



No cover

PRACTICAL SERMONS,

EXTRACTED FROM THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.

WITH THE CONSENT OF THE AUTHOR,

ASHBEL GREEN, D. D.

For Sale by John C. Clark, No. 60, Dock Street, Philadelphia.

NOTICE.

With the consent of the author, the printer of the Christian Advocate struck off a few copies of the following Sermons from the types as they stood; but on a paper superior to that of the Magazine. These he now offers to the public in a pamphlet form. They admit of being bound into a small volume; but this is left to the option of every purchaser. Probably some who already have them as they are scattered through the whole of the last volume of the Advocate, will wish to possess them in a connected form.

PRACTICAL SERMONS.

A NEW YEAR'S SERMON.

THE BELIEVER WAITING FOR HIS CHANGE.

JOB, xiv. 14, latter part.—“All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.”

A New Year's day is commonly regarded as a season appropriated to joy and festivity. Whence, my brethren, is this idea derived? and what good reason can be assigned for its indulgence? Do we intend by our rejoicing to express our grateful sense of the Divine goodness, by which we have been preserved through another year? This, indeed, is both rational and pious; and the pleasure which arises from such a source ought not to be suppressed, but encouraged and cherished. Considering however the general indications of the event, they seem plainly to direct us to serious, rather than to light and airy contemplations. The pleasure which has just been admitted to be proper, though real and exquisite, is of the serious kind; and surely nothing can be more serious than to be reminded that our lives are fast hastening to a close, and that we are speedily to render up our account for every deed done in the body,—which is the most natural train of thought that the occurrence of a new year can suggest to a considerate and pious mind. Hence it happens, that although the season is usually devoted to unthinking levity, by those who wish to escape from all serious thought, it is impossible to say any thing of a religious kind that shall be *appropriate* to it, without leading to those meditations which are apt to be esteemed gloomy. I say for myself, brethren, that I have never been able to frame a new year's discourse, which would not serve, with very few modifications, for a funeral sermon; and the reason is, that the flight of time, the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the importance of our being habitually prepared to stand before our final Judge, are equally suggested by both these occasions.

Searching for a topic which might give some variety to the strain in which I have heretofore addressed you, my attention has been drawn to the text; which, after all, can vary it but little. It was originally uttered by Job, in a meditation he indulged and to which he was led by his afflictions, relative to the vanity of man, or the shortness and sorrows of human life. The words themselves are expressive of a pious resolution, patiently to wait till God should please to put an end to all his sufferings by the stroke of death: or, perhaps, we may say more generally that they announce a determination to leave quietly to God's disposal all the events of life and death; only waiting on him for the knowledge of his will, and for grace and strength to do or suffer it, till the final

change contemplated, should terminate the sufferer's weary pilgrimage. Considering the expression, as I propose to do, in a detached and general view, we may, I think, without doing violence to its natural import, consider it as authorizing the following positions—

I. There is a purpose, unspeakably important, for which each of us was sent into this world:

II. The period allowed to each of us, for the execution of this purpose, is fixed and determined by God:

III. It is our duty piously and patiently to wait, till this period be accomplished:

IV. When it is terminated, we shall experience a change in the highest degree important and decisive.

After briefly discussing each of these points, a short application shall conclude the discourse.

First, then, there is a purpose, unspeakably important, for which each of us was sent into this world. Is not this a truth, which by plain implication is taught in the text? Does not an appointed time, waiting for the completion of it, and looking for a change, imply that there is a design to be answered by our present situation, as well as by that which is future? Was this space assigned for no purpose? Is it to be a period of mere idle and useless existence? or is it to be filled up at the pleasure of every individual, without any responsibility for his conduct? Certainly not—To suppose this, would be to impeach the wisdom and moral equity of the Creator. The intimation is strong in the text, and it is abundantly confirmed by the unequivocal decisions both of reason and Scripture, that the present is a probatory state; a state in which preparation is to be made, and a character to be formed for the eternal world. All that we see of man is a riddle, unless he is to exist beyond the grave; and unless his present dispositions and actions are to have an influence there. The condition of man at present is marked with the greatest inequalities, and apparent violations of equity. The wicked are often prosperous and successful, and the virtuous are frequently disappointed and overwhelmed with distress. How strikingly was this exemplified in the case of the holy man who uttered our text? It seems necessary, then, in order to vindicate the moral government of the Deity, that there should be a state in which these irregularities shall be equitably adjusted; in which vice shall be punished, and virtue and piety rewarded.

Man, moreover, is endued with faculties which aim at objects that, in the present life, he never attains. With powers capable of endless improvement, he dies almost as soon as that improvement is begun. If his Creator be, as we cannot but conclude that he is, both wise and good, it is altogether incredible that a creature should be formed by him for uniform disappointment; should be made to possess powers which are never matured, but invariably blasted in the bud. These considerations led even the heathen philosophers, strongly to hope for and expect a life to come; a life for which the present was to be regarded only as a period of preparatory discipline, a state of infancy and tutelage. Divine revelation establishes this deduction of reason, as an unquestionable fact. Its whole import is, that there is a future state of happiness and misery; that this future state will be determined by our present conduct; and to teach and persuade us to shun the evil, and to choose the good. The unequivocal and abundant teaching of the holy oracles is—"Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked! it

shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him—Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap—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—and the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” It appears, then, that the purpose for which we were sent into this world is, to prepare for another; that our condition hereafter, (which will be a condition either of infinite happiness or infinite misery,) will entirely depend on the temper which we have here possessed, and the part which we have here acted. How unspeakably important does our present character and conduct appear in the light of these solemn truths! Consequences—eternal in their duration and boundless in their magnitude—follow inevitably from the complexion of that moral character of heart and life which we here possess. Thoughtless and inconsiderate man! awake and think of thy situation! An endless existence of unutterable joy or wo, is pending on what thou now art, and on what thou now dost. Thou art now deciding thy own condition for an interminable state of enjoyment or of suffering—Thou art now upon this awful probation! Every thought, word and action, constitutes a part of it. Every fleeting moment brings thee nearer to the end of it; nearer to the time when the seal of an unchanging destiny will be set upon thy state. Think then of the circumstances in which thou art placed; look into thy heart; take counsel of thy conscience; take heed to all thy steps; for nothing ever was so important and interesting to thee, as that thou shouldst be prepared to go hence whenever thou art called. And let us remember—

II. That the period of our departure cannot be prolonged by any of our wishes or efforts, being fixed and determined by God. This is a truth to which the text directs our attention. The time which is there mentioned is called “an appointed time.” And this appears to refer to an expression still more explicit in the fifth verse, where it is said “his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.” Numerous passages of Scripture might be added to these, all going to establish the point, that in the counsel and determination of God, the period of human life, as of every thing else, is not uncertain or fluctuating, but fixed and decisive. Reason, also, confirms the same conclusion. To suppose the Deity either ignorant of any event, or changeable in regard to it, is to suppose him imperfect; and this is to deny his essential character. How the absolute determinations of God coincide with the freedom, operation, and influence of second causes, I pretend not to explain, and expect not, in the present state, fully to understand. But I think it perfectly consistent with this to say, that I believe both; because, on proper evidence, I ought to believe, and do believe, a great variety of facts, the *manner* of whose agreement I can neither illustrate nor comprehend. From each class of these facts, I also deduce practical consequences of the highest importance. In the instance now in view, I derive from the assured belief that means and instruments, under the Divine blessing, have an influence in preserving life, an encouragement to endeavour to avoid danger, to strive to preserve my health, and to recover it when it is lost. I know that if it be preserved or restored, it must usually be in the use of these means; that the means are as much in my power as any thing whatever can be; and that I am, therefore, blameable if I neglect them. Consequences

equally important, I also draw from a full belief of the other fact—that all depends on God. I derive from this an impressive sense of his sovereignty, a conviction of my being absolutely in his hand and at his disposal, my obligations to reverence and fear him, and the comfortable thought that no accident, and no design of any wicked being, can destroy my life, or do me any injury, contrary to his sovereign will.

In regard to the subject immediately before us and to which I shall now confine myself, the entire disposal of human life by the will of our Creator, teaches us that it is infinite folly and presumption to reckon with certainty on a long continuance here; and especially on a period in which we may indulge in sin. How wicked, how infatuated, to calculate on having a protracted space to offend that God in whose hand our life is, and who can cut it short at any moment? What! shall we expect that Heaven will grant us time to be employed in insulting it! Verily if it be granted, it is likely to be granted not in mercy, but in judgment to the presumptuous sinner—granted that he may have time to fill up the measure of his iniquity, and become ripe for a more awful doom. But experience as well as reason, teaches us that it is folly without a parallel, to reckon with certainty on length of days. We see that God's appointed time for different individuals leaves no room for such a calculation. At all periods, from infancy to old age, we see our fellows finishing the space assigned them. Reasons not fully known to us, but doubtless wise and sufficient in themselves, decide that one shall have a longer, and another a shorter period. Time enough is allowed to each to be prepared for that account which he will be called upon to render up; for this account will be proportioned to the means and opportunities enjoyed. But, when called, neither youth, nor health, nor prudence, nor friends, nor physicians, nor wealth, nor esteem, can disappoint or delay the fixed purpose of Jehovah. He will not be influenced by any of these circumstances or considerations, but the stroke of death shall unavoidably do its office, on him who has lived his appointed time. Let us now consider—

III. That it is our duty piously and patiently to wait till this period be accomplished. This was the resolution of holy Job, as expressed in the text. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait"—Taking this subject, as I have proposed, in a general view, it may be affirmed with propriety, that the duty of waiting for our great change comprehends in it, 1. Preparation or readiness to depart; 2. Expectation or desire of the destined moment; 3. Patience while it is delayed, or acquiescence in the will of Him whose coming or determination we look for. It will I think be found, that *to wait*, always refers to some one of these ideas, or to the whole of them united.

1. It implies preparation or readiness to depart. When we wait for an event, the implication ever is, that, let it come whenever it may, it will find us in a state promptly to obey its call—with every thing done which is necessary to be done, or which we wish to do, before its occurrence. We cannot be said to be waiting for our departure out of time into eternity, unless we are thus circumstanced, in regard to that momentous transition—unless all that is necessary to fit us for it, and render it a happy event to us, is fully accomplished.

What then, my hearers, is necessary, to render our departure from life a happy event? It is, be assured, *essentially* necessary, that our natures should be renewed—that our hearts should be changed and sanctified by the Spirit of grace. For—"except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Every one of us possesses, by

nature, a heart wholly depraved—"The carnal mind is enmity against God." This enmity must be removed; this heart of alienation must be taken away—or we can never be partakers of the happiness of the world to come. It becomes impossible, because, without holiness, God will never admit us to his blissful presence; and even if he would, we should be miserable still, for the want of that temper, taste, and disposition, which are necessary to qualify us to enter into and enjoy the pure and spiritual exercises which constitute the happiness of glorified spirits. And as this change is absolutely indispensable, so it is equally necessary that it take place in the present life; for after death there can be no change. Then it will be said—"He that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy let him be filthy still." The Holy Spirit is the Almighty agent who performs this work; and hence the inspired declaration that we must be "born of the Spirit." He must enlighten us to see our guilt and danger. He must give us eyes to behold, and a disposition to accept of the Lord Jesus Christ, as all our salvation and all our desire—trusting entirely to his merits for pardon and eternal life. The influence of the Holy Spirit must bring us truly to loath and repent of all sin; to see its abominable nature; to desire most earnestly and sincerely, a deliverance from it; to love holiness; to delight supremely in God; to possess real benevolence toward all men—enemies as well as friends; and to discharge, as we have opportunity, all the duties which we owe to our Creator, to each other, and to ourselves. These dispositions and exercises are the fruit and evidence of a new nature; they proceed from a sanctified heart; they are its natural produce—flowing like sweet waters from a pure fountain. Thus qualified, the renewed soul holds spiritual communion with God at present, and is fitted to find its highest happiness in him to all eternity. But without this qualification, we cannot have such communion now, and, as we have seen, we cannot possibly be prepared for the enjoyment of God, and therefore cannot be admitted to it, at the hour of death.

