the past. You will, however, join me in the prayer that your beloved and honored pastor may continue to exert for your benefit, the vigorous powers of a mind whose natural force is not abated, that his bodily infirmities may be healed by the power or, at least, assuaged by the ministrations of a Savior's sympathy, and that for the edification of his flock he may yet be detained for many years from the last removal and the heavenly rest.

In looking back along the line of these faithful pastorates, it becomes impossible to estimate the amount of good for time and for eternity which has resulted from the labors connected with them. How many have been rescued by the restraining and conserving influence of a preached Gospel from crime and ruin on earth; how many souls have been snatched as brands from the burning; how many immortal destinies have been redeemed from the complexion of despair; what benign and salutary impressions have been made upon

all the interests of the community; what evils have been averted; what heavenly and incalculable blessings have been brought down. All this it is impossible to compute. The day of eternity alone will reveal the whole case and disclose the accumulating fruits of this unbroken succession of able, evangelical and efficient ministries. But there is one obvious result which, by the blessing of God, has flowed from them to this church, which demands its profoundest gratitude, and its highest praise. The scriptural purity of the preaching and instruction that for fifty years past have been enjoyed in this sanctuary have preserved this church from the dreadful evil of doctrinal defections and held it fast to the moorings of the simple Gospel of Christ. A crucified, risen and exalted Savior has been fully set forth as the only ground of the hope of the sinner and the solace of the saint. The grace of God has been magnified in opposition to the wisdom and the works of men; and the expulsive power of divine truth, taught in its purity and just proportions, has been evinced in the exclusion of those rationalistic and radical theories by which the faith of so many churches has been shipwrecked, the lights on their altars extinguished, and Ichabod written as by the hand of judgment on their walls. Thus has this noble church fulfilled like a planet her appointed orbit around her central sun, derived from Him her light, her glory and her warmth, and dispensed healing in her beams from the firmament of eternal truth. Brethren, lift up your hands and raise your voices this day in devoutest thanksgiving for this inestimable token of preserving grace! Let it be your fervent prayer that this glorious Gospel may be continued to you in its unadulterated efficacy; guard it with a watchfulness that knows no slumber from cor-

rupting influences, and by the blessing of God, when you gather up your feet in death, transmit it unimpaired to your children as the most precious legacy which you can leave them.

While alluding to this subject of thanksgiving due to the Head of the church for the faithful pastors by whom this church has been served, it deserves also to be noticed that not the least of her causes for gratitude lies in the fact that under God she has been a mother of ministers. Many who have been trained in her Sabbath school and nourished by her maternal discipline have gone forth from her bosom to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. There exists scarcely any higher theme for thanksgiving on the part of a church than that she is thus enabled to communicate to others through the hands of her sons the precious boon of the Gospel of salvation; to sound out the word of the Lord to other and more destitute parts of the country and of the world. Some of these heralds of the cross who went out with the blessing of this church to preach Christ and Him crucified have ceased from their labors and have fallen asleep in Jesus. Auld, Logan, Hughes, and Robert Small have fulfilled the course of a faithful and honored ministry and have joined the church triumphant. Adger, Turner, Flinn, Stillman, Miller, White, Corbett, Buttolph, Small, Dickson, McCormick, Danforth, Waite and others yet live as laborious and able ministers of the New Testament. To these this church may emphatically point as her jewels, and with them she will doubtless deck the Savior's diadem on the day of His coronation in the presence of His elect and ransomed church.

I will be pardoned for pausing, in this connection, to lay an humble garland upon the grave of a beloved

and sainted friend. William N. Carberry was one of the fruits of the memorable revival in the year 1846. Having passed with honor through his academic career, he consecrated himself at the call of God to the work of the ministry, and commenced his preparatory training for the sacred office. But He who called him to the work and tested his spirit of sacrifice was pleased to remove him from earth ere he could enter upon the holy employment he had elected. He peacefully closed his eyes on worldly things about two years after his conversion, and now sleeps in the adjoining churchyard. His was one of the loveliest, gentlest and most devoted spirits whom it has been my lot to know. He declared that from the time of his conversion to his last illness he had never known doubt, but was blessed with an uninterrupted assurance of the love of God. One of the Grecian poets says that "roses are pleasant to the gods." This lovely spirit which, had it remained on earth, would have flowered out in all the graces of Christianity, was destined, as by assimilation to a higher life, to an early expansion in a celestial sphere and a not premature association with the seraphic ministries around the throne.

Thus far attention has been chiefly directed to the gifts with which the ascended Redeemer has adorned and enriched this church. Suffer me now briefly to advert to the manner in which, through His grace, some of the great duties of Christianity have been discharged. I confess, my brethren, that, although human nature, even when pervaded by the power of religion, is prone to the indulgence of pride, and that, too, in reference to spiritual accomplishments, there seems no impropriety in speaking in terms of encomium of the fidelity with which a church of Christ has been enabled

to meet its responsibilities and perform its duties. It was the custom of the great Apostle of the Gentiles to allude in terms of highest eulogy to the charity, the faith, the activity of the churches to which he ministered. We cannot err if, bearing in mind the fact that Paul referred the ability to discharge all duty to the grace of God, we follow his example in the matter to which allusion has been made. One who would undertake to review the history of this church and fail to observe the steady cultivation of the leading grace of charity, would ignore one of the most signal features of its spiritual growth. This grace, under the tuition of the Spirit, has manifested itself in various forms of development, but in none more conspicuously than in the sympathy displayed by this church in the great and Christ-like work of foreign missions. This result, it must in candor be admitted, is chiefly to be attributed under God to the faithful instructions, the earnest appeals and the unremitting exertions of the present pastor of the church. Even the children have been educated to take an interest in this blessed cause and to contribute in early life to its advancement on the earth. The church has, in consequence of this training, taken a foremost stand among our congregations, and by her example has furnished no mean stimulus to the growth of the missionary spirit. For this her thanks are due to Him who came in the character of a missionary to our fallen and wretched race, and has breathed into her heart somewhat of His own compassion for the souls of the benighted and the lost. Brethren, let this grace abound yet more and more. The feeble successes which the Gospel has achieved in the dark wastes of heathendom, so far from discouraging us and suggesting skeptical objections to the missionary work, should

present themselves as the harbingers of better things, and should increase our prayers, quicken our zeal, enlarge our contributions and stimulate our love and pity for the dying nations of the earth.

Nor has this church been lacking in her attention to the great work of domestic missions. The poor and the ignorant have not appealed to her in vain. In stretching her commiserative gaze over the broad and destitute field of a world lying in wickedness, she has not forgotten the needy who knocked at her own door for the bread of eternal life. She has bowed down her ear to their necessities, condescended to men of low estate and furnished in her philanthropy a fresh and conspicuous exhibition of that great credential of Christianity signalized by the Savior himself—the preaching of the Gospel to the poor. Concurring most heartily and promptly in the suggestion of one of her own sons—the Rev. John B. Adger, who had, in consequence of a disease of the eyes, been constrained to return from a foreign field in which he had zealously expended missionary labor, and whose sympathies were called forth by the spiritual wants of the colored people in his native land, this church, through the concerted action of her pastor, session and congregation, assisted in originating an enterprise contemplating their more efficient religious instruction. During the feeble and struggling infancy of that enterprise she nursed it in her lap and cherished it on her generous bosom, until it had attained such stature as to warrant an independent establishment. Nor when it thus passed from the immediate shelter of her arm did she cease to foster it by her efforts, her contributions and her prayers. Freely she had received; freely she gave. And whatever of efficiency it subsequently has at-

tained, must be mainly ascribed to that support and encouragement which she continued to yield it through all its darker and gloomier days. At the last assize, when the rich and the poor shall meet together before the Maker and the Judge of them all, may you, beloved brethren, receive the rich reward conveyed in those words from a Savior's lips: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

Suffer me, while speaking of this subject, to make a grateful allusion to one in whom the missionary spirit of this church was conspicuously manifested, in consequence of whose determination to devote his rare energies, clear judgment and compassionate heart to the religious instruction of the negroes in the Anson Street congregation, the present pastor of that charge was in part induced to assume its care, under the anticipation that anxiety and toil when shared by such a spirit would be deprived of half their pressure. Alas! the hope was doomed to a sad disappointment. At the very time at which it was expected that he would commence his labors in that field he lay stricken down in a distant city by a fatal malady. He never returned to gladden us by his presence. There he fell asleep in Him whose care over His dying saints knows no difference of place. But his body was brought to his native city and the numbers who crowded this house to render him the only remaining tribute of respect attested the loss which the community had felt. A true and noble heart had ceased to beat, an active, strong and generous soul had gone, and the city and the church were the poorer for the loss. Fittingly is it inscribed on the honored tomb of William Adger—"All ye that

know his name say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod!"

It would be gratifying to notice, also, the evidences of spiritual prosperity which have manifested themselves in the tender care exhibited towards the children of the fold, and the colored members of the congregation. The limits of this discourse, however, must preclude the consideration of these topics.

I cannot, however, close these remarks without alluding to the fact, suggested by the occurrences of the present eventful period, that it is one of the offices of the church to throw around patriotism the sanctions of religion. The voice of this church has not been hushed, nor has it uttered an uncertain sound in reference to the momentous questions now pending, questions, it appears, to be discussed by the sword and settled by an appeal to the last argument to which governments are wont to resort. While it becomes the church of Christ to pay special regard to the spiritual affairs of men, to conserve the religious interests of the souls committed to her nurture, and to maintain her characteristic idea as an institute contemplating their preparation for an eternal destiny,—she may not overlook her human relations nor be indifferent to those civil questions and duties which affect alike her own well-being and the very existence of the communities whose benefit she seeks. At this moment her offices of prayer and counsel are appropriately rendered in behalf of a country whose dearest interests are threatened by overweening arrogance and determined hate. While our sons and brothers, inflamed by the fires of patriotic affection and impelled by the very instinct of self-preservation, are hastening to the field of strife, she is called to stretch her hands to their fathers' God and to

invoke for them the shield of His almighty providence in the day of battle and of carnage.

“While,” in the words of the eloquent Robert Hall, “while they are engaged in the field, many will repair to the closet, many to the sanctuary, the faithful of every name will employ that prayer which has power with God; the feeble hands which are unequal to any other weapon will grasp the sword of the Spirit, and from myriads of humble, contrite hearts the voice of intercession, supplication and weeping will mingle in its ascent to heaven with the shouts of battle and the shock of arms.”

Let, then, these altars be surrounded by those who, mindful of the marvellous protection recently rendered by Providence to their fellow-citizens in the day of exposure and peril, and profoundly convinced of the justice of the cause for which they are contending, lift up their hearts in mighty prayer that the Lord of Hosts may go before our people, that the pillar of His presence may precede them, and that in the critical moments of conflict they may be encompassed with chariots of flame and horses of fire. And above all, remembering the numberless casualties of war and the peculiar uncertainty of that life which our brethren in the field are leading, let us commend their souls to the mercy of God that, if they are called to sacrifice their bodies in defense of those principles for which they are not unwilling to shed their blood, they may be removed from the service of their country on earth to the still more sublime and exalted employments of the celestial city.

As from this day we have looked back upon the history of the past, and have discovered in it abundant reasons for gratitude to God for His providence and

grace, let us, in looking forward to the future now frowning upon us, commit ourselves, our families, and our destinies into the hands of Him who has abandoned us in no dark and stormy hour and has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Let us reflect that there are sublimer events than those, however startling, by which we are now surrounded, which are hurrying on the theatre of this earth, that the world is hastening to a more awful crisis than any which has mercy of God that if they are called to sacrifice their yet impended over its history, and that the church in her grand march through the dispensations is passing on to the fulfilment of her fondest hopes. In company with all the faithful we would look forward to the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Savior Jesus Christ, and lift to Him the solemn invocation: Come quickly; Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus!

And now, beloved brethren, breathing the fervent prayer that your honored church may be crowned in the future with even greater blessings than those which have marked its past history. I would, with the deepest respect and affection, commend you to God and the word of His Grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. May grace, mercy and peace from Father, Son and Holy Ghost be multiplied abundantly unto you. Amen.

THE NATURE OF PRAYER

Luke xviii, 1. "*Men ought always to pray.*"

In these words our Savior inculcates the habitual and unremitting discharge of the duty of prayer. He obviously contemplates it as of importance so indispensable as that it admits of no suspension or serious interruption of its discharge. The reason of this is sufficiently evident. Prayer is a duty of universal significance. There can be no religion without it, and the degree of practical piety must always correspond with the extent to which it is performed. It may be said to be the prime duty of all religion, whether that of nature or of the Gospel of Christ. Not only does it possess an intrinsic value of its own which is absolutely immeasurable, but it is the essential concomitant, the necessary stimulus and support of all other religious duties. It goes hand in hand with the cultivation of Christian graces, and the performance of legal obligations. As it is passive, it is the grand recipient of that divine grace and strength which energize the soul, and as it is active, it re-acts most salutarily upon the fervor of religious emotions, is positively influential in the production of the most important results, and powerfully propels the suppliant in the path of spiritual obedience.

NOTE.—The five following sermons on prayer were delivered late in 1865, in Zion Presbyterian Church, Glebe street, Charleston. A note by Dr. Girardeau says: "Daily prayer was offered by crowds of worshippers for the success of the Confederate struggle. In consequence of its disastrous result, many of God's people were, by Satanic influence, tempted to slack their confidence in prayer. These sermons were an humble attempt to help them under this trial."

A just and scriptural consideration of this vitally important subject can at no time be inappropriate, or suited to promote other than beneficial ends, but there are certain exigencies in the experience of God's people when it claims more than ordinary attention. Especially when confidence in its efficacy has been weakened if not impaired by the occurrence of afflictive and disastrous events against which its aid had been invoked, and the sneer of the skeptic is, Where is now thy God who professes to be the hearer of prayer, it becomes us to re-examine its nature and its grounds, and to settle afresh our faith in its divinely-appointed force. It has probably struck us all, my brethren, that under just such circumstances we now find ourselves actually placed; and anxious as I am to accommodate the ministrations of the pulpit to your present necessities, I have thought it not inappropriate to take up, in several discourses, this great duty of prayer, and to endeavor, with God's blessing, to indicate its nature, its grounds, its spirit, and its efficacy, and then to answer, if possible, the objections which skepticism or a flagging faith may urge against its continued discharge. And I am impelled to this course by the profound conviction that we need all our religion to sustain us now, and that without the active exercise of prayer, though the principle of religion may not cease to exist, it will be practically dormant and inoperative either as to the performance of duty or the supply of consolation.

Your attention will first be directed to the question, What is the nature of prayer? It need scarcely be observed that prayer has a wider and a narrower signification. In its wider sense, it comprehends the elements of adoration of God, confession of sin, and a thankful

acknowledgment of the mercies which we may receive. In its narrower acceptation, it is simply petitionary or supplicatory in its character. In this point of view it is the preferment of our request to God for the blessings which He, and He alone, is competent to bestow. It is to this latter aspect of it that these remarks will be mainly devoted.

I would here take occasion to remind you, my friends, that there are certain great and fundamental truths which, at the outset of the discussion, will be taken for granted. It is assumed that God is, and that He is the rewarder of such as diligently seek Him. I shall not for the present, at least, pause to discuss with the Atheist the question of the divine existence, or with the Pantheist that of the divine personality, supposing God to exist, nor with the professed believer in the sole reign of naked, abstract law, that of the possibility of prayer as addressed to an intelligent Being who is capable of communing with us and who invites us to hold communion with Him. These things, which it is admitted lie at the very bottom of the subject, must for the present be assumed as truths which are conceded. Nor can any fair objection be urged against this course, since the utterances of the pulpit are simply the reflections of the deliverances of Scripture. The Bible does not elaborately expound, in formal shape, the great doctrines of God's existence and personality: It enounces them authoritatively as entitled to immediate reception, and ever proceeds on the supposition that their bare enouncement is sufficient to call forth an affirmative response to them from man's essential structure, or is itself an adequate revelation of their truth. The pulpit, therefore, is entitled to assume what the Scriptures—its sole authority—always take for

granted. This, however, will not debar us, at a future stage in the treatment of the subject, from comparing the objections of the skeptic with those principles of our nature, or those convictions of reason which are themselves sanctioned and supported by the Divine Word. Conceding, then, that God exists, that He is possessed of personal attributes which render communion with Him possible, and that He is both willing and competent to answer our petitions for His blessing, the question which now solicits our consideration is, What is prayer?

I. In the first place it is clear that true prayer must include, as its first great element, the offering up of our real desires unto God. There may be the form of prayer without the desires of the heart, but there cannot be true prayer without them. All petition supposes a condition of want which requires to be relieved. It is the experimental sense, or the intellectual conviction, of need, which originates desire. The hungry man prays for bread, and the thirsty man prays for drink, because they desire them to supply their wants. He who is not hungry may ask for bread, and he who is not thirsty may beg for drink, but as the petitions they offer are not prompted by desire springing from a real want they are destitute of sincerity and are not worthy of being answered. In like manner the wretched man desires happiness, the guilty pardon, the impure holiness, and the lost salvation, when they experience in their souls a want of these invaluable blessings. But it is conceivable that formal petitions may be offered to God for these benefits without that desire for them which is grounded in a sense of need. In these cases the professed suppliant tampers with the majesty of God, which is offended by his insincerity; or trifles with

the omniscience of God, which he must all the while be conscious is able to detect the hypocrisy and to unmask the pretence. It is not sufficient, then, that the attitude and gesture, the look and tone of supplication be assumed; it is not sufficient that a certain formula of devotion be employed in accordance with the demands of custom or in obedience to motives which are simply mercenary or selfish; it is not sufficient that a clamorous repetition of empty words be used under the impression that the Deity must needs be affected with such a quantity of entreaty; it is absolutely essential that the real desires of the heart should urge the prayers which we offer to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, or all our petitions, arrayed though they be in language ever so sublime, are offensive to God and barren of beneficial results. They are nothing but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. It is then only we "draw near" to God when we come with the conviction of want and the language of sincere desire. The heart must speak or the ear of God is deaf to the voice of the petition.

II. It deserves, also, to be considered that the desires which we experience and the prayers which they prompt should be for things that are agreeable to the will of God. Otherwise no true prayer is presented. It is hypocrisy to ask for blessings which we do not desire, it is presumption to pray for those which are contrary to the divine will. If the objects of prayer be unlawful, the prayer itself is illegitimate. The will of God is the expression of His holy nature and perfections, and wherever it is made known to us it becomes the standard of reference and the rule of action. It is evidently possible that we may transgress this will in our prayers, both in regard to the things which we

seek and the motives which suggest our petitions. If either the reasons in which prayer is conceived or the ends it desires to secure are contrary to the will of God the prayer itself is intrinsically wrong.

The objects which we seek in prayer are of two kinds. They may be either spiritual or temporal, and the rule which has been indicated will apply with equal force to both of these classes. It will hardly require discussion to show that in those cases in which the revealed will of God, as contained in His Word, is transcended by our petitions, they are not conceived in the spirit of true and legitimate prayer. It is always lawful to ask those blessings for which the Scriptures authorize us to pray, always wrong to seek those things which they forbid us to desire, or the supplications for which are prompted by motives which they will not justify. The Word as the expression of the will of God specifies the things for which we may properly pray and indicates the motives which will meet the divine approbation. To ask other things than these, or to pray from other motives than these, is to be guilty of impiety in our professed homage to God, and to make worship itself the vehicle of sin. To seek from God those things which He has plainly told us we ought not to desire is to treat Him as wayward and exacting children would a father whom they regard as too weak to adhere to his own will, or to abide by those rules which he has laid down for the government of his house. Thus far all is clear. There can be no dispute as to the position that it is wrong to pray for those things which the Scriptures, as the revealed or preceptive will of God, forbid us to seek, and that those petitions in which this is done do not partake of the nature of true and legitimate prayer. Nor, on the other hand, will any question

exist as to the propriety of those supplications which the Scriptures authorize us to present.

There is, however, another aspect of the will of God in reference to which the case may not be equally free from perplexity. A distinction has been drawn, and, it strikes me, validly drawn, between the revealed or preceptive will of God, contained in the written word, and the secret or decretive will of God which He has not thought proper to disclose in the same formal manner. It sometimes pleases Him to indicate this latter aspect of His supreme will, with greater or less distinctness, in the procedures of His providence; and whenever in this mode it becomes definitely known to us we are bound to pay it the same deference and render it the same obedience as we yield to the dicta of His written word. But there are numerous cases in which this secret will of God is not distinctly made known to us. He reserves to Himself that prerogative of sovereignty the glory of which it sometimes is to conceal a thing. He is not under obligation to give account of His matters unto any. As the ruler of the universe, and the supreme arbiter of events, He disposes of all things in accordance with His own secret purposes. Now, we are bound to submit to the decisions of God's will, whether they are revealed or not. It cannot, it is true, become to us a rule of action when it is not revealed, but even then it claims our profoundest homage and our most implicit submission. It exists, though it be not made known; and as it is eternally the rule of the divine government, we are under obligation to refer to it all our states of mind, all our acts, and all our circumstances in life. In all cases about which our prayers may be concerned it behooves us to refer the final decision—the ultimate result—to the

supreme though secret will of God. Let me endeavor to illustrate this truth, for it appears to me to be one of great importance. In those cases, for example, in which we are clearly authorized by the written word to offer prayer for blessing, we are not discharged from the obligation to submit the matter to the decision of God's secret will. This is true, I conceive, even in reference to prayer for spiritual benefits. For even in those cases He has reserved to Himself the right to answer or not, and the disposal of the time, circumstances and mode in which He will bestow blessings when He sees fit to grant a favorable response. We pray for an increase of a certain grace within us. We are right. But it is for God to decide whether He will comply with our request as to the thing sought or as to the mode and measure in which the request shall be met. We pray to be delivered from a certain temptation. We are right. So the Apostle Paul prayed against the thorn in the flesh. But it is for God to decide whether we shall be delivered or not. It is sometimes the case, to go still farther, that God calls us to do what He does not mean us to do and authorizes us to pray for blessings which He does not intend to confer. He called Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, but He did not mean to permit him to perform the act itself. He tests our obedience, and at the same time fulfils His own wise and secret purposes. Paul was authorized to pray for exemption from a certain form of temptation, but God did not intend to grant him that exemption. He gave him, it is true, what was better—His sufficient grace, which enabled him successfully to resist it. He accomplishes, thus, our discipline in holiness, and works out concurrently the behests of His sovereign will. It will be perceived,

then, my brethren, that even in those cases in which we do not disobey the revealed will of God in offering our prayers, they must still be presented in profound submission to His secret will. Our blessed Savior Himself prayed that He might be delivered from drinking the cup of His last dreadful sufferings, but meekly referred the decision of the matter to the sovereign will of God. "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done"!

This principle will go far to solve the apparent difficulty arising frequently from the nonfulfilment of promises which on their face are limited by no qualification. It must always be assumed, as a tacit condition, that God has reserved to Himself the right of acting in regard to them in accordance with His sovereign will. In some instances the limiting circumstances may be plainly gathered either from the Scriptures themselves, or from the course of God's providence. If, for example, one should now pray for the faith which enabled the believer to perform miracles, he would fail to secure it, though the promises concerning it appear to be unqualified. God has withdrawn this particular gift from His church. This was one of Edward Irving's great mistakes, which tended to cripple a ministry of extraordinary power.

The same principle ought always to be applied to prayers in which benefits of a temporal nature are sought. In the general those blessings which come under this class are promised to believers, so far as they may be needful to them. The Divine Word guarantees them, and authorizes us to pray for them. In these cases where the motives which lead us to ask them are unlawful, or where the things desired are themselves forbidden to us in the Scriptures, we clearly have no right to pray. In the other instances in which we are

authorized to seek them, we should never lose sight of the great fact that God bestows, or does not bestow, them in accordance with His holy and sovereign will; and in the event of their not being attained in answer to prayer, it is our duty to lay our hands upon our mouths, to refrain from charging God foolishly, and to render implicit and unquestioning submission to that will.

And let it never be forgotten that there are many specific forms of temporal blessings for which we are often led to pray which God has never pledged Himself to confer. He gives us promises, in the general, and has reserved to Himself the particular application of them. In such cases it is manifestly our duty to yield the most perfect deference to His decisions. He promises that the prayer of faith shall save the sick, but He has not promised that this or that particular individual who is sick shall, through prayer, be restored. We are authorized to pray for the recovery of the sick, and to believe that our prayer will be answered, until the providence of God decides adversely, when our duty is to submit. God promises to deliver His people who call upon Him in the day of trouble, but He has not pledged Himself to deliver a certain individual from what he conceives to be evil. The martyr is authorized to pray for deliverance from the fire and the stake, so long as the final event is uncertain, but God may call him to testify to His truth and to prove his own faith and love by dying in His cause; and in that case he is bound to acquiesce and to go obediently to his tragic end. God has promised to uphold truth and to support right, but He has not pledged Himself in every particular conflict in which truth grapples with error and right with wrong to render truth and right for the

present triumphant. He may suffer them, for wise purposes, to undergo apparent defeat, and to be exposed to a tempest of opprobrium, oppression and scorn. In these cases it is our duty to sustain ourselves by the consideration that God does His will, and that the Judge of all the earth will do right. And to him who thus in disappointment and suffering, baffled in his hopes, and tempted to skepticism, yet honors God by a meek and uncomplaining submission due from a sinful, short-sighted creature, to infinite wisdom and absolute sovereignty, it will in time be made conspicuously to appear—as clearly as the flash of a sunbeam through the fissures of a dissolving cloud—that benefits were withheld for the bestowal of greater, that temporary suffering is but the prelude to everlasting blessing, short-lived disappointment to the dawn of unfading honor, and that truth and right go down beneath a horizon of darkness, and an ocean of storms, only to reappear in the morning glory of an eternal triumph. Jesus as an infirm, dying human being, staggering under the curse of a world, prayed that He might be delivered from suffering the second death. His prayer was unanswered and He died; but His grave was the scene of death's dethronement and the birth-place of unnumbered millions of deathless souls redeemed from Satan, sin and hell. Hold, Christian brother! Do not despair because your prayers for certain blessings, however apparently great, have for a time been unanswered. Where is your faith? Where is your allegiance to your almighty, all-wise, all-merciful Sovereign? Collect yourself. Put on the panoply of God. Stand against these troops of fiends that would dislodge you from the citadel of your faith. Look up. God, your redeemer and deliverer, reigns.

See, He sits on yonder throne, and suns and systems of light are but the sparkling dust beneath His feet. Thousands of thousands of shining seraphs minister before Him. Infinite empire is in His grasp. The sceptre of universal dominion is borne aloft in His almighty hand. His eye is upon His afflicted people. See, see, He comes, He comes, riding upon the wings of the whirlwind, wielding His glittering sword bathed in the radiance of heaven, driving His foes like chaff before His face, and hastening to the succor of His saints with resources of boundless power, and illimitable grace.

III. Let us pass on briefly to consider the third essential element in true prayer—a thoroughgoing reliance upon the atoning merits and advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Prayer is a duty of universal obligation. We are bound by the very conditions of our being, as the creatures of God's power, the subjects of His government, and the pensioners of His bounty, to render worship to Him and to express our dependence upon Him in the form of supplication. But, on the supposition of sin, it is impossible to see on what natural grounds we would have a right to approach Him with entreaties for His favor. Exiles from His presence, condemned by His law, and doomed by His justice to perpetual exclusion from His fellowship, we might indeed roar out our petitions for relief from our misery, but could be consoled by not the most distant hope of audience and acceptance. It has, however, pleased God to bridge this gulf which separated us from Him, and which would otherwise have been forever impassable by us. In the mediation of His dear Son, who, being God and man in one person, was competent to reconcile us to His Father, we have a way of access opened to

us through which we are again privileged to approach the divine throne with our supplications and our prayers. The atoning blood of Jesus removes the guilt of the believer and pleads for his acceptance with melting accents and resistless power. To offer prayer without a reliance upon the person and the work of the great Mediator is to bar the door of audience against ourselves. Reliance upon His atoning merits is absolutely necessary, therefore, to the existence of true and effectual prayer. Having, therefore, brethren, says the Apostle Paul, boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near. And let it be also borne in mind that had we not in the person of the Lord Jesus a righteous advocate on high, a merciful and faithful high-priest who, having passed through the heavens, appears for us in His Father's presence, no prayers that we could offer would rise into those holy courts. Polluted as we are in our persons and defiled as we are in our best services, it is out of the question for us to approach directly to the throne of the majesty on high. It is the province of the great Intercessor to offer His blood as the reason of the sinner's accepted approach, to take into His own priestly hands the prayers of the suppliant, and perfuming them with the incense of His glorious sacrifice to present them before His Father's throne. True prayer, then, my friends, involves a heartfelt recognition of the advocacy of the great Redeemer, and an humble dependence for acceptance upon His availing intercession.

IV. The last element which I shall mention as necessary to the existence of true prayer is the gracious assistance of the Holy Spirit. Blinded by sin as we are, we would, in ourselves, be ignorant of the objects for which we should pray, and be unable, did we know

them, to pray in an acceptable manner. The apostle teaches us that it is one part of the condescending and merciful office of God's blessed Spirit to supply these wants. "Likewise," says he, "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." From this consoling passage we learn that coming into our hearts as the promised "Spirit of grace and of supplication," the Holy Ghost graciously helps us while struggling under our infirmities, while conscious of our unworthiness and ashamed to appear before God, while vainly endeavoring to collect our scattered thoughts and wandering affections, and almost hopeless in the effort to school our stammering tongues to utter the language of sincere petition. He illuminates our souls with a knowledge of our real wants, and stimulates our desires for that grace which alone is able to relieve them. And then remaining in us,—what wondrous mercy that such dullness and reluctance to pray and proneness to sin as we constantly oppose to His heavenly offices do not drive Him from us in unappeasable anger!—remaining with us, He responds from the depths of our poor, sinful hearts to the pleas that Jesus pours out for us in the heavens and makes intercessions for us with unutterable groanings.

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER: OR THE MANNER IN WHICH IT OUGHT TO BE PERFORMED

Hebrews, x: 22. *“Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”*

In the words immediately preceding the text the apostle, as I endeavored to show in the last discourse, indicates the grounds of acceptable prayer. They are, first, the atoning death of the great Mediator, forcibly expressed by the words, “the blood of Jesus”; and, secondly, the presidency of Christ as a great High Priest over the house of God in all that pertains to the offering of worship. And the warrant which we have to approach God in reliance upon these grounds is derived from His own invitations, commands, and promises. Your attention is now asked to a consideration of the question, What is the spirit of true and acceptable prayer? *How* should we pray? In what manner should we attempt to discharge this all-important duty? In answering these questions I shall follow the order of statement observed in the text.

I. In the first place, in conformity to the exhortation of the inspired apostle, we should earnestly endeavor, in all our prayers, to “draw near” unto God.

This evidently implies that we should avail ourselves of that perfect liberty of access to God which is granted to us under the present dispensation in consequence of the completed mediatorial work of Christ, and His

prevalent advocacy of our cause in the heavenly Holy of Holies. In the whole of this suggestive passage a contrast is drawn between the restricted worship of the old economy and the untrammelled freedom of our approach to God under the provisions of the new. Not that it is by any means implied that the way to God through prayer was unknown to the saints of the former dispensation, or that there were not conspicuous examples of the performance of this duty before the advent and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel and a host of others, were remarkable exemplars of the fervor and the efficacy of prayer. Every believer during the past dispensations of the Gospel enjoyed access to a prayer-hearing God. We do not differ from them in the fact that we can come to God in supplication while they could not; but our state is discriminated from theirs by the consideration that as a result of the accomplished sacrifice of Christ we have greater liberty, a bolder confidence in drawing near to God. We are not now admitted into the holiest of all only after the lapse of protracted intervals, and upon the occasion of solemn and national lustrations. We are not deterred from drawing nigh the blood-besprinkled mercy seat by a veil which dripped with blood and a glory which forbade the approach of the ordinary worshipper. We come not as the Israelite did, even when represented by the august High Priest, only to the symbols of the divine presence. Nor are we obliged to conform, as a prerequisite to acceptable petition, to the requirements of a cumbersome and painful ritual, to present daily the blood of animal sacrifices and to furnish the numberless offerings exacted upon pain of death by the rigid statutes of the Mosaic institute. On the contrary,

we are privileged to come unto God, to approach into the holiest of all every day and every moment. No interposed veil stands between the worshipper and the innermost sanctuary. The flesh of Jesus has been rent and the veil exists no more, or exists only as an open door through which our High Priest passed into the heavens and through which all His people are invited to enter with Him—a privilege now enjoyed by faith, and actually possessed at the personal passage of believers at death into the heavenly sanctuary. We come not now, as of old, into contact with the symbols of the divine presence, but into the very presence of a gracious and reconciled God. No blood of daily sacrifices is required at our hands, nor need the smoke of the morning and the evening oblation ascend to God; we come through the sacrifice of Jesus which was offered once for all, and the infinite merit of which opens the way for the advance of every true believer, and the submission of every true petition. What an extraordinary privilege, my brethren, do we thus possess! A privilege denied, in its full extent, to the saintly patriarchs, prophets, and servants of God in time past, but now freely granted to the humblest believer in the atoning Lamb. How great will be our guilt and folly if we neglect to avail ourselves of this liberty of worship and fail to draw near unto God!

It is also implied, in drawing near to God, that we endeavor to attain to nothing short of an intimate personal communion with the Father of our spirits. We have seen that the guilt of the believer is fully expiated by the blood of Jesus, and the pardon of the believer is actually secured for him by the priestly intercessions of his great High Priest. God is, therefore, no longer an unpropitiated judge. He is a reconciled God and a

tender and pitiful father. It has been said that the style by which the Old Testament saints addressed the Deity was—the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, but that that employed by believers in the New Dispensation is—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Go to my brethren,” said Jesus to Mary at the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection, “go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.” “Blessed,” says the Apostle Peter, “be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Our sins estranged us from Him and drove us into exile from His paternal presence and from the tokens of His fatherly love. In Christ He is reconciled to us and admits us to His gracious presence. Our communion with Him is not only restored, but enhanced and enlarged. “Truly,” exclaims the Apostle John, in appreciation of this illustrious privilege, “our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. The great God now regards us as children adopted in His Son and beloved for His sake. As children, therefore, are entitled to enter into their father’s presence, to invade, so to speak, his very privacy, and to come before him with filial confidence at all times with their petitions, so are we, my brethren, authorized to approach our heavenly Father, to hold personal communion with Him, and freely and fully to present our prayers and make known our wants. Nor should we ever be satisfied unless in our worship we have sensibly attained to this sacred yet intimate fellowship with our God, have been enabled to talk to

Him as children to a parent, and have thus consciously realized the fact that we have drawn near unto Him.

In connection with this point, it may be remarked, that drawing near to God supposes not a perfunctory performance of prayer, dictated by the demands of custom or a cold and formal sense of obligation, but a kindling of the emotions which naturally spring from near and holy intercourse with Him. In coming near to Him in personal communion we are attracted by His infinite glory, beauty and loveliness, are powerfully drawn to Him by sentiments of gratitude and love, and secure that moved and elevated state of the affections which renders prayer an actual joy and best prepares us for the duties, the conflicts and the trials of life. Without some such experience as this, though the fundamental elements of prayer may not be entirely absent, we fail to discharge the duty in such a manner as to entitle it to be described as a drawing near of the soul unto God.

II. The second element in the spirit of true prayer, which is mentioned by the apostle, is that we should come to God "with true hearts." There are two things which are suggested by these words: in the first place, that in prayer, our hearts should be true to God; and in the second place, that we should be true to ourselves.

That our worship should be acceptable it is necessary that it should be that of the heart. It is the language of the heart which God expects, and no other language, whether it be that of outward services or of words, is ever acceptable to Him except as the medium of His own appointment through which the heart utters itself to Him. Nor is it only the worship of the heart which He demands. The heart itself must be characterized by truth. That our hearts should be true

to God, it is essential that they should, in the prayers they urge, be conformed to the nature and perfections of God, to the relations which we sustain to Him, to the requirements of His word, and to the really existing condition of our own souls in His sight.

It deserves to be considered, then, that our hearts are true to God in prayer when they recognize Him in His spirituality and render to Him a spiritual worship which corresponds with His nature. "The hour cometh," says our Savior, "and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." It is not so much required of us that we worship in this or that place, in Jerusalem or Samaria; nor that we employ this or that external mode of addressing God; what He does expect of us as absolutely indispensable to any worship at all, is that as He is a pure and intelligent Spirit, our spirits should hold true and genuine communion with Him.

It ought also to be noticed that the spirituality of the divine nature makes it requisite that our hearts, if they would be true to God, should divest themselves of those vain and unscriptural imaginations and conceptions by which material properties are attached to Him. I am not unaware, as our Savior possesses a human nature, and that nature is represented as being in a certain locality designated as heaven, and as being the medium through which the divine glory is manifested to the celestial worshippers, that it would be unscriptural and extravagant to say that such conceptions, so far as they apply to this mode of Christ's existence, are illegitimate. The truth is, that the facts of the case and

our own mental natures necessitate them. We cannot think of Christ without associating with Him corporeal qualities. But what I would urge is this, that worship rendered to God as God must recognize His spirituality, and that we ought to labor to free ourselves from those imagings of His essential nature which degrade or limit it by the ascription to it of material qualities. When we are privileged to draw most near to God we feel that in Him we live and move and have our being, and that He is restricted to no place and no material forms in the manifestation of His presence and the exhibition of His glory. Of course, this view of the spirituality of the divine nature and the spiritual worship which truth requires will exclude all impious attempts, on any pretence whatsoever, to frame some material image of God by the efforts of human art through which we may conceive ourselves better able to approach Him or to attain the sense of nearness to Him. Now, as of old, the command of God is thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image: thou shalt not bow down thyself to it or serve it. Whatever may be pleaded for these painted or sculptured representations of an immaterial Being, their tendency necessarily is to the destruction of spiritual worship; and the blinded, fascinated and imbruted faculties lose at last all capacity for true and heartfelt worship. These words may not be gratuitous. Prophecy informs us that the time is coming—and there are not a few who think it not far distant,—when these old and settled principles of Protestants will be brought to a crucial test. To worship the image of Antichrist will then be to live, to refuse it homage will be to die. Happy he who will consent to die that he may forever live!

It merits our consideration, too, that in order that our hearts should be true to God in prayer, they should recognize His greatness, majesty, holiness and glory, and worship Him "with reverence and godly fear." Liberty of access to Him by no means implies that we are warranted in approaching Him with thoughtlessness and rashness. We are never to forget the great and terrible name of the Lord our God. He is in heaven, and we upon earth; He the infinite God filling immensity with His presence, and we insignificant worms of the dust, debased by sin even unto hell, and dignified and ennobled only by the gracious notice which He is pleased to take of us. His glory fills the heavens and the most exalted principalities of that celestial state approach Him with reverence and awe, and bending in the light of His majesty, cry, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. It becomes us, truth requires it of us, to come unto God with profoundest humility, and to pay our homage to Him with reverent and prostrate adoration.

I remark, further, that in order that our hearts may be true to God in prayer, it is necessary that they should be characterized by sincerity, and be free from hypocrisy, double-dealing and formality. This involves the necessity of being ever deeply convinced that our secret motives, intents and thoughts are open to the scrutiny of the all-seeing eye. "Thou God seest me." "O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and my uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon

me. Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." Were we always properly impressed by the truth conveyed in these striking words of the Psalmist, we should less seldom vitiate our prayers and vacate them of efficacy by the insincerity and hypocrisy which may be mingled with them. It is frequently the case that while we pray to be delivered from sin, our hearts secretly cling to it and are reluctant to give it up; so that we should be disappointed by receiving the answer which we seek with our lips. And not only is this the case in specific cases, but a secret regard for sin operates to the destruction of all truthfulness of heart in prayer, and closes the ear of God against our petitions. "If," says David, "I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." This is a species of insincerity which consists in pretending to desire what we do not, and it is as abhorrent as it is patent to Him who desireth truth in the inward parts. On the other hand, we may be equally guilty of insincerity by seeking from motives which God cannot approve the things which we really desire. This sort of insincerity is designated by the Apostle James when he assigns a reason why some of our prayers fail of receiving an answer. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss. that ye may consume it upon your lusts." It would be interesting to inquire what motives come

under this class, what prayers are thus invalidated, but the scope of this discourse precludes the discussion. Suffice it to say that any state of the soul which consists with a love of sin, with an indisposition to submit to the divine will, and with a refusal to seek the divine glory as our great and ultimate end, is characterized by an untruthfulness to God which hinders the success of our prayers. We are not true to God in our prayers, if we love sin instead of hating it, if we seek the gratification of our own wills rather than the accomplishment of God's will, and if we desire our own reputation and advancement rather than the glory of God's great name.

The exhortation of the apostle, it may be observed in the next place, supposes that in our prayers we should be true to ourselves, both in regard to our own personal necessities and the needs of those who are related to us. This implies such a knowledge of our own state, such a conviction of our own wants, as will lead to fervent earnestness and importunate ceaselessness in pressing our petitions. It is evident that in order to pray as we should, we ought, in some degree, to understand our necessities, and to feel them. It becomes us, therefore, to examine into the condition of our souls, that we may be prepared to plead with God. And then when apprized of our wants, we should not be satisfied with merely mentioning them at the throne of grace, or coldly asking their supply; we should urge our suits with fervent earnestness. We have eminent examples of this manner of presenting prayer in the saints mentioned in Scripture. The most illustrious case is that of the Lord Jesus Himself, who is represented as having spent much of His time in wrestling with God and as having, in the days of His flesh, offered up

prayers with strong cryings and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death. We are commanded to ask that we may receive, to seek that we may find, to knock that it may be opened to us. Truthfulness to our own wants requires that we should be instant, that is, urgent in prayer, that like Jacob we should wrestle with God, and like Jesus pour out our supplications with strong cryings and tears.

To be true to our own necessities, furthermore, we must continue importunately and unremittingly to pray. Our needs are always pressing and demand unceasing prayer. And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint. Like the poor widow in this parable, we should, in spite of discouragements and delays, of baffled expectations and disappointed hopes, continue to plead our cause until the answer is in some form received. Perhaps there is no one duty which is more frequently inculcated in the Scriptures than that of importunate and incessant prayer. "Praying always," says Paul, "with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." "Evening and morning and at noon," says David, "will I pray and cry aloud." Daniel kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks. "Continue in prayer and watch in the same." "The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer."

III. In the third place, we are exhorted, in the text, to draw near to God in prayer "in full assurance of faith." The apostle does not here, as I conceive, allude to what is ordinarily understood as assurance, that is, the certain persuasion of our being the children of God, though a feature of Christian experience clearly

enounced in other passages of Scripture as one which we should labor diligently to attain. His meaning in this place, I take it, is that in approaching God in prayer, we should repose undoubting reliance upon the death and intercessions of the Lord Jesus as sufficient grounds for our petitions, a childlike and unquestioning confidence in the willingness of our great High Priest to present and of our Heavenly Father to accept our prayers, and a firm belief in the promises of God to answer us favorably so far as may be for His glory and our highest good. Doubt upon these points is a hinderance to the proper performance of this great duty. The limitations which God may see fit to impose upon the fulfilment of His promises have already, in a previous discourse, been fully suggested. He best knows what is consistent with His glory and the welfare of His people, and He reserves to Himself the sovereign prerogative to answer prayer in accordance with His righteous will. But even in view of these limitations—in full recognition of the divine sovereignty, and in profound submission to the divine will, it is alike our duty and our privilege, in all cases in which we are convinced that we offer petitions which are not inconsistent with the revealed will of God, to pray in full assurance of faith. This duty is frequently inculcated by the Savior. “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” The Apostle James, in directing us to pray for wisdom, bids us ask in faith, nothing wavering; and declares that doubt is fatal to success. “For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive

anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." It is obvious that a general rule is here delivered which, although applied by the apostle to a special case, is capable of universal application. My brethren, we are conscious of infinite guiltiness, infinite shortcomings, and infinite worthlessness. Satan infuses doubts into our minds and our own hearts tempt us to skepticism. Let us believe. In the blood of Jesus and the intercession of Jesus we have sufficient grounds for approaching God. Let us rely upon them. Our great High Priest and righteous advocate is willing to receive our prayers and present them before the throne. Let us trust Him. Our reconciled God and Father in Christ Jesus is ready to accept our petitions. Let us confide in Him. To doubt is to do injustice to a Savior's work and the dispositions of a Father's heart. Come, let us draw near to God in full assurance of faith.

IV. In the fourth and last place, the apostle encourages us to come to God in prayer, "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

There are two cases in which the heart is so influenced by an evil conscience as to be hindered in endeavoring to offer acceptable prayer. The first is that in which the conscience convicts us of guilt, accuses us of it, and reflecting the sentence of the broken law, condemns us for its existence. This necessarily produces a timid and slavish condition of the soul, which is utterly inconsistent with the enjoyment of that filial confidence without which it is impossible to draw near to God with liberty and boldness. The blood of Jesus sprinkled, through faith, upon the conscience, satisfies its demands, silences its accusations, and annuls its

condemning sentence. We are, in consequence, no longer ashamed or afraid to come unto God. The blood of Jesus, as the apostle says in another passage, purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. The soul is no longer slain under the curse of a violated and unsatisfied law. The blood of atonement applied by the grace of the Spirit has rendered it a living soul. Its works are consequently living works and suited to be presented to a living God. In coming to God by prayer, therefore, we should labor so to apprehend the atoning merits of Christ as to be delivered from an enslaving bondage to an accusing and condemning conscience.

The second case in which liberty in prayer is impeded by an evil conscience is that in which, through the special pleadings of a perverted understanding and a corrupt heart, the conscience is deceived and induced to tolerate the soul in the secret indulgence of sin. So long as this condition lasts, no access to God in prayer can be enjoyed. The heart regards iniquity, and God will not, consequently, hear our prayers. The blood of Jesus sprinkling the conscience purges it of its blindness, clears up its perceptions of the real facts in the case and leads it to continue its rebukes of the sin until it is repented of and forsaken. The defiled condition of the heart is thus removed, and liberty in prayer is the result. We should draw near to God, therefore, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of Jesus.

To this the apostle adds the necessity of having our bodies washed with pure water. Dr. Owen is of opinion that the allusion in these words is not to the purification which is symbolized by the washing of

baptism. It may be that it is included in the idea presented by the apostle; but I am inclined to think that that was not its chief significance, and to agree with the great theologian just mentioned in supposing that Paul's meaning is that in coming to God in prayer, we should be cleansed, not only from the guilt of those secret sins by which the heart is defiled, but also from that of those more open and grosser sins which the body is instrumental in committing. The blood of Christ applied by the grace of the Holy Ghost washes us from the pollution communicated by these sins. And as it is necessary that in praying acceptably we should not secretly regard iniquity in our hearts, it is equally incumbent upon us, if we would pray aright, to resist the solicitations of those sins of the flesh from which we have been purified by the blood of Jesus and the washing of the Holy Ghost. It is plain that allowed indulgence in such sins bars the way of access to God. Let us, therefore, draw near to God, having our bodies washed with pure water.

THE GROUNDS OF PRAYER

Hebrews, x: 19-22. *“Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near.”*

In a previous discourse the question of the nature of prayer was considered. I endeavored to show that true prayer consists, in the first place, in the offering unto God of our real desires grounded in the felt conviction of our wants; in the second place, in the offering of our desires for such things as are agreeable to the will of God, as are conformable to that will as expressly revealed in the written Word, or entertained in profound submission to it, as it is a secret, decretive and sovereign will; in the third place, in a believing reliance upon the atoning merits and the priestly advocacy of Christ; and in the fourth place, in an humble dependence upon the gracious assistance of the Holy Spirit, who helpeth our infirmities, teaches us what things to pray for as we ought, and maketh intercessions for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.

Your attention on this occasion, my friends, will be directed to the question, What are the grounds of prayer? What is the foundation on which it rests, and what the reasons which lead us to hope that our petitions will meet a favorable reception and result in such blessings as God sees it for His glory and our welfare to bestow? I may here mention, by way of explanation, that in treating the question of the nature of prayer,

some notice of its grounds was taken, but chiefly in reference to the internal exercises of the suppliant, as all true petition necessarily involves the reliance of the heart upon these grounds as its warrant for presenting it. In the present discourse, the grounds themselves of prayer will be more fully and directly considered. What are they, and how do they legitimate our access to God in supplication?

I. In the passage before us in which the apostle affectionately exhibits the warrant of all acceptable approach to God, he indicates the first ground of prayer as being the mediatorial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near.

The inquiry properly emerges before we proceed immediately to consider this point, whether acceptable prayer may in any case be offered without reference to the offices of a competent mediator? With the Word of God as our guide, I cannot see how this is possible, on the supposition that the suppliant is a sinner. The ground has been taken by some, as by Lord Bacon in his confession of faith, that no creature, however holy, can approach God except through the intervention of a mediator. "I believe," says that remarkable man, "that God is so holy, pure and jealous, as it is impossible for Him to be pleased in any creature, though the work of His own hands; so that neither angel, man, nor world, could stand, or can stand, one moment in His eyes without beholding the same in the face of a mediator, and, therefore, that before Him, with whom all things are present, the Lamb of God was slain before all worlds." In this view some eminent theologians concur. But whatever difference of opinion may exist upon this question, it cannot be disputed that

the Scriptures definitely teach that no sinner can approach the holiness of God except through the great Mediator.

There were two disastrous results which were accomplished by the fact of sin: in the first place, it erected legal obstacles insuperable by the sinner in the way of his access to God; and in the second place, it effected a deadly change in his own spiritual nature. Both these difficulties obviously require to be removed before a sinner can approach God with acceptable prayer. In order to achieve the removal of the first, that is the legal obstacles which oppose his access to God, he must produce an adequate satisfaction to the divine justice, and an adequate reparation to the divine government. This he cannot do, for two reasons: a finite creature cannot furnish such an expiration of guilt as would meet the demands of an infinite law, and a guilty creature, from the nature of the case, can offer no atonement for guilt, which could secure him absolute and acquittal. All that the sinner can do is to submit to punishment in the hope that it may eventually prove sufficient to expiate his guilt; but as sin, by reason of its infraction of infinite obligations, is an infinite evil, and the agent who performs it is a finite creature, the punishment must, if inflicted at all, be necessarily eternal. So far, therefore, as any attempt on his own part to remove the obstacles which hinder his approach to God is concerned, his condition is utterly hopeless. His sin has reared betwixt him and his Maker a partition as high as heaven and as deep as hell, and no effort of his own can avail to take it away.

Unless, therefore, a competent mediator is provided who removes these gigantic barriers which oppose the sinner's access to God, his prayers, supposing it possible

for him to offer them, can never rise into the ear of the Lord of Sabaoth. He has no warrant in himself for addressing the offended Majesty on high which is not invalidated by guilt, no ground for prayer which is not rendered worthless by sin. The acceptance of a sinner's prayer on the part of God involves his salvation; but salvation cannot be obtained except through an adequate atonement. Such an atonement the sinner cannot furnish. The conclusion is that he cannot offer acceptable prayer.

The case may be stated differently. The very first petition which it behooves a sinner to present to God is one for pardon. Unless his inexcusable guilt be forgiven he cannot become an accepted worshipper. But forgiveness cannot be secured without atonement. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." As, then, the sinner cannot be pardoned except on the ground of the expiation of his guilt, and such an expiation it is not in his power to furnish, even his prayer for pardon cannot, on any merely natural ground, be accepted. He is shut up to reliance upon the interposition of a mediator.