You perceive, then, that those who are unacquainted with this great spiritual change—who have not been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, who have not truly repented of sin, cannot, with any propriety, be said to be waiting for their change. The essential preparation for it, they have as yet, wholly neglected. They have forgotten or disregarded the main concern, the great errand, on which they were sent into the world. Whether they be in the morning, the meridian, or the decline of life, the great business of life is yet untouched by them; it is still all upon their hands; and it urges them to put forth all the powers of their souls—calling on God for help—in an immediate and effectual attention to its demands. But those who know by happy experience what it is to have passed from death to life, have made what may be denominated the *essential preparation* for death. They are so waiting for the coming of their Lord, as that his appearance, whenever or however it shall take place, will be a happy event to them. Yet it is important, and will be found highly comfortable,

2. To possess and cherish the desire that the appointed hour for dismissal from the world should speedily arrive. This seems clearly to have been the disposition of the penman of the text. He plainly intimates, that although he would endeavour to wait with resignation, as long as God should please to continue him here, yet it was his choice and inclination to be speedily dismissed. The same sentiment is distinctly expressed by the apostle Paul; "I have, said he, a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." Through an undue

attachment to the world, the weakness of their faith, the want of present and satisfactory evidence of their interest in the covenant of grace, and a clear view and sensible anticipation of the entertainments of the heavenly world, it frequently comes to pass, that those who are the real heirs of glory, are unwilling for the present to leave the world—fearful of the hour of death, and desirous to have it delayed. In opposition to this, it should be their aim, to acquire a firm and settled confidence of their covenant interest in the Redeemer, to have their affections weaned from the earth, their worldly concerns so settled and arranged, and their minds so constantly and daily raised up to God, and so delighted in the contemplation of his glorious excellence, as that they should long to be swallowed up in the near and perfect vision of him; as that the summons to depart would be to them a matter of real gratification. This may be called an *actual* and *habitual* readiness or preparedness for their dissolution. It is that temper and state of mind in which every child of God would wish to be found, when the messenger death shall deliver the mandate to depart. I say not, indeed, that this state of habitual desire “to be absent from the body and present with the Lord,” is one of easy or general attainment. But I do say, that it is not only desirable and possible, but that it has been actually attained by some, and that it ought to be pressed after, with serious care and diligence, by every real Christian. We ought to endeavour to have our minds so habitually filled with holy desires after God and glory, as that we may view the coming of our Lord like the arrival of a friend, for whom we have been long looking, with anxious and earnest expectation. This it is, in deed and in truth, *to wait* for our change. But,

3. While it is delayed, we ought to exercise patience, and resignation to the will of Him who hath appointed the time of our release. This is to be the guard and qualification of what you have just heard. We are not to be impatient, or to murmur and repine, that the hour does not arrive, at which we are to have done with the world. Of this, it may be thought by some, there is little danger; and in reality it is that extreme which is less frequently seen than the other. Yet its occurrence is sometimes witnessed. It is not a thing unknown in experience, that a child of God should find it far more difficult to be willing to live than willing to die. The pious author of our text himself, was an example of it. Some of his expressions appear to manifest an impatient wish to be released from his sufferings by death; and the whole spirit of our text, as used by him, is a resolution to guard against this unjustifiable emotion. Elijah and Jonah are other instances, with which the sacred records furnish us, of good men who sinfully wished to die. Nor are instances wanting in every age and place. What shocking proofs are given us of this, when men, through rage or despair, put an end to their own lives, and rush, all covered with their sins, to the tribunal of their insulted Creator. Wicked men, who either deliberately disbelieve a future state, or who have no distinct or impressive apprehensions of what awaits them there, are not unfrequently seen to be impatient for death. But good men may also indulge in a degree of this spirit; although preserved, while reason holds its throne, from carrying it to the horrid lengths that have just been mentioned. The cares, and burdens, and perplexities, and fatigue of worldly business, or of relative duties, may sometimes urge them to this sinful impatience. Long sickness, or much bodily infirmity, or heavy afflictions of any kind, may tempt them, as they did Job, to indulge it.

The languor, lassitude, and various inconveniences and sufferings of old age, are sometimes seen to produce it. The believer hopes for unmingled happiness beyond the grave, and is ready to be dissatisfied that he is detained in a state of sorrow and affliction. But he ought to remember, that "his times are in the hand of God," and that duty demands that this concern be resigned entirely to the divine disposal. The believer should recollect that it is not acting the part of a good servant, to be reluctant to work till evening, nor of a good soldier, to be too desirous of being called from his post. He should remember that it is incumbent on him to *suffer* the will of God, as well as to *do* it; and that the former of these is often as important, both to himself and to others, as the latter. He should remember that the reward of fidelity is so great, that he may well wait, and do, and suffer, as long, and as much, as God may require, before it be conferred?—eternity will surely be long enough to be happy. While, therefore, he may and ought, with the apostle, as already stated, to indulge a desire to depart and to be with Christ, he should also be willing, as the apostle was, to stay as long as he may be profitable to the church or to the world; or may, in any wise promote the divine glory: and longer than this, he may be well assured, God will not suffer any of his children to remain in exile from their heavenly home. Cordially, therefore, let them adopt the language of the text—"All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come"—I am now to remark briefly—

IV. In the last place, that this change will be, in the highest degree, important and decisive to all. It is spoken of with emphasis in the text—it is denominated "*my change*," as if there were no other that could be mentioned or thought of, while this was in contemplation;—or as if no other deserved notice in comparison with this. And such, in reality, is the fact. Death will change all the circumstances of our present existence. The body will change its appearance and its capacities. It will change from an animated and attractive form, into a lifeless and unsightly lump of clay. The soul will change worlds. It will change time for eternity, a state of probation for a state of eternal fixedness of character and perceptions; a state where happiness and misery are blended together, for one where there will be either happiness or misery without any mixture, and with an intensity of which we can now have no adequate conception; a state where things are seen through the dim medium of the senses, for one where the unimprisoned spirit will discern God and eternal realities, with naked and unobstructed vision.

Widely different, as already hinted, will be the nature of that transition, which the righteous and the wicked will make, when their last final change shall come. The wicked will then change their indifference to religion, into an unavailing and endless agony of soul, that they wasted the period of probation, without making preparation for this momentous event. The infidel will change his unbelief of revelation, and his sneers at its truth, into an awful conviction of its verity, and into curses on his impiety and folly, for neglecting the counsel of God for his eternal well being. The prosperous and pleasurable sinner will change his wealth, his pomp, his fame, his flatterers, and his sensual indulgences, for the blackness of darkness for ever, the society of blaspheming spirits, tormenting devils, and the gnawing of that worm which shall never die. The giddy, the thoughtless, and the vain, will change all those sportive scenes, which once allured them, and kept their souls from God, for weeping and wailing, and gnashing

of teeth, without hope and without end—awful change!—beyond conception awful—to all who shall then be found to have lived without God and without Christ in the world. “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.”

But unspeakably joyous and glorious will be this change, to all the people of God. Faith will then be changed into vision, and they will behold their Saviour, face to face. They will change all the sufferings of time for all the ecstasy of eternity. They will change a state of infirmity for one where no inhabitant shall ever say I am sick; but where all shall possess eternal health, activity, and vigour. They shall change the scoffs and reproaches of wicked men for the approbation and applause of God and angels. They shall change a state of labour for a state of rest and reward. They shall change all their doubts and fears, their languor, coldness and sluggishness, in the divine life, for a perfect and enduring assurance of God’s love, and the most delightful freedom in his service. They shall change, in a word, a state of sin and imperfection, for a state of immaculate holiness and resemblance to the blessed God—where no enemy or temptation shall ever again assail them; where the body of this death shall no more oppress them; where they shall have no more contentions and conflicts with any of their corruptions; but where the soul shall be completely purified, and shall drink without interruption, and with ever increasing delight, of the rivers of pleasure which flow at God’s right hand. Thrice blessed and desirable change! Come the happy hour that shall bring it near!—“Come quickly; even so, come Lord Jesus.”

In closing the subject, fidelity to my Master, and to their own souls demands, that I solemnly call on those whose consciences inform them that they are yet in their sins, to accept the offered grace of God to-day. To-day you enter on a new year; and after all the days and years you have passed, the whole business of life, as you have heard, is still before you—it is still all on your hands. Is it not time to set about it in earnest? May not “the time past of your life suffice you to have wrought the will of the flesh?” When do you propose to be wise for eternity?—O beware, I conjure you, that you be not surprised into remediless misery! Resolve, in the strength of an Almighty Saviour, that this year, this day, yea, from this good hour, you will be for God—that the care of the soul shall be to you the “one thing needful,” till its salvation is ensured, by a vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ. If my earnest wishes, and prayers, and entreaties, under the blessing of God, shall induce you thus to resolve and act, you will look back to this year, this day, this hour, as one ineffably happy—the one when happiness inconceivable and endless began, and was made assuredly yours.

Let those who are yet in painful doubt on the subject of their spiritual state, be reminded by this day and this discourse, that their time for ascertaining their true standing as candidates for the weal or woe of eternity, is fast stealing away, and that they know not how soon, whether doubting or resolved, their decisive change will come. “How long halt ye between two opinions?” Be exhorted to aim at a higher standard of piety than you have yet proposed to yourselves; and if you reach it, your doubts and fears will be likely to vanish with the attainment. Instead of poring over your past experience, go right to the foot of the cross, and as perishing sinners embrace a crucified Saviour, who is as freely offered to you now, as he ever was. If your faith, invigorated by the Spirit of all grace, shall give you sensible freedom to

trust yourselves simply and solely on the righteousness of Christ, and shall shed abroad his love in your hearts, quickening you in all duty, and giving you a hatred of all sin, you ought to be comforted and established—If you are not, your fears and doubts will then be infirmities, which if they follow you to your great change, will, after it is past, leave you entirely and for ever.

Christians who possess “a good hope through grace,” “the full assurance of hope,” “a hope full of immortality”—this surely must be a joyful day to you. The recurrence of every such day, is a way-mark to travellers on the journey of human life; and this day you see another of these significant monitors, that your pilgrimage is rapidly approaching its happy termination; that you are one marked portion of time nearer, than on the last occurrence of a new year, to the *great change* which will carry you from earth to heaven. “Rejoice always, and again I say rejoice;” but be not impatient. Say, with the holy man who spoke our text,—“all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.” And while you wait, be active and exemplary in every duty. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Keep in mind that all the trials of this mortal state, only “work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while you look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.” Yes, dear brethren, often look across this vale of tears, and the valley of the shadow of death, to the region of light and life eternal that lies beyond. There every sorrow will be turned into joy, in the immediate presence and vision of that precious Redeemer to whom you now look by the eye of faith—There

“His own soft hand shall wipe the tears,
From every weeping eye;
And pains, and groans, and griefs and fears,
And death itself shall die.

“How long, dear Saviour, O how long!
Shall this bright hour delay;
Fly swifter round, ye wheels of time,
And bring the welcome day.”

A SACRAMENTAL SERMON.

CHRIST THE BELIEVER'S PEACE.

EPHESIANS ii. 14, first part.—“For he is our peace.”

These words, my brethren, point us to the Redeemer of the world. He who is called JESUS, because he saves his people from their sins; he who is called CHRIST, because he was anointed of the Father for this great purpose; he through whom all the manifestations of the divine mercy that were ever made to the children of men have been conveyed; he, of whom, the apostle affirms in the words which immediately follow the text, that he hath “broken down the middle wall of partition between the Gentile and the Jew, and hath made both one;” he of whom it is declared, in the verse which precedes the text, that “now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ”—HE is our peace; he alone is our peace; he is an unfailing peace-maker.

In discoursing on the words, I will endeavour, in reliance on divine aid, to illustrate them in the three following views:—

I. As referring to the method in which God was rendered reconcilable to fallen man.

II. As descriptive of the manner in which a convinced sinner first obtains solid peace of conscience.

III. As pointing out the source from which the real Christian derives all his consolations and comforts.

After this, a short improvement shall conclude the discourse.

First, then, let us consider the words as referring to the method in which God was rendered reconcilable to fallen man.

Before the birth of time, my brethren, even in the ages of eternity, when "the counsel of peace was between them both," the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the foresight of the fall of man and the ruin of our race, engaged to the eternal Father, in the covenant of redemption, to satisfy divine justice in behalf of his elect people, who were given to him in that high and mysterious transaction. Hence, when man had actually fallen, he was not, like the rebel angels, consigned to immediate and hopeless perdition, but received the early promise that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." Hence too, the obedience and death of Christ became, by anticipation, the ground of all the favours conferred on a guilty world before his actual appearance in the flesh. Through the efficacy of his work, to be performed in "the fulness of time," the saints under the ancient dispensation obtained both grace and glory; for he was the "lamb without blemish and without spot—slain from the foundation of the world:" and since his incarnation and death, his merits and intercession have still remained the rich and abounding fountain, from which have flowed forth all the blessings, both of a temporal and a spiritual kind, which the race of man has experienced.

Dwell on the thought for a moment, my brethren, that if you exclude from the system of the divine administration as it respects this world, the benefits of the Redeemer's undertaking, you exclude every thing but sin and sorrow. You open hostilities between heaven and earth, and guilty, feeble man, becomes a creature, in whose present situation and future prospects you can discern nothing but guilt and sufferings. This was once actually his condition. Into this condition he was brought by the violation of the covenant under which he was originally placed—It was the condition of Adam, after his fall, and before the promise of a Saviour. The law of Jehovah had been transgressed, and his justice was pledged to punish the offence. Man had become a rebel against his Maker, and the glory of God was concerned to see that the rebellion should not escape its deserved punishment. The inviolable declaration had gone forth—"In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Death temporal, spiritual, and eternal, was the awful penalty and doom of the first transgressor, and of all his descendants. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

This view of the condition of man, as condemned and lost, serves to show, most clearly and impressively, the nature and necessity of the Redeemer's undertaking. Having humbled himself to assume our nature, he performed what in the covenant of redemption he assumed to do, as the surety of his people. In this character "he fully discharged their debt"*—He completely satisfied the divine law and justice in

* Confession of Faith, Chap. xi. Sec. 3.

their behalf. Having restored the violated honours of the law, by a perfect and sinless obedience, he paid its penalty by his sufferings and death. "Surely," says the evangelical prophet, "he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"—Of the same tenor is the language of the apostles—"He bare our sins in his own body on the tree—Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree—He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." It is on this very ground that the great apostle of the Gentiles says, "we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." It is on this ground that the extension of favours to our guilty race has become consistent with the rights and claims of Jehovah, and that a treaty of peace is opened between God and man. In a word, here is the plan on which "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

Christ, then, is our peace, inasmuch as he hath rendered offended Deity propitious. "Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God—To declare I say at this time his righteousness; that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Hence, at the nativity of the Saviour, the angels proclaimed "peace on earth and good will to men." The dispensation which he established was a dispensation of peace. The commission which he gave to his apostles and ministers was, to "preach the gospel"—the good news of salvation—"to every creature." It is in virtue of what he hath done, and in virtue of that only, that salvation has become possible, and reconciliation with God attainable; that we are able, with truth, to proclaim to guilty men, that they may return to their offended Creator, with the hope of acceptance; and that all the ordinances of revealed truth are dispensed for this purpose.