The second difficulty which has been mentioned as opposing the presentation of acceptable prayer on the part of a sinner is the fact that sin has effected a deadly change in his spiritual nature. This renders it impossible that he should pray aright except through the influence of a divinely-appointed mediation. Admitting the existence of sin as justly exposing the guilty to the divine displeasure, there are many who advocate the opinion—and it is one which seems natural to a mind unenlightened by grace—that sincere repentance will avert the consequences of transgression, and open the way for the restoration of the offender to the favor

of God and his access to Him in prayer. Penitence for sin is, in this case, the ground upon which prayer is offered, and expected to be heard. Those who so smoothly and fluently declaim upon the benevolence of God and His willingness to accept the professions of a repentance which is exercised in accordance with merely natural principles forget what the Scriptures so clearly proclaim, that it is impossible for the sinner to repent at all, except in consequence of the application of those provisions which the mediation of Christ alone supplies. The very first effect which sin produces is to entail spiritual death upon the transgressor, a death which renders it impossible for him, in his own strength, to perform any spiritual act which would be acceptable to God. "He is dead in trespasses and sins"; and as repentance is a spiritual act and one which, whenever truly performed, is acceptable in God's sight, he cannot, of himself, repent. Repent, after a fashion, he may; but repentance from a motive which God does not sanction, and in order to an end which God does not approve, is one thing, and true and genuine repentance is quite another. And so the sinner may pray. Most men pray after a sort. The question, however, is not as to the possibility of some natural ground of prayer which men may devise, but as to the ground of that duty which God authorizes in His Word. Now, we are expressly taught that repentance is only possible through the mediation of Christ, which opens the way for its exercise, and provides that agency of the divine spirit which alone enables the sinner to produce it. As, therefore, true penitence for sin is impossible apart from mediation, it cannot exist as a natural ground for acceptable prayer. He who depends upon such a warrant for approach to God must find himself sadly and bitterly mistaken.

Is there, then, no reason in the nature of things, aside from the mediation of the Redeemer, which will impart validity to our petitions? How, then, it may be asked, can any man who is not a believer in Christ offer prayer at all? How can the unconverted pray with the hope that their petitions will be answered? To this it might be replied that even the ungodly who are seeking salvation may, and do, pray with professed dependence upon the mediation of Christ. The difficulty may, however, still be pressed, that if they are in a state of spiritual death, and even their prayers are destitute of spiritual value, it is inconceivable, upon the view which has been advanced, how their petitions can be accepted and answered. I shall endeavor to obviate this difficulty in a subsequent part of the discourse. The exposition of the doctrine enounced in the text will lead us to its satisfactory solution.

Let us recur, now, to the position of the apostle that the first ground of acceptable prayer is the mediatorial death of the Lord Jesus; that we have boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath opened for us through the vail, that is to say, His flesh. The "blood of Jesus" is but a striking expression for His atoning death. As His blood was shed unto death, and the law declared that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, it is a favorite mode of statement by which the apostle evinces the fact of the completed sacrifice of Christ as a satisfaction for sin.

The influence of the work of Christ upon the access of sinners to God in prayer is exhibited by the apostle in an impressive comparison which he institutes between the old and the new dispensations. There were three great lessons which were conveyed through the

sacrificial ritual of the Mosaic economy. The first was, that God is a Being of infinite justice, purity and holiness; that acceptable worship can be presented to Him by sinners only through a competent atonement rendered in blood; and that He had mercifully made provision for the offering of such an expiatory sacrifice in the death of His Son to be afterwards actually made in the room of the guilty, and which was shadowed forth by the victims daily slain in His courts, and daily consumed upon His altars. The second lesson was, that no acceptable worship could be offered to God except through the mediatorial offices and worship of a divinely-constituted priesthood, a fact which was most solemnly impressed upon the minds of the people through the awful services of the great day of annual atonement, when the high priest alone, even of the priestly order, arrayed in His sacerdotal vestments, and bearing in his hands the blood of sacrifice, and the incense of intercession, was permitted to turn aside the bloody veil and enter into the holiest of all to make expiation for the guilt of the congregation and, as their only authorized organ, to present their worship to God. The third lesson was, that the sacrifice of animals was intrinsically worthless, and derived its value alone from its typical relation to the death of Christ; that the blood of bulls and goats, of heifers and calves, could not in itself avail to take away sin; and that, therefore, an impediment existed in the way of perfect liberty of worship, and holy boldness in approaching God, until the great mediation should be completed, the great atonement offered, and the great intercession prosecuted in the temple not made with hands.

All these features of the Jewish economy are distinctly intimated in the passage under consideration,

but as his purpose was not so much to indicate the community as the difference between the two dispensations, he dwells more particularly upon the last. He shows that the new is superior to the old in that it publishes the actual accomplishment of that atonement which the latter pointed to as a fact to come. The blood of the great, the only intrinsically efficacious and sufficient sacrifice has now been shed, and as a consequence all sincere worshippers are entitled with boldness and confidence to draw near to God.

The blood of Jesus, or what is the same thing, the atoning death of Jesus, is an essential ground of prayer for two reasons. In the first place, it effectually removes those obstacles, arising from God's nature and God's law, which forbade the approach of sinners into the divine presence. We have seen that unexpiated guilt bars the door of access to God. Even the sinless worshippers in the heavenly sanctuary approach Him with reverential awe, and cherubim and seraphim cover their faces with their wings in the dazzling light that blazes from His throne. How can a sinner, blushing with conscious guilt, confessedly a rebel against His law and a traitor to His government, venture without atonement into that insufferable presence? The holiness, the justice, the truth, the law of God, all conspire to preclude his approach. The immutable perfections of the divine nature and the irreversible principles of the divine government lie in the way of his coming to God, and he who dares to tread that way walks presumptuously in the road to death. These difficulties are removed by the vicarious death of Jesus in the behalf of sinners. It affords a complete and sufficient sacrifice for sin, an effectual expiation of guilt. It meets the uncompromising claims of divine justice, and

satisfies the most rigorous demands of the divine law. It renders it perfectly consistent with His changeless attributes that God should hear the sinner who sues for audience through the blood of Jesus. The cross of Jesus is the passport of the guilty into the reconciled presence of the great Judge, the name of Jesus the countersign which admits him through watch and ward into the palace of the Eternal King. The way into the divine presence is no longer a way of death. It is one of life. Jesus, says the apostle, hath consecrated for us a new and living way through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. Let us dwell a moment on the significance of these words as they furnish an impressive though symbolical representation of the great truth which I am endeavoring to expound. In the arrangement of the Jewish tabernacle and temple there was a threefold distribution of place. First there was the outer court occupied by the congregation, in which was the altar of sacrifice; next the sanctuary, in which the altar of incense stood, and lastly, the holy of holies, or the most holy place, in which was the ark of the covenant, the mercy-seat, overshadowed by cherubim, and the awful symbols of the divine presence. There was the luminous cloud of the Shechinah which attested the glorious holiness of a present Deity. Between the holy of holies and the sanctuary was interposed a heavy veil which, by divine statute, was kept continually saturated with the blood of the sacrifices. None dared to put aside that awful barrier to the immediate presence of God but the high priest himself. Even he ventured not to do it but when he was expressly commanded, and that only once a year on the day of national atonement. To have done it at any other time would have been instant death to him. And

when, in accordance with the requirement of the law, he took in his priestly hands the blood of the sacrifice and the smoking incense, and reverently and tremblingly turned aside the sacred veil to enter into the innermost sanctuary and appear before God, none of the priests, Levites or people dared to follow him thither. The radiant cloud would have flashed vengefully into their faces, and the bolts of divine wrath would have leaped from its flaming bosom to check their presumptuous rashness by condign death. So long as the veil remained unrent, liberty of approach into the presence of God was denied to the worshipper. This significantly inculcated the lesson that so long as the flesh of Jesus was unrent, that is, while the death of Jesus was not an accomplished fact, boldness of access to God could not be the privilege of the sinner. The rending of the flesh of Jesus, or, in other words, His atoning death, removed the obstacles which lay in the way of the worshipper's drawing near to God. The veil which had separated the heavenly holy of holies from the sanctuary and outer courts on earth is now rent, and through it, as through an ever-open door, the vilest sinner who trusts in the blood of Jesus is invited to enter with his petitions into the immediate presence of God. The Deity is there, but He is a propitiated and reconciled God. The Shechinah is there, but it no longer flashes its lightnings into the face of the approaching suppliant.

“No fiery vengeance now,
No burning wrath comes down”;
“No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below.”

Another reason which may be briefly mentioned for the fact that the atoning death of Jesus is a ground of prayer lies in the consideration that it properly merits a hearing for the petitions of those who trust in Him. The co-presence of His divine nature with His human rendered His sacrifice of Himself infinitely valuable and meritorious. He through the eternal Spirit, says the apostle, offered Himself without spot to God. His divine nature was the altar which sustained the gift of His human nature and sanctified it to the great end for which it was sacrificed. The prayers of the believer, though worthless in themselves, are, when laid upon the sacrifice of Christ, sanctified by the same altar. The infinite merits of the atonement of Jesus impart worth and dignity to his petitions, purchase for them audience with God, and lend them their own rich perfume as they ascend before the throne of grace.

II. The second ground of prayer which the apostle instances is the fact that we have a great High Priest over the house of God. Jesus presides over the house of God in all the arrangements which contemplate the offering of worship. He is the public organ of the church through whom all her worship of God is conducted. And as it is necessary that one who discharges this high office in the name and on the behalf of sinners should be a priest whose distinctive province it is to render worship by sacrifice, Jesus, as our great Priest, first offered worship in His own person by the voluntary sacrifice of Himself upon the cross, and continues now in the heavens, through the same medium, to urge His sacerdotal pleas, and to present before His Father's throne the homage, the prayers and the praises of His people. There are several ends which are accomplished by the priestly presidency of Jesus over the

house of God, which render it one of the grounds of acceptable prayer. In the first place, by His intercessions, He actually procures for sinners that pardon without which no available petition can be urged. He presents in the holiest of all the proofs of His atoning sacrifice, and the evidences of His completed mediatorial work. As it was necessary that He should have somewhat to offer, He appears in the heavenly sanctuary not without blood. He shows His wounded hands and feet and side, and by these affecting memorials of Calvary pleads for the pardon and salvation of the guilty and the lost. Faithful to His promise to His Son, and ever ready to hear the prayers of this, His anointed One, the Father puts into His hands the pardon which He seeks, to be dispensed by Him to those for whom He died. The death of Christ had removed the obstacles that opposed the forgiveness of the sinner, and His intercessory work as the complement of His atonement actually obtains it for His people.

In the second place, as the public organ of worship, He is the only medium through whom the prayers of sinners can reach the Majesty on high. He presides over the throne of grace sprinkled with His own atoning blood and receives the prayers of those who come unto God by Him. Attaching to them, intrinsically worthless as they are, the infinite merits of His sacrifice and adding to them His own prevalent intercessions, He offers them as incense before His Father's throne. It is thus, my brethren, our prayers are heard. It is not so much we who pray as Jesus our High Priest who prays for us. It is not in ourselves that we prevail with God, it is Jesus who prevails with Him in our poor name, and for our poor sake. It is this that gives us heart to persevere in prayer. It is this that saves us

from despair. We are so conscious that our prayers are marred by weakness, carnality and sin, that we should abandon the attempt to offer them at all were we not supported by the conviction that they are received by our great and merciful High Priest, that they are presented by His hands, seconded by His merits, and enforced by His pleas.

It may be added to these considerations that the intercessions of Him who presides over the house of God procure for us the influence of the Holy Spirit by whom we are incited to pray, and taught how to pray and what things to pray for; who intercedes for the saints according to the will of God and makes intercessions within us with unutterable groanings. We are privileged to plead with God in view of the fact that His own blessed Spirit indites our petitions, and that, being thus prompted, they are according to His mind.

We are now prepared to meet the difficulty suggested in a previous part of this discourse, how, notwithstanding the fact that the mediation of Christ is essential to the offering of acceptable prayer, and that the unregenerate who are spiritually dead and, therefore, incapable of rendering spiritual worship to God, are not only under obligation to pray, but are led earnestly to pray and receive a gracious answer to their prayers. The explanation is that Jesus, the great High Priest, presents His blood in their behalf, sues out pardon for them by His availing intercessions, and secures for them the grace of the Holy Spirit who, coming, in the first instance, not in answer to their prayers, but to the prayers of the great Mediator, awakens in them a sense of their spiritual wants, impels them to pray for divine help, and enables them while struggling in supplication to believe in the person and trust in the merits of

the Savior. The people of God, while in their unconverted and ungodly condition, are accepted not because of the efficacy of their prayers, but because Jesus has previously prayed for them. This is the encouragement which the unconverted sinner has in attempting to pray. His prayers in themselves do not deserve an answer. God might in justice reject them. But the mediation and intercession of Christ render it consistent with His perfections that He should receive the sinner and hear his prayer. He meets him in Christ, regards him in Christ, and blesses him for Christ's sake. The love He bears His dear Son and the honor he puts upon His atoning death and priestly intercession cause Him to bow down His ear to the cry of the wretched suppliant who prostrates himself at His feet.

“Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near.” The infinite mercy of God which regarded us in our ruin has provided for us a way of access into His gracious and reconciled presence; and having furnished us in the death and intercession of His Son the grounds of acceptable prayer, He invites, commands and urges us to pray, adding His word of promise that if we present our petitions in sincere reliance upon these grounds, He will grant us those blessings which it is consistent with His glory and our welfare to confer.

Should any now ask, What are the grounds of acceptable prayer, the answer is, the atoning death and the priestly advocacy of the great Mediator; and should any inquire, What authority we have to pray, the reply is, the invitation, command, and promise of Him who has furnished the grounds of prayer.

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER

James, v: 16. "*The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*"

In the last discourse which, it may be remembered, was occupied with the consideration of the spirit of prayer, I endeavored to elucidate the manner in which this great duty ought to be performed. In the first place, it was shown that in prayer we should draw near to God; that we should avail ourselves of that perfect liberty of access to Him which is granted to us under the present dispensation in consequence of the accomplishment of the atoning work of Christ, and His prevalent advocacy of our cause in the heavenly Holy of Holies; that we should be satisfied with nothing short of an intimate personal communion with the Father of our spirits; and that we should strive to attain that fervor of affection and kindling of emotion which naturally spring from near and holy intercourse with Him. In the second place, it was urged that we should come to God with a true heart; with a heart true to the spirituality of His nature and worshipping Him in spirit and in truth; with a heart true to His infinite greatness and glory, and serving Him with reverence and godly fear; with a heart true to His majesty, holiness and omniscience, and calling on Him with a sincerity exclusive of formality, duplicity and hypocrisy; that we should come with a heart true to ourselves, a heart true to our real condition of poverty, sinfulness and want, and pressing its petitions with fervent earnestness and importunate ceaselessness. In the third place, it was contended that we

should pray in full assurance of faith, that is to say, in undoubting reliance upon the death and intercessions of the Lord Jesus as sufficient grounds for our petitions, in unquestioning confidence in the willingness of our great High Priest to present and of our heavenly Father to accept our prayers, and with a firm belief in the promises of God to answer us favorably so far as may be for His glory and our good. In the fourth place, it was seen that we should come to God having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; that is, with hearts discharged by the application of the blood of atonement from the enslaving influence of a condemning conscience, and relieved of that condition in which a misled conscience tolerates the indulgence of sin; and that we should come having our bodies washed with pure water, or, in other words, resisting the solicitations of those more open and grosser sins of the flesh which it is the office of the blood of Jesus and the grace of the Holy Spirit to wash away.

Your attention, on the present occasion, is invited to a consideration of the efficacy of prayer. The text declares that "the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much." It has been remarked that there is an apparent pleonasm in these words, that it is somewhat strange that the apostle should affirm that efficacious prayer is efficacious. I do not see that the criticism is well taken. What he means to say is simply that it is not all prayer which may be expected to avail with God, but that which springs from a felt sense of misery and want, and is therefore urged with heartfelt earnestness and fervor. It is such prayer, when offered by a righteous man—one who relies upon the justifying righteousness of Christ and is conscious of righteous intentions which exclude hypocrisy—that enters

into the ear of God and is efficacious in securing the blessings which are sought. The doctrine of the text is that true prayer, when offered in a proper manner, is effectual in producing those positive results which its very nature supposes it possible to attain.

The view has not unfrequently been maintained, and is, it may be feared, but too current at the present day, that the influence of prayer is merely subjective: that its office consists in stimulating by a sort of reflex action the religious affections and emotions, and in strengthening the pious purposes and resolutions of the soul. It is urged that more than this it cannot be expected to accomplish, on the specious ground that either on the supposition that the world is governed by fixed and uniform laws, or that the providence of God always proceeds upon an undeviating general plan, it would be absurd to expect a change of those laws or an accommodation of that plan in accordance with the necessities or desires of each individual.

It would seem to be a sufficient answer to this hypothesis that it contradicts the fundamental conception of prayer. No one prays simply for the purpose of exciting by the act of prayer the fervor of his religious emotions. For if it be admitted that this result is secured by the operation of a divine influence upon the heart, the very essence of the theory is given up, which is that prayer acts by a reflex energy of its own; and if it be denied that this result is secured by a divine influence, then the advocate of this view is confronted by a twofold difficulty: he attributes to prayer what can only be achieved by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit; and he contradicts the very terms of all true prayer in which a divine influence is invariably implored. This is so palpable as to be conceded even

by candid infidels themselves. Dr. McCosh tells us that "after hearing a sermon preached by Dr. Leechman, in which he dwelt upon the power of prayer to render the wishes it expressed more ardent and passionate, Hume remarked with great justice, 'we can make use of no expression or even thought, in prayers and entreaties, which does not imply that these prayers have an influence.'"

It is my present purpose, however, to maintain the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer by a simple appeal to the testimony of the Scriptures which bears directly upon the point, reserving to another opportunity a fuller discussion of the objection to this view professing to be founded upon its inconsistency with the fixed and uniform operation of the laws of nature or of Providence.

It is not, of course, denied that the reflex influence of prayer in kindling the ardor of our religious emotions is one of its beneficial results. It is cheerfully conceded that adoration of God, communion with Him, and the thankful acknowledgment of His mercies tend, even apart from petition for positive blessings, to produce a salutary effect upon the soul. This is true, but the Scriptures represent prayer as accomplishing a great deal more than this. They attribute to it an actual influence in bringing to bear upon us, both in our spiritual and temporal condition, powers and energies which are not only not inherent in us, but absolutely extraneous to us. In a word, the doctrine of the Scriptures clearly is that true prayer is efficacious in securing God's interposition in our behalf. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails to the accomplishment of this result. It has power to prevail with God. It not only brings us nigh to Him, it

brings Him nigh to us. It lays hold of the Divine strength, obtains the Divine help, and supplies the wants of the soul and the body from the fullness of the Divine resources.

I. The efficacy of prayer in actually securing Divine assistance, it may be remarked in the first place, is plainly deducible from those statements of Scripture in which God is represented as the hearer of prayer. "O Thou that hearest prayer," says the Psalmist, "unto Thee shall all flesh come." In this passage God is addressed by His inspired servant as the hearer of prayer, and because this was His known character, the declaration is made that unto Him all flesh should come bringing their requests and looking for His blessing. It would be doing violence to this and kindred statements to limit prayer to the offering of adoration and thanksgiving. The prayers of sinners must in a large degree consist of petition. The guilty necessarily pray, if they pray at all, for pardon, the ignorant for knowledge, the miserable for relief, the lost for salvation. If God hears the prayers of sinners—and such is the statement—He actually confers upon them pardon, knowledge, relief and salvation, in answer to their supplications for these positive blessings. God not only hears our praises, but our prayers, and hears them to answer them. It may here be observed that, except on the supposition that He hears and answers petitions so as to confer actual blessings upon the petitioner, prayer itself would be both a mockery and an absurdity. It would be a mockery, for we would address supplications to God to which we do not expect Him to respond; it would be an absurdity, for petitions for nothing would be but idle breath. Nor is it easy to see how prayer in this view of the case can be productive even of a reflex

influence for good. An address to the Deity which would be both blasphemous and absurd, one would naturally suppose, could only damage the character of the suppliant. To pray for pardon, knowledge, happiness and salvation, in the expectation that they will be secured by a reflex influence of the prayer itself, is something that passes comprehension. Not to pray for them at all is to remain unpardoned, ignorant, miserable and lost.. Either God simply receives prayer without answering it, or He hears it in order to answer it. If the first supposition be adopted, then, except on the Pelagian theory of human ability, the soul continues in a state of unpardoned guilt and hopeless misery. If the second, then the very ground of the doctrine against which I am contending is abandoned.

II. In the second place, it may be observed that God is not only declared to be the hearer of prayer, but He directs us to offer our petitions to Him, and promises that He will grant blessings in answer to them. The passages in which 'this truth are taught are so numerous that the only difficulty lies in selecting the testimonies which are most striking and pertinent. We call attention to a few which may be regarded as representatives of larger classes. First, we meet those passages in which we are commanded to pray for blessings in general, and to which promises of answers are attached. "Thus saith the Lord, call upon Me and I will answer thee." "Ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you." "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Next we have directions to pray for spiritual blessings with promises of answers annexed to them. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." In

this declaration it is manifestly taught that salvation is granted in answer to prayer, and that it is withheld from those who refuse to pray. It will not be denied that it is the prerogative of God alone to give salvation, and that, therefore, no merely internal influence of prayer can avail to secure it. It springs not from within us. It comes from without. Take this exhortation of the Savior which may serve as an exponent of this whole class of passages. "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or, what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him." Another evangelist thus states this promise conveyed in the last words of this passage: "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Here we are taught, as definitely as language can impart any idea, that the blessings which we obtain as the result of prayer are things which are given to us by a Father from whom we ask them. A personal God hears us when we pray and actually bestows upon us the spiritual blessings which as persons we seek at His hands. These blessings are all comprehensively contained in the influence of the Holy Spirit. Our Savior declares that He is given in answer to prayer. This simple announcement is enough to evince the fallacy of the view which is combated in these remarks. What reflex influence of prayer is equivalent to the bestowal of the influences of God's

blessed Spirit? It is God's prerogative alone to confer the grace of His Spirit. There is, it may be said without irreverence, no higher function of His exclusive sovereignty than that which is involved in the impartation of the Holy Ghost, Himself possessed of divine personality, and clothed with the majesty and the greatness of infinite Deity. If the Holy Spirit is given in answer to prayer, and Jesus Christ Himself assures us that He is, what becomes of the theory which makes the chief office of this duty to consist in stimulating our religious nature, and re-acting for good upon the soul? What provision is made on this supposition for the imparted grace of the Eternal Spirit? It provides for no Holy Ghost and, therefore, provides no hope for our guilty and dying race. To this it may be replied that the Spirit is conferred in accordance with the arrangements of the scheme of redemption, but not in consequence of the offering of prayer for His influence. To take this ground is to forget the express language of the Savior, which has been quoted, in which He distinctly informs us that our heavenly Father is willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him; and also to overlook the fact that the influence of the Spirit, which is bestowed even upon the ungodly and is necessary to the production of the temper of prayer in the heart of the sinner, is secured by the prayers of Christ as our intercessor in the heavens; and would never be conferred except His sacerdotal petitions were presented in our behalf. Nor is the consideration material that in the one case the prayers of sinful men are involved, and in the other those of the divine and holy Savior, for upon the hypothesis under consideration the essence of all prayer consists in its being subjective in its character and reflex in its influence. Consistency,

therefore, would require that the productive efficacy of the Savior's prayers should be denied. And as it is contended that the fixed and uniform operation of the scheme of law, inexorable and undeviating from its very inception, can in no case admit the positive influence of prayer which is an afterthought of the individual subject of this inflexible rule, a logical adherence to the theory demands the denial of the active efficacy of the prayers of Christ in obtaining for sinners the grace of the Holy Ghost. And so all shadow of hope is swept away from our wretched race. It is stripped alike of the prevalent intercessions of its Redeemer and the saving influence of its Sanctifier. Surely a doctrine which deprives us of one-half of the work of Christ and the whole of the work of the Spirit is not one which has its foundation in a Gospel which brings glad tidings to a ruined race, or one suited to strike a spark of light in the deep midnight of its despair. We turn with a bound of joy from the arctic desolateness of this tenet to the green pastures of God's Word, and refresh our fainting faith with those gracious declarations which assure us that God is the hearer of prayer, and those exceeding great and precious promises which guaranty divine answers to the petitions of the needy and the poor.

III. It deserves to be remarked, in the third place, that the doctrine of the positive efficacy of prayer is enhanced by the consideration of the objects for which we are directed to offer it. If it can be shown that God commands us to pray for objects which lie outside of our experience and are not immediately connected with it, the productive power of prayer will be clearly evinced in opposition to the idea that it is simply subjective and reflex in its influence. In order to accom-

plish this it is only necessary to examine the Lord's Prayer, which is admitted on all hands to be a perfect model of petition. In praying that God's great name may be hallowed, we ask that it may be sanctified and honored not only by ourselves but by all the world, a result which no subjective and reflex influence can secure. In praying that God's kingdom may come and His will may be done on earth as in heaven, we ask not only that His kingdom may come in our own hearts, and that His will may be done by ourselves, but that these great ends may be accomplished in the whole earth. Unless each suppliant be the world in himself, which is easier imagined than realized, what becomes of the reflex theory? In praying that God may give us our daily bread, we ask for that which it will hardly be said a mere experimental exercise will furnish us, unless this daily bread be simply spiritual; or unless it be so that to be a Christian is to be able to live without food, and that men ought not only not to live by bread alone, but ought not to live by bread at all; or unless prayer, as it supplies the heart by a reflex influence, furnishes the stomach in the same miraculous way. When we pray that God may forgive us our sins, we ask that the great Ruler and Judge whose laws we have infringed may graciously pardon our guilt; unless, indeed, the pardon of an offended Sovereign is the same thing as the pardoning of ourselves by a reflex influence, a pleasing fancy, it must be confessed, as it is not difficult for men to forgive themselves, but one which would scarcely take the gloom from the face of a prisoner who hears the stroke of the hammer on his own gallows. When we pray that God may lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, we ask that He may, by His almighty providence, so dispose and

arrange our circumstances as to prevent our entrance into temptation, and may defend us from the crafts of the Devil, the violence of men, and the innumerable dangers from causes outside of ourselves, as well as within us, to which we are every day and every moment exposed; unless it be so that the internal influence of prayer controls the arrangements of Providence and manages the forces of nature, foils the intelligence and baffles the power of the great Adversary, directs the steps, ties the hands and seals the lips of men, cures the maladies of the body, checks the sweep of the pestilence, arrests the flight of the destroying angel, and converts famine into plenty, war into peace, and death into life. But why pursue this train of thought? Is it not obvious that if God commands us to pray for objects which lie outside of our experience, prayer must have a positive and productive energy which is something more than a mere subjective and reflex influence? As an integral element of God's great plan of providence, it actually contributes to the hallowing of His name, the advancement of His kingdom and the accomplishment of His will. It brings us our daily bread, secures the pardon of our sins, erects a barrier between us and the yawning abysses of temptation, and encompasses our frailty and our weakness with the impregnable ramparts of almighty power. Such are the inferences which naturally flow from the prayer which our blessed Savior has taught us, and they are confirmed by the concurrent deliverances of the Scriptures, and the instincts and facts of Christian experience.

IV. It may be observed, in the last place, that the efficacy of prayer is proved by the numerous cases on record in the Scriptures in which it is seen to have

produced results which, so far from depending upon a reflex influence upon experience, were not even experimental in their character. So striking are these cases that they seem to represent nature and Providence as obedient to the call of prayer. Let us look at a few of them as they stand out on the past track of the church, monuments of the willingness of God to hear and answer prayer. Abraham prays for Sodom, and his intercessions fail of complete success only because there were not ten righteous men in that wicked city for whose sake, in answer to his petitions, it might have been saved from its fiery doom. Jacob, when after a protracted exile from his native land, rendered necessary by the vow of Esau to destroy him, when returning to his home, learns that his vindictive brother is hastening to meet him with an armed band in order to put into execution his long-delayed but still cherished intention. He pleads with God for deliverance from an injured brother's wrath. On the bank of the Jabbok he consumes the waning hours of night in wrestling with the angel of the covenant. He refuses to relax his grasp until the coveted blessing is obtained. His brother's wrath is turned to grace, his hate to love; they meet in peace, and kiss each other; and thenceforward the earnest and successful suppliant is pronounced a prince who had power with God and prevailed, and held up as a conspicuous exemplar of the efficacy of prayer to all succeeding generations. To this day, with the Psalmist of Israel, when we plead most urgently with God, we would fain address Him as the God of Jacob who hears and answers prayer. Moses cries to the Lord, and the bitter waters of Marah are made sweet. He prays again, and the rock gushes with streams of living water which slake the thirst of

thousands. Israel, at the base of Sinai and in view of the dreadful tokens of Jehovah's presence, is guilty of defection from His service and bows down in worship to a calf of gold. The anger of God is kindled and threatened judgment hurtles like a storm over the guilty camp. Moses throws himself into the breach, prays for the pardon of his people, and the Almighty hand is arrested which was about to discharge the bolts of retributive justice upon an idolatrous and apostate race.

There are other passages, still, in which the case is even more clearly made out. I allude to those in which we are directed to pray for temporal blessings, and the promise extended that we shall be heard. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee." In this and similar passages we are directed to pray for deliverance from temporal evil, and the assurance is given that God will, in answer to prayer, accomplish it for us. In the words immediately preceding the text the apostle directs that, in the case of one who is sick, the elders of the church should be sent for to offer prayer for his recovery, and the declaration is made that the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him. It would seem superfluous to say that it is inconceivable that an influence which is merely internal to ourselves can deliver us from evil, or restore us to health. For if it be conceded that it is not our prayers, but the power of God which accomplishes these results, the theory of a subjective influence is confessedly relinquished, as the Scriptures assure us that that power is exerted in answer to prayer.

Joshua, the great leader of Israel, in the midst of conflict with their foes, prays that the sun and moon

might stand still, and the day pauses in its course that ample time might be furnished to reap the fruits of victory. David prays to God that his afflicted people might be spared from the ravages of the pestilence that was mowing them down by thousands, and the destroying angel stops in his path of desolation, closes his baleful wings and sheathes his devouring sword. Hezekiah, the sick king of Judah, turns his face to the wall and with weeping prays for his recovery. At the entreaty of the prophet Isaiah the shadow on the dial-plate goes backward ten degrees in attestation of the fact that God had heard his prayer, and fifteen years are added to his life. Elijah stretches himself upon the corpse of the widow's son, and cries unto the Lord: "O Lord, my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again"; the disembodied spirit returns. He takes the child alive in his arms, brings him down from the chamber of death, and places him in the bosom of his astonished and enraptured mother. The glorious prophet prays again. Single-handed and alone he copes with the banded prophets of Baal in the presence of his idolatrous countrymen. He calls upon the living God, and fire flashes from mid-heaven, rushes down upon the victim on the altar, and licks up the running water in the trenches. Once more he prays. On the top of Carmel he bows his head between his knees. He pleads for rain upon a parched and dying country; and the brazen heavens pour down the grateful floods, the iron earth drinks in the descending waters. Well may the apostle exclaim, in the words of the text, in referring to this illustrious instance of successful prayer, the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of

three years and six months; and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Jonah, from the bosom of the great deep, cries to God for deliverance, and is cast out upon dry land; and the wicked city of Nineveh, alarmed by his stern proclamation of her impending doom, prostrates herself before God in prayer, and averts the threatening ruin. Peter is cast into prison, bound with chains and watched by the vigils of a Roman guard. Prayer is made for him without ceasing by the assembled church. An angel descends into the dungeon, strikes off the chains from the prisoner's limbs, opens the prison-doors, and sends the liberated apostle to surprise the throng of suppliants with the answer to their prayers.

Such are some of the instances, my brethren, which the Scriptures furnish to illustrate the positive and productive efficacy of prayer, and to vindicate it from the representations of professed friends who would cripple its heavenly power by degrading it into an influence which is merely subjective and internal. And let us not be told that all that is proved by these cases is that there is a concurrence, a coincidence between prayer and these outward results. We might be content with such an admission, for it is fatal to the theory which has been considered. If the concurrence is that of an appointed antecedence and sequence, then prayer is not simply experimental. It is tied by divine appointment to the objective and outward result. It is necessary to its occurrence. It is that without which the outward result would not take place. So God has ordained and as He has been pleased to require prayer of us in order to His bestowal of blessings upon ourselves and others, and has declared that when effectual and fervent it availeth much, we accept His testimony, let the wise men of this world philosophize as they may.

CONSISTENCY OF PRAYER WITH NATURAL LAW

James v: 16. "*The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*"

In bringing the present series of discourses to a conclusion, I would today invite your attention, my friends, to the consideration of a specious objection, professing to be grounded in philosophical principles, which has frequently been urged against the utility, the efficacy, and even the possibility of prayer. It is contended that the world is governed by general laws which are fixed and uniform in their operation, and that, therefore, it is idle if not absurd to suppose that any emotions which we may experience, or any prayers which may be dictated by our desires, can exercise an influence upon the undeviating course of nature. No exceptions can be supposed to arise in favor of individuals. They must be content to have their lot assigned them under the general and impartial system of law. This objection to prayer has been forcibly and ingeniously expressed by Pope in his *Essay on Man*.

NOTE.—This sermon was also used as the basis of a baccalaureate discourse at Washington College, in 1869, during the presidency of General Robert E. Lee. The sermon was not preached as written, for in addition to the earnestness and spiritual fervor that always characterized Dr. Girardeau's preaching, on this occasion his heart was so stirred by his return to the State where, as chaplain, he had prayed and preached and suffered; the attendance of a large audience containing not only college students and professors, but also many distinguished visitors; and the presence of the former commander of the armies of the Confederacy, that he soon forgot his manuscript and preached with the same freedom and power that had so often thrilled the soldiers of the South. General Lee was among those who made no effort to control their emotions.

“Think we, like some weak prince, the Eternal Cause,
Prone for his favorites to reverse his laws?
Shall burning Etna, if a sage requires,
Forget to thunder, and recall her fires;
On air or sea new motions be imprest,
O blameless Bethel, to relieve thy breast;
When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
Shall gravitation cease, if you go by?”

This is the difficulty which I propose to examine; and it must be admitted that it possesses an apparent justification in the discoveries of science which gives it a certain weight with minds not thoroughly imbued with the doctrines of Scripture, or not convinced by their own actual experience of the incontestable benefits of prayer. I venture, however, to express the hope that an inquiry into the theory on which the objection is based will show that it lacks the support even from reason which at first it appears to furnish.

I. Let it now, in the first place, for the sake of argument, be assumed, what, however, I am not willing to concede as a fact, that the world of nature is governed simply and purely by general laws. The first question, in the way of definition, which would arise for settlement is, What is nature, what does it include? What is that which is stated to be the subject of this government of law? Evidently there is comprehended in the term both departments of what is called nature, the material and the spiritual, or, if that phraseology be objected to, matter and mind. In the position that the world is controlled by general laws it must be meant that the world of matter and the world of mind are alike under the operation of this system of rule. If it be contended that mind is but matter of a finer texture

and a more ethereal mould, then it is admitted that it forms no exception to the statement that nature is governed by law. If, on the other hand, it be urged that mind constitutes an exception to this statement on the ground that it is essentially different from matter and is controlled by influences which are peculiar to itself, then the position is clearly abandoned that the world is governed by general laws, for mind is obviously a part of the world, or of the system of nature, and those laws cannot be said to be general which do not apply to it. They are, in that case, limited to a certain department of nature. If it be granted, then, that mind as well as matter is a subject of this fixed and uniform government of general laws, I would call attention to the striking consideration that man in every age, condition and clime has been characterized by a conscious sense of dependence. He has always been sensible of the fact that he is hemmed in by limitations of various sorts, limitations upon his faculties and powers arising from their weakness, limitations springing from the influences exerted upon him by his fellow-men, and limitations imposed by natural circumstances which are beyond his control and which hedge him about on every hand. The conviction of weakness necessarily leads him to the consciousness of dependence, a consciousness sometimes manifesting itself in relation to other men, sometimes to external nature, and most frequently to a power which is felt to be above men and above nature itself. This universal sense of dependence has led very naturally to a universal disposition on the part of men to seek for help, and we are, accordingly, met by the fact that men in every age and country have been inclined to pray. Whatever may be the differences between them, in civilization, refine-

ment and learning, they are all characterized by the propensity to worship. Whether their religion has been of one sort or another, it invariably embodies the element of prayer. The Hottentot and the South-Sea Islander, as well as the Englishman and the German, offers prayer. Here, then, we are confronted by a fact of universal, or at least of well-nigh universal, existence. The completer the induction induced by observation, the stronger grows the conclusion of the universality of this phenomenon. We are, therefore, irresistibly impelled to the position that if human beings are controlled by any law, they are governed by the law of conscious dependence leading them to pray. If we are warranted in inferring the existence of a law from a wide induction of facts which are characterized by identity, we are justified in concluding that there is a law of prayer, for the induction upon which it is based is as extensive as the human race. Here, then, we find a general law which necessitates the offering of prayer; and it devolves upon those who maintain the objection to prayer, that it is inconsistent with the operation of the general laws of nature, to explain the curious anomaly that it is rendered necessary by one of those very laws themselves. But if the fact that men pray is one of universal existence, it would seem that there must be some provision made in the system of nature for meeting this fact, or human nature is a gigantic lie, and the scheme by which the world is governed is irreconcilable with itself. This supposition would destroy the foundation of the objection under consideration, inasmuch as it would concede that the world is under the control of laws which are out of harmony with each other and wanting in that adaptation to each other which a general system must involve.

Even granting, therefore, that the world is simply governed by general laws, we are obliged to admit that the propensity to pray is necessitated by these laws themselves. It is not for us who maintain another theory to explain the fact, but for those who contend that prayer is inconsistent with the reign of law to adjust it to their views.

I am not unaware that it may be said, in reply to this line of argument, that the induction upon which the law of prayer is professedly founded is not as complete as it has been represented to be; that it is "ignorance," which "is the mother of devotion," and that as men advance in the knowledge of the scheme of nature and of the laws which science reveals as controlling it, they see the inutility and absurdity of prayer. It must strike an impartial mind that the spirit in which this exception is conceived is an arrogant one, as it leaves out of account the fact that some of the most illustrious expounders of scientific laws have been distinguished by habits of devotion. It will hardly be maintained with seriousness that the prayers of such men as Newton, Locke, Bacon, Leibnitz, Pascal and Hamilton originated in their ignorance. Nor will it be denied that in many cases in which men have been negligent of the practice of prayer, and in some cases in which they have opposed and ridiculed the theory of prayer, the appalling exigencies of life and the dreadful solemnities of death have converted neglect into petition, and sneers into supplication. It is in such circumstances that the truth comes out, that the weakness of our nature is confessed, and the conscious need of help springs to the lips in the form of earnest entreaty. The dying infidel cried, "O God, if there be a God, have mercy on my soul, if I have a soul."

Speculate and theorize as we may, it is natural for men to offer prayer. They may not always pray aright, but it is a law of their being to pray. Prayer, therefore, is not inconsistent with the laws by which the world is governed, unless it be supposed that law is pitted against law, and nature is engaged in destroying itself.

II. In the second place, it is pertinent to inquire, What are the laws in accordance with which the world is governed? I say in accordance with which the world is governed, for it is obviously one thing to say that it is governed in accordance with law, and quite a different thing to say that it is governed by law. In the once instance it is affirmed that the governing power is law, in the other it may be held that the governing power is above law while it acts through it. The question being, then, what are the laws of nature; it is but fair to admit that there is a distinction demanded by the discussion which is to be noticed as existing between moral and natural law. A moral law may be defined to be a rule of duty. It supposes a lawgiver of whose will it is a formal expression binding the moral agent as a subject of moral government to a course of moral obedience. Let it be conceded that this is not the aspect of law in which it enters into the present discussion, and the question recurs, What are the laws of nature, whether they be regarded as impressed upon the world of matter or the world of mind? It would appear to be an uncontrollable conviction of our minds that back of the existence of laws there lies the existence of power, or of force. All are agreed as to the process by which we arrive at the conception of a natural law. When by a careful observation and collection of a sufficient number of particular facts

which closely resemble each other we proceed to arrange them into a class, we denominate the generalized statement thus attained a law, and we say that the facts took place in obedience or conformity to this law. But is it not manifest that this is not a complete account of the occurrence of the facts themselves? The question at once arises, What produced the facts, for facts are things done. What is that by which they are performed or accomplished? It will not do to say that they were produced by law, for law is only a generalization of the facts. That would be equivalent to saying that the facts produced themselves. The true answer is that they were produced by power operating in a fixed and regular manner. Natural law is but the fixed and uniform mode in which power operates to the production of results. We are accustomed to say that the solar system is governed by the law of gravitation. But when we proceed to analyze the language, we are driven to the conclusion that it is not a mere abstraction which we call the law of gravitation which holds the parts of the system together. There is the force of attraction which draws worlds to worlds, and keeps them in their appointed places. The same thing is true of all natural laws, of chemical affinity, electricity, magnetism, and others which might be mentioned. These are but expressions of the regular modes in which force operates to the production of certain results. We speak of the law of vegetable and of animal growth, but it is clear that there is something more than mere law, there is a power which causes the vegetable or the animal to grow. The law but expresses the method in which that power acts. When, therefore, it is said that the world is governed by certain laws, the meaning, to be intelligible, is that it is

controlled by power which operates in regular and uniform modes in producing the facts of nature. And here it may be remarked as deserving our notice that a discussion which has for some time been going on, and is now in progress, in the philosophical circles of Europe, has developed the theory, which is ably sustained, that all the forces of nature are but different modifications of one and the same original and central force. The attraction of gravitation and chemical affinity, for example, are but diverse manifestations of the same great force in different relations, and under dissimilar circumstances and conditions. I do not mention this as affording a ground of faith, but only as indicating the fact that the researches of science, when properly conducted, corroborate the doctrines of Scripture; and that the utterances of nature, in regard to subjects upon which she is competent to speak at all, are not out of harmony with the oracles of revelation. God's works and God's Word are the complement of each other.

III. The inquiry now arises, What is this great power which produces the facts of nature? Were I instituting a merely philosophical argument, the issue, at this stage, would have to be joined with the atheist upon the question whether this power be that of God, or one which is inherent in nature itself. I do not feel that I am called upon to enter into those lists. But it merits our attention that it is not inconsistent with their purpose for those who urge the objection to prayer that it is rendered useless by the operation of general laws, to admit that these laws are but manifestations of a power which is divine. This is the position of the pantheistic school, which numbers its disciples by thousands, and is supported by some of the

most splendid names in philosophy and letters. Concede to them their doctrine of the impersonality of God, and you admit the impossibility of prayer. For, to all intents and purposes, God is law and law is God, and it is the absurdest of all absurdities to suppose that prayer may be rationally offered to law. There must be a personal being before prayer can be conceived as intelligible or possible, and it is alike the deliverance of reason and of Scripture that the power which governs the world is that of an intelligent and personal God. The arguments by which even reason establishes this fundamental principle of religion might, did time permit, be impressively exhibited, but I must be content with only a brief intimation of one line of proof which appeals to the experience of every human being. It is derived from the testimony of our own consciousness. It is true, my brethren, that our knowledge of the great, the infinite God, is exceedingly small, even though He has been pleased to reveal Himself to us in His Word. But He has given us faculties by which we are able to apprehend somewhat of His existence and His attributes; otherwise the idea of God would be to us an impossibility and His name an unmeaning cipher. Man was originally made in the image of God, and we are able to rise to some conception of His nature and perfections from the imperfect but real analogies of our own consciousness. Were we not possessed of moral attributes it would be impossible for us to conceive of His moral excellencies; had we no intellect, we could not apprehend Him as an intelligent being; and had we no will and no conscience, we could not acknowledge Him as the Almighty Ruler of the world. From our possession of these faculties, it is competent for us to infer their

existence in Him, although in an infinitely higher degree of perfection. In the same way it is a legitimate process by which we infer from our consciousness of personality the fact of the personality of God. It is not intended to affirm that our consciousness of personality is direct and immediate. All that is necessary is to show that we are conscious of the possession of attributes which necessitate the conviction of the fact of our personality. It will not be denied that we are conscious of our individuality, of that characteristic which discriminates us from all other beings; that we are conscious of possessing intelligence, will and conscience; in short, that we are conscious of attributes inhering in us from which the influence is necessary and immediate that we are personal beings. This leads us to the conviction of God's personality. Although we may not be directly conscious of the fact, any more than we are directly conscious of the existence of God, we are irresistibly led to infer the divine personality, just as we are necessarily impelled to the inference of the divine existence. Every human being is conscious that he is different from everything else, that what is himself is not anything else, and that nothing else is himself. And the inference is clear, that as God is a person, He is different from everything else, that God is not the universe and the universe is not God. All things were created by Him and in Him they live and move and have their being, but they are not He, and He is not they. This must be so, or we are greater than God. It is the fact of our endowment with the noble principle of personality which lifts us, poor as we are, immeasurably above the brutes and the sublimest features of the natural world. And shall we deny to God an excellence which distinguishes us?

The Pantheist is met by the dilemma,—either we are not persons and then our nature is a lie, or we are persons and then as, according to his hypothesis, we are God and God is we, God is a person, and the whole pantheistic theory is overthrown. The conviction of the divine personality is indestructibly imbedded in the heart of the human race. Wherever we find man, in every age and clime, we are met by “oracles, altars and priests” as attestations of the belief that personal Deity exists, that men may worship Him, and that He may receive the worship of men. And this great truth so loudly and unmistakably proclaimed by human consciousness is, of course, the fundamental idea in which revelation is grounded. There must be a personal God or it is impossible to conceive that He could communicate to intelligent beings the knowledge of Himself, and invite them to the exalted privilege of holding communion with Him. The fact of the divine personality is stamped upon the records of nature, and blazes in letters of light upon the awful pages of a written revelation. To strike it out of the inmost convictions of our minds is to dash out the lights upon the altar of our souls, and to render religion itself a mockery and a cheat. To blot it from the tablets of Scripture is to quench the rising dawn of religious hope and consign the idea of a Bible and a scheme of redemption to the region of impossibilities.

When, therefore, we affirm that the world is not simply governed by law, and that there is a power which lies back of law, and operates through it to the production of the facts of nature, we do not convey the impression that this is a blind and impersonal power. It is the sublime and active energy of an infinite per-

sonal God whose reign is above law, while it is administered through it; a Being who

“Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glowes in the stars, and rustles in the trees;
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Speads undivided, operates unspent.”

Let it be conceded, then, that the power which governs the world through law is a personal God and you reach the doctrine of the possibility of prayer. We cannot pray to law, but we can pray to the God who made law and uses it as an instrument, a plan upon which He creates, develops and controls a system of order, harmony and beauty.

IV. But, in the fourth place, admitting the personality of God and the consequent possibility of prayer, it will still be urged that the difficulty has been shifted, but not removed. For if God governs the world by general laws, the same objection exists to the utility and efficacy of prayer. The system of government is fixed and uniform and determines beforehand the destiny of the individual. Where, then, is the room for prayer? To this the answer is obvious. There is no impossibility, even on rational grounds, of conceiving that God has in the ordination of the system of law by which He administers the government of the world made provision for prayer as an element in the scheme. He may have established between it and the results which are sought by it the relation of means to ends, and then prayer, so far from being inconsistent with the operation of law, is involved in its development and rendered certainly successful by its operation. It would be divested of contingency, and

possess, when sincerely offered, the guarantee and assurance of success. I cannot do better than by quoting, on this point, the remarks of an able living writer, who combines with the acuteness of a philosopher the humility and the faith of a Christian. Says Dr. McCosh: "Dr Chalmers supposes that prayer may be answered in one or other of two ways in perfect accordance with the ordinary procedure of God. He supposes that prayer and its answer may be connected together as cause and effect, that they may form a sequence of a very subtle kind, more subtle than any of the sequences of the most latent physical substances, and not, therefore, observable, except by those who have that nice spiritual discernment which is communicated by faith. Or, he supposes that God may interpose among the physical agents beyond that limit to which human sagacity can trace the operation of law. . . . He might, for instance, change the laws which regulate the weather, and send a storm or a calm at any given place or time; or He might modify the laws by which the living functions of the human body are regulated, and send health or disease, and no man be able to say whether there has been an interposition or not. But is it necessary," says Dr. McCosh, "to resort to either of these ingenious theories? Is there not a more obvious means by which God can answer the prayer of faith? It is not necessary to suppose that prayer and its answer form a separate law of nature, for the answer may come as the result of other laws arranged for this very purpose. Nor is it needful to suppose that God interposes to change His own laws. The analogy of His method of operation in other matters would rather incline us to believe that He has so arranged these laws that by their

agency He may answer prayer without at all interfering with them. . . . His agents were at first ordained and marshalled by Him for the accomplishment of all the wise designs of His government; and among other ends they may bring the blessings for which faith is expected to supplicate. He sends an answer to prayer in precisely the same way as He compasses all His other moral designs, as He conveys blessings and inflicts judgments. He does not require to interfere with His own arrangements, for there is an answer provided in the arrangement made by Him from all eternity. How is it that God sends us the bounties of His providence? how is it that He supplies the many wants of His creatures? how is it that He encourages industry? how is it that He arrests the plots of wickedness? how is it that He punishes in this life notorious offenders against His law? The answer is, by the skilful pre-arrangements of His providence, whereby the needful events fall out at the very time and in the way required. When the question is asked: How does God answer prayer? We give the very same reply,—it is by a pre-ordained appointment when God settled the constitution of the world and set all its parts in order.”

These views, so far as they go, I believe to be as just as they are forcibly expressed, and they are the more striking as they do not indicate a method of answering prayer that is inconsistent with the fact, which every fresh discovery of science tends to confirm, that God controls the world through the medium of natural laws. But I confess that if this statement of the mode by which God answers prayer were intended to embrace the whole truth upon the subject, which, however, is not the case on the part of the writer quoted, it

would fail to present an aspect of the subject which is inexpressibly dear to the heart of the Christian, and with which he could not for an instant consent to part. That view is that God is personally present always and everywhere in the working of the scheme of His providence, and that the blessings which are conferred in answer to prayer are bestowed by His immediate personal act. He is not, in accordance with the ancient philosophical idea, though admitted to be personal, simply the first cause of all things, who constructed the world as a vast machine, impressed upon it its laws, and withdrew from a subsequent immediate interposition in its affairs. He is not, so to speak, located at the remote end of the series of second causes. His power immediately pervades the whole series in all its minutest details, circumstances and relations. He is perpetually present with every part of it, and as His personality can no more be divided than His essence, He is personally present to guide, to manage, and to energize the entire system in all its parts. Nor is He present with the world, conceived as a great living organism, a mere principle of development of which its life is the general result and its parts are but the special modifications. That would be to deny His personality and to make Him substantially identical with the world and the world with Him. He is the principle of life, and the source of power, but He is a person who imparts life, a person who infuses power. He is different from the world while He is with it, and the world is different from Him while it is in Him. He giveth to all life and breath and all things. In Him all creatures live and move and have their being. Let us take this view into connection with the other, and we are able to see how, without infringing the estab-

lished order of natural law, God may provide for our wants, listen to our petitions, and bestow the answers to prayer by His own personal and immediate agency. This is the precious doctrine of a special providence, so clearly taught us by the Scriptures, without which the world would be but a cold and dreary realm under the sway of an iron system of law, with no God to whom we could draw near in sweet personal communion, and from whom we could derive a present help amid the stormy vicissitudes of life. No, my brethren, we are not under the rigid reign of naked and absolute law. We are not doomed by the stern necessities of our being to pray to mere abstractions, to cry to no purpose, with the false prophets of old, "O Baal, hear us, O Baal, hear us!" We are under the special providence of a personal God who clothes the lilies, feeds the ravens, notices the death of the sparrow, and bows down a listening ear to the faintest breathings of true desire from the humblest broken hearts of His creatures.