Be especially reminded, that it is wholly in virtue of what Christ hath done, that you, the people of my charge, have so long and so richly enjoyed the means of grace; that you have been waited upon, from week to week, and from year to year, with the messages of peace; that you have been and constantly are entreated, urged, and persuaded, to be at peace with your God; and that all the most cogent motives and affecting considerations are pressed upon you, to induce you to choose so safe and so wise a part. Let us now—

II. Consider the text as descriptive of the manner in which a convinced sinner first obtains solid peace of conscience. In the process of this work, the mind is enlightened by the spirit of grace, to see the reality and importance of the truths that have just been stated. The sinner is made to feel, with a power that nothing can resist or evade, that "God is a consuming fire to the wicked." The eyes of his understanding are opened,—it may be gradually or suddenly,—to behold the abounding of iniquity in his life and in his heart, and every excuse and palliation is seen to be of no avail. Conscience brings home the charge, in the language of Nathan to David, "thou art the man"—Thou art the sinner who hast offended thy God; thou art the very one against

whom the divine law and justice point their accusations; thou art the guilty defaulter who owest ten thousand talents; who art chargeable with sins that are of a crimson colour and a scarlet dye; who art, at this moment, deserving and liable to be banished forever from all good; and yet thou art the very soul who canst make no reparation for thy offences—Ah! when this conviction of guilt thus takes hold on the conscience, in what an interesting light does it then appear, that Christ Jesus is our peace. The convinced sinner sees—I should rather say he feels—feels with the keenest sensibility, that but for Christ peace would be impossible.

And when this convicted sinner is enabled to embrace the gospel offer, and by faith to lay hold on Christ, in an appropriating act, as his own Saviour; when he feels a holy freedom, delight, and desire, drawing him away, to make a full and unreserved surrender of himself—of his all of hope and happiness, into his Redeemer's hands; when the suitableness and excellence of the plan of redemption beams on the soul, with such a lustre of evidence and beauty as to constrain it to cry out—"this is all my salvation and all my desire"—then is every sorrow turned into joy; and with a sweet outgoing of spirit, not to be described, he will say, "Christ is my peace: here is that peace for which I have so ardently panted; here, at length, I have found it. I have been viewing myself as the enemy of God, and God as my enemy. It seemed as if his very honour was engaged to punish such an unholy wretch as I have been. But—it must be by the enlightening influence of his own blessed Spirit—he now gives me to see, not only that a reconciliation is possible, but that its taking place will even advance his declarative glory, by showing how "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other," in the salvation of the chief of sinners by Jesus Christ. I feel a supreme delight in contemplating this very method of salvation. I am sure it is that which I would choose, if I had ten thousand choices. And it is freely proposed—yea I am commanded to accept and trust it. I do accept it cordially—I am conscious that I do. It is therefore—O the overwhelming thought of joy!—it is, it must be mine. Yes, and here I will hold, in defiance of all the enemies of my peace. Let the tempter no more persuade me to despair or to despond. I know my sins are great and numerous; I know they have gone to heaven and cry for vengeance. I know, too, that I have no strength—that in myself I am very weakness. But I see every thing that I need in Christ my Saviour. I see a value in his blood that answers to every demand of God's holy law against me. If my sins have gone to heaven, he too has gone to heaven, to plead his merits before the throne to which my sins have risen. If they cry for condemnation, he shows his merits; he answers the demands of law and justice, and thus grants peace and pardon. He ever liveth to make intercession for me, and he can save even to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him. He can, and he will, supply all my need from the riches of his grace and fulness. Begone, then, ye insidious tempters to unbelief; ye treacherous enemies of my peace begone: for to all your insinuations I will still oppose this one incontrovertible answer—the *fulness of Christ*. On this I feel a freedom to rely—"this is the rock of my peace, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

But—

III. The words before us point out the source from which the real Christian must, and will, continue to derive all his consolations and

comforts—For we are to remember that Christ is not only the author and cause of the freedom which is first obtained from the condemning sentence of the law, and the accusations of a guilty conscience, and of the first peace and joy which follow on believing; but he is also, throughout the whole of the Christian course, the bestower of all the spiritual blessings which the believer is made to possess. Let me illustrate this part of the subject, by leading you to view the offices sustained by our glorious Redeemer.

My brethren, it is not a tenet derived originally from the love of system, or the affectation of nice distinctions; it is not merely the creed of children, or the sound of words, when we speak to you of *the offices of Christ*. The doctrine is derived from the scripture itself, and whoever knows the power of godliness, will know, practically and substantially, if not formally, its important meaning.

Christ is a king. God hath “set his king on his holy hill of Zion;” and hath “committed all things into his hands;” and hath “given him to be head over all things to the church.” “He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” In the execution of this kingly office of the Redeemer, the peace of the believer is rendered secure, against the numerous and powerful enemies, who would otherwise wrest it from him in a moment. The great adversary of our souls is ever busy in bringing forward temptations to the mind, under various forms. Often does the Christian find himself assaulted with these,—often in a manner which he little expected, and always would they prevail against his peace, were it not for the aid and protection he receives from his almighty Saviour. But he who so often manifested his power over the prince of darkness while here on earth, has not less ability to control and defeat his designs, now that he has ascended on high. He will not suffer his people “to be tempted above that they are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it.” To open to their view the remaining depravity and deceitfulness of their hearts, and thus to increase their humility and their sense of dependence on their Lord, he may permit the tempter, as in the case of Peter, to prevail to a certain length. But out of every temptation the King of Zion will, at length and without fail, deliver his subjects: and their peace, like a mass of iron, which settles deeper in the earth for being shaken, shall become the more firm and stable, from all the shocks which it receives.

The world is, also, a dangerous enemy of the Christian's peace. By stealing insidiously into his heart, and mingling its love unduly with the current of his better affections—by terrifying with its frowns, oppressing with its cares, and seducing with its blandishments, it often destroys the holy tranquillity of the soul. But the great Captain of salvation will not suffer it finally to prevail. By the winning influences of his grace, or by the rod of correction seasonably applied, he will wean every sincere follower's heart from this unhallowed attachment, and make him say, with his servant of old—“Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.”

The flesh, with its affections and lusts, is likewise a most dangerous and successful enemy to the peace of the believer. Unsanctified desires, propensities, emotions, and passions, frequently plead for indulgence, and too often break forth into open sin. Coldness, indifference, and indisposition to duty, often oppress the spirit, and make it drag heavily along its Christian course. The mind, thus affected, may be, for a season, at war with itself. But, Christians, Christ is your peace.

From his kingly office, you are to seek for a victory over your corruptions, and the removal of your spiritual sloth. He can subdue all these enemies, and set you at liberty from your bondage to them, and quicken you effectually in the divine life. Apply earnestly to him, and in his own good time, he will give you that enlargement which is best; and in the meantime, he will never suffer you wholly to fall before them. Be mindful that in him, and not in yourselves, lies your strength and your safety, and to him seek incessantly, that you may "be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."

Christ is also a prophet—He was "that prophet that should come into the world." He revealed the method of salvation more clearly and fully than it had been known before. By his Spirit, applying the truth of his word, he still reveals himself in the hearts of his people, and manifests himself unto them "as he does not manifest himself unto the world." Here is the Christian's refuge from that ignorance, blindness, and darkness, which sometimes so fatally destroy his peace. Losing those clear views and that affecting sense of spiritual and eternal realities which once he possessed, the believer is often disquieted and perplexed, and is sometimes ready to condemn himself as wholly graceless. But in the prophetic office of his Saviour, he is made to find peace. By the enlightening influence of his Spirit, the darkness is chased away, and the clouds which overshadowed his mind are dispelled: or if, in any degree, they remain, the gloom is abated; there are intervals of light. The Sun of righteousness sheds down his beams in such measure, as to enable him "that walked in darkness and had no light," to perceive that he is travelling the path which will terminate in the regions of eternal day.

Under the teachings of Christ in his prophetic office, his people likewise obtain spiritual views of revealed truth, which unsanctified men never possess. Real Christians, also, by divine illumination, often perceive, in various parts of the sacred word, a beauty, an excellence, and a suitableness of the truth to their own condition and wants, which greatly promote their edification and animate their hopes. In short, the Spirit of grace and truth, as the Spirit of Christ in his prophetic office, teaches them rightly to apply and trust the promises, to understand their own character and state, and to discern the wise design and benevolent intention of providential dispensations—even of those which once seemed mysterious and trying to their faith—in such a manner as to restore their peace when impaired, to establish it when possessed, and to put a song of praise into their mouth, to a faithful and covenant-keeping God.

Christ, in fine, is a priest—"He is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec—he hath an unchangeable priesthood: wherefore he is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people, for this he did once, when he offered up himself."

Every practical Christian has learned from his own experience, how essential to the preservation of his peace, is this priestly office of the Redeemer. Deeply is he sensible of many and aggravated offences against his heavenly Father; numerous, if not reproachful backslidings, he has to bewail; innumerable instances of ingratitude he sees in his life; inexcusable and repeated omissions of duty, present themselves to

his view, and great imperfection he discovers in his very best performances. Comparing, therefore, his life with the strict demands of the *law*, or the purity and holiness of the *nature* of God, his own heart condemns him, and he knows that "God is greater than his heart and knoweth all things." In those eyes which cannot behold any sin but with abhorrence, he who is sanctified but in part, must necessarily appear unspeakably more polluted than in his own. But still Christ is his peace. When, with a penitent, broken, bleeding heart for his sins, he can get near to the throne of grace, and plead in faith the value of the peace-speaking blood of his Redeemer, he feels that all the threatenings of the law are disarmed of their terrors. He views Christ, in his priestly office, as having made a full satisfaction for sin and transgression; and when he is enabled by the arm of faith to take, as it were, a firm hold of this satisfaction, and bring it before the throne of grace, and there plead its glorious all-sufficiency, he feels that it must prevail. It must prevail against the cry of all his guilt, for it is of boundless worth, and God hath declared that whosoever cometh unto him in this way he will in no wise cast out. O my brethren! when, in the exercise of precious faith, you find a blessed enlargement of heart to plead the righteousness of Christ—to plead it with a sense of its perfection and its infinite value—does it not give you "a peace which passeth all understanding?" Does it not make you to rejoice in good hope of the glory of God? Does it not make you feel that you have an argument that is irresistible? Does it not, in a word, and that the word of God, persuade you satisfactorily, that "being justified by faith, you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Did time permit, I might enlarge on what I shall only state in the most summary manner—That he who is at peace with his God, and in peace with himself, on the terms of the gospel, will also be at peace with the world. He will "seek peace and pursue it;" he will endeavour to be a peace-maker among all with whom he has intercourse; and for himself, "if it be possible, as much as in him lieth, he will live peaceable with all men."

To improve the subject, let us reflect—

1. If Christ is our peace, if he is so in an *exclusive* sense, then those that are not united to him by a vital faith—those that are out of Christ—are out of the path of peace. Yes, let me proclaim it with an awful solemnity, "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Let me, in faithfulness to the souls of those whom I am bound to watch, most seriously admonish every Christless sinner in this assembly, that he is travelling a peaceless path. Dear inconsiderate immortals, believe it for your good, that while you are not reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, there is nothing but pain in your prospects, and disappointment in your pursuits. "Destruction and misery are in your ways, and the way of peace you have not known." All the demands of God's violated law stand good against you. Not one of them is or can be cancelled, till by faith you are interested in the divine Redeemer. Till then, you are under the curse, and liable, every moment, to its full execution. But—

2. As Christ has been made a peace offering for the sins of men, and the gospel is published for the express purpose of inviting them to return unto God, will not this prevail with every soul who is here present, to endeavour to lay hold on Christ and on eternal life by him? Is heaven proclaiming peace, and is the guilty world for a war against the Almighty? Is the Saviour pursuing rebels and aggressors, and almost

compelling their acceptance of his rich offers, and will they obstinately refuse to hear, obey, and live? What madness half so desperate as this! Men and brethren! I beseech you by the gentleness of Christ, to turn to him for salvation. On this occasion, especially, I would plead with every heart that is not wholly lost to gratitude and duty. Here, over the emblems of the body and blood of that Saviour whom your sins contributed to slay; over the remains of a friend that loved us with a love that was stronger than death; over the ashes, as it were, of that burnt sacrifice which was made for your peace; over the symbols which exhibit the Redeemer "evidently set forth crucified among you"—I do tenderly and most solemnly obtest and conjure you, that you renounce your sins, and without delay flee to Christ for salvation; that you "kiss the son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way."

3. Lastly. This subject speaks the most comfortable and encouraging language to those who are about to sit down at the table of the Lord. Christ is our peace; and now, dear brethren, we are going to commemorate the great transaction by which peace was obtained. To this the dear Redeemer here invites us. Let us endeavour to draw near in the exercise of repentance, faith, and love. Must we not be filled with penitential sorrow, while we recollect the sins which needed such a sacrifice to make expiation for them? Must we not be deeply grieved, and humbled, and abased, while we think that our sins had their full share in the infliction of agony, crucifixion and death, on the Lord of life and glory. Truly, the infinite malignity, and the tremendous punishment due to sin, no where appear so conspicuously—not even in the flames of hell—as in the cross of Christ. Here then, let us contemplate our guilt and our desert; and let penitential sorrow melt our hearts, and bring us very low before our God. But blessed be his holy name, while the demerit and desert of sin are most conspicuously and awfully displayed in the sacrifice of Christ, that same sacrifice exhibits, with equal clearness, the complete atonement, the full satisfaction, the finished expiation, which was made for that very sin, though it be "of a scarlet colour and crimson dye," in behalf of all who look away from every thing else, and trust their souls simply, unreservedly, and confidently, into the hands of their redeeming God. So, beloved brethren, let us now do. Let our faith embrace him without wavering. Let us afresh "put on Christ." In the exercise of precious faith, let us draw over us the spotless robe of the Saviour's righteousness, that it may "be unto and upon us," to cover all our guilt and our pollution, to be our complete justification before the throne of God, and prove our title to eternal life. With this "wedding garment," let us go to the gospel feast before us; and there, with the appointed symbols and seals, let us solemnly re-ratify our covenant engagements to our blessed Lord, and take his renewed covenant pledge that he will be "*our peace*" for time and for eternity. "O the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of Christ—it passeth knowledge." Yes, verily, we can never know it fully in time, and it will form the delightful study and meditation of glorified spirits throughout eternity. But we are taught so to contemplate it *now*, as that we may "be filled with all the fulness of God." Help us, gracious Lord, in these contemplations, while we sit at thy table; and let thy "love constrain us" to consecrate our hearts and our lives to thee; and O be thou with us, to make us faithful unto the death, that we may receive the crown of life eternal. Amen.