V. I hasten to a conclusion with the remark, that the God who rules the world has been pleased in His word to reveal Himself to us under the relations of a Father, a Savior, and a Friend, and graciously invites us to pray to Him as He is made known to us in these lovely and endearing characters. It is with a feeling of relief that we emerge from the swamps and thickets of a tangled and abstract discussion into the open fields and cheering sunlight of God's blessed word. Here the plainest and most unlettered believer in Jesus may take his stand and invincibly maintain his ground against the most subtle and specious assaults upon his faith of philosophy and science falsely so called. God speaks to him. It is enough. He accepts the divine testimony

and relies upon it though a world should pronounce it a lie. And what the word of God declares to him finds a response in his own experience which the storms of infidelity cannot beat down, or the jeers of skepticism silence. Yes, my friends, the Great Being who created the world, stamps His laws upon it, and manages its affairs by His infinite wisdom and almighty providence—the God who thunders in the heavens and rides upon the wings of the wind, proclaims Himself to us worthless sinners as our Father in Christ Jesus His Son. We are taught to address Him as “our Father in heaven.” He thus tenderly expostulates with us amidst the waywardness of early life: “Wilt thou not from this time say, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?” He instructs us to say, “Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not.” Hear how movingly He appeals to our own emotions, and derives from them exhortations to us to confide in His paternal love in all our weaknesses and distresses: “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are but dust. Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on her son? Yea, she may forget, yet will I remember thee. For a small moment I have forsaken thee, but with everlasting mercies will I have compassion on thee.” “If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” and is this so? Then, if He be indeed our Father, tender, merciful and pitiful; surely as His children we may come to Him and make known to Him our requests. Sick, poor, needy, blind, miserable, naked, we will come

to Him and tell Him all our wants. And can a Father's heart be steeled against the entreaties of His children who cry to Him from the depths of such afflictions? Tell us not He governs the world by general laws and cannot listen to the prayers of individuals. And shall a Father's laws imprison the outgoings of a Father's heart? Who would ever dream that the more perfectly an earthly parent administers the government of his household and manages its affairs by wise rules and systematic arrangements, the less likely He would be to hear the requests of His children? And why should God be prevented by the laws which He Himself administers from answering the prayers of His children? Of what avail is it that He is our Father and we His children if we cannot make bold to come into His presence, to cling to His knees and ask His paternal benediction? Let men of science sneer as they may at the fancied inefficacy and absurdity of prayer, God is our Father, and we can pray to Him, and He will hear our voice. "Let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." He gave His Son to die for us; how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?

But what, above all, gives us assurance of the efficacy of our prayers is the fact that the procedures of providence are instituted and the laws of the world are administered by One who is at once a Savior, a Brother, and a Friend. "The Father," said the Lord Jesus, in His parting words to His disciples, "the Father hath given all things into My hands." All things are put in subjection under His feet, and nothing is excepted from His sway, but He who did put all things under Him. The hands that were pierced with the

nails of Calvary wield the sceptre of limitless dominion. The head that was lacerated and dishonored with the crown of thorns is graced with many crowns and blazes with diadems that symbolize a manifold and universal rule. There is not an element of nature, not a force of nature, not a living being of nature, which Jesus does not hold in His power and use at His will. He purchased the control of the world in the name of His people by the price of His blood. Nor does His empire stop here. It is established above the throne of death and sweeps away, parallel with the future destiny of men, across the dread borders of time and eternity into the invisible realm of disembodied spirits. "I am He," He triumphantly exclaims, "that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore. Amen. And have the keys of hell and of death." And let it be remembered, as a source of unspeakable consolation to us, that this administration of providence, this control of the laws by which the world is governed, is committed to the hands of the Lord Jesus for the benefit and salvation of His people. "All things," says the great apostle, addressing believers, "all things are yours; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." And can we believe that the laws of nature which Christ Himself administers and through which He displays His power shall ever be barriers betwixt His heart and the prayers of His people? No, my brethren, the Savior who died for us, the Brother who passed through the flaming furnace of affliction that He might know how to sympathize with us, will tolerate no impediment to the communication of His love to His people, or the passage of His people's prayers to Him.

THE REST OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Hebrews iv:9. "*There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God.*"

The first part of this epistle is occupied in showing that the advantages accruing to the Hebrews from their profession of Christianity were superior to those which they would have enjoyed had they continued their adherence to Judaism. In an elaborate comparison which the apostle institutes between Christ and the ministries of the old dispensation, he proves the infinite superiority of the Savior to the prophets, to the angels through whose hands the law was dispensed, to Moses, and to the Aaronic priesthood. And in the argument in which the text occurs he evinces the pre-eminence of Jesus over Joshua as a leader, and of the rest into which he introduces the people of God over that into which Israel was conducted by their illustrious captain. In the prosecution of this branch of the comparison the apostle mentions several kinds of rest, in order to show what was not and what is that rest which remaineth for the people of God. In the first place, he adverts to the rest into which God entered when he ceased from the works of creation, of which the Sabbath was originally designed to be a reminder and a monument. Had man remained in His primitive integrity he would have enjoyed a rest in God of which

NOTE.—The purpose of this sermon was evidently to comfort those whose hearts were sore. A note says: "Delivered in the Second Presbyterian Church, Charleston, in the summer of 1865—the year when the war closed—to a great congregation from all the dismantled Presbyterian churches of the city."

the perpetual recurrence of the Sabbath was a beautiful type. But, as he sinned, that natural institute was suited at once to remind him of the rest which he had lost, and to convince him of his need of another. Neither, therefore, the rest into which God as Creator entered, nor the Sabbath which was its sign, could be that which now remains to the people of God. Nor, argues the apostle, can the temporal rest into which Israel was led by Joshua be that which still exists for us. For long after the occupation of the promised land and the enjoyment of the blessings it contained, the Holy Spirit through David made mention of another day of rest. If Joshua had given them rest, then would not God have spoken of another day. When, then, the apostle expresses it as his conclusion that there remaineth a rest to the people of God, he does not mean to intimate that there is no present rest which it is possible to attain, and that the future alone can disclose it, but that, over and above those other sorts of rest which he had mentioned, there remains another which is to be discriminated from them. The last kind of rest to which he alludes is that which is brought to our notice in his declaration, that "he that is entered into his rest he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from His." I am unable to understand these words, unless the reference be to Christ. The argument appears to be that as God, as Creator, finished His works and entered into rest, so Christ, as Mediator and Redeemer, has closed His labors and entered into His rest. And as the Sabbath originally was designed to be a sign of rest from the works of creation, the Lord's day is intended to represent to us the rest which succeeded the labors of redemption. Now, as Jesus acted in the capacity of a public person—as a federal head

and leader of His people—in accomplishing His mediatorial functions, in the same character He entered into rest. He has secured for them a rest into which they are exhorted to enter by faith. To believe is to enter into that rest, to disbelieve is to be excluded from it. He who believes enters now into it. For, declares the apostle, we which have believed do enter into rest. The rest, therefore, into which Christ introduces His people by means of their faith in His atoning labors is that which remaineth for the people of God, the only, the true Sabbatism of the soul. Though in its own nature perfect, it is in the present life, in consequence of the corruptions which exist in believers, partial and incomplete in the extent of its realization. The day will come when, concurrently with the perfect sanctification of the soul, it will be consummate in degree as well as in nature. The heavenly rest is but the complement of that which the believer now enjoys in Christ. He who now rests by faith in his Redeemer will ultimately rest in heaven. But in each case He who confers the rest is Christ.

The question now occurs, what is the nature of that rest which remaineth for the people of God, and into which Jesus as their leader conducts them? The term rest is a correlative one. It stands related both to labor and to pain. He who ceases from wearisome and exhausting toil is said to rest, and so with him who is relieved from torturing pain. The soldier, who in a parched climate and under a burning sun has been exhausted by a day's march, knows the sweetness of rest, when at evening he stretches his wearied limbs on some leafy bed, and composes himself to slumber. The sick man, who for long days and nights has tossed on his couch, scorched by fever or racked by pain, is prepared

to understand the gratefulness of rest. I shall endeavor to show that both of these elements enter into the composition of that rest which Jesus promises to His people.

I. It may be remarked, in the first place, that this rest involves a cessation of those anxious and futile labors by which we attempt to secure our justification.

When men are profoundly convinced that in consequence of their sins there is a breach betwixt them and their Maker; that He is their judicial enemy; that His broken law demands their punishment, and His holiness, justice, and truth conspire to enforce this claim, they address themselves to the discharge of duties and the performance of labors in the hope that they will thus be enabled to avert their doom, and propitiate the favor of God. But there are two insuperable difficulties which oppose the success of their schemes. The sentence is already pronounced which ensures their condemnation on the ground of past offences, and it is impossible that they should, by their own efforts, furnish an adequate expiation of their guilt, and a satisfactory reparation to the divine government. No finite sacrifices will avail to atone for the infinite guiltiness of their sins. When all their prayers have been offered, all their tears been shed, all their arduous toils been accomplished, the barriers to reconciliation to God are discovered to be just as impassable as ever, and the prospect of reaching the end of their efforts as remote as when they commenced them. Unfortunately for them, too, the sinful principle within them, which no endeavors of their own can eradicate, is so intensely hostile to the worship and service of God that all the labors which they expend in that direction are attended necessarily with perpetual and consuming misery. In-

stead of attaining rest they increase their unrest. Their convictions of the necessity of laboring are enhanced by their disappointments, and their disappointments are deepened by the mortifying failure of their efforts. In this deplorable condition Jesus offers them rest. He reveals, by His gospel, the fact that He has, as the substitute of sinners, taken their place, assumed their legal obligations, obeyed the law in their room, in His life furnishing perfect obedience to its precepts, and in His expiatory death exhausting its awful curse; and that having finished these, His mediatorial labors, He has entered into rest and secured for those who believe in Him exemption from the necessity of incurring vain and painful labors for the purpose of attaining their own justification. The work in order to justification has been done and perfectly done by Him. To that end there remains nothing further to be done by the sinner save only to accept, by faith, His vicarious work, and to cease from all labors of his own. When, therefore, the question is asked by the anxious and inquiring sinner, What work must I do that I may be saved, the answer invariably is from Christ and His apostles alike: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Faith is a confession of impotence. The believer's language is, I can do nothing to save myself; I renounce my own work as utterly worthless; I accept the work of the Savior and implicitly rely upon that and that alone. He who believes has the labors of Christ imputed to him as if he had performed them in his own person, and receives the result of those labors—an entrance for his vexed and troubled soul into the rest that remains for God's people.

He desists from his anxious and fruitless toil to win his own justification. He is justified in Christ, and

being so justified, he obtains, without any works of his own, that "peace of God which passeth all understanding." As Jesus entered into His rest when He ceased from His labors, the soul that believes in Him and appropriates His works as its own passes with the Savior into the same peaceful and blessed condition.

II. The second element of the rest which the believer enjoys in Christ is his exemption from the tortures of a guilty and accusing conscience.

The question whether we enjoy any true and substantial rest of spirit in this painful life depends upon the answer which we are able to give to another question: De we possess a peaceful or a guilty and troubled conscience? This faculty has been shown by an able living writer to unite in itself the threefold functions of a law, a witness and a judge. In the first of these aspects, it reflects the majesty and authority of that eternal standard of rectitude which is founded in the very nature of God. The original rule of conduct indestructibly imbedded in the constitution of man, is, when unbiassed by the false and perverted representation of facts furnished by the understanding, in perfect accord with the Scriptures. Though not like them formally expressed in a written document, it is indelibly inscribed upon the tablets of the soul. It implicitly contains those fundamental principles of rectitude which are capable of application to every mental state of which we can be conscious, and to every act which it is possible for us to perform. It is God's law in the human soul, its utterances are His utterances, and when it speaks, it thunders with His voice, and clothes itself with the awful sanctions of His authority. Disobedience to conscience is disobedience to God. In its second phase—that of a witness—it takes notice of all our

moral acts, keeps, so to speak, a record of our sins, and is prepared to furnish its true and unerring testimony against us in every instance of transgression. Nor are its records ever completely lost or destroyed. As if graven with the point of a diamond in the everlasting rock, its memoranda of our offences are absolutely indelible. They may for the time be forgotten by the sinner himself; he may suppose them to be buried in the grave of the past beyond the power of resurrection to resuscitate them; but when, in sudden and critical emergencies the fears of the future are thoroughly aroused as in moments of imminent peril, or in the solemn hour of death, bursting into light through all the overlapping inscriptions of years, these records of guilt, filed away in the court of conscience, stand out in bold relief to the startled memory of the transgressor, and are fastened as charges upon him by a witness which speaks with the veracity of God. Its power is still more sensibly felt, and its sanctions become still more impressive, when we reflect that, in addition to the characteristics which have been mentioned, it discharges the functions of a judge. Itself the witness of offences against its own legal requirements, it pronounces upon the transgressor the sentence of condemnation. Nor is it possible to slight its judicial decisions. It speaks for God when it delivers them, and refers for their authentication to His supreme authority and for their ultimate enforcement to His final bar. It sits, in this point of view, on a minor judgment-seat in the soul of man, arraigns the offender with divine authority before it, with divine majesty utters the sentence of condemnation, and binds him over to a higher court, to a more awful judicial day, and to the tremendous solemnities of the last assize. It is no marvel,

then, that it has power by its thunders to break the slumber of the sinner, and to rob him of his fancied rest. It is possible, when conscience smiles upon us, when its sentence of approbation supports the soul, to breast with serenity the severest storms of adversity, to oppose with singular constancy the unreasonable demands of faction, and to pass with undaunted fortitude to the rack, the gibbet and the stake. He who is sustained by an enlightened conscience is supported by the power of God; and he may well exclaim, If God is for me, who can be against me? "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." When, on the contrary, conscience frowns upon the transgressor, when its sentences, muttered in the depths of the soul like the first growls of a coming tempest herald the swift approach of the final judgment, it dissolves his natural courage, unstrings the resolution of his heart, blanches his face with mortal paleness, peoples his dying chamber with shapes of terrors, crowds the valley of the death-shade with executioners of vengeance, and blackens the awful future before him with the aspect of an eternal storm. The most consuming care which one can experience is derived from the accusations of a guilty conscience. It admits of no rest. It is more to be dreaded than all the pains of the body, and all the engines of physical torture. Happily for us, my brethren, a refuge is provided for us from this intolerable evil. From the pangs of an accusing conscience Jesus Christ offers us rest. There is no other remedy for our unrest but in the atoning blood of the Lamb. The infinite mercy of God in furnishing a glorious substitute who assumes our guilt and consents to undergo its penal consequences,

affords us an escape from the dreadful lash of conscience. Himself holy, harmless and undefiled, Jesus suffers our sins to be accounted His, permits them to be bound upon His soul, and yields Himself a victim to the punishment which must otherwise have sunk us to the lowest hell. His death discharges the believer from the obligation to suffer in his own person—His blood quenches the lightnings of an angry conscience, silences its accusations, and purges it from dead works to serve the living God. Who can estimate the relief which faith in a dying Savior brings to the poor sinner whose troubled conscience had made this life a burden, and the life to come an object of unutterable dread? None, none but he who has experimentally known the sweetness of that rest which the conscience-smitten spirit finds in the grace of a compassionate Redeemer. There be some of us, perhaps, in this assembly today to whom it is not difficult to recall a time when we suffered from legal convictions, from the goadings of an unpurged conscience, and the apprehensions of eternal wrath.

The fires of passion raged within, and there was no means of quenching them; the conflict with wicked habits grew fiercer and more bitter, and no succor was nigh; the commandment pressed with power upon our souls, sin revived, and we died; and ever as the perception of our criminality became more vivid, the sentence of doom uttered from within us like the blast of a trumpet waxed louder and louder. At every step we seemed to be confronted with the terrors of Sinai—its blackness, smoke and flame,—and to draw nearer and nearer to the verge of a fiery and bottomless abyss. Darkness encompassed us, tempestuous billows rolled over our heads, and our fainting souls took hold on

hell. In that hour of extremity a voice of ineffable tenderness, as of one in quest of the wretched and the lost, was heard exclaiming: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." We listened, wondered, ventured to come, believed the gracious word, and found, in the bosom of Jesus, rest from the pangs of conscience and the fears of hell. The night of despair was suffused with the morning light of heaven, and our hearts broke forth into the grateful song: "Thou hast delivered our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling." Conscience, pacified by the blood of Jesus, withdrew its charges, acquitted us of guilt, and bade us enter into that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

III. A third element, which I would mention as constituting that rest which remaineth to the people of God, is deliverance from the tyrannical dominion of sin and Satan.

Christ gives us rest not only from bondage to the guilt of sin, but also to its power, and He affords us, moreover, deliverance from the galling yoke of the Devil. This He accomplishes, I conceive, in a three-fold manner. In the first place, He extends to us in our conflicts with our spiritual foes the powerful succor of His grace. I use this word in the sense of an active and energetic principle. When employed in reference to the subject of justification the term grace, so far as I am able to perceive, always expresses one of two things: either the favorable disposition of God to sinners, or that state of favor into which they are introduced by the justifying righteousness of Christ. "We are justified by grace" would be an instance of the former signification; "we have access into this

grace wherein we stand" is an example, probably, of the latter. When used in reference to sanctification the term not unfrequently signifies that vital energy, that powerful, operative principle, which the Holy Spirit employs as a positive element of strength in the soul of the believer. When, for example, the Savior, in answer to the prayer of the apostle that the thorn in His flesh might be removed, assured him that His grace was sufficient for him, I am inclined to think that He promised him the aid of an efficacious principle which would strengthen him for the endurance of the trial and give him the victory over the temptation.

When by faith we become united to Christ we are made partakers of this grace of the Holy Spirit which was purchased for us by the blood of Jesus, and is dispensed by Him in proportion to the exigencies of His people. Without this divine gift we can do nothing, our attempts to resist the dominion of our lusts are miserable failures, and we become the sport of our temptations and the prey of the Devil. With it the feeblest believer is in a measure, even in this life, emancipated from bondage to his corruptions and blessed with rest from the tyrannical dominion of Satan. It positively reinforces his weakness, is an actual strength in his impotence, and gives him success in conflicts which would otherwise but plunge him deeper into a wretched slavery of the soul.

In the next place, Christ communicates to us rest from the oppressive power of our sins by generating in us that faith which is the victory that overcometh the world. There is a remarkable passage in the Book of Revelation in which the saints, who have attained to heavenly felicity, are represented as having overcome the Devil by the blood of the Lamb and the word

of their testimony. Here we have indicated the instrument by which we successfully oppose the assaults of Satan, a potent talisman which, when borne with us, dissolves the spell of passion and breaks the force of temptation. It is faith in the blood of the Lamb. Although there may be other modes by which these results are accomplished through the blood of Jesus, it appears to me that the chief significance of this passage lies in this, that a view by faith of the blood of the Lamb poured out for sin conveys such a sense of its enormity as induces abhorrence of it, and the profoundest penitence for its commission. He alone is prepared to cope with sin who beholds its effect as exhibited in the effusion of Jesus' blood. And He who is not melted to penitence by that sight, and is not moved by it to abandon his sins, will in vain appeal to any other motive or employ any other means to subdue the power of his lusts. But by imparting to us a faith which finds in the blood of Jesus the most powerful argument for resistance to temptation, the Savior communicates to us rest from the dominion of sin and the oppression of the Devil.

It may further be observed that Christ gives us rest from the tyranny of sin, as He extends to us a sympathy which cheers us in the depression which results from conflicts with temptation. This sympathy is the fruit of His own experience while undergoing the furious assaults of the Devil. Taught Himself by bitter discipline in the school of trial, He extends His sympathy to us heartily and freely while we encounter difficulties akin to His own. This is the most precious cordial which we can have when fainting amidst our contests with sin and Satan. We rest in it. It soothes the anguished spirit and stimulates us to renewed exer-

tions in a battle which we are conscious we are not fighting alone. Christ is with us. That fact gives us partial rest in the very drift of the conflict on earth, and conveys the assurance of a perfect triumph and a complete rest at last.

IV. Still another element of the rest which Jesus confers consists in relief from the painful disquietudes which spring from temporal afflictions, and from changes in our earthly circumstances.

The chief sting of affliction lies in the conviction that it is penal. The sense of ill-desert is the natural and necessary effect of our sins; and when we regard the sufferings of life as punitive visitations, as evidences of the fact that God is dealing with us in the capacity of an unsparing Judge, and that His dispensations toward us are the measures of retributive justice, our condition is truly deplorable. Cut off by the very pressure of sorrow from all external sources of relief, we find in our inward consciousness no mitigation of the trial. On the contrary, reflection upon our own state serves only to convince us that we suffer justly, and this conviction lends additional poignancy to the arrow that pierces the soul. All is dark without, and no ray of light arises from within. If we look to the world it presents the aspect of a stormy sea that threatens to overwhelm us; if we look to our own souls, the tempest equally rages there; if we look to God, His throne is pavilioned with clouds and His face is shadowed with frowns. We hear nothing but the roar of the tempest and the angry voice of the Judge. It is the province of the gospel, and of it alone, to furnish us rest in the midst of these trials. The vicarious work of Christ changes the very character of our afflictions. Believing in Him and justified by His righteousness,

we are freed from the condemning sentence of the law. "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." It is not to be denied that the believer undergoes suffering from the afflictions which are common to men, or even from trials which necessarily result from His profession of the gospel. It may be admitted that it is a law of Christ's kingdom on earth that His people shall have tribulation and that they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But it is equally true that all the afflictions which the believer is called upon to encounter are stripped of their penal complexion, and constitute a salutary discipline which is intended to benefit and not to destroy. He is entitled to regard them not as the retributive measures of a Judge, but the kindly corrections of a Father. So far from being a penalty, they are the tokens of paternal love. This consideration cannot but deprive our earthly trials of their chief power to inflict anguish. It reconciles us to a discipline which checks our waywardness, refines our graces and ripens for the inheritance of the saints in light. It calms the perturbations of our spirits and gives us a measure of rest in the midst of our anxieties, perplexities, and griefs. Convinced that God is reconciled to us by the blood of Jesus, and that like as a father pitieth his children, so He pities us; assured that Christ, by His sufferings and death, has forever removed from us the curse of the law, and transmuted our afflictions into blessings; cheered by the precious testimony of the blessed Spirit, concurring with that of our own spirits that we are the children of God and heirs of all the priceless and everlasting treasures of His kingdom, we possess a peace which passes all understanding and imparts a serene rest to our souls

while struggling with trials and tossed by grief. In this point of view, the paradoxes of the apostle become experimental verities: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

These consolatory considerations are enhanced, too, by the reflection that the administration of divine providence is committed into the hands of the Lord Jesus, hands that for us were once nailed to the accursed tree, but now for us hold the reins of universal empire. He who sits upon the throne of providence, controlling its energies, arranging its measures, and meting out its dispensations, is He who, standing in the midst of His church, is not ashamed to call them brethren. It is He who assumed our nature and was made in all things like unto His brethren, that He might be merciful and faithful to them. To Him all power is intrusted. All the elements of nature, all the forces of providence, all the powers of heaven, earth, and hell are at His supreme and absolute disposal. He speaks, and cherubim and seraphim hasten to obey; He thunders, and the nations of the earth tremble at the sound; He utters His majestic voice, and devils cry out in anticipation of their doom. His will is omnipotence, His realm the universe, and His sceptre the symbol of illimitable and resistless sway. When He bows the heavens and comes down to vindicate His people, the whole earth is exhorted to make a joyful noise; the sea to roar with the fulness thereof; the floods to clap their hands; the hills to rejoice; and all the inhabitants of the world to shout before Him. Zion hears the thundering acclaim and is glad, and all

the daughters of Judah rejoice because of His judgments. My brethren, if there be any thought which is suited to allay our fears and to give us rest amidst our earthly trials, and the fluctuations of our earthly lot, it is that Jesus reigns; that the infinite resources of providence are lodged in a brother's hands, and that all its measures in relation to His people are the suggestions of a brother's heart. He allots our afflictions and appoints our changes, and we may safely rest in the conviction that, as He is a Savior and not a Destroyer, He makes His Providence a minister to our good. Under His administration nature becomes grace, and the scheme of providence is merged into the scheme of redemption. His infinite power obeys the promptings of His infinite love. To know the wants of His people is to supply them; to know their distresses is to relieve them; to know their dangers is to defeat them. His all-seeing and compassionate eye watches us toiling, rowing amidst night and storm, and He comes to us walking upon the sea. It is enough that He is present. His voice sets our fears at rest, and sinks the heaving billows of our afflictions into profound and settled calm. This, then, is our relief. We rest in providence, for providence is Christ's and Christ is ours.

In this connection it may not inappropriately be added that in the rest which Jesus bestows we experience deliverance from the perplexing doubts which the mysterious dispensations of providence not unfrequently excite.

There are problems arising from the dealings of providence with the race which it is not intended that we should solve in this world and under the present limitation of our faculties. But even in these cases it

is the tendency of faith in Christ to lead us, when we cannot understand, to submit and adore. There are other difficulties connected with providential dispensations that are only insoluble, or, at least, productive of unhappiness to the unbeliever. They are resolved by a faith which contemplates the conduct of providence as committed to the wisdom and the mercy of one who is at once a Ruler and a Savior, a Sovereign and a Friend. What is darkness to others is light to the believer. Christ is the interpreter as well as the administrator of providence, and faith in Him not seldom places us in possession of an exposition which He is pleased to furnish, and which puts an end to doubt. Especially does our personal interest in the protecting care of providence become clear and undoubted when we repose implicit faith in Jesus. He who did not think it beneath Him to die for us, will not think it beneath Him to provide for us. He has assured us that He cares for the sparrow, and that we are of more value than many sparrows. Poor and insignificant we may be, but He has spread His garment over us and acknowledged us as His kinsmen. Included with Him in the relations of the everlasting covenant, we dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty: we cover ourselves with His feathers and under His wings we trust. Amid privation and want, amid afflictions and distresses, amid pestilence and death, we rest in that vigilant and almighty providence whose care for us was purchased by the blood of Jesus, and whose unwasting resources are pledged to our relief.

V. In the remarks which have been made, the position is taken that we are privileged in this life to enjoy

strike his ear and disturb his soul no more. The revolutionary changes which hurl thrones and dynasties into the dust shall have no influence on that immovable kingdom which, founded in the blood of Jesus, and conserved by the power of the everlasting covenant, shall survive the shaking of the heavens and the conflagration of the earth. The night of doubt, perplexity, and unrest shall give way to the morning light of an unclouded and eternal day. The mysteries of providence will no longer tempt to skepticism, and the perfect temper of submissiveness to the divine will, which is the result of the believer's earthly discipline, will forever preclude the excursions of the imagination which might tend to excite discontent even with a heavenly sphere of activity and joy. An unbroken sabbatism shall reign within him, and a perpetual Sabbath shall lie before him in which to employ the habitudes of his glorified spirit in the ministrations of the celestial sanctuary. He shall come home to Jesus, the dwelling-place of His people, and rest with Him forever. And sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, with the confessors, martyrs, and ministers of Jesus, with sainted kindred, brethren and friends, he shall rest in a communion which will realize the idea of a perfect society, and prove an everlasting banquet of the soul.

UNBELIEF IN CHRIST THE GREAT- EST OF SINS

John xvi:9 *“Of sin, because they believe not on Me.”*

In the affecting valedictory discourse which the Savior delivered to His disciples, immediately before His last passion, He assures them that it was expedient that He should leave them. The reason which He assigned was that if He did not go away the Comforter would not come to them, but if He departed He would send Him unto them. In the wonderful economy of redemption, the Scriptures inform us that each person in the Godhead discharges a peculiar function. As it was the office of the Father to conceive the plan of salvation, and to commission the Son to fulfil it by His atoning sufferings on earth and His intercessions in heaven, so it is the province of the Spirit to apply the benefits which Christ purchased for His people by His blood. But in order that that blessed Agent should come upon this gracious and salutary mission, it was necessary that the Savior, after having offered Himself as an expiatory sacrifice, should, as the High Priest of His elect people, ascend into the heavens, and by presenting the memorials of His death, and pressing His sacerdotal pleas, should actually obtain the saving offices of the Holy Ghost. Thus securing them He imparts, from His mediatorial throne, the spirit of all grace to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. The text gives us the statement of Christ

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as to the mode by which the Holy Spirit would convince men of sin. "He will reprove," or convince, "the world of sin, because they believe not on Me." It is obvious that our Savior regarded unbelief in Himself as the greatest, the most comprehensive of all sins. According to this statement, unbelief in Christ is an epitome, a recapitulation of all conceivable forms of sin. In convincing the world of unbelief in Him, the Holy Spirit would convince them of all sin. As in the gospel, faith, in consequence of its relation to Christ, is treated as the occasion of all the other Christian virtues, so unbelief, from its opposition to Him, is considered as the occasion of all the other sins. And as faith in Christ is enjoined as the first great duty to be discharged by the sinner, unbelief in Him is pronounced to be the capital sin to which his attention is to be first directed, and which is chiefly to be repented of and forsaken.

Unbelief is a condition of the heart which renders the sinner unwilling to receive Christ as a Savior, and is indicated in the specific acts of the will by which, in that capacity, He is rejected. The judgment of unbelievers as to the criminality of this sin is different from that which the Savior enounces in the text. In the attempts which they sometimes make at repentance or reformation, so far from being regarded as the most monstrous of all sins, it is apt to be considered as less aggravated than their other offences. These efforts must end in vanity. They begin in error, and must terminate in failure. It will be my purpose to show that unbelief is the greatest of all sins, and in doing so to induce you, my friends, to seek that grace by which you may be convinced of its enormity and to

embrace Jesus Christ as He is freely offered to you in the gospel.

I. Unbelief in Christ, it may be remarked in the first place, is the greatest of sins, because it comprehends all other sins in itself, and is a deliberate approval and justification of them. This is evident from the consideration that the scheme of redemption through Christ furnishes the means, and the only means, by which the guilt of sin may be pardoned and its power destroyed; and unbelief in the Savior is a wilful rejection of these means. The very purpose for which the plan of salvation was instituted, and the mission of the Son of God was undertaken, was that the works of the Devil might be destroyed and the dominion of sin be broken. Previously to the incarnation of the Redeemer, the announcement was made, through an angelic ministry, that He should be called Jesus, for He should save His people from their sins. The whole scheme of redemption contemplates the deliverance of sinners from the condemning sentence of the violated law, the destruction of the influence of sin within them, and their restoration to the image of God, which consists in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness. Of this scheme, and of the accomplishment of the wise, beneficent and merciful ends which it proposes, unbelief in Christ is the open and defiant resistance. So far as it goes, it would destroy the plan and defeat its ends. It is as if the unbeliever should say: I am aware that the gospel affords the means by which I may repair the injury done the divine name and government, secure the pardon of my guilt, and render acceptable service to God, but I am unwilling to subserve these purposes, and prefer to continue in that condition in which, so far as I am concerned, they

will certainly fail of attainment. Let us look at the enormous turpitude of such a position.

It is not difficult to show that unbelief in Christ includes and ratifies the guilt of original sin. The sin by which man at first rebelled against God, broke his covenant with Him, trampled under foot His law, and spurned the rich and innumerable tokens of His love will be admitted to have been one characterized by the most flagrant criminality. Endowed with all the furniture and adornments of a holy nature, in sympathy by the very conditions of his being with the perfections and government of His divine Maker, possessed of a strength, graciously imparted, amply sufficient to enable him to keep the divine commands, eminently favored in having the field of temptation and the term of his trial limited by the arrangements of the covenant, and living in a state of happiness in which nothing of enjoyment was left him to desire, under a rule which was not only righteous and equitable, but kindly and parental, what shadow of excuse can be furnished for the gigantic crime of his rebellion? In the face of the most extraordinary advantages accruing from a course of obedience, of the most urgent reasons for refusing to disobey, and of the most solemn and impressive engagements by which a voluntary agent could be bound, at the very first proposal of the tempter, he discredited the divine testimony, snapped the bonds of his own plighted faith, flouted the amazing goodness of God, contemned the law before which angels bow, and with a haste, a hardihood and an audacity almost inconceivable under the circumstances, rushed into the crime of foul and undisguised revolt against his Maker, his Benefactor, and his Friend. By the terms of the covenant, which Adam thus inexcusably broke, he stood

under its provisions as the head and representative of the race which was destined to spring from his loins. Had he refrained from sinning during the limited period of probation graciously assigned him, his obedience, through the channel of federal representation, would have been derived to his posterity, and they, in consequence of the imputation to them of that obedience, would have been justified, that is to say, they would have been established in holiness and happiness and everlastingly secured against the contingency of a fall. But by the terms of the same covenant, as he sinned, the guilt of his first transgression is, through the channel of federal representation, derived to them, and, in consequence of its imputation to them, they are justly regarded as implicated in his sin and exposed to the penalty which its commission entailed. We, then, my brethren, are involved in the guilt of that stupendous crime by which the race first shook off the government of God, and plunged into a career of disobedience. There is now, however, furnished us in the mercy of God the means by which we may be relieved from this intolerable guilt, and enabled to repair the injury occasioned by it to the law and government of God. The incarnate Son of God, as the second Adam, represents sinners under the provisions of a new and gracious covenant. In pursuance of its arrangements He undertakes, as the representative of the guilty, to render a perfect obedience to the law which they violated, and in His expiatory sufferings and death, to assume and exhaust the curse which it inflicts. This He did, and as He was a being of infinite dignity, his vicarious obedience magnifies the law and affords a satisfactory reparation to the claims of the outraged government

of God. Through the channel of the federal representation the obedience of Christ is derived to all who believe in Him, that is, to all who accept Him as a Savior and cordially and penitently rely upon Him. His perfect righteousness is imputed to the believing sinner, and characterizes him in all his personal relations to God. It is obvious, consequently, that He who believes in Christ is discharged from the guilt of original sin, and through his great representative, offers to the nature, the law, and the government of God the satisfaction which they imperatively require. The obedience of Christ neutralizes the guilt of Adam. As our birth into this world places us under subjection of Adam's guilt, faith puts us in possession of Christ's righteousness. Here, then, we have furnished us in the gospel the means, the only means, by which we can avert the consequences of our implication in the guilt of original sin, and undo the damage which through it we have done. Faith renders this means available to us. It is mercifully offered to the acceptance of our faith. He, therefore, who refuses to believe in Christ, deliberately declines the use of this means, and formally ratifies upon his soul the guilt of Adam's sin. Dreadful as it is, he accepts it as his own. For he who may be delivered from guilt, however derived, and refuses to do so, binds, by his own act, that guilt upon himself.

The unbeliever in Christ, it may be remarked in the next place, refuses to accept the removal of his guilt as a condition of rendering acceptable service to God, and, therefore, approves and sanctions a disability which keeps him in the uninterrupted commission of sin. By the term guilt is to be understood subjection to the penalty of the broken law, and exposure to the

consequences which it imposes. Now, it is plainly impossible that a guilty person can render an obedience which shall be acceptable to God. All his efforts at holiness of life must be abortive. It is a contradiction to suppose that one can suffer the curse of God's law and at the same time sustain relations or produce an obedience which He will approve. Communion with God is the spiritual life of the soul. "His favor is life." And as guilt supposes the destruction of intercourse with God, it is a proof that spiritual life no longer exists. It will require no discussion to show that where there is no spiritual life there can be no spiritual acts. The apostle tells us that conscience in its natural and guilty condition is able only to produce dead works—works which, though they may be materially good, spring from no principle of spiritual life, are performed by persons spiritually dead and wrought with no spiritual end in view. They are dead as to the source in which they originate, dead as to the agent who discharges them, and dead as to the end which they contemplate. The sinner, therefore, in his natural, unbelieving state, lies under the sentence of the law which makes it simply impossible that either his person or his works should be accepted. He cannot be condemned and accepted at one and the same time. And his conscience, though through fear it may be religiously stimulated, only goads him to the performance of duties which are intrinsically worthless.

This view of the sinner's disability is enhanced, too, by the consideration plainly presented in the Scriptures that a filial spirit is absolutely necessary to acceptable obedience. The temper of a condemned criminal and that of an affectionate child cannot coincide in the same heart. It is only they who are led by the

Spirit of God that are the sons of God, and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." Let it be observed that it is the office of faith, and of faith alone, to remove this disability, which disqualifies the sinner from entering at all upon the acceptable service of God. The believer in Christ is discharged from the sentence of the law, which cripples his soul and holds him in bondage. His guilt is washed away in the blood of Jesus applied to him through faith. The blood of Christ purges his conscience from dead works to serve the living God. And the Spirit of Christ, applying that blood, generates in him the filial temper which prompts him to the performance of duty not as a criminal or a slave, but as an adopted and beloved child. Now, as unbelief refuses to accept the atonement of Christ, and the grace of the spirit which was acquired by His blood, it deliberately rejects the only means by which the sinner can become reconciled to God and be relieved from the disability to serve Him entailed by the penalty of the law. The unbeliever voluntarily imprisons himself in a condition in which it is impossible for him to render to God a free and acceptable obedience. He rejects the means of deliverance, prefers to be incapacitated to serve God, and chooses to continue in the undisturbed commission of his sins.

The same line of argument tends to show the heinousness of the sin of unbelief in Christ as it implies an endorsement of all the actual transgressions of which the sinner may be guilty. If God has provided the means by which we may resist and overcome our sins, then surely a rejection of those means involves a justification of our iniquities. These means have been furnished and unbelief rejects them. It is faith in

the blood of Christ and in the grace of the Spirit which enables us to obtain the victory over our sins. The saints who have already reached the heavenly world, we are taught, overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. Unbelief discards the blood of Christ, the only effectual weapon with which we are able to foil the attempts and resist the assaults of the adversary of souls. Faith is the victory that overcometh the world. Unbelief succumbs to the world and leaves the soul the sport of its blandishments or the prey of its terrors. Faith receives the grace which is sufficient for us in every conflict with temptation—the divine and efficacious principle which alone energizes the soul for the discharge of duty and the resistance of sin. Unbelief refuses to sue for this grace, and abandons the sinner to his native impotence and an unrestrained love of transgression. It is manifest, therefore, that every sin of which one may be guilty is endorsed and justified by unbelief. There is not a transgression which the sinner may have committed against the first or second table of the divine law which it does not practically sanction. It includes them all, and is chargeable with them all. The unbeliever might, by faith, repent of his past sins and successfully oppose those which might tempt him in the future, and he refuses to believe. He, therefore, tolerates and approves his sins. God abhors them, condemns them, and thunders against them the terrible sentence of His law. The unbeliever, in the face of this divine reprobation and in contempt of God's holiness and majesty, lays his hand upon them and coolly and deliberately endorses them. He puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, and woe to those who do!

To this it must be added that unbelief in Christ not only involves an endorsement of crimes which have been actually committed, but of all the tendencies which are inherent in sin, and all the developments of which it is capable. The state of spiritual death is one in which, from the nature of the case, it is possible that the sinner should be guilty of any specific form of iniquity. His original righteousness is lost, and from the supposition the renewing grace of God's Spirit is not present. Essentially active as a moral agent, he must go on in the perpetration of transgression. Every sin, too, includes in itself the seeds of every other sin. No sin stands alone. It is generative and reproductive. A single breach of the divine law opens a gap through which an irruption may be made, and if not arrested, will inevitably be made upon every requirement which it contains. Although the remark of the Roman satirist may be conceded to be true, that "no man becomes thoroughly depraved all at once," and it may even be admitted that no one in the present life has fully developed the sinful principle within him, it is still not to be denied that there is in sin a fatal tendency to a steady and indefinite progression. In the world of lost spirits, where the restraints of society, themselves superinduced by the moulding influences of the gospel, the checks derived from the operation of one sinful motive or passion in antagonism to another, and the common influences of grace are all withdrawn, the sinner will rush forward in the development of sin with an advancement commensurate with the sweep of endless ages and a celerity only measured by the limitless capacities of the soul. To believe in Christ is to stop this tendency and turn it backwards. Faith receives the means, divinely provided, by which this

fearful progress is arrested, and the soul is projected in an opposite direction—the eternal development of holiness. Unbelief in Christ involves the rejection of these means, and as it leaves the soul to the unimpeded growth of the principle of sin, furnishes a justification of all the terrible extremes to which that principle naturally and legitimately tends.

II. In the second place, it deserves to be considered that unbelief in Christ, regarded intrinsically and as to its own nature, is the most heinous and flagrant of all sins. It virtually comprehends in itself, as has been shown, all other sins, and it adds to the fearful catalogue a special turpitude of its own which exceeds that of all others combined. Let us briefly examine it in this point of view :

It is a wilful rejection of God's testimony and a deliberate falsification of God's word. The gospel is the divine testimony touching our condition of sin and ruin, and the means by which we may be delivered from it. In it God the Father solemnly testifies to us, by His own existence and by the awful sanctity of His majestic name, that as transgressors of His law we are doomed to perish, but that He has mercifully provided redemption for us through the mediation of His beloved Son. He testifies to us that, notwithstanding our inexcusable guilt, He "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He testifies to us that "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but he that believeth not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this

life is in His Son." When He introduced His incarnate Son into the world, He sent a deputation of angels, with anthems grander than the music of the spheres, to make the joyful announcement. At the public inauguration of the Savior into His earthly ministry He proclaimed in an audible testimony: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." He repeated this testimony on the occasion of the transfiguration when the great Mediator, having conversed in reference to His approaching death with a delegation from heaven representing the law and the prophets of the old dispensation, arrayed Himself in robes of light and anticipated in the astonished view of His disciples the glory of His exaltation. And in raising Him from the dead the Father published to the universe an endorsement of His righteousness and a testimony to the acceptance of His mediatorial work. These solemn deliverances of God the Father unbelief in Christ deliberately rejects and treats with supreme contempt.

It discredits, moreover, the testimony of the Son. The brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person, intimately acquainted by virtue of His nature with the eternal purposes of the Godhead, and explicitly charged with the proclamation of the scheme of redemption, the Son of God, as the commissioned revealer of His Father's will, comes into the world to testify that will concerning the salvation of men. Bearing credentials of His divine commission, attested by the most stupendous miracles, He testified that He came into the world to save sinners. Inviting, exhorting, entreating them to come to Him that they might have life. He continued for years to preach His own glorious gospel, and finally sealed His testimony

with His blood. This testimony also unbelief treats with indifference or rejects with disdain.

It discards also the testimony of the Holy Ghost. It is a part of the office of the blessed Spirit, now that the Savior has ascended into heaven and has ceased His personal ministry on earth, to testify of Him in the hearts of men. He corroborates the utterances of the gospel by His own direct and powerful testimony to the minds and consciences of sinners. It is amazing with what patience, forbearance, and long suffering He follows them, notwithstanding their infatuated persistence in sin with this secret testimony in regard to the way of salvation in Christ. One would be apt to suppose that, in view of this exceeding graciousness and tenderness combined with the awful sanctions which are thrown around His office and guard it from profane and blasphemous treatment, His testimony would at least be regarded with respect. But unbelief rejects it and tramples under foot the veracity of the Holy Ghost.

Unbelief in Christ, therefore, is an impeachment of the truthfulness of the whole Godhead. It discredits the concurrent testimony of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, a testimony miraculously imparted, flaming on the pages of the sacred word, delivered in the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, and urged upon our attention by the sweet, the persuasive, the powerful influences of divine grace.

It enhances our sense of the enormity of this crime when we reflect that while other sins are more immediately related to law, unbelief in Christ is peculiarly a sin against mercy, grace, and love. It is, of course, a transgression of law, but its chief aggravation lies in

the fact that it is a contempt of the gospel. It is a deliberate and wanton insult to every person of the ever-blessed Godhead, as each is manifested to our guilty and dying race under relations the most gracious and aspects the most beneficent and endearing.

It is an insult to God the Father. Had He consigned the whole race of sinners to remediless destruction, the universe of holy beings would have unani- mously glorified the justice of the sentence. His gov- ernment furnished an awful precedent for such a course. He inflicted summary punishment upon the rebellious angels. When those sons of light resigned their censers of worship for the arms of revolt, and dashed themselves against His throne, He hurled against them the flaming bolts of insulted justice, drove them in terror from His presence, and consigned them to hell, there to expend their fury in the eternal roar of discordant spirits and the clank of everlasting chains. That dismal prison, the darkness of which is only illuminated by the glare of penal fires, will for- ever rear its gloomy walls as an awful monument of divine justice, an affecting memorial of the folly and danger of trifling with God's holiness, majesty and law. But in relation to the equally guilty race of human sinners, it pleased Him to take counsel of His love. Looking upon them in their sin and ruin He was touched with ineffable pity. His infinite mercy origi- nated a wondrous plan of redemption, and His infinite wisdom adjusted and perfected its arrangements. He called and commissioned His only begotten Son to act as the substitute of sinners, and by suffering and dying in their place, to rescue them from their merited doom and render it consistent with His inviolable perfections to receive them again to His favor. Taking from His

bosom His well beloved upon whom He had from eternity poured out a love which only the infinite heart that experienced it could measure, He sent Him down to shame, reproach, and death that sinners might be saved. Yearning with boundless compassion towards His incarnate Son, as He struggled and fainted under the burden of His stupendous work, He still refused to interrupt the progress of the fearful drama. He heard Him, when in Gethsemane He tremblingly took the cup of woe and pleaded that if possible it might pass from Him, and declined to withdraw that cup. He saw Him when a prisoner He stood at the bar of formalists and hypocrites amidst a tempest of false accusations, and did not vindicate Him. He listened to the shout of His countrymen at Pilate's judgment-seat: Crucify Him! Crucify Him! and did not dispatch legions of angels to sweep that mob from before His face. He beheld Him as bound at the whipping-post when he felt the blows of the Roman thong, and did not hasten to His relief. He hearkened to Him as crowned with a diadem of thorns, disfigured with blood and spittle, and nailed to the accursed tree, He cried: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and did not respond to that moving appeal; but as He had devoted Him to death as a sacrifice for sin, He continued to discharge upon Him a storm of wrath until His sacred life was quenched, and His amazing work was done. Such, my brethren, was the mercy of God the Father to our guilty and wretched race. It is enough to melt a heart of adamant; but unbelief, whether it spring from indifference or deliberate purpose, despises this matchless grace, scorns this unutterable gift, and, through the person of the crucified and rejected Savior, offers a wanton insult to the eternal Father's love.

Unbelief is also an insult to God the Holy Spirit. It involves a contemptuous rejection of His gracious offices. Acting in His sovereign capacity, and yet commissioned by the Father and the Son, He mercifully undertakes the work of applying to the hearts of sinners the benefits of redemption which Jesus purchased with His blood. In the prosecution of this saving office, He enlightens their ignorance, convinces them of their sin and danger, discloses to them their need of a Savior, and with infinite tenderness and an almost exhaustless compassion, though often resisted and often grieved, He affectionately urges upon them the necessity of fleeing the wrath to come, and of betaking themselves to Christ as the only refuge of their souls. Representing the absent Savior, He portrays to sinners His loveliness and glory, His sufficiency for their wants, and His perfect willingness to save them. Taking up the gracious invitations of the Lord Jesus, He repeats them to their souls with a melting pathos and an importunate urgency; and seizing them by the hand, as it were, He sweetly offers to conduct them to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. The ambassador of the Godhead He comes to them with divine overtures of reconciliation and presses upon them their acceptance, while the day of grace and the opportunities of mercy are extended. This exalted and beneficent minister of grace, invested with the credentials of a divine commission, surrounded by sanctions peculiarly awful and bearing with him the precious blood of atonement, unbelief contemptuously rejects. Disdaining His glorious person, slighting His dreadful sovereignty, scorning His unspeakable love, turning with cold indifference from His pathetic solicitations, and thrusting aside His outstretched hand, unbelief offers

to the eternal Spirit of God an insult which, if persisted in by the sinner, were worse than a mill-stone hanged about his neck and dragging him down to fathomless abysses.

Finally, the worst feature of this monstrous sin is its insulting rejection of the blessed Son of God. The Father sent the Son, and the Spirit represents Him; but it was the Son Himself who came to earth to suffer, bleed, and die for men. Called of His Father to undertake the mediatorial work, He cheerfully accepted the extraordinary vocation, and in order to achieve the salvation of sinners, stripped Himself of His glory and hastened down into a valley of humiliation which He bedewed with His tears, and moistened with His blood. For sinners He consented to be born of a woman, to be made under the law, and to assume its awful curse. For them He took a sorrow which attended Him as a familiar acquaintance and a reproach which broke His heart. For them He underwent poverty, toil, privation, and fatigue, and bore a ceaseless tempest of misrepresentation, hate, and scorn. For sinners He endured the temptations of the wilderness, the anguish of Gethsemane, and the persecutions of the Sanhedrim. For them He encountered the combined opposition of king, governor and priest, the mingled rage of Jew and Gentile, the malice of His countrymen, and the desertion of His friends. For their sakes He consented to be beaten, scourged and spitted on, and for them, finally, He experienced the agony, the shame, and the wrath of the cross. In that crown of thorns, those lacerated limbs, that mangled body, that pale yet gory visage, those streaming wounds, those deep-drawn groans and trickling tears, is most affectingly attested His mercy and compassion for dying

men. And for them an exquisite torture, unseen and unheard by sense, wrung the soul of the expiring Savior as He sunk under the tremendous penalty of the law, the weight of imputed guilt, and the pressure of infinite wrath. All this the merciful Redeemer suffered for sinners. And yet, unbelief, as it attaches no importance to the work which He discharged, and the miseries He endured, offers a deliberate insult to the crucified Son of God. The unbeliever takes his stand with the multitude who mocked His dying anguish and sympathizes with them. To him the death of Jesus is but the dissolution of an ordinary man, or what it seemed to the eye of sense, that of a condemned malefactor. To him it has no spiritual import. Passing by the awful spectacle, and wagging his head in indifference, he profanely tramples under foot the blood of God's eternal Son. And it deserves to be seriously pondered that as sin was the occasion of the Savior's death, and unbelief is an endorsement and justification of sin, it constitutes the unbeliever in Christ a virtual partaker in the tremendous crime of the crucifixion; and that if he continue in unbelief and dies under its guilt, he passes to God's flaming bar with the blood of God's Son upon his soul. And if "he that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith He was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? . . . It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

THE DISCRETIONARY POWER OF THE CHURCH

Matt. xxviii:20. "*Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.*"

There are certain utterances which, though brief, are comprehensive and regulative. They enounce principles, or inculcate duties, which involve all minor and dependent ones, and stamp a moulding influence upon thought and action. Such are those contained in the text. So far as any words of the Lord Jesus can derive a peculiar interest from the impressiveness of the circumstances in which they were spoken, these possess that quality. They constitute a part of what is usually termed the great commission,—that last brief, but affecting and momentous charge which Jesus delivered to the apostles and, through them, to the church, while ten thousand of His holy ones waited to escort Him to the gates of glory and the mediatorial throne. An apostate or declining church may be insensible to their power, but they burn like fire in the consciousness of one which is vitalized by the breath of the Holy Ghost. They speak to us this day with the same freshness and emphasis with which they fell from the lips of a triumphant Savior upon the listening ears of the apostles of His extraordinary call.

NOTE.—This is not the most eloquent, but it is the most valuable and the most timely sermon in this volume. It was preached before the General Assembly, at St. Louis, May 20, 1875. The author called it *a testimony*.

There are two supreme obligations which this final charge of the Lord Jesus lays upon the heart of the church. The first is the transcendent duty of universal evangelization. The second is the inculcation and maintenance of the truth which Christ, the prophet of the church, has taught, and the commands which Christ, the king of the church, has enjoined. The call of the gospel is to be addressed to all the sons of men, and when they accept it, and are gathered into the fold of the church, she is to teach them all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. There are obviously a positive and a negative aspect of this charge to the church,—positive, in that she is directed to teach all that Christ has commanded; negative, in that she is implicitly prohibited from teaching anything which He has not commanded. The negative duty is a necessary inference from the command which enforces the positive. Here, then, we have the principle tinged with the blood of our Puritan, Covenanter and Huguenot forefathers—that what is not commanded, either explicitly or implicitly in the Scriptures, is prohibited to the church. She can utter no new doctrine, make no new laws, ordain no new forms of government, and invent no new modes of worship. This is but a statement of a fundamental principle of Protestantism, contra-distinguishing it from Rationalism on the one hand and Romanism on the other,—that the Scriptures, as the word of Christ, are the complete and ultimate rule of faith and duty. They are complete, since they furnish as perfect a provision for the spiritual, as does nature for the physical, wants of man, and, therefore, exclude every other rule as unnecessary and superfluous. They are ultimate because, being the word of God, they must pronounce infallibly and supremely

upon all questions relating to religious faith and practice. The duty of the church, consequently, to conform herself strictly to the divine word, and her guilt and danger in departing from it would seem to be transparently evident. But the clearest principles, through the blindness, fallibility, and perverseness of the human mind, frequently prove inoperative in actual experience; and the history of the church furnishes lamentable proof that the great, regulative truth of the completeness and supremacy of the Scriptures constitutes no exception to this remark. Because we are Protestants, and Presbyterian Protestants, because the doctrine of the perfection and ultimate authority of the word lies at the root of our system and is embodied in our standards, we are not, therefore, free from the peril attending the failure of the church to conform herself in all things to the revealed will of Christ, and her tendency to rely upon her own folly instead of His wisdom.