SERMON.

THE SOUL RESTING IN GOD.

PSALM CXVI. 7.—“Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.”

Notwithstanding the questions which have been raised relative to the author of the psalm in which these words are found, we hesitate not to ascribe them to that eminent saint, who is called in the sacred records, “the sweet Psalmist of Israel,” and “the man after God’s own heart.” This distinguished personage was not only, by divine designation, the king of the ancient chosen people of Jehovah, and the successful warrior whose conquests had put into their possession the whole domain that had been promised to their fathers; but he was also richly endowed with the gifts both of prophecy and poetry. His inspired lyrics have formed the principal source of devotional song for the church of God, in every age since their publication. The psalms of David unquestionably abound in such lofty descriptions of the divine attributes, such exalted strains of adoration and praise, such heavenly aspirations of soul, and such wonderful examples of the communing of the human spirit with the great Father of spirits, as have never been surpassed, perhaps never equalled, except in the case of our blessed Redeemer, who, in one mysterious person, united our nature with the Godhead. Yet the spiritual depressions of the royal psalmist seem to have been correspondent to his elevations; and the exemplification of this in the psalm before us, decides our belief that it is his composition. Strong, and striking indeed, is the language of the context, in describing its author’s deep affliction and distress. “The sorrows of death, he says, compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow.” Under such feelings, even if inspiration had not guided him, he could not have spoken lightly on the subject of *rest*. His language, notwithstanding, is the language of confidence, when he tells us, not only where he had once found it, but where he might find it again. “Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.”

In speaking on this passage of holy writ—principally on the first part of it—I will, in reliance on divine assistance, endeavour—

I. To show where, and in what it was, that the psalmist confidently expected to find the relief which he so much needed and desired.

II. To evince that it possesses all the properties which he ascribes to it, when he calls it emphatically his *REST*.

III. To show what will enable and entitle us, to appropriate and apply to ourselves, the consolatory language of the text.

After this, a short improvement shall conclude the discourse.

Frst, then, we are to consider where, and in what it was, that the psalmist confidently expected to find the relief which he so much needed and desired.

It scarcely seems necessary to observe, that the author of the text must have intended something more by it, than merely that he would attempt to quiet and compose his mind, by the ordinary means and endeavours which are used for that purpose. The manner of his expression, as well as the whole connexion of the words, plainly demon-

strates, that he had in view some distinct and peculiar object, toward which he might turn the current of his thoughts, and by centring them on which, they would naturally and certainly obtain composure and quiet. He speaks of this rest as a fixed and unfailing resource, to which he might return as to a home, whenever he wanted refreshment and enjoyment for his mind.—My brethren, this object, this resource, this home, this resting place for the soul, is God himself. The psalmist clearly intimates this in the latter part of the text.—“Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee”—That is—“Let thy meditations fix themselves on thy God, who hath bountifully supplied all thy necessities, whenever thou hast fled from the broken cisterns of creature reliefs to him alone.” The same sentiments are expressed and repeated, immediately before and immediately after the text. “Gracious is the Lord and righteous, yea our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple, I was brought low and he helped me—Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me. I will take the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” The whole of these expressions point us to God as the rest of the psalmist’s soul. In contemplating the infinite excellence of the divine nature; in surveying the glory of the divine attributes; in calling to mind that a God of boundless wisdom, power and goodness, would infallibly order every thing for the best; in recollecting and believing that this God was in covenant with his soul,—reconciled to him through the blood of the covenant, and engaged to be to him, and to do for him, infinitely more and better than he could conceive,—to be his protector now and his portion to all eternity;—in the indulgence of these meditations; in the cultivation of these exercises; in the consciousness of such possessions, and the cherishing of such expectations, he expected his mind to be fully tranquillized and satisfied. However great his troubles, however imminent his dangers, however involved his perplexities, however keen his anguish, here was one remedy for all; here he would be at rest—Here was a peaceful region, where the storms of distress could never gather, to which the blasts of discontentment could never reach. Here he would feel himself secure from the world,—secure from all possible accidents, and would experience all those desirable sensations which arise from a mind serene and satisfied. Very properly, therefore, might he call this a resting place for his soul, and resolve to flee to it for refuge, against the calamities which had been pressing him so heavily and painfully. This I am to show more fully, by endeavouring—

II. To evince that the psalmist’s resource possesses all the properties that he ascribes to it, when he calls it, with emphasis, his REST.

Let us here consider a few of the circumstances essential to rest, and see if they are not always the concomitants of the resource we contemplate—

1. In order to be at rest we ought to be in *safety*. Without safety there can be no rational or durable quiet. The thoughtless and stupid may, indeed, be free from alarm in the midst of danger. But this is insensibility or infatuation, rather than rest. Dreadful, surely, and not desirable, must be that composure which wholly depends on ignorance, or the want of consideration—on not knowing, or not considering, what one’s true situation is. It is not only bad while it lasts, but it is continually liable to detection. He who reposes on forgetfulness or

falsehood, may, at any moment, be awakened to misery; and if never awakened, his protracted slumbers can only end in perdition. Of that, therefore, which deserves the name of *rest*, safety is an essential attribute. Now this attribute of safety was not peculiar to the condition of the prince and prophet who uttered the text. It equally belongs to the state and situation of every child of God. The closest examination, and the imagination even of the most numerous and singular circumstances, will but tend to demonstrate the extent of his security.

Say that there is a dark aspect spread over human affairs in general, or over those in which the saint is more immediately concerned. Sensible of his interest in the divine favour, and having his own will swallowed up in the will of God, he may and ought to indulge in such meditations as these—"My heavenly Father is the absolute Sovereign and director of all events: and will not the Judge of all the earth do right? Do I not desire that his counsel should stand, and that he should do all his pleasure? Mournful, indeed, is the contemplation of human misery, and it is my duty to use my utmost efforts to prevent or to diminish it; but still, I am warranted to take comfort in the thought, that come to pass what may, God will eventually overrule it for good. He, especially, who controls all things, and without whose superintending care a sparrow falleth not to the ground, He, assuredly, will take care of a child who looks to and depends upon him. Yes, he hath promised to do it, and he cannot deceive. He hath promised 'to withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly.' He hath declared 'that all things work together for good to them that love God;—that all things are theirs, things present and things to come, life or death, all are theirs.' What is best for me or for others, I know not: But my heavenly Father knoweth, and with him it is my privilege to leave it. It may, indeed, be the loss of something that I value, or the refusal of something that I wish. But if the loss or the refusal will terminate in my ultimate advantage, let me welcome a merciful disappointment. Confident, therefore, that he who directs all events will not permit me to be afflicted unless it be for my good, and desirous of affliction if it will, I will be at rest; for I have trusted all my concerns into his hands, and there they must be safe." Brethren—Here is no exaggeration—Here is nothing but practical truth, and unquestionable Christian experience. The triumphant language of the prophet Habakkuk is in strict and full accordance with the representation I have given. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Say, again, that the man who has made God his refuge, is beset with enemies; which seems to have been in some measure the cause of distress to the author of the text—Still he will realize that he is safe, under the divine protection. He will recollect the declaration which saith—"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain," and the gracious assurance—"He will keep thee as the apple of his eye." His trust, therefore, is in God, and here, being safe, he is at rest.

Or say that even the life of him who has the psalmist's resource is threatened—Still he has the consolation to reflect that he is safe. Death to him can bring no danger. I assert not, that it will not some-

times bring a degree of alarm. The consciousness of remaining corruption, a deep sense of ill desert, the weakness of faith, the importance of the unchangeable state on which he is entering, the natural dread of dissolution, may, by their separate or combined influence, excite some perturbation. But still you will observe, he is safe—safe in fact, although he cannot take all the comforts to which he is entitled. His case is the very reverse of that of the impious man, who is in danger while he is unalarmed. One dark step will terminate all the gloom of the child of God, and usher him into the regions of eternal day. But this, you will recollect, is putting the case at the very worst. Frequently—very frequently—the saint is able to repose, in unshaken confidence, on the faithfulness of Him in whose eyes “the death of his saints is precious.” Supported by this confidence, the bed of death is to him a bed of the sweetest rest, as well as safety. He can say, and the speaker has heard it from expiring lips—

“Jesus can make a dying bed
 Feel soft as downy pillows are;
 While on his breast I lean my head,
 And breathe my life out sweetly there.”

Yes, the believer can say—casting the eye of faith on the mansions which his Saviour has promised and gone to prepare—“Return unto thy rest—thy eternal rest, O my soul.” I now see it near; it is full in view; the rest that remaineth for the people of God. “Come, Lord Jesus—even so—come quickly.”

Thus it appears, that the attribute of safety, which is so essential to rest, will, in every possible situation, be found by the man of undissembled piety. Unbelievers themselves must allow, that his state is the safest of all. If they think that his religion is false, they must still admit that it is safe—that it cannot injure him beyond the grave. He is, therefore, like a merchant whose goods are all gratuitously insured. He can lose nothing; and whatever is to be gained, he is sure to gain it. He is on the *safe side* of the momentous question, and is, consequently, entitled to be at rest.

2. Freedom from pain and anxiety, is a circumstance necessary to rest.

My brethren—The present state was intended to be a state of trial. No individual, therefore, of whatever condition or character, will be wholly exempted from affliction. The Deity hath never promised that his own children shall escape it. On the contrary, he hath promised that, when necessary, they shall endure it—“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not.” It is, however, the happy lot of the people of God to be perfectly assured that they shall be preserved from all unnecessary distress, and that what they suffer shall not only be sanctified to them in the end, but that they shall find solace or support during its continuance. This is to speak within the bounds of the strictest verity. The word of life declares, and experience witnesses to its truth,—“That the Lord is a strong hold in the day of trouble:” And to possess the soul in peace, to have internal quiet and satisfaction, is to pluck from affliction its most envenomed sting. When the mind can lean with confidence on some stable support, adversity, pain and suffering, are half annihilated.

These, then, are the favourable circumstances in which those who have confidence in the divine favour will encounter the pains of the

body, or the anxieties of the mind. While the satisfying sense of the love of God abides on their hearts, they will be able to say with the apostle—"We rejoice even in tribulation"—and—"Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day—For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The representation of the apostle here is, that the attention of a suffering saint, even while he is immediately under the rod, may be so taken up with the contemplation and assurance of better things to come, that he will but lightly feel, and little regard, the pain of the stroke which is inflicted. This certainly is a matter of Christian experience. The pious mind may be, and often is, so engaged, in the hour of affliction, with holy meditations and consolations, that pain, or other afflictive circumstances, lose largely the effect which they are wont to produce—Nay, the Christian is sometimes ready to give thanks for all that he endures, finding it accompanied with a divine support, not ordinarily experienced. And when, for a little, his mind is drawn off, and his attention becomes engaged with the circumstances which afflict him, which certainly is often the case, still this unfailling and consolatory resource is ever at hand. Recollection comes speedily to his aid, and pointing to heaven, admonishes the soul—"Return unto thy rest. Let thy thoughts fix again upon thy God. Flee away from all thy cares and thy griefs, and solace thyself with divine consolations." But this is anticipating what I propose to state distinctly—

3. That a circumstance essentially necessary to *mental* rest is, that there be some subject to dwell upon, which is pleasing, soothing, satisfying, and delightful—This seems to have been most directly in the view of the sacred penman of the words before us. He had been greatly perplexed and agitated with distressing, anxious, and painful emotions. Worn out with them, at last, he resolves to banish them from his mind, by turning his thoughts on God, his exceeding joy. This it is which gives force to the word *return*. He had wandered from the place of his rest, to which he now determines again to resort. My brethren—discontent, uneasiness, anxiety, grief, and perturbation, may steal into the hearts of the best of men, and grievously corrode them for a time. But it is their peculiar privilege to escape at length from these disquieting intruders, by recurring to that source of plenary satisfaction, which a consciousness of the divine favour opens for them. I am aware that I have already called your attention to this consideration. But I must enlarge upon it a little; it is worthy of a more distinct notice. Judge, then, I say, if that man has not a subject for meditation calculated to speak peace to his troubled spirit, who can contemplate infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, with the pleasing confidence that they are engaged for his protection and happiness? May not he with good reason be at rest, who can reflect that God Almighty is his friend, by solemn covenant and oath? That he who sits at the helm of the universe will govern and direct all his concerns, in such a manner as shall issue in his safety and advantage? Are not these reflections adapted to still the agitation, soothe the anguish, or dispel the darkness of the mind? May not he who is entitled to indulge them, say with great propriety—"Return unto thy rest, O my soul—Leave these perplexing concerns, about which thou art so anxious. Thou hast disquieted thyself too much already; turn thy

thoughts upon thy God; there thou wilt not fail to find peace and repose; there thou wilt see thy present safety and thy future glory; there thou wilt see how little and unworthy are the things which give thee so much uneasiness; there thou wilt see their short duration; there thou wilt see thyself raised above them; there thy God will hide thee in his pavilion, and shelter thee from every annoyance. Return, therefore, return unto thy rest, O my soul; ‘for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.’”