It is designed, in these remarks, to direct attention to the subject of the discretionary power of the church; and in the discussion of that question, logical fitness requires that the great Protestant principle of the completeness and supremacy of the Scriptures be premised. That being admitted, the Rationalist hypothesis of the final authority of reason in matters of religious faith and duty, and the Romanist, which affirms the ultimate rule to be the Scriptures and tradition, as expounded by an infallible human head of the church, are effectually discharged. To establish this fundamental assumption, recourse need be had but to a single short but conclusive argument. Those who appeal to the Scriptures as possessing any authority at all must admit them to be true. They are a veracious witness.

But they affirm themselves to be inspired: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" and as inspired they farther assert that they are a complete standard of faith and directory of practice. They claim to be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Either we must deny their truthfulness in this instance, or admit it. If we deny it, then their character for veracity breaks down in all respects, in accordance with the maxim: "false in one point, false in all." They are suited to be no rule at all. If we admit their truthfulness, then, as they declare themselves to be complete, we must believe that they are; and so every other rule is excluded, and they stand alone, without a rival, either as a co-ordinate or a supplementary standard of faith and duty.

But, although the Scriptures are the supreme rule, they are not alone the supreme judge of faith and practice. The question being as to the final judge whose expositions of the rule are ultimate, the answer is given with equal sublimity and accuracy in the Westminster Confession of Faith: "The supreme Judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." From the nature of the case, the only competent judge of a divine rule is a divine judge. Let us pause a moment that we may estimate the force of this mighty collocation. The grand principle of Protestantism is not that the supreme judge is the Word alone, nor that it is the Spirit alone; but that it is—the Word and the Spirit.

This little coupling and, which brings together and indissolubly unites the two great terms—the Word, the Spirit, effects the junction with a thundering clank which should ring in the ear of the church, and penetrate into her innermost heart. The copulative here has a significance akin to that which expresses the substantial unity of the three distinct subsistences in the adorable Trinity—the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one God over all blessed forever. It is like that between justification, sanctification, and the personal experience of both,—not the water only, not the blood only, not the Spirit only; but the Spirit and the water and the blood, one in the unity of the Word, and one in the concrete unity of the believer's experience. God, all-wise, has put together these two terms of the grandest of all Protestant canons—the Word and the Spirit, the supreme judge of controversies; and what God hath joined together let not man put asunder! Their divorce is sure to result in slavery to the letter on the one hand, and on the other, in wild hypotheses as to human rights and needless schisms which rend the unity of the church in pieces.

Neither, then, is the conscience of the individual, nor that of the church in her organic capacity, possessed of ultimate authority in matters of faith and duty. Both, in the noble language of Luther, himself the intrepid defender of the right of private judgment, in his final reply at the Diet of Worms, both are "bound captive by the Scriptures." And, as the Word is interpreted by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, human wisdom is to be guided by that infallible authority. In the grand words of the same distinguished reformer: "Obedience is to be preferred to the gift of miracles, even if we possessed that gift." Yes;

the paramount duty of the church is absolute conformity to the written Word as it is expounded to faith by the divine Spirit.

Attention is now invited to a consideration of the theory of the discretionary power of the church. Has she any such power? If so, what is it? and how is it limited?

It is obvious that the root of these questions must be sought in an antecedent one, in reference to the very nature of the church herself. She is fundamentally discriminated from all other institutes in this respect—that they are natural, and she is supernatural. The state has its origin in the facts and relations of nature, and “is designed,” as a profound thinker has remarked, “to realize the idea of justice.” Philanthropic societies have a like foundation and aim to realize the idea of benevolence. The church is grounded in the supernatural facts and relations of redemption, and is intended to “realize the idea of grace.” Her very existence is created by the redeeming mission of Christ. She is not, therefore, a society of human beings, as such, but of human beings as redeemed. As strictly a redemptive institute she must be supernatural. Her origin is supernatural as lying in the mediatorial work of Christ; her existence as historically developed is supernatural, as springing from the call of the Holy Ghost; her members are men presumed at least to be supernaturally regenerated; and her end is supernatural, as designed to illustrate the grace of a redeeming God. It would, consequently, violate all the analogies of the case to suppose that she is left to the guidance of a rule of faith and duty which is natural—which is dictated by the wisdom of the human intelligence.

Like herself, her fundamental rule must be supernatural—it must be a revelation from Him who, as He has redeemed her by His blood and called her by His Spirit, alone possesses the authority to give her constitution and the power to enforce it. It is barely conceivable that as a regenerated nature is imparted by grace to her members, and the promise of illumination is furnished them, she might have been left to the guidance of sanctified reason under the direction of the Holy Spirit, without the formal instructions of an objective rule of faith and duty,—supernaturally imparted wisdom might have been able to frame rules adequate to the wants even of a supernatural society. It might be supposed that, as God originally stamped the articles of natural religion upon the reason of man and engraved His law upon his conscience, He might have pursued the same course in regard to the religion of grace. But this antecedent probability is vacated of force by the consideration that while we are, if regenerate, endowed with a reason and conscience supernaturally illuminated, we are also still under the partial influence of sinful principles; and in the collision between these two antagonistic elements which would emerge upon the presentation of the concrete cases of experience, confusion would necessarily characterize our ultimate judgments, and utter uncertainty attach to the resulting rule. But the question is settled by fact. God has furnished to the church a supernaturally revealed, an external and authoritative rule of faith and duty; and allusion has only been made to the antecedent presumption indicated in order to evince the necessity for such a standard. As infinite wisdom appointed the external objects of nature, the

sun, moon, and stars in the heavens above and the visible phenomena of the earth below, fixed realities by which the aberrations of perception and the illusions of sense may be corrected, so has He set in the supernatural firmament of His Word the great facts and doctrines of redemption as unchanging and permanent data, in accordance with which all the deductions of reason and all the decisions of conscience, in the domain of religion, are to be tested and regulated.

Now, as it has pleased God to communicate to the church a supernatural revelation of His will, which He intended and has declared to be a complete and supreme rule of faith and life, it would seem to be intuitively obvious that her duty is to conform herself implicitly and absolutely to it in all things, that she has no discretion but to teach and observe all that Christ has commanded, and to teach and observe nothing else. The maxim of Bacon, in regard to the relation which man holds to nature as a minister and interpreter, would appear to apply with enhanced emphasis to that which the church sustains to the Scriptures. They disclose a new world of supersensible and transcendent realities—a supernatural universe. In their light even the common obligations and duties of “the law moral” in respect to which the natural reason and conscience are, in some measure, competent to speak, are brought under the moulding influence of supernatural relations, enforced by supernatural motives and impressed by supernatural sanctions. Granting that the church, as renewed and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, is enabled to study and apprehend these revealed mysteries, we are compelled to confess that she must ever be the learner and servant, and not the law-giver and master. Faith, or what is the same thing,

reason born again, the supernaturally-imparted organ of perception which adapts her to this system of redemptive phenomena, is a confession of her inability to originate anything in such a sphere. It can only report what it observes. The church, therefore, can have no opinions and frame no laws of her own. The facts, the doctrines which expound the relations of those facts, and the practical rules which enforce the duties arising from those relations, are all divinely given. Her whole duty lies in believing and obeying. She can create nothing. There is no necessity for it even if she could. All that she requires is already provided for her by the wisdom and mercy of her head. She is completely equipped for all the exigencies of her life, and for all the ends which her Lord has designed her to achieve. The extent of her power is thus easily defined,—it consists in first knowing, and then applying, the rule of faith and duty which expresses to her the will of Christ. These conclusions are so fair and obvious that one reasoning abstractly could scarcely imagine how they may be disputed; and yet the history of the church has, to a great extent, been a record of perpetual contradictions of them. How is the amazing fact to be accounted for? Apart from that general cause, the corruption of the human heart, which ever tends to mar by its touch every perfect work of God, a special explanation is to be found in the assumption that the church is invested with a discretionary power which may be legitimately exercised alike in the sphere of doctrine, of government, and of worship. Here we lay our finger upon the main secret of the church's tendency to degeneracy in these vital concerns. The theory of discretionary power constitutes her formal justification of her practical

departures from the Word. It appears, in the main, to be founded on one or the other, or on a combination of both, of these suppositions—namely, that the statements of doctrine in the Scriptures are in the form of concise and comprehensive enunciations of principles, which need to be expanded and developed by additional deliverances; and that the rules laid down for government and worship are regulative, not constitutive—general provisions without the specification of particular modes and minute details; and their application to the varying circumstances and multiplied exigencies of the church demand from her supplementary legislation in a more specific shape. The church is endowed with wisdom for the discharge of these important offices; and so long as she does not positively contradict the Word, her exercise of this discretionary power is legitimate. She is not to be tied to the letter of Scripture—that would be a bondage inconsistent with the liberty wherewith Christ has made her free. She is in some sort His confidential agent, and as such she is entitled to use her own judgment. Where the Scriptures are silent she may speak, and whatever measure they do not prohibit, and is, to her mind, consistent with their general scope and spirit, she is not precluded from adopting. To require her to produce a divine warrant for all that she does, is to fetter her freedom and cripple her energies.

Let us contemplate the operation of this theory of discretionary power in the sphere of doctrine. Let us see how, under its influence, the potent key is wielded by the church which admits her into this grand department of Christ's kingdom. It is in the way of what is termed development of doctrine. The idea which is embodied in this high-sounding phraseology is some-

what vague and indefinite, as every one must have felt who has made the attempt to seize it. The meaning of the term must, if possible, be settled in order that we may attain some clear apprehension of the question before us. Development may be understood to signify the express eliciting from anything that which is implicitly contained in it; and that either by a process of self-evolution, or by the agency of extraneous forces acting upon it; or, it may be taken to mean the unfolding of a series or system by substantive addition and accretion to what previously existed, in accordance with an intelligent plan. In this latter case there is no self-evolution; the development is effected by successive interpositions of a creative power. There is no education of what was latent in a thing already existing, but the creation of new things related to those going before, not by inherent affinity, but by the unity of an intelligent scheme. This sort of development is simply the orderly procedure of intelligence accomplishing results in pursuance of a definite plan. It is the development of a scheme, not of the individual things embraced under it. When, for example, a certain class of scientific men contend that the Creator brings into being new species of vegetables or animals, different from, but related to, those previously existing, He only develops His plan; there is no evolution of species into species, but a clear addition at each step in the creative process to the numerical sum of distinct beings.

Let it be observed now that the question is not whether there has been a divine development of doctrine by the instrumentality of inspired prophets and apostles. Of course there has been. As each dispensation of religion succeeded another, there was an addition of new facts, and a fresh development of doctrine.

The Jewish economy was an advance upon the Patriarchal, and the Christian upon the Jewish; and this progress of doctrine went on under the immediate agency of inspiration until the canon of Scripture was closed. The question is not, whether God developed doctrine—that is conceded; but it is, whether the canon of Scripture having been closed, the church is clothed with power to continue the development.

In order to clear our way still farther, let us note the patent distinction which has been pressed by orthodox Protestants, and candidly and explicitly stated by rationalist theologians themselves—the distinction between a subjective and an objective development of doctrine. The former is simply the growth and expansion in the mind itself of its knowledge of the doctrines externally given in the Scriptures. It is not a development of Scripture, nor a development from Scripture, but a development, as Dr. Rainy has said, up to Scripture, as the ultimate standard. It is what every well-instructed Christian understands—the leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ and going on onto perfection. In the case of the church as an organized society living on from age to age, it is the progress which she has made in the knowledge of Scriptural truth in consequence of her conflicts with error, and the discipline she has undergone. The latter—the alleged objective development of doctrine—is the numerical increase of the objects of faith, the addition of others to those already externally given in the Scriptures; it is the expansion and enlargement of the doctrinal system by substantive accretions to the complement of doctrine revealed in the written word. It is this latter view which constitutes the very core of the theory of development of doctrine.

Now, in regard to this theory it deserves, in the first place, to be remarked that its most prominent advocates are logically guilty in confounding the two members of the distinction which has just been signalized. At one time they argue for what no one denies—the development of the knowledge of doctrine, and at another for a very different kind of development—that of the doctrinal system of the Scriptures. The confusion is damaging to the success of the theory. Let us have one thing or the other. The amalgamation of rationalist and evangelical views in the same line of argument is too glaring an incongruity to be overlooked.

In the second place, the theory involves the inconsistent mixture of the two sorts of development to which in the foregoing remarks attention has already been directed,—the one, by a process of self-evolution by virtue of inherent tendencies, and the other, by positive additions effected by creative power. A patient endeavor to detect the real merits of the theory has led us to the opinion that it finds some plausible ground in the following assumptions: First, the doctrines of Scripture may be regarded as seminal principles—germ-truths, which were not intended to be complete, but to expand into other and related doctrines by virtue of certain tendencies inherent in them; in some such manner as the germ-cells of vegetable or animal organisms are developed by a process of growth, or as the rudimentary truths of the human mind are unfolded through the progress of intelligence to maturity. Secondly, there may be assumed to be a genius or spirit which pervades and characterizes the doctrinal system of the Scriptures—a sort of typical, controlling idea, in accordance with which the mind of the church, reflectively acting upon the process of evolution as it

brings the germinal principles of the divine Word into contact with her changing circumstances and her diversified necessities, is enabled to register the results of the development in the shape of formulated statements. Substantial additions are thus made to the doctrines of Scripture, but the church does not create them. Her intelligence is indeed in contact with the developing truth, but only as a concurring and conditioning force. As one species of animals, it is said, is evolved into a new and distinct species, so one truth, or group of truths, is evolved into a new truth or group of truths. The church simply watches the course of this wonderful self-development of doctrine, marks the results and reduces them to formal record. Thus the body of doctrine is continually enlarging. Did our limits permit, we think it might be shown that these germ-principles of Scripture are hypothetical. The fundamental doctrines of the word are developed in it far more fully and systematically than is commonly supposed. The great cardinal truths of justification and sanctification, for example, are very elaborately and completely expounded with their affiliated doctrines in the epistle to the Romans, and that of the priesthood of Christ in the epistle to the Hebrews. As to this genius of Christianity which is substituted for the Holy Ghost, what we have to say is, that it usually turns out to be but the dominating conception by some individual or party of the contents of Scripture, to which they are bent to serve a purpose. We, of all men, have reason to know what this genius of the gospel can accomplish, when it holds its light for humanitarian and higher-law developers of the Bible.

But the case, as it has just been stated, is not the case as put by the Romanist defenders of this theory

themselves. They admit that all the results of this self-evolution are not to be retained; and they cover up the difficulties in which such a view of the process involves them under the cloudy phrase—historical development. They assume an infallible developing authority which sifts out all that is undesirable and formulates only what is suitable. The admission is fatal. It concedes the fact that the alleged development does not proceed by its own law, but is arbitrarily managed and regulated by the church. We have, then, after all, not a development by legitimate evolution of comprehensive principles, but one implying the continuous growth of a system by the interventions of creative power. The church is the creator; she makes the substantive additions to the original doctrines of the Scriptures, and she does it by the process of construction in accordance with a scheme of her own. The hypothesis is weighed down by the difficulties with which a searching historical criticism had embarrassed that of tradition, for which it was intended to be a philosophical substitute. They both postulate an infallible developing authority. That being granted, it is virtually admitted that the church has creative power, and actually makes new doctrines in addition to those of the Scriptures. This theory of development, then, stands chargeable with bringing together and confounding incongruous hypotheses.

In the third place, the theory, in the hands of the Romanist, effectually breaks down at the point at which it assumes the continuance of inspiration. Were it true that the church is inspired and, therefore, gifted with infallibility for the development of doctrine, it would follow that there is a continuous supernatural revelation of God's will. The development in the way

of addition would be legitimate, since it would be divine. But the fundamental assumption of the theory—the existence of an infallible developing authority—is unsupported by evidence. The miraculous credentials of inspiration are absent. Let the Pope raise the dead and we will consider his claim to be inspired.

The theory as held by the Rationalist, while substantially identical with that of the Romanist, differs from it in several respects,—he denies the Scriptures to be a supernaturally inspired revelation; he makes reason, instead of an infallible church, the ultimate developing authority; and he asserts its competency to abridge, as well as enlarge, the doctrinal contents of the Word. Our main issue with the Rationalist is not in regard to the power to develop the Scriptures, but in reference to their inspiration. But holding, as we do, the fact of their inspiration, the argument against the power of reason to develop their doctrines either by addition to, or subtraction from, them is a short one. The developing authority cannot be of lower degree than that which originally communicated the doctrines. To remit the dicta of an inspired revelation to the fallible judgment of reason is to bring God to the bar of man.

We meet this whole theory of development of doctrine, which involves positive additions to the Scriptures, by whomsoever held, on the simple ground of the perfection and supremacy of the written Word. We accept its own testimony that it thoroughly furnishes the man of God for all good works, and maintain that the church, as a society of men of God, finds in its provisions ample furniture for all her needs. It is absurd to talk of substantially developing a complete rule; it is wicked to say that the Scriptures are not complete. The church has no such discretionary power as is im-

plied in this theory of development of doctrine by which Rationalist and Romanist—Herod and Pontius Pilate—take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed.

Still the question presses, whether the church has any power to develop doctrine. Is there such a thing as its legitimate development? It is necessary that we look again to the signification of our terms. There are certain writers, as, for instance, Dr. Rainy in his recent able lectures on the Delivery and Development of Christian Doctrine, who employ the term doctrine in a subjective sense, to signify the conception which the mind has of the teaching of Scripture, and which it reduces to formal shape. It is the doctrine of the Bible as apprehended by the understanding, and, perchance, modified by it in the process of assimilation. Hence it is inferred that a real development of doctrine is warrantable. Now, it is perfectly evident that if a doctrine precisely as it is enunciated in the Scriptures is received by the mind, there is no more development admissible in the one case than in the other. If a doctrine be the very same on the pages of the Word and on the tablets of the human mind, what is predicable of it in one place is predicable of it in the other. And if, as written by the Spirit of God in the sacred oracles, it is not susceptible of substantial development, neither is it capable of such development when inscribed by the same Spirit upon the human soul. The same thing is true of doctrine as registered by the church in her formularies of faith and duty. If the doctrines of these symbols exactly coincide with those delivered in the Scriptures, it is impossible to see how they can receive any other development than that to which Scripture itself may be subjected. The ground may,

therefore, be boldly and safely taken, that the doctrine of Scripture, if rightly apprehended by the individual mind, or rightly expressed in a church-creed, admits of no substantial development. It is a completed product of the divine intelligence. What is true of any particular doctrine is also true of a system of doctrine, whether held by an individual or by the church. If in either case the scheme of Scripture doctrine is accurately reproduced, nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. We do not hesitate, therefore, to maintain that in so far as a creed faithfully conforms to Scripture, it is no more susceptible of development than Scripture itself. What is it, in that case, but Scripture?

If, on the other hand, doctrines are held by the mind which are not those of Scripture, what is the development which is needed? What can it be but abandonment of them and the substitution of the true doctrines? If destruction can be termed development, then may such doctrines be developed. If those held are but imperfectly conformed to the scriptural standard, the developing process is simply one of correction by that standard. It is somewhat curious that there should be any perplexity about this matter. Manifestly, the development which is possible and legitimate in such cases is that not of doctrine, but of doctrinal knowledge. It is the mind's stock of knowledge which is developed by substantial additions; and the very staple of these additions ought to be the unchanging doctrines of God's Word. And precisely so is it with the knowledge of the church in her organic capacity, as that knowledge is formulated in her creeds. The fixed, the invariable, the undeveloping quantity is the doctrines of the Scriptures; the variable and developing

is the church's knowledge. If a creed is imperfect, let the church develop it into closer conformity with the Scriptures; or, in other words, let her adjust the formal statements of her knowledge to the nature and extent of that knowledge. This she not only may do, but ought to do; but in that case it is not Scripture doctrine which is developed, it is the theology of the church, by being brought into closer approximation to the changeless and everlasting Word. The distinction which has been illustrated is as clear as it is simple, and the wonder is that it is not always observed.

What becomes, then, of that development of doctrine by inference, which the Westminster Confession appears to sanction? If by development be meant the unfolding, the bringing out the latent and unexpressed meaning of a proposition, then it is admitted that to deduce doctrines from Scripture propositions by good and necessary consequence is a legitimate development of Scripture. But let it be observed that the development, in that case, proceeds not by substantive addition. It is simply the explicit evolution from the doctrinal propositions of the Word of what is implicitly contained in them,—the inference is part of the original enunciation. And it must be borne in mind that it is not a discretionary power which entitles the church to make such a development of doctrine as this: the rules of logic necessitate it. The only discretionary power which the church is apt to employ in the case is to attempt a development by ill and unnecessary consequence. She has no commission to reason badly. The sort of evolution of doctrine we are considering is only justifiable when it proceeds by logical inference, and logical inferences are not speculative opinions. Let the church confine herself to the deduction of good and

necessary consequences from the doctrines of Scripture, and she will not develop from them the doctrines and commandments of men.

There is a specious and dangerous form of this theory of development of doctrine which threatens, at the present day, to invade the supremacy of the written Word. The ground is not openly taken that the doctrinal system of the Scriptures may be developed, but it is maintained that the creeds and confessions in which the church has logically arranged that system cannot bind the conscience or shackle thought. It is contended that they are human compositions—fruits of the human brain, and that they are consequently collections of the unauthoritative dogmas of men. To forbid the development of doctrine beyond their limits is represented as tyranny, and tyranny in its worst form, as inflicted upon the intellect itself. The precious and inalienable right of private judgment, consecrated to the Protestant heart by the struggles of the Reformation, is retrenched, and the dogmatic despotism of man again enthroned in the sacred domain of conscience. The free, progressive, advanced thought of the age must not be strapped down by old dogmas which have gone to sleep with the conflicts which gave them birth. Like the weapons of ancient warfare, they did good service in their time, but they must give way to the improved arms of the present. Theological schools are not to be repositories of these now useless engines. The demand of the times is for untrammelled development. The young, vigorous, exultant intellect of this era will be satisfied with nothing less; and if the church insists on clinging to antiquated dogmas and repressing this temper of development, she must consent to be left behind by the grand army of progress.

in its onward and triumphant march. This is eloquent. All that it needs to make it effective is—truth. Had it possessed that simple quality it would, ere this, have fired and roused the heart of the church.

If the preceding argument is worth anything, it has shown that in whatever way the doctrines of the divine Word may be expressed, they are characterized by completeness and ultimate authority, and are, therefore, incapable of substantial development. Whether enunciated in the Scriptures, or written upon the tablets of the human mind, or inscribed upon the pages of a church-formulary, they are possessed of the same immutable characteristics. The question, then, is simply one of fact,—do church-creeds faithfully reproduce the doctrines of the Scriptures? The question to us as a church is, Do our standards accurately state those doctrines? If they do not, the development required is to expunge the dogmas which do not express the mind of Christ in the written Word, and incorporate those that do. If they do, as they utter the word of Christ, they are clothed with Christ's authority. The delivery of Christ's doctrines and commandments by men does not make them the doctrines and commandments of men. The fact being settled that the doctrines of these standards are the very doctrines of Scripture, we meet the fundamental premise in which the opposition to them is grounded with a denial. They are not human compositions, except in so far as their form and arrangement are concerned—they are for substance the composition of the divine Spirit; they coincide with the inspired writings. Their dogmas are not man's, they are God's dogmas. The cry for liberty to develop theological thought beyond their doctrines is the demand for license to develop it beyond God's doctrines.

This is the real secret of revolt against the binding authority of confessions. When men cry, Down with creeds! they mean, Down with the Bible! When they shout, We will not be tied down by confessions of faith! they mean, We will not submit to God's authority—the human intelligence is too gloriously free to be led captive by God Himself! These are not Christian views; they are the children of rationalism brought to the font of the church and baptized under the attractive names of Broad-Churchism, Liberal Christianity, and Progressive Thought—the fair daughters of men with whom, when the sons of God consort, they generate the giant leaders of defection and apostasy.

And in the name of reason we would ask, Why should confessions of faith be rejected because they are old? What is there in age to invalidate truth? She is as old as God and as immortal as He. Is not the Bible old? Has age made it worthless? Is it not now, as it ever has been, the impregnable tower into which the righteous runneth when pressed by the legions of the pit? Has age made it decrepit? Is it not now taking wings like the Apocalyptic angel, to fly in mid-heaven and blow the trump of jubilee to the slaves of sin and death? Is not nature old? And are her laws inoperative because they began to work from the foundation of the world? Are her ordinances worn out because they are old? Shine not the heavenly host with the same lustre with which they beamed upon the plains of Uz, when Job sang of the bands of Orion and the sweet influences of the Pleiades? And are the grand facts and doctrines of redemption effete because they date back to the promise which, springing like a bow from the abyss of the fall, has spanned the arch of time? Is the panoply of God of no further service

because for ages the darts of the Devil have been driven in a fiery storm against it? And is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, now useless and to be discarded because in the conflicts of centuries it has rung against the armor of error and the mail of hell? No; the difficulty with these confessions—these battle-torn standards of the church—is not that they are antiquated; it is that they are as young and vigorous as ever. The light of immortal youth which rests upon the divine Word kindles upon them. Their crime is that they too faithfully represent God's authority—that they restrain the license of speculation, call the students of truth into the school of Christ, and bind His yoke upon their necks.

To develop her knowledge of Scripture doctrine as its meaning is elicited by fresh conflicts with error, and new evolutions of providence, and, as developed, to give it formal and permanent expression in her symbols and in this way to develop them,—this is conceded to be the privilege and the duty of the church; but so far as this has been done and her standards made coincident with the Scriptures, she is debarred from any substantive development of their doctrines as she is precluded from such a development of the complete and ultimate rule of faith and duty. She ought to add Scripture doctrines to her standards when they are wanting; she has no power to add to Scripture doctrines in her standards.

The next aspect of this subject which claims our notice is the extent of discretionary power possessed by the church in the sphere of government.