Let us now, very briefly, consider—

III. What will entitle and enable us to appropriate and apply to ourselves the language of the text. In addresses from the sacred desk, my brethren, it is often quite as important to inculcate truth, as to teach or explain it; to endeavour to bring home to the hearts and consciences of our hearers the doctrine which, in abstract speculation, they will readily admit. So I think it is with the subject before us. There is little need of argument to show, that if we would be partakers of the psalmist’s privilege, it is indispensable that we possess a portion of the psalmist’s temper. It is manifest at once, that there can be no rest, where there is enmity against the party in whose favour and loving kindness rest must be found. Now the oracles of infallible truth assure us, that “the carnal mind is enmity against God,” and of course God cannot be the rest of the carnal mind, while its enmity remains. The thing, you perceive, is a natural impossibility. It is so, because the sinner never will, in fact, seek rest in God; and if he did, he would find nothing but what was hostile, as well as hateful to him. It behooves each of us, therefore, to let the truth sink deep into his heart, that, before it be possible for him to appropriate and apply to himself the language of the text, he must possess such a temper as that his desires may be gratified, and the highest pleasure of his mind be furnished, by the contemplation of all the divine attributes and dispensations. Yes, beloved hearers, you must be transformed by the renewing of your mind; you must be born again—and born of the Spirit; you must be made to love what God loves, and to hate what he hates; you must, in a word, be truly reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, before the soul of any one of you can rest in God. Without this, no one can be entitled to use the language of the text, for the obvious reason that he cannot use it with truth or propriety. Hear the oracle of God—“The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.”

But, my brethren, if we would be able, *at all times*, to find our rest in God, we must not only be truly reconciled to him, but we must be much engaged in holy intercourse and communion with him. This is the only method by which we can be enabled to take up our rest in him in the time of need. Alas! it is because we make so little use of our rest, that we are so often brought into doubt whether we have a title to it; and thus exclude ourselves from its benefits, when the necessity of them is most sensibly felt. Our souls fix and centre on God so seldom, that they become inapt for the exercise. Yes, and the people of God, sometimes look so much to the creature for their rest, that they feel afraid and ashamed to look to God for it, when the creature fails; and they have to pass through a deeply humbling process, before they can get back to their rest. Let us see the importance, then, of being familiar with this blessed rest, that we may be able to resort to it with ease, when pressed by necessity. Let us earnestly endeavour to keep our title to it clear and free from doubt. Let us, so to speak, often

travel the path which leads to it. Let it be the daily employment of our souls to commune with God. Thus shall we be able speedily and easily to fly to him as our rest on every emergency; and at all times shall be entitled and enabled to appropriate and apply to ourselves the language of the text, with humble, holy confidence.

For the improvement of the subject, we may learn from it—

1. What is the precise difference between the righteous and the wicked in this life, in point of enjoyment—The good man has a resting place for his soul, and the bad man has not. This is the line which divides, and will forever divide, their portions, even in this world. Nor is this an inconsiderable difference. It is, on the contrary, inconceivably great. A sense of unconditional safety; a refuge in all seasons of distress; a subject of high, delightful, and satisfactory contemplation; and a well-founded expectation of an eternal weight of glory—This is now the portion of the sanctified man, and it is the portion of no unsanctified man.

It is true, indeed, that pious men may have their glooms, their doubts, and their fears; but these ultimately bring them more fully to their rest, and even heighten by contrast the delights it affords. Their seasons of darkness, therefore, are only like shades in a picture, which increase on the whole the beauty of the piece. It is also true, we admit, that wicked men may, at present, sometimes forget their situation, be ignorant of their danger, enjoy the world, and indulge in its pleasures. But this forgetfulness, it must also be remembered, only enhances their misery, when a sense of their danger is forced upon them. Then their pleasures are often converted into pains; and at the best they can never *satisfy* the mind. They forever leave in it a dreadful, craving void. That great, permanent, soul-filling portion, which confidence in the divine favour bestows, they never do or can possess. Most pitifully, therefore, do impenitent sinners mistake, when they suppose that to become religious would diminish their pleasure, and destroy their happiness. Alas! without religion, they can never know what true pleasure, what solid happiness is. Therefore,

2. Let me from this subject exhort those present who have hitherto been looking to the world as the only source of their enjoyment, now to seek it in a reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. "Come unto me, said the blessed Saviour, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God—why will you not listen to this invitation of the Saviour? In your present pursuits, believe me, you are like the dove that was sent forth by Noah. Direct your course as you may, there is nothing but troubled waters beneath you. Above the threatening billows, you may indeed be borne for a short space, on the wings of excited fancy and passion. But these deceptive pinions will not long sustain you, they will soon droop and fail; and then, if you are excluded from the ark of safety, you plunge and are lost forever in the bottomless abyss. Listen, therefore, to the voice of the Saviour, now inviting you to quit your wanderings, and to take refuge, and find rest in him. *Now*, if you will be obedient to his call—If abasing yourselves in the dust of humility for your sins; if imploring and receiving the aid of his good Spirit, you truly renounce every false way, and rely on his merits, righteousness, and intercession alone, for salvation, he will not reject you; he will receive you into his favour, and will assuredly give you rest—Rest from the torments of a guilty conscience; rest from the ty-

ranny of your lusts; and at last, an eternal rest from all sin and all sorrow, in the abodes of heavenly peace.

Finally—Although the rest which the people of God enjoy in him at present, is derived, in great part, from the assurance of better things to come, and although to this I have already made frequent references, yet I cannot conclude this discourse without calling your undivided attention, for a moment, to the apostolic declaration, that “there remaineth a rest for the people of God”—What they have at present, is only an earnest, a foretaste, of what awaits them in a future state. In the present life, their sanctification is imperfect; and hence their rest in God, although it seems at times to antedate heaven, is, as we have seen, often interrupted—The remainders of corruption operate to interrupt it; and not only this, but the connexion of the soul with the body, will not admit of high and unbroken spiritual enjoyment. If the necessary concerns of life did not, as they certainly do, prevent such enjoyment, the human mind cannot at present endure a long continuance of that holy excitement which is its inseparable attendant. In view of these causes of the interruption and imperfection to which the spiritual repose and felicity of the believer is subject, while he dwells in the body, the apostle, in the words I have quoted, speaks of a rest which *remaineth*—speaks as if what is enjoyed here, is so inferior to that which is to be possessed hereafter, that the present is hardly worthy of the name; it is *a rest*, but it is not *the rest*, which shall be known in the mansions above. Yes, beloved brethren in the Lord, such is unquestionably the fact. The grace of God has opened in your souls “a well of living water;” the water is “springing up,” but it has not yet reached, to “life everlasting.” You have at present only a prelibation—comparatively only a drop, and that not an unmingled drop—of “the rivers of pleasure” which flow at God’s right hand—

“There you shall bathe your weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest;
And not a wave of sorrow roll
Across your peaceful breast.”

Let this glorious prospect soothe every sorrow; dry every weeping eye; put the world under your feet; animate you in the cause of God; and fill you with a holy, but well-regulated desire, to depart, and to be with Christ. There you will know that “far better” rest, and those celestial joys, which eye hath not seen; of which no mortal ear hath heard, and of which an adequate conception hath never entered an unglorified spirit. Amen.

SERMON.

THE CHARACTER, DECEPTION, DANGER AND DUTY, OF THOSE WHO HAVE HEARD, AND HAVE NOT OBEYED THE WORD OF GOD.

JAMES i. 22, 23, 24.—“But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”

The apostle James seems to have written his epistle, with the express design of reproving the primitive Christians, for that degree of degeneracy which, even then, had appeared in the church; and of cor-

recting a number of errors, into which the hearers of the gospel had already fallen. Among these errors, he soon proceeds to notice a mistaken and faulty manner of attending on the word of God. His observations and admonitions on this subject are extended through several verses, beside those on which I am now to discourse. But these contain the substance of the whole—The rest of his remarks on this topic, are but the extension and explanation of what seems to be embodied in the text.

In the verses before us, I shall take the liberty, which it is often necessary to take, in considering detached passages of scripture, of transposing the order in which the clauses or sentences are arranged, so as to favour the main object of the discourse. This object, in the present address, is clearly expressed in the first of the three verses, which have been read—“Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only.” But in order to explain and inculcate it the better, and to guard against certain common and dangerous errors, I propose to consider, previously, the remarks which the apostle subjoins to the first precept. My distribution then shall be this—

I. I will point your attention to the nature of that conduct which is at once explained and condemned in the words—“If any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”

II. Notice the deception, which is frequently both the occasion and the consequence of the conduct described; and which is referred to in the words—“deceiving your own selves,” and—

III. Endeavour to enforce the result of the whole, expressed in the words—“Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only.”

I. We begin with considering the nature of that conduct which is at once explained and condemned in the words—“If any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.” We have, in this expression, a very natural and lively description of a character, too often realized, in some of those who are favoured with the preaching of the gospel. You may have observed, my brethren, among those who resort to the public exercises of the sanctuary, an individual, whose character, as an attendant there, may, without material error, be delineated thus—He is a frequenter, perhaps a diligent frequenter, of the house of God; and while present, he attends with careful, it may be with critical ears, to the dispensation of divine truth. To a preacher who has occasion and skill to delineate characters with justness and accuracy, he listens, even with pleasure and delight. He hears his own character described, and scrutinizes the description. He enters into the justness of the representation, and sees himself—beholds his true character, as he beholds his natural face in a glass. He is conscious that his condition, his practices, and his prospects, are fairly and truly portrayed, in all their discriminating features, and natural aspect. In short, he is sensible, for the time, what sort of a man he really is—what he ought to appear in his own eyes, and what he actually appears in the eyes of God. But this is only a transient view. “He goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.” The impressions he has received, are hardly more lasting than the sound of the words which produced them. They pass from his mind as speedily, and with as little effect, as the image of an object, received from a mirror, passes from

the eye, when it is turned to another direction. If he ever afterwards reflects upon it, and indeed even while he is immediately beholding it, he entertains no purpose of correcting what he observes amiss. He is occupied only in amusing his fancy, or in exercising his understanding and judgment. He perhaps admires and commends the skill of the moral painter, praises his knowledge of the human mind and character, and his talent for exhibiting them in a natural and striking light. But the whole effect produced upon him is, to give him that kind of interest and gratification which is always felt, when we see or hear a representation, which is a just copy of nature. It is a mere piece of entertainment, which pleases him for the present, but makes no lasting impression on his heart, and produces no change in his life and practice.

Sometimes, indeed, the effect which is produced is a little more powerful and permanent. The word of God is a glass which represents the odiousness and deformity of sin and sinners, in such an aggravated and shocking light, that he who fairly sees them, as they there appear, and is conscious that the likeness is his own, can scarcely avoid feeling some uneasiness at the view—Just as he who beholds his natural face in a glass, if he observe it to be deformed or distorted, is displeased with the appearance, regrets that it is such as it is, and feels mortified and perhaps humbled at the sight. Thus the sinner, viewing himself in the glass of God's law, may for the time be much dissatisfied with his appearance, experience regret, and feel a degree of shame and humiliation. But the event of both cases is the same. The man who is naturally uncomely, as soon as his eye is turned from the mirror, willingly forgets what he there beheld. The very fact that the view was disagreeable, is the reason why he endeavours to exclude it from his mind and memory. In the mean time, the things which are of ill appearance, being natural, sit easily upon him. He is not sensible of the aspect which they bear in the view of others, and is soon as perfectly reconciled to himself, as if he were ever so comely, and pleasing in his appearance. In like manner, he who is morally deformed, with equal industry, and with infinitely more criminality, (for to rise superior to natural blemishes is rather a virtue than a vice) endeavours to forget what manner of man he is. He turns the attention of his mind from his own character, because it gives him pain to behold it—He hates to behold it, and is soon successful in his endeavours to forget its odious qualities, and becomes as easy and contented, in the possession of it, as if he did not possess, and had never seen it.

Such, my hearers, is the representation of the apostle; and such a character your own observation, and it is likely the personal experience of some of you, has proved to be real. Let me urge you to question yourselves honestly and closely on this matter. Are not some of you who now hear me, conscious to yourselves that you have exemplified, and are still exemplifying, the character which has been exhibited before you? Have not some of you, at certain times, seen that what has been said in the preaching of the word was a fair and just representation of your own fearful character and prospects? Have you not been sensible that you were the very persons depicted, as being in a state truly and affectingly wretched? And yet, have you not gone away from this view of yourselves without any amendment? Have you not speedily forgotten it, in the business or pleasures of the world; and continued to possess the same kind of character, with as little concern, and as little reformation, as if you had not seen your

moral deformity, and your offensiveness in the eyes of a holy God? Let your consciences speak, and bear witness to the truth. Be reminded also, that those who must plead guilty in this matter, to the challenges of conscience, have probably been the subjects of that deception, which I have proposed to consider in the

II. Division of this discourse, and which is referred to by the apostle, in the words "deceiving your own selves."

The evident import of this expression, from the connexion which it has with what precedes it, is, that there are many instances of persons who seem to imagine, or who act as if they imagined, that the whole design of hearing the word of God, was answered merely by *hearing* it, or by those transient emotions which have just been described—"Be ye doers of the word, says the apostle, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"—As if he had said, "Do not content yourselves with barely listening to what is addressed to you. Do not deceive yourselves, as too often happens, by supposing that the whole purpose of preaching the gospel is obtained, if during the time of your attendance on it, you make it a point to observe diligently what is said. Who ever believes that this will satisfy the demands of Christian duty, is grossly deceived, and imposes on himself in the most dangerous manner."

There seem to be several degrees of this deception; but in one degree or another, it is a common, and almost universal fault, among nominal Christians. The highest degree of this evil is seen in those who make it, deliberately, a part of their creed, that going to church, attending to what they hear, and reading their bibles, constitutes them good Christians, and places them in the safe path to heaven; though their hearts are not renewed and sanctified, nor their lives altered and reformed. Unaccountable as such a conduct and creed may appear, (and it is not easy to conceive of any thing which is more so) yet this absurdity is not unfrequently witnessed in real life. Whoever has paid a careful attention to those, who, in some form or other, seek to support a religious character, may have seen men who are even conscientiously scrupulous in attending on almost every external rite of religion—are regular in reading and in hearing the word of life—value themselves on this character—are even displeased if the truth be not told them plainly—or if it be softened or disguised, so as not to deal a severe and home reproof to the wicked—and who most commend the preacher, from whom they receive the warmest and most pointed rebuke—and yet these very men continue from week to week, in the undisturbed practice of those very sins, which they hear censured, and which they would be much dissatisfied, if they did not hear censured. They seem to think that the whole of their obligations are discharged by hearing themselves reprimanded and condemned, and by making it a point of conscience to do so. What an infatuation! that men should deceive themselves so egregiously, as to imagine that there should be any other end in view in hearing truth, but to be prepared for acting; that it is of any avail to receive reproof, if the reproof be never complied with. Such, however, is the blindness of human folly—such is the deception of the human heart.

But, my hearers, that which I have just described, although it be the most flagrant, is, by no means, the most frequent species of the deception which the text contemplates. When thus gross and deliberate, it is usually, I think, connected with great ignorance of the true principles of all religion. But there is a kind of self-deception which exists

even in enlightened minds, in regard to this subject. It exists, indeed, rather in the heart, than in the understanding—It proceeds rather from inattention, than deliberation; more from a reluctance to realize the truth, than from an ignorance or perversion of it. How numerous are the instances of those, who are not reformed by the reading or the preaching of the word of God, who nevertheless would be uneasy, if they did not read and hear it? Nay, how numerous are those, who seem to be quite satisfied with themselves, because they have attended on the public administrations of religion, though they have not corrected one error, which in their attendance they have heard reproved? Proceeding still a little farther, how great indeed is the number of those who give themselves much credit, at least, for having gone to church, although they return from it, forgetting entirely what manner of men they are. Having accustomed themselves to consider it as a duty—which no doubt it is—to go up to the sanctuary of God, where social acts of devotion are performed, and where the word of eternal life is dispensed, and prone to flatter themselves that the slightest regard to duty, is the performance of the whole—they make their very bodily presence in a place of public worship, answer all the demands of God and conscience. My dear hearers, this is not representing things worse than they are—It is a matter of constant experience, that from some cause, whatever it be, the greater part of those who enjoy the light of the gospel, go the round of attending on public worship without benefit. How are we to account for this? After assigning to other causes, whatever may be their due, much, I verily believe, must still be charged to a kind of vague and unexamined notion, to a practical self-deception, that they are doing very well, while they are thus found *in the way of duty*, as they often express it. They attend upon church whenever it is practicable; they do not allow themselves in the neglect of it; they are careful to listen to what is said; they, sometimes at least, read their bibles; and they think that this is a great part of religion. “It is better, certainly, they say, than not attending at all. If we are not doing well, what is to become of those who show no regard to religion?” Far be from me, my hearers, the invidious and unchristian office of representing men in a character which they do not deserve. Far be from me a wish to deprive any one of the praise of well doing, so far as he merits it. Were it a safe expression, I would be willing to say, that they who read and hear the word of God, act better than they who do not. I do say, that it manifests a less decided hostility to the gospel—that it is treating it with more respect and courtesy, to only listen to its admonitions, than entirely to neglect and despise them. Those who hear, keep themselves within the reach of benefit and advantage. But what consolation, I pray you, will it afford you at the last, to have constantly heard the sound of the gospel, if you have never obeyed it? What benefit to have kept within the reach of mercy, if you have never obtained mercy? Beside, you ought to recollect, that by hearing the gospel, your duty is constantly set before you; and that your final Judge has declared, that “the servant who knew his Lord’s will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.” Hence I intimated that it is not safe, to say that one ruinous course is *better* than another. One may not be as *bad* as another; because not involving so great an enormity of guilt, and because the prospect of a change may not be so utterly hopeless. But I hold all comparisons of this kind to be improper, because they commonly lead to dangerous practical consequences. Do but suffer the mind to esteem itself less guilty than

something with which it compares itself, and self-love will be likely soon to persuade it, that it is not far from being innocent, or even meritorious. Tell an unsanctified man that he is much more excusable, or in a much safer state than another, and there is reason to apprehend that he will soon persuade himself that he is in no danger at all. This is the very root of the evil which I am seeking to eradicate. Those who show some external respect to divine institutions, frequently grow into a kind of practical belief that they are entirely safe. Not careful, and not willing, because secretly afraid, to examine whether they have received any saving benefit from the dispensation of revealed truth, they come, under the influence of self-flattery and self-love, to take the form of duty for the substance, the means of grace for the thing itself. Not indeed that they do deliberately indulge this opinion; but they act and are as easy as if they did.

“What then—an offended objector may say—what are the demands of religion? Shall we never be able to act in a manner that will exempt us from censure? Shall we never adopt a line of conduct that will satisfy the advocates of religion?” Yes, my friends, you shall satisfy us completely, when you are obedient to the precept of the text; when you become “doers of the word, and not hearers only.”

III. This is the last, the important point, which—“whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear”—I must endeavour to inculcate. The reasonableness of the injunction of the Holy Spirit, here promulgated by the apostle James, needs not be shown by any extended train of argument or illustration. “Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only,” is a command as obviously consonant to reason, as that means are useless, if they fail of the end for which alone they are employed. Hearing is but the means of action. Instruction is ever in order to practice—And why, in religion, would you institute a rule, or be chargeable with a procedure, which you would be ashamed to apply to any other subject, or follow out in any other business? Let me then urge on the heart and conscience of all who hear me, a duty, the obligation of which no one can deny. Let me entreat you to guard carefully against the evils which were exposed in the beginning of this address. Beware that the views which religion gives you of yourselves do not pass from your minds, like an image from the eye. Beware that you do not consider religious instruction and discourse, merely in the light of amusement or entertainment, or as a subject only for speculation or criticism. Beware that you are not more attentive to please your fancy, or even to improve your knowledge, than to mend your hearts. When you hear a lively description of the evil of sin, and of the depravity of the human heart, remember, I solemnly admonish you, that you—you and I—are the very persons who are chargeable with this evil, and labouring under this depravity. Remember that we are the men who must be humbled into the very dust under a sense of our guilt—That we are the parties who must have the pardon of this sin, and the correction of this depravity, by the grace of God in our hearts, and have it speedily, or incur that awful punishment which is its due. Let every hearer examine, as under the eye of the heart-searching God, how these matters stand with himself. Let every hearer avoid distributing to others what belongs to himself; and to himself let him take it. Let him consider all that is said as aimed at the heart and practice. When you find yourselves addressed, let the address enter into your very souls, and be as it were a rule to measure your desert, and a faithful monitor to tell you what must be amended. Let every sentence be as an index,

pointing to some duty, or some consideration, and saying—"this is the duty which you are now to perform, this is the consideration which you are now to regard. These are the things which you are not only to hear but to do; these are the things which you are to do, not at another time, but the present; these are the things which you must not let depart from your minds, till you have performed them; these are the things for which you are to account, before the Judge of quick and dead; these are the things which must be done, if you would have any rational ground to expect the salvation of your souls."

To urge yourselves to the duty thus laid before you, think seriously, how great is the sin of forgetfulness and neglect, which is so common; and how high the account of many of you must already have risen, from this circumstance. For thus saith the Lord—"Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded: But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." May these, my beloved hearers—may these be the consequences that may follow from hearing the word of God without doing it? May a perseverance in this wicked folly bring you to a time when you may call with ineffectual importunity? May it bring you to a time when the day of doing shall be past forever? Most assuredly it may; for this is the genuine spirit of the representation you have now heard from the oracles of God. You may be left to judicial hardness of heart, till, on the near approach of your final doom, your eyes may be opened on all the horrors of your situation; and your cries for mercy may be too late to avail for yourselves, and only serve as an awful warning to others, not to follow in the path which leads to hopeless perdition.

Do not flatter yourselves, I most earnestly pray you, that your course cannot possibly lead to the tremendous termination now presented to your view, because your sins, as you think, are only of the *omissive* kind—"You are not, you will perhaps say—you never have been, infidel blasphemers; you have never spoken against or rejected the gospel of Christ. Nay, you have honoured the institutions of religion; you have pleaded for their usefulness and importance; you have attended carefully on the preaching of the word; and all that can be said is, that you have not yielded your hearts and your lives to its spiritual and practical requirements." I will take you then on the ground of your own choosing. I will say nothing of the ten thousand actual transgressions of God's holy law; from which you know that your lives and hearts have not been free. I will speak of nothing but of your refusal to obey the single command of Christ—his command, to believe in him with all the heart to the saving of your souls, with its corresponding course of action. Now I put it to your consciences—is it a light matter to neglect a salvation provided at the expense of the ineffable agonies, the inconceivable sufferings, the unutterably awful death, of the Son of God? Is there no aggravation in the guilt of refusing to consult your own eternal well being?—in refusing the felicities of heaven, and obstinately pursuing the path that leads to hell? Is eternal self-destruction, when

it is the known consequence of neglect, no crime? My interrogatives answer themselves justly; and your consciences, if not utterly callous, must answer them; and the gospel answers them most awfully. *Unbelief*—a negative sin—is, by special designation and emphasis, the *damning* sin of the gospel. And if you will look through the whole gospel—the mild gospel of Jesus Christ—you will find that the most frequent and alarming denunciations are pronounced against *mere omissions*. Its divine author knew that there would be thousands, and ten thousands, of the hearers of the gospel, who would lose their souls by neglect, whose consciences might be shocked by the commission of an acknowledged and flagitious crime; and who nevertheless would make no account of omitted duties, and who would even esteem themselves good Christians, because they were not reproachful sinners. This therefore was the pass to destruction, which the Holy Ghost was specially careful to guard, and to set up a beacon of warning at its very entrance. Hence we find the denunciation or threatening, again and again pronounced—not against the tree that bore *bad* fruit, but against the tree that bore no fruit; not against the lamp that had *bad* oil, but against the lamp that had no oil; not against the servant who *wasted* his Lord's talent, but against the servant who made no profit of his talent. Hence also the appeal of the apostle, in a question too big with meaning to be answered in words—"How shall we escape, if we **NEGLECT** so great salvation?" Hence, in fine, the last solemn sentence, in the day of final retribution, is represented by our Saviour himself, as turning wholly on *neglected duties*—not a single *positive act* of transgression is contained in the whole award; it is filled up with charges of omissions—"I was an hungered, and ye gave me *no* meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me *no* drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me *not* in; naked and ye clothed me *not*; sick and in prison, and ye visited me *not*." And what, my dear hearers, would be the sentence that might be formed on this plan, in regard to your improvement of the word of life?—How would it run, if the Judge should now erect his tribunal in this church, and call you to his bar? Ah! to how many would it be said—Ye *heard*, but ye did *not*. Ye understood, but ye did *not* practice. You saw yourselves to be guilty, but you did *not* amend. You viewed yourselves as endangered, but you did *not* seek for safety. You were instructed in your duty, but you would *not* perform it. You heard sermons, but you did *not* improve them. You attended the worship of God, but you were *not* benefited. You were entreated to consider your ways, but you would *not* consider. You were exhorted to embrace the Saviour, but you would *not* yield to the exhortation. You were enjoined immediately to begin the work of reformation, but you would *not* regard the injunction. You were faithfully told that you were in danger of perishing, but you would *not* credit it. You were solemnly admonished that you would never find a more favourable opportunity than that which existed, to turn unto God, but you did *not* heed it. Since, therefore, you have been instructed, and urged, and entreated, and long forborne with, and did *not* to the last believe and repent—therefore "depart"—O most merciful Saviour! let not this sentence fall on any whom I now address. Help me, Lord, so to warn them, and do thou so bless the warning, that they may never hear thee say to them, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

But I tell you, delaying and disregarding sinners—in very faithfulness to your souls and to my own, I tell you—the awful sentence you have just heard, will go forth against you, in the judgment of the

great day, if you continue to hear the word of God, and do it not. Most solemnly, therefore, I now warn you of your danger, and counsel you to beware. In the name of Him who will judge both you and me, I charge you to trifle no longer. Remember and write it on your hearts, that *hearing* is in order to *doing*. Remember that the most attentive and frequent hearing will avail you nothing, unless you become doers of the word. Remember that though you are entertained in hearing, though you are advocates for hearing, though you commend the word that you hear, though you admire and are delighted with the word preached, if you are not doers of that word, it shall profit you nothing. Remember that though you were to hear a sermon every day; though an angel from heaven were the preacher, and the eloquence of Michael were the strain in which you were addressed; yet if you were not doers of the word, it would profit you nothing. Nothing, nothing but *doing the will of God*, will fulfil your obligations, and end in the salvation of your souls.

All that remains for me then, is once more to lay before you the sum of your duty, and obtest you, while you feel the force of this subject—if you do in any measure feel it—to be not only the hearers but the doers of God's word. I lay before you therefore, that it is your *immediate* duty to humble yourselves deeply in the sight of God, on account of your depravity, and your innumerable actual sins; to turn, with unfeigned repentance and brokenness of heart, unto God; to cast yourselves on his sovereign mercy, abounding through the atoning sacrifice and infinite merits of the Lord Jesus Christ; and to devote yourselves, henceforth, entirely to his service. This is the sum of your duty, and this is the word which now you hear—Look that ye be doers of this word, and not hearers only. Do you ask me for some detail? Well then, I lay before you, that it is your immediate duty to pray earnestly, and perseveringly to God, that he would give you a new heart, and never to be satisfied till this prayer be granted. You are now the hearers of this word: by the worth of your souls I entreat you to be the doers also. I lay before you, that it is your immediate and constant duty, to cultivate by watchfulness and prayer, a humble, believing, and holy temper of mind, constantly imploring, and constantly depending on the divine aid, to render you successful. This is the word which now sounds in your ears; and by the value of heaven, and the fear of hell, I affectionately and importunately urge you to be the doers, the immediate doers, of what you hear—With these solemn monitions, entreaties, and appeals, I close my address; and I do it under all but an overwhelming recollection, that in the day of dread decision, when I shall stand to be judged with you—I for my fidelity in warning you, and you for the manner in which you regard the warning—it will appear, who of you have heard to the saving of your souls; and who, having finally refused to do what they hear, shall be adjudged to the prison of eternal despair.