Reverting to the great principle of the completeness of the Scriptures as a rule of faith and duty, we would expect to find in them ample directions in respect to

the government of the church as an organized society; we would reasonably look for an adequate constitution for this supernatural kingdom from Him who is at once its Savior, its head and its sovereign—the giver of life, the source of power and the administrator of rule. To take any other view would be to impugn the perfection of the Scriptures, or to suppose that they were designed to be a guide to individuals only, and not to the church as an organic whole. To adopt this supposition is to impeach the wisdom of Christ, since in that case He would have failed to guard His church against the corruptions into which she has been plunged by this very hypothesis, that He has given her no definite form of government, but left her 'in that matter to the guidance of her own wisdom. But our expectation that He would provide for all the requirements of His church is not disappointed. He has revealed to her His will in this solemn concern of her polity. It is usual to draw a sharp distinction between doctrine and government. In a certain sense, it is admissible—the sense in which the gospel as a doctrine differs from church-government as a law. It would, however, seem to be more accurate to take the distinction between the doctrine touching the way in which individuals are to be saved, and the doctrine touching the way in which the church is to be governed—in a word, the doctrine of salvation, and the doctrine of church-government. Both are matters of revelation; the government of the church is a revealed doctrine as well as the salvation of the soul. In both cases, therefore, our obligation is alike to believe and obey—to accept the doctrine and to perform the inculcated duties. If the individual embraces the gospel by faith, by faith likewise does the church receive the teachings

of her Lord in reference to the government and order of His house. If this position be correct, it follows that the church has no more discretionary power to develop the doctrine of government by substantive addition or diminution than she possesses in regard to the doctrine of salvation. This, however, is denied. It is contended that there is no definite form of church-government revealed in the Scriptures; only the essential principles are given. If the language conveys any meaning, it implies that government in the general is instituted, but no form of government in particular.

It may, without arrogance, be suggested that it is difficult, if not impossible, to extract any clear and precise notion from this position. We can understand the proposition that Christ appointed no government for His church, but left it to the enlightened wisdom of His followers to devise one for themselves; but that is not what is affirmed. We can perceive, in the abstract, the logical distinction between the generic notion of government and the different species which may be contained under it; but it passes our ability to comprehend how, in the concrete, an organized society can be under government in the general, but under no particular sort of government. If, for example, it be said that a given political community is under government, the question at once arises, What government? Is it monarchical, or aristocratic, or democratic? If it be replied that it is neither under any one of these, nor under one composed of the elements of some or all of them, then we beg to know what conceivable idea of government remains. It is like thinking away all the distinctive marks which characterize a thing and then attempting to form a notion of the thing itself. There is a government, but there is no constitution which embodies it,

and nobody authorized to administer it. The truth is, that the effort to realize the abstract idea of government in the concrete necessitates the designation of some particular features, and however few may be the elements enumerated, their specification defines a certain kind of government which is distinguishable from others. If, therefore, Christ has, in His Word, ordained any government at all for His church, it must be one which is capable of being realized in a definite form. Has He done this? Has He revealed a government for His church? Is this among the all things which He commanded the apostles and which they were to teach the church to observe? This question will be settled by another. Has He revealed those component elements of a government the existence of which determines the existence of the government itself? The essential elements which enter into the composition of a government are laws, officers and courts. Each of these elements is revealed in the New Testament,—itself embodies the laws, the officers are given under definite titles and with prescribed functions, and the courts are described. Presbyterians are sure that they find a particular sort of officers, courts peculiarly composed, and a specific principle which distinguishes the mode of administering the government from every other—the principle of government by Presbyters in representative assemblies, discriminating this polity from Prelacy on the one hand and Independency on the other. We have, then—so we firmly believe—a divinely-revealed polity of definite form. The King of the church has not left it to her to frame a government upon principles of expediency commending themselves to human wisdom; He has supernaturally communicated to her as a supernatural

organism her constitution, office-bearers and courts. It is no more permissible to the church to devise her government than to think out her gospel. Reason, no doubt, would, were it left to her, do better in the one department than in the other. That is not the question. The task of doing neither has been assigned to it. Polity is given as well as salvation, and in regard to it the church has no power but to conform herself strictly to the requirements of her complete and infallible rule.

There is a respect in which the church has discretionary power in this department, but it is one which does not in the slightest degree affect the nature and organization of her government. It lies not in the sphere of the supernatural, but altogether in that of the natural. The Westminster Confession very precisely defines the extent of this discretion. It is restricted to "some circumstances concerning the government of the church common to human actions and societies." It is designed to speak more particularly of this "doctrine of circumstances" under the topic still remaining—that of worship—and it is here dismissed with a single remark. It is clear that circumstances which are common to human actions cannot be anything which is peculiar to church actions, and those which are common to human societies cannot be anything distinctive of the church as a certain kind of society. They are circumstances belonging to the temporal sphere—time, place, decorum, and the natural methods of discharging business which are necessities to all societies. They do not appertain to the kind of government which the church ought to have, nor the mode in which it is to be dispensed.

This, then, is the extent of the discretionary power of the church in the sphere of government: She is to

add nothing to, to take nothing from, what Christ has commanded in the Scriptures. All her needs are there provided for. She must have a divine warrant for every element of her polity and every distinctive function of government. Her laws are given; her officers are given; and the mode in which those laws shall be administered, and those officers shall act, is given. She can, consequently, make no laws—her power is limited to declaring and applying Christ's laws; she can create no offices—her power is expressed in electing the persons to fill those that Christ has appointed; she can institute no new mode of government—her sole power lies in employing that which Christ has ordained. Her power and her duty alike are summed up in absolute conformity to the Written Word.

The same general line of argument is applicable to the extent of discretionary power possessed by the church in the domain of public worship,—public worship, we say, for that belongs to the church, as such, and all that is predicable of it, is not predicable of that of the family and the social circle.

Dr. Breckinridge has well urged that the supernatural element runs through, pervades and controls all the departments of doctrine, government and worship. We cannot afford ever to lose sight of this great principle. It has a commanding value. Especially ought we to challenge our attention to it in the matter of public worship, because there is no divine institution in regard to which natural wisdom and natural taste are so apt to arrogate discretion as this. It involves to a large extent the æsthetical element of our nature, and the imagination and the sensibilities as well as the reason plead for a share in its control. A cultivated carnality begs, clamors, storms for some license here.

Here it is, emphatically, that human wisdom asserts its liberty to exercise its own inventive power, and to refuse conformity to divine appointments whether in the establishment of modes of worship, or in their alteration as positive institutes. But let it never be forgotten that will-worship has been under every dispensation of religion a special object of divine denunciation and wrath. God has always manifested a peculiar jealousy for the appointed worship of His house; and no marvel, for in the worship of the solemn assembly, religion finds its highest and most formal expression, the human heart is most immediately conscious of the divine presence, and the will of the creature brought into closest relation to that of God. The divine majesty is directly before us, the glory of it blazes in our very eyes, the place is holy ground, and an act which elsewhere might be indifferent takes on the complexion of profanity. It is to assert ourselves before God face to face. The sentences of Christ's displeasure against the invasions of His prerogative are not as summarily enforced under the New Dispensation as under the old, but their fearfulness is not diminished by the fact that their execution is suspended. The Apostle Paul, in the third chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, furnishes a picture which should enstamp itself upon the minds of every Christian teacher. He represents one who has, with doctrinal correctness, laid the true and only foundation, which is Jesus Christ, and yet has built upon it a superstructure of wood, hay and stubble. Behold him, as the ordeal of the last day tries his work of what sort it is! Every false doctrine, every unscriptural element of government, every invention of will-worship perishes one after another in the fiery circle which narrows around him; his very vestments

are swept from him by its consuming breath; and he stands naked and alone—himself saved, but the results of his life-long labor reduced to ashes in the final conflagration. Verily, it becomes the teachers of religion, as they would not be found at last to have spent their strength for naught, not only to lay aright the doctrinal foundation, but to attend to the sort of superstructure which they rear upon it! The standard of building is in their hands—the judgment which will be laid for a line, the righteousness which will be applied as a plummet, are given in the inspired word. “To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

The only question is, Has Christ revealed the worship of His house? Has He included it among the things which He has commanded, and which He has enjoined the Church to observe? If He has, nothing is left her but to obey His voice.

The public worship of the church, in a wide sense, includes the reading of the Scriptures, preaching, prayer, the singing of praise, the administration of the sacraments, contribution of our substance to the service of God, and the pronouncement of the benediction. In a stricter sense, its elements are prayer and singing. It will not be disputed that these modes of worship are revealed by Christ in His Word. If so, the church has no discretionary power to introduce any others, or to change in any respect those which Christ has warranted. The theory that whatsoever is not expressly forbidden in the Word the church may do, involves the monstrous assumption, that in matters of positive institution uninspired wisdom is of co-ordinate authority with the revealed will of God. The power that adds

to or abridges them, that changes or modifies them, must either be equal to the original appointing power, or be shown to be delegated from it. Neither of these positions rests upon a shadow of proof from the Scriptures. But whatever others may think on this subject, our doctrine is definitely settled. The Westminster Confession distinctly enounces the principle that whatsoever, in connection with church-worship, is not commanded, either expressly or implicitly, is forbidden. Its language is: "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, *or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.*" This is the doctrine of the best and truest of the Reformers, the doctrine of our own Constitution, our accepted exposition of the Written Word,—that only what Christ has commanded can the church enforce or permit; that what He has not commanded is not allowable; that the only sphere in which the church possesses discretionary power is that of commanded things, within which she may act, beyond which she is not at liberty to go one inch.

But, in this sphere of commanded things, what is the extent of her discretionary power? This is a question which is to us, as a church, one of present, practical import. It is one of the points at which we are in especial danger of being caught off our guard—this is a gate through which the Trojan horse is sought to be introduced into our holy city. It is a real, living issue, What power has the church within the sacred, the divinely-scored circle of commanded things—of revealed duties? This being the question, the answer,

for us, is most precisely given in our Confession of Faith. After stating the mighty principle of the limitation of power within the things prescribed in Scripture, it proceeds to say: "There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and the government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed." Since then, by her Constitution, the charter which defines her rights, limits her powers and prescribes her duties, the discretion of our church is astricted to "some circumstances concerning the worship of God common to human actions and societies," it is a question of the utmost consequence, What is the nature of these circumstances? Dr. Thornwell puts the case so clearly, and yet so concisely, that we quote a portion of his words in answer to this very question: "Circumstances are those concomitants of an action without which it either cannot be done at all, or cannot be done with decency and decorum. Public worship, for example, requires public assemblies, and in public assemblies people must appear in some costume and assume some posture. . . . Public assemblies, moreover, cannot be held without fixing the time and place of meeting: these are circumstances which the church is at liberty to regulate. . . . We must distinguish between those circumstances which attend actions as actions—that is, without which the actions cannot be—and those circumstances which, though not essential, are added as appendages. These last do not fall within the jurisdiction of the church. She has no right to appoint them. They are circumstances in the sense that they do not belong to the substance of the act.

They are not circumstances in the sense that they so surround it that they cannot be separated from it. A liturgy is a circumstance of this kind. . . . In public worship, indeed in all commanded external actions, there are two elements—a fixed and a variable. The fixed element, involving the essence of the thing, is beyond the discretion of the church. The variable, involving only the circumstances of the action, its separable accidents, may be changed, modified or altered, according to the exigencies of the case.” Such is the doctrine of one who was a profound and philosophical thinker, a man deeply taught of the Spirit, and a master of the Presbyterian system, the doctrine of Calvin and Owen, of Cunningham and Breckinridge, the doctrine of the Reformed Church of France, of the Puritans of England, and of the Church of Scotland, the doctrine to which, by the grace of God, the practice of the Free Church of Scotland and of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, in an age of growing laxity, still continues to be conformed.

There are three criteria by which the kind of circumstances attending worship which fall under the discretionary power of the church may be determined: first, they are not qualities or modes of the acts of worship; they are extraneous to them as a certain kind of actions; secondly, they are common to the acts of all societies, and, therefore, not peculiar to the acts of the church as a particular sort of society—they are not characteristic and distinctive of her acts and predicable of them alone; and thirdly, they are conditions necessary to the performance of the acts of worship—without them the acts of this society could not be done, as without them the acts of no society could be done.

Let us now bring a liturgy to the test of these criteria; and it is instanced because it is an appendage to one of the acts in which worship is, in the strictest sense, rendered to God—prayer. It cannot abide the first, because it qualifies and modifies the act of prayer itself—it is a kind of prayer, a mode in which it is offered. It cannot abide the second, because it is not common to human actions and societies—all societies, political, scientific, agricultural, mechanical and others surely do not, as such, use liturgies. It cannot abide the third, because a liturgy is not a condition necessary to the performance of the act of prayer. Its necessity could only be pleaded on one of two grounds: either that without it the act of prayer cannot be performed at all, and that is out of the question; or, that without it the act cannot be performed decently and in order, and to take that ground is to impeach the office of the Holy Ghost, who is specially promised to teach us how to pray and what things to pray for, to depreciate the capacities of the sanctified intelligence of man, and to pass a derogatory criticism upon some of the purest churches that have ever flourished, and some of the noblest saints who have ever edified the people of God by their ministrations.

The other strict and proper act of worship is the singing of praise. Let it be observed that it is not praise, but the singing of praise. The distinction is not captious—it is precisely made by the New Testament and our Standards. They both prescribe the act of singing, and they both recognize the element of praise as not peculiar to that act. The Confession of Faith says: prayer with thanksgiving is one special part of religious worship; and the Directory for Worship designates giving thanks as an element in the

prayer before sermon in public services. Praise has, therefore, a generic character, and sustains a two-fold relation—to prayer and to singing. The specific element, then, in the part of worship we are considering is singing. Now it is pleaded that the church has discretionary power to employ instrumental music, as one of the circumstances allowed by our Standards. Let us submit it to the test of the criteria by which these circumstances are determined. First, they are not parts of the acts of worship by which they are modified; but this circumstance is a part of the act of singing praise by which it is modified—it is a mode in which it is performed. Secondly, these circumstances are common to the acts of human societies, not peculiar to, and distinctive of, those of the church. It is very certain that instrumental music is not such a circumstance. It will hardly be said that all societies play on instruments as well as the church. Thirdly, these circumstances are conditions necessary to the performance of the acts of worship, without which they either cannot be done at all, or not done decently and in order. That the singing of praise cannot be performed at all without instrumental music will be affirmed by none. But it may be affirmed that it cannot without it be performed decently and in order. Let it be noticed that the question is not whether it may not be performed in an indecent and disorderly manner. Granted; but so may instrumental music. The question is, whether it cannot be done decently and in order without instrumental accompaniment. The question can only be determined by reference of the practice to a permanent and universal standard of propriety and decorum. And to say that the simple singing of God's praise in His house is indecent and disorderly is to say, that for

twelve centuries the church of Christ was guilty of this impropriety; for it is a matter of history that for that period not even the Church of Rome knew anything of instruments in her worship. To say that the simple singing of God's praise violates the standard of decency and order of this age is to censure the glorious Free Church of Scotland and the Irish Presbyterian Church for an indecent and disorderly conduct of this part of divine worship. The ground, therefore, that instrumental music in public worship is one of those circumstances required by the rule that all things be done decently and in order cannot be maintained without a spirit of arrogance and censoriousness which would itself violate the higher principle of Christian charity.

It is submitted, with all modesty, that this line of argument ought to be conclusive with Presbyterians, at least, against ranking instrumental music in public worship as one of the circumstances common to human actions and societies which fall under the discretion of the church. Consequently, to justify it, it must be proved to be one of those directly commanded things which the apostles taught the church to observe. To take that ground is to contradict the unbroken evidence of history from the apostolic age until the middle of the thirteenth century. The force of this consideration lies here: there having been a tendency in the church from the earliest age to depart from the simple institutions of the Gospel, it is utterly unaccountable that she should have become more simple in her worship after the apostles fell asleep than she was under their personal teaching. It is clear as day, the human heart being what it is, that if the apostolic churches had been accustomed to this mode of worship it never

would have been eradicated. The natural tastes of men all forbid the supposition. The elimination of instrumental music from the worship of Christ's house by the best churches of the Reformation, by the English Puritans and the Church of Scotland, was the result of an effort to purify the church and to restore her to what they conceived to be the simplicity of apostolic practice. In this matter, we have relapsed from their reformed position. But if the use of instrumental music in the New Testament Church be not either directly commanded in Scripture, or indirectly as one of the circumstances common to human actions and societies and lying within the sphere of commanded things, it only remains to consider it a clear, substantive addition to the divinely revealed rule of faith and duty in the Written Word; and then it is prohibited. The issue is: Either we must prove that it is one of the things expressly or implicitly commanded by Christ, or admit that it is forbidden. The latter alternative is the doctrine of our Standards; and, if so, the inference as to what our practice ought to be is too apparent to be pressed.

What has been said upon this last point has not been dictated by a spirit of captiousness or arrogance. A natural wish to conform to the usages of one's time, a desire for popular esteem in order to usefulness, a regard to what may be deemed the demands of courtesy and earthly propriety, a respectful deference to the opinions of others, and an indisposition to stand on what it is usual to characterize as a minor and indifferent question, though minor and indifferent it cannot be if it involve a grand, fundamental principle,—all these considerations conspired to restrain the utterance. Only a solemn conviction of the duty of the

church and of her danger in departing in any respect from the Word have urged it. The argument may have merely the significance of a protest. For its truth, appeal is humbly taken to our Constitution; for the purity of the motive that prompted it, to Him who knows the secrets of the heart. It has been spoken as unto wise men; let them judge what has been said.

Finally, in these remarks the ground has been assumed that the doctrine, the polity and the worship of the church are all divinely given in the Word, and that she has no right in any of these departments which is not a divine right. This is not to advocate bigotry and exclusiveness. We abjure High-churchism as much as we do No-churchism. It is perfectly clear that the more closely the church is conformed to the word, the more nearly would she approximate the spirit of its divine author. She would be no broader and no narrower than He. She would be strict only where He is strict, and breathe the same charity with Him. She would, in that case, be exactly adapted, like the Word itself, to show forth the glory of Christ. In consequence of such a conformity to the pattern shown in the Mount, she would indeed be pure and beautiful; but the eyes of men would not be attracted to her. She would stand a crystal palace transmitting the glory of the Savior who reigns within her, transparently revealing His cross and His crown to all who seek Him for salvation and are willing to bow to His rule. Her language would emphatically be: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ!" High-churchism makes extravagant claims to discretionary power, depreciates the necessity of conformity to the Word, especially in government and worship, yet asserts the exclusive validity of its orders

and its sacraments, and unchurches all bodies of professed disciples of Jesus which subscribe not to its pretensions. To say that a church which grounds her every right in a warrant from the Scriptures, and repudiates the license of human wisdom and the discretion of human authority; which admits to her communion all who are regenerated by the Spirit and justified by faith in Christ; which unchurches no body of men that preaches a true gospel and administers its ordinances in their essential purity,—to say that such a church is chargeable with High-church exclusiveness is simply preposterous. It is to make white black. It is to say that the Scriptures are a digest of High-church canons, and that Christ and His apostles were the exponents of intolerance. It is a powerful presumption in favor of the genuineness of a church when her inherent and distinctive principles, carried out to their legitimate results, conduct her by a logical necessity to that broad, loving catholicity which pulsates in the Scriptures, as it beat in the heart of a dying Savior. It is not conformity to the Word, it is the want of it, which produces the temper of exclusiveness. We make the distinction between a true church more perfectly conformed, and a true church less perfectly conformed, to the supreme rule; as we make a distinction between a true Christian more completely, and a true Christian less completely, obedient to the same great standard.

Nor does it follow that because it is of the very last importance that a church adhere to the doctrines of salvation, it is, therefore, of little consequence whether she be careful to adjust her government and her worship to the standard of the Word. Difference in degree of importance between the several contents of the ultimate rule has no influence upon the duty to receive and

obey whatever is revealed. Christ has spoken; His authority clothes every word with importance. And it should never be forgotten that the efficacious grace of the gospel ordinarily acts through an apparatus of divinely-appointed ordinances, and that to neglect them is to turn aside from the channels in which it is intended to flow—the types and moulds in which it is designed to operate. There is as exquisite an adaptation of the organism of the church to the supernatural energies of grace as there is of the fabric of the external world to the unseen forces of nature; or as there is of the structure of the human body to the vital power of the immaterial soul.

. There is, moreover, such a divinely adjusted relation between the different departments of the church—between doctrine and government and worship; there is so nice and delicate an inter-action among them, that one cannot be injuriously affected without involving the suffering of the others. All history teaches this lesson. The contagion begun in one sphere is sure to spread by sympathy to the others, as the consumption of one organ of the body fatally implicates all the rest. A corpse anywhere in the church infects her whole atmosphere. A dead doctrine tends to paralyze a living polity and a living worship, and a dead worship infuses a poisoning virus into a living doctrine and a living polity.

Nor can we be indifferent to the fact illuminated by the experience of the church that false doctrine always tends to affiliate with a false polity and a false worship. In the struggles of the Church of Scotland, as Hetherington, her eloquent historian, graphically points out, Armenianism was almost always associated with Prelacy and a cumbrous ritual, and Calvinism with Pres-

bytery and a simple worship. Introduce an unscriptural element into any department, and if unchecked it stamps, in the course of time, its depraving genius upon all the rest. Let us see to it that we guard the towers of government and worship on our outer walls, assured that if one of them be carried, the path is opened up before an irruptive and triumphant foe to the citadel of doctrine and the seat of life.

We are apt to have our eye diverted from the importance of these views by the absorbing interests of our missionary enterprises and the intense activities they evoke. The great command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" is summoning the church as with the trump of an angel and the shout of the Lord to the evangelization of the race. Evangelism is the pervading spirit of the age, aggressiveness its dominant policy, and onward to the ends of the earth! its thrilling and inspiring battle-cry. This is the honor and glory of our times—it throws us back across the desert of mediæval indifference into sympathy with the sublime genius of the apostolic age. The zeal of Paul is reproduced and incarnated in the burning heralds of the Cross. But the church is not only the divinely-commissioned publisher, she is also the divinely-commanded conservator, of the truth. Christianity, in her development beyond the circumscribed limits of Judaism, did not throw off, she took up and absorbed, the conservatism of the old dispensation, while she girded her loins under the new for its distinctive and glorious office of universal evangelization. Conservatism and aggression are twin duties, complementary to each other. It is just as important to maintain the truth as it is to propagate it. The danger

is that the church will neglect the former duty in discharging the latter—that she will be more solicitous to preach the gospel in some form to the world than to guard the particular type of it which she impresses on the forming and infantile churches of converted heathen men. As surely as the mother imparts her features and habits to the daughter, so surely will the parent churches at home stamp their cast of doctrine, polity and worship upon their children on heathen soil. In her onward march the church cannot afford to neglect her base-line. As we value the vital interests of our own organizations as well as of those established abroad, we must see to it, with sedulous and unremitting vigilance, that we keep ourselves conformed in all things to the will of Christ as revealed in the sacred word.

We are not without peril. The law of degeneracy, the baleful results of which are only relieved by sudden and wonderful interpositions of reviving grace at critical epochs in the church's history, is written upon all the past. Shall we fondly dream that we shall be free from its scope? Look abroad upon the field of the church and the world with the patient eye of a careful induction, scrutinize contemporaneous facts, collect the signs of the times, and do we not reach the alarming generalization that there is in the best churches of Protestantism a growing latitudinarianism which spurns the restraints of a complete and ultimate rule of faith and duty? We are now more than three hundred years away from the glorious Reformation of the sixteenth century, almost as far from it as was Augustin from the apostolic age when the Pelagian heresy threatened to engulf the church. Shall the American church escape the universal law of corruptibility? And

shall she prove the solitary exception in history to the law of conflict and suffering? She has not yet been called to seal her testimony to truth in the fire, although well-nigh every other Protestant church has received her baptism of blood. Depend upon it, there are defections and there are struggles before us. The prophetic warnings of Scripture, the confirming lessons of history and the corroborating indications of the period admonish us that in the latter days perilous times shall come, that men shall depart from the truth, and having itching ears shall heap to themselves teachers, that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; that as the hopes of the church sunk into the grave of Jesus just before the ascending glories of the apostolic Reformation, and as they again descended into the sepulchre just before the resurrection light of the Protestant Reformation, so they will again decline into the gloom and blood of a widespread apostasy and a mighty tribulation, just before the Morning Star of the Millennial Reformation shall beam amidst the rifted clouds of an ecclesiastical night. Protestantism itself will need to be reformed.

What, then, is the course which our own beloved church is called by her Head to pursue? What, fathers and brethren, what? What, youthful students and thinkers, into whose hands, under God, the destinies of this church—her type of faith, thought and action, of doctrine, polity and worship, are to be intrusted when the actors in her early organization shall have mouldered into dust? What, ye ruling elders, responsible and honored guardians of each little flock as it rests in its own particular fold? What is the great, paramount vocation of this church? While yet in the body of her mother she struggled, as conscious even then of a sepa-

rate individuality, against the Esau of discretionary power, and the first breath of her independent historic existence was expended in protest against error and testimony for truth. Conformity to the Word was the reason of her separate being; let conformity to the Word be the law of its development—conformity to the Word, close, implicit, undeviating in doctrine, government and worship. The opportunity furnished us is inexpressively grand. Freed from the conflict of antagonistic ideas, almost a unit ourselves, we have the moulding and fashioning of a church in our hands. What will we do with her? Let us rise to the greatness of the occasion. Let us endeavor, by grace, to make this church as perfect a specimen of Scriptural truth, order and worship as the imperfections of the present state will permit. Let us take her by the hand and lead her to the Word alone. Let us pass the Reformers, let us pass the Fathers, uncovering our heads to them in token of our profound appreciation of their labors for truth, and heartily receiving from them all they speak in accordance with the Word; but let us pass on and pause not, until with our sacred charge we reach the Oracles of God, and with her bow at the Master's feet, and listen to the Master's voice. Let obedience to the word of Christ in all things be the law of her life; so that when the day of review shall come, and section after section of the universal church shall halt for judgment before the great Inspector Himself, although, no doubt, there will be much of unfaithfulness of life that will draw on His forgiveness, His eye may detect no departure from His Word in her principles, her order and her worship. He cannot discredit His own commands; and that church will receive His chief encomiums which has been most closely conformed to His Word. Let us strive for that glory!

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