SERMON.

THE INCALCULABLE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

MATT. xvi. 20.—“For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

These words were addressed by our Saviour to his disciples, as an admonition against the folly of forsaking him, on account of any danger or difficulty which an adherence to his cause might induce. He had reminded them that to save, or to prolong their mortal life, by apostatizing from him, would prove in the event the greatest loss, as it would preclude them from an eternal life beyond the grave: And that, on the other hand, if by an inflexible attachment to him, they should subject themselves to death itself, their gain would be immense; as the death of the body would immediately introduce them to a happy and unending existence in heaven, as the reward of their fidelity. Having clearly held forth these important ideas in the context, he gives them, in the words on which I discourse, a weighty and powerful enforcement, by putting two questions, the answers to which are obvious, and yet so overwhelming as to forbid expression—As if he had said—“What will it profit a man though he gain the whole world, if he lose his soul in getting it? Or if he barter away his soul, what will he give in exchange for it, that it may be restored to him again?”

In discoursing on these interrogatories of our Saviour, a real difficulty arises, from the circumstance that they contain truth so plain as almost to preclude illustration, and so important as to render enforcement seemingly superfluous, if not disadvantageous. This, perhaps, would truly be the case, if lamentable experience did not teach us, that our meditations are apt to be desultory, wandering, slight and superficial, in regard even to the most interesting topics of a spiritual kind, and therefore have much need of something to fix and deepen them. The preaching of the word is the instituted ordinance by which this effect is usually produced, even when that which is delivered is neither novel as to the matter discussed, nor striking as to the form in which it is presented. Let me then entreat you to go along with me into a train of *serious thinking*, on the familiar but important truths which the passage before us suggests—lifting up your souls to God for the aids of his grace, that our meditations may be richly blessed to our spiritual edification—“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

It is the evident intention of these solemn questions, to call our attention to a comparison between the value of the soul, and that of any other possession or consideration, for which it may be exchanged or lost; and to induce us to make and act upon a just view and estimate of this great concern. I see no method of treating them, therefore, more proper than to consider distinctly—

I. The value of the soul: Or to show rather, that it is altogether invaluable, and incapable of having an adequate price set upon it.

II. That it must, of course, be unspeakable folly to exchange it for any consideration or possession whatsoever, on account of which it may be sacrificed: And

III. To apply and improve the subject.

On each of these points I shall detain you but a few minutes; but O! that they may be minutes of close and solemn attention.

1. We are to consider the value of the soul: Or to show, rather, that it is altogether invaluable.

We must begin here with an idea hinted at in the text, and which is distinctly stated by one of the evangelists by whom it is recorded. The idea is, that the soul of man is *himself*, and consequently that nothing else can be equally precious to its possessor, however it may be estimated by others, or whatever may be its value in itself. The word which is here rendered *soul*, is in the original the same which, in the preceding verses, is rendered *life*; and it appears that the text, in this view, had become proverbial among the Jews. When they wished to express the palpable and gross absurdity of giving, as the price of any proposed good, the very capacity of possessing and enjoying it, they said—"What will it profit a man to gain the whole world by the loss of his life?" Our Lord, probably alluding to this proverb, and using the word that signified *life* to denote the *soul*, or the principle of life itself, which the language in which he spoke fully allowed, gave a spiritual turn and application to the adage, and accommodated it to his purpose with great energy and beauty. He urged them, and he urges us, to think of the indescribable folly of those, who for the sake of grasping at the fleeting shadow of a world, subject themselves by the very act to the total perdition of their souls—of souls which, being once lost, the losers can neither enjoy the object for which they gave them, nor recall the act by which they bartered them away. If it would be, as I am sure you would think it, a trifling with your understandings, to enter into a formal argument to prove that a man must be literally beside himself, who should deliberately sell his soul, though he actually obtained the whole world in stipulating for its price—think, then, I beseech you, how severe is the censure which this very circumstance inflicts on the greater part of mankind, who are actually and constantly doing a thing, which is too manifestly and awfully absurd to justify argument or admit of illustration. The fact, alas! is incapable of denial—Indeed I can scarcely think without horror, on the probability that many of those who now hear me, are concerned in this shocking traffic of giving *themselves* for the offers of the world—Giving their souls *to* the world, and therefore giving them *for* it; so that if this covenant with death be not speedily broken, final, irretrievable perdition, must be the consequence. For "the friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God."

2. The incalculable worth of the soul appears from the price which was paid for its redemption.

Is it not probable, brethren, that this consideration was in the view of the Saviour, when he pronounced the text? Being himself the Creator of the world, and the Redeemer of the soul, he knew the value of both—He knew that the world was made by a word; but that to save the human soul it behoved him to come from heaven to earth, and to lay down his life as a ransom for it. Verily this is a thought that deserves to be most seriously pondered by us. It is indeed true, that the exhibition of the divine glory before the whole intelligent creation, is the ultimate purpose of the Deity in all his works. But this circumstance takes nothing from any representation which can be made of the importance of man's redemption, as it is argued from the method in which it was effected—The circumstance rather adds weight to the argument. It shows that the salvation of a number of our lost race, was an event so intimately and essentially connected with the

highest of all possible objects, the glory of God, that infinite wisdom determined to provide for it, even at all that amazing expense which the attainment of it required, and which it actually cost. Remember then, dear brethren, that "We were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold—but with the precious blood of Christ." Consider whatever could be done or endured by the eternal Son of God, "the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person," as a matter of price or worth; and then search your imaginations for another object of equal value. Consider the humiliation of such a great and glorious being, his assuming "the form of a servant, and becoming a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"—Consider him as persecuted, despised, insulted, and derided, while "found in the likeness of sinful flesh"—Consider him as having heaven, earth and hell set against him; so that in his agonizing conflict "he sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground; and exclaiming on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Consider him, at last, as dying with the vilest malefactors, and himself represented as the greatest of all—While you consider these things, imagine that you were ignorant of the plan of redemption, and were called on to point out an object, or a purpose, worthy to be achieved by such a treatment of the Son of God—Would you be able to name it? Would you dare to say that you judged it proper that the Author of all things should give himself in this manner for any of his works, or for all of them collectively? You would not—you ought not. Yet oh! the sovereign mercy and compassion of the Redeemer!—Having the right to do it, he has—may I so express it!—outbidden all our estimates, hopes and expectations, and set this very price on the human soul. Though he was himself to pay the ransom, he set it thus high, and he discharged it. He actually gave himself to all the dreadful sufferings we have contemplated, that our immortal spirits might not be lost. A judge perfectly qualified and competent, has thus fixed the value of our souls, at a higher mark than our own conceptions, when challenged to the effort, could otherwise have reached. Infinitely, therefore, do we undervalue them, when we give them for any created object—Nay, the whole material creation is but the dust of the balance, when brought into this competition: For the Creator hath given *himself* for us—It is the language of Scripture—"He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

3. The inestimable worth of the soul appears also, from its immortal nature, and the happiness or misery of which it must be the subject throughout eternity. To this consideration there has been necessarily an implied reference in the former particulars, but as the weight of the text rests upon it, let it now command our direct and undivided attention.

That thinking principle, my brethren, by which you now attend to this subject,—that power within you, which enables you to apprehend, reason and judge; which makes you the subjects of joy and sorrow, of hope and fear, of hatred and love, of every emotion, affection or passion which you feel;—that thinking principle, in every individual who hears me, will live and act for ever. Never, never, will it cease to operate. You cannot look forward to the period when it will be no more—Make the attempt. Task your imagination to the utmost, and fix a point as far off as you can in the endless region of futurity. Over the whole space which divides the present moment from that dis-

tant point, each of our souls will actually pass. There we shall at length arrive, and there eternity will still be all before us. Then will this conscious spirit which each of us now feels within him, be even more vigorous and active than at present. We cannot extinguish it, though we were desirous of its annihilation. It cannot terminate its own existence, and no other creature can destroy it. God formed it for immortality, and as long as God himself exists, so long shall you and I, my hearers, continue our existence.

But this is not all. Our existence is not only to remain, but we are, very soon, to change the mode of it, in a very interesting manner. We are here placed in a kind of mixed state. We experience alternate returns of pleasure and pain, and yet we experience neither in the highest degree. But when we pass—as pass we speedily must—the bounds of this mortal life, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, will be no longer mingled together. They will be entirely separated, and in each of our souls there will be nothing but happiness, or nothing but misery, to all eternity—Nay, it is probable that unmingled happiness, or unmingled misery, will increase upon us, in an endless progression. The powers of the human mind have a kind of expansive property—They gradually grow more and more capable of taking in a larger portion of any thing of which they are susceptible. This property, there is reason to believe from analogy, will continue throughout the whole of our existence. If, therefore, we fall into condemnation, increasing anguish may come upon us without end. We may sink, and sink, and sink, from one degree of torment to another, through all the depths of unfathomable wo. The enlarged spirit may be still filling up with anguish, and still expanding to receive a greater measure—Whose soul does not turn sick with horror at this prospect! Yet oh! remember, the prospect will not only be realized, but exceeded, by every one who loses his soul.

On the other hand, he who is saved, may rise perpetually in the scale of happiness and glory. His faculties may constantly grow larger, by partaking of the banquets of heavenly bliss, and drinking to the full of “the waters of life.” To his augmented, and perpetually increasing powers, the infinity of the Deity, and the boundless extent and variety of his works and ways, will still afford scope, and still furnish objects new and delightful; so that the point at which Gabriel now stands may, perhaps, my Christian brethren, be reached by you—Nay, without this supposition, it may be shown, that, estimating happiness by quantity, through *one* of your souls a greater measure of happiness may pass, than all the glorified saints and angels have yet enjoyed. For this sum we know is finite, and in eternity you may exhaust it all, and be still but entering on the immeasurable bliss which there awaits you. How do these ideas animate and swell the soul! The good seems too great to be real; and we are ready to ask ourselves whether it be a dream or a reality. A reality it is, my brethren, not to be questioned more than your existence—A reality which every child of God who now hears me, shall begin to experience for himself, in a very short space.

Attend, then, to the point, which, from this representation you are called to consider—It is, whether you can think of any thing that should induce you to sacrifice all the happiness, and incur all the misery, of which you have just heard? Can you think of any thing so desirable as the one, and so dreadful as the other? Can you conceive of any possession or enjoyment that you would choose to have, on condi-

tion that it should subject you to the torments, and deprive you of the glories, that have been set before you? No—reason and common sense turn instantly with disdain and abhorrence from the thought. Here, then, you unite with the inspired penman and say “The redemption—the purchase price, of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever.” Consider, then,

II. That it must be unspeakable folly to exchange it for any consideration or possession whatsoever, on account of which it may be sacrificed.

My brethren, I told you in the entrance of the discourse, that this subject was so plain that it was difficult to illustrate it, and I now feel the full force of the remark. I seem to have anticipated all that can properly fall under this part of my plan—For if the soul be of such immense worth that the whole world is not an equivalent for it; if it far transcends every offer that can be made for its purchase; the conclusion is already formed, and formed with the utmost force, that to exchange or lose it, for any low consideration, is folly for which we have not a name. But alas! still it is a folly often witnessed; and therefore, though it is impossible to add strength to the argument, you must bear with me, while I point out some striking instances of the melancholy fact.

One such instance you see, in those who are devoted to the *pleasures of the world*. At the shrine of these pleasures their souls are sacrificed. Devoted to that mirth which enchantingly agitates the mind and drowns reflection; or fascinated by that ceaseless round of fashionable amusement which leaves no time for serious thought; or hurried on by the gratification of those appetites which extinguish conscience and sensualize the whole soul; the care, and almost the existence of the soul, is forgotten and disregarded. Suppose then, ye votaries of pleasure,—suppose what is not likely to take place—that you enjoy your idol without interruption to the very close of life, and then that you miss the heaven, and sink, as you certainly will, into the hell that has been described—where, I demand it of you, where is the wisdom of your choice? Have you laid your plans for *enjoyment* aright? Have you not rather acted the part of infatuation? For a few fleeting indulgences, you have lost an interminable and inconceivable happiness, and subjected yourselves to hopeless and endless misery.

Again—The *possessions of the world*, are another consideration for which thousands of souls are continually bartered away. Bad as the bargain is, wealth is commonly and greedily accepted, in exchange for the immortal part of man. So true and so frequent is this, that we have the authority of omniscience itself to say, that *riches* and the *salvation of the soul* are only *not incompatible*—“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?” Busied, and burdened, and perplexed, by the cares, exertions and anxieties, by which their worldly interests are to be advanced and wealth secured; or else with their whole thoughts and hearts engrossed and occupied by those contemplations, passions and pursuits, which affluence begets and cherishes, rich men are apt to undervalue and neglect the true riches, and to give themselves for the bribes of the world. Grant them, then, for the sake of a case—grant them the full attainment of the object which they seek. Allow—ye who are so intent on accumulating gain—allow that your most sanguine wishes shall not only be realized, but exceeded. Let it be admitted that you become the very darlings of fortune, and be rich even to a proverb—Admit it all, and then answer me—ye

men of *calculation*, answer, to the plain question of *profit and loss*, which the Saviour proposes in the text—"What is a man profited though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul." When the awful sound, which struck the ears of one of your brethren, shall be rung in yours—"this night thy soul shall be required of thee;" and when, with another, you shall "lift up your eyes in hell being in torments"—how will your estimates then appear? Ah! you will then discover an error awfully great—an error which it will be forever too late to correct. Your account will then be unchangeably settled. You have lost your souls, and you have nothing to give in exchange for them, to redeem them from the prison of despair, whence you cannot escape "till you have paid the uttermost farthing."

Again—Another object at which many grasp so as to lose their souls, is "*the honour which cometh from man.*" To be esteemed great and wise, to possess reputation and influence, to be the object of admiration with the living, and secure a name and applause beyond the grave, this is the illusion which enchants a number, and persuades them to resign the hopes of the gospel, in the attempt to seize the phantom. Assume then as a fact the greatest improbability. Imagine that these men who idolize fame, become her most successful and happy votaries. Imagine that they obtain universal admiration and esteem while living, and that their names, when dead, become synonymous with genius, or learning, or wisdom, or patriotism, or heroism—with any thing, or with every thing, in chase of which the soul may be lost—And then tell us—Ye oracles of wisdom, I put the inquiry to yourselves—tell us what it will avail you to be praised and envied in this world, when, at that very moment, you shall be tormented with hopeless anguish in the world to come? Will the recollection that your fellow worms are admiring you, sooth the pain of the fire that never shall be quenched? Will the applauses of mortals comfort you under the wrath of God, and a final banishment from his presence? How will the part you have chosen appear in the day of judgment, and at the tribunal of Christ? When you shall be separated to shame and everlasting contempt before the assembled universe, how ineffably foolish will that wisdom appear, which taught you to prefer "the honour which cometh from man, before that which cometh from God only?" Yes, then it will be seen in a stronger light than the truth can now receive, that those who have endured the most contemptuous sneers, the most insulting ridicule, the bitterest scoffs, the most cruel persecution, and death itself, rather than forsake the Saviour, have chosen a portion infinitely desirable and valuable; and that those who have been induced, by any considerations, to desert the cause, or be ashamed of the name of the Redeemer, have acted a part more infatuated and injurious to themselves, than imagination can paint. The one class have preferred time, to eternity—the other, eternity to time; the one experience a loss that is infinite—the other reap a gain that is incalculable.

Once more—Thousands lose their souls through *mere carelessness, indifference, and inaction*. They do not remarkably indulge inordinate passions, but neither do they cordially embrace the gospel. They are asleep in a carnal and unregenerate state. They hear the gospel, but they do not obey it. They are unwilling to think on religion, because it interrupts their peace. They voluntarily indulge an indolent thoughtlessness of their condition, and nothing can engage them to "strive to enter in at the strait gate." In a word, they are at ease in their sins, and they hate to be disturbed; and as the kingdom of

heaven "suffereth violence," they lose it, because they will not "take it by force." We will grant you, then, ye slothful souls, ye sleepers under the call of the gospel—we will grant that your consciences shall never sting you, nor your minds be disturbed by religion, till your final hour. But beyond that hour your stupor cannot last. Then you will be roused by the gnawings of "the worm that shall never die." And when you see heaven lost, and final perdition incurred, by your invincible carelessness and neglect, how will you upbraid yourselves in agony, that you would never exert your faculties, till exertion could only augment your misery.

But, my brethren, justice to my subject requires that I now recall all the concessions that I have made for the sake of argument. The worldling does not *always* obtain wealth; the man of pleasure does not *always* escape pain; the pursuer of fame does not *always* attain renown; the careless sinner is not *always* able to preserve his quiet to the last. On the contrary, the chance to any individual is very small, that he will be fortunate enough to realize his hopes and expectations to any considerable extent; and great disappointment and vexation he will certainly experience. Often do the men to whom I have alluded, suffer more, even in this life, than many other men suffer. So that in fact, they often give up their interest in both worlds—"First dragged through this, then damned in that to come." On the other hand—true religion is not inconsistent with wealth, with pleasure, with character, or with ease, so far as they are real ingredients in present happiness: Nay, unfeigned piety gives us the best enjoyment of all these—"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come."

Here, then, is the true and correct statement—Men lose their souls, forfeit heaven, and sink into hell, for something here which, after all, they do not obtain. They are often wretched in time, and wretched throughout eternity, for the sake of grasping at an object which they cannot reach. And all this, when, by true religion, they might really possess the greatest enjoyment in this life, and secure eternal felicity in the life to come. Behold, here, the wisdom of this world! Language cannot express the madness of its absurdity, nor describe the consequences of listening to its dictates. Let us, then—

III. Carefully apply and improve this subject. And here the first point that each of us ought to settle, is—whether he be concerned or not, in this fearful business of giving his soul for the world? It is a question of infinite importance, and I do entreat you to put it honestly to your consciences and hearts. I beg of every individual to ask himself fairly and seriously, whether he loves God, or the world, the most? This decides the point—If you love not God supremely, you have no such love to him as will save your souls. He will not share your affections with any rival. "You cannot serve God and mammon." The one, or the other, is your lord and sovereign. Decide the question—which is it? Do you hesitate? If you belong to any of those classes or descriptions of character that I have just set before you, you need not deliberate a moment. You have chosen the world, and your soul is the forfeiture. Are you really doubtful about your state? Then come, and let us investigate it closely. Have you ever felt that you were by nature and by practice a lost and perishing sinner? I ask not whether you have *speculatively* believed this—I ask if you have *felt* it. Has the sight and conviction of your sin, given you such uneasiness that you have felt willing to give up the world, as your supreme good?

Yea, felt that if you had owned a world, you would have been ready to give it freely, if this had been the price of obtaining pardon and reconciliation with your Maker? In these circumstances, has the Lord Jesus Christ been presented to your view; as the only, and the all-sufficient Saviour? Have you renounced all your own doings and righteousness, as of no avail, and cast yourselves—helpless and hopeless from any other quarter—on him, as the entire hope, and only refuge of your souls? Have you ever been drawn sweetly to resign yourselves to him, to save you from the power and dominion of sin, as well as from its punishment? Have you, in consequence of this, found Christ Jesus unspeakably precious? Have you solemnly renounced the world, and all that it can offer, so far as it shall come in competition with the laws and service of God? Have you chosen God in Christ, as your portion and supreme good; determined to undervalue and treat as “dross and dung,” every thing inconsistent with his love and favour? Have you been able to keep this purpose—not perfectly, for none do this—but yet so prevailingly that you do prefer the ways, the favour and the glory of God, before all other considerations? Can you, and do you, give up the possessions, the pleasures, and the good opinion of the world, when they are opposed to Christian duty? Are your heart, your treasure, and your affections, in heaven? Do you study to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour, in all things—by a meek, and humble, and exemplary deportment; and by the faithful, diligent, and conscientious discharge of every social and relative duty? If so, you are the Lord’s, and he will keep that which you have committed to him. A few days of trial more, and you will enter on that glorious state of endless and increasing blessedness, which has been faintly described in this discourse.

But my principal business is with those whose consciences inform them that they must answer the inquiries proposed in the negative. Let them know assuredly, that they have trifled or trafficked away their souls. Dear deluded immortals! Count me not your enemy because I tell you the truth. Behold, I come to you this hour with a message, that you ought to receive with the greatest thankfulness and joy. I come to tell you, that it is not too late to *retract the fatal transaction*, by which you have lost your souls. I come to proclaim to you in the name of Jehovah, that your “covenant with death,” may, and ought to be disannulled; and your “agreement with hell,” to be broken. I come to persuade you immediately to renounce and cast far from you, the wages of eternal death. Will you not listen, with all the powers of your souls, to this information? If you will, you may yet be saved. Such is the transcendent mercy of God, and the wonderful condescension of the Saviour, that he invites you to come to him, although you have hitherto been the property of his enemies, and refused all the kind and merciful offers that he has made to win you to himself. He is still carrying on the treaty of peace. He is still “reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” If you will now break your league with your idols and your lusts, cast yourselves at the foot of his mercy, confess your sins heartily, forsake them truly, and trust to the finished righteousness of the Redeemer, as the ground of your acceptance, your souls will yet be saved, and will yet rise and shine in the mansions of eternal glory. Can you need any arguments to persuade you to choose this, rather than to go on and perish forever? I know of none that can be offered more powerful than those you have already heard. Ponder them, I beseech you, till they

rouse into action every energy of your minds. Remember your souls are at stake; and if they are worth more than a world, they are surely worth a conflict for their salvation. Look to God, to aid you by his grace; for without this, whatever impressions you may feel, whatever resolutions you may form—all, I know, will be effaced and lost. You will become again insensible and infatuated, till you are forever undone. Pray, therefore, in forming every purpose, and in making every effort, for the effectual aid of God's Holy Spirit; and resolving in divine strength, and looking constantly for divine assistance, make no delay in beginning the work; undervalue and disregard all that shall oppose you in it—and the prize is yours. You shall be delivered from the power of sin and the slavery of Satan; you shall be saved from the pit of destruction; you shall be numbered with the adopted children of God on earth; and you shall, with them, possess hereafter "an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven, for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." Amen.

SERMON.

THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF REGENERATION.

2 COR. iv. 6.—"For GOD, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

That the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of the children of men, is a truth which Scripture and experience unite to confirm. Insensible, by nature, of the beauty and excellence of holiness, we wander in pursuit of the unlawful pleasures which our corrupted passions suggest, and easily fall into the snares which the enemy of our salvation spreads for our destruction. Natural conscience, rendered insensible by repeated perversions and violations, ceases at length to do its office, and the unhappy offender is left to the fatal consequences of an unrestrained indulgence of his corruptions and lusts. This, although a dark, is not an unjust picture, of the natural state, and tendency of man. It is, in effect, the picture which the Apostle has given, in the verses immediately preceding the text. And on the justness of this representation, is founded the necessity of that great change which we are now to illustrate from the inspired declaration,—"That God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts—meaning the hearts of those who believe—to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

In this declaration of the Apostle, the three following important points, seem to be implied—

I. That the change which, in regeneration, is wrought by God in the hearts of sinners, is a work of creation.

II. That the consequence of this change is, a new and impressive discovery of the glory of God; and

III. That this discovery is made through the medium of the character and work of Jesus Christ.

Previously to entering on the illustration of the general doctrines laid down, it may not be improper just to take notice, that divines have sometimes been divided, respecting the manner in which the operation

of the Spirit of God produces its effects on the heart. It is said on the one hand, that the change is wrought by light conveyed to the understanding, in such an irresistible manner that the approbation of the heart of necessity follows. On the other hand, it is alleged, that oftentimes there is no need of any further illumination of the understanding, but only of a new temper, disposed to love the truths already clearly and sufficiently apprehended. It does not seem a matter of much consequence, to enter far into this discussion. Whether the understanding or the heart be first applied to, on either supposition, the event is the same. The mind which was before at enmity, is now changed, and filled with love to God. Perhaps in this, as in many other disputes which have divided the Christian church, truth lies not wholly on the one side or the other. Probably, both the understanding is enlightened, and the heart, by a direct influence, renewed unto holiness, at the same time. Absolutely to pronounce on the ways of God, is beyond the knowledge and the duty of man. Our inquiries, therefore, on these subjects, ought ever to be made with reverence and humility. In the economy of grace, as well as of nature, undoubtedly there may be various ways of producing the same effect. In the present instance, it is probable, as has been said, that a change of heart is most frequently, if not always, accompanied with an uncommonly clear apprehension of divine things. But which of these is *necessarily* first, in the order of nature, is perhaps a point on which it belongs not to us to pronounce. Neither would it be a matter of great importance, could we be absolutely decided on this, or any such question. For on any subtlety, or nice distinction, in regard to the *mode* of the divine operations, the essentials of religion do not depend. Are we not taught reserve on this subject by the declaration of the Saviour himself?—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." What is clearly revealed in the divine word, and what we proposed first to illustrate from the words of the text is—That the change which, in regeneration, is wrought by God in the hearts of sinners, is a work of creation. This seems evidently to be taught, by the Apostle's comparing the power of God in the original creation of light, with his operation in producing the light of life in the unholy heart—"God who commanded the light to shine out of *darkness*, hath shined in *our hearts*." As if he had said—"The same creative power, which made light to spring out of the darkness and confusion of chaos, hath, by a similar operation, made divine light to shine, amidst the darkness and disorder which sin had introduced into the hearts of his people. This sentiment, somewhat diversified in the manner of its expression, is delivered in many other passages of Scripture. Sometimes it is represented as a new birth. "Ye must be born again," said our Lord to Nicodemus. "If any man be in Christ," saith the Apostle, "he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." Sometimes, it is spoken of as a great change or transformation. "Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove, what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." But whatever figure, or mode of expression is used, the idea is still preserved, that a creative power has been exerted on the soul. "Put on the new man which, after God, is *created* in righteousness, and true holiness."

Let us examine this doctrine, so clearly and explicitly taught in Holy

Scripture, by the test of facts and experience. Look abroad into the world, and consult your own observation. You shall find a man who was once proud and overbearing, now meek and humble; one who was once revengeful, now forgiving; one who was once selfish, now benevolent; one who was once impure and sensual, now chaste and holy. In short, you shall find every moral bias, and habit of the mind, taking a new and a contrary direction. Nor shall we find these persons thus altered, by philosophical reasoning on the superior pleasures of virtue, above those of vice. Many of them, perhaps, never put the question to themselves, whether religion and piety do, or do not, lead directly to present happiness. Or if they have, the event has been, that so far from considering them as favourable to present enjoyment, they have rather viewed them as the bane of every worldly pleasure, and only necessary as a refuge and security against future punishment. But the Spirit of God has laid hold on their hearts, and co-operating with conscience, has, after many reluctant struggles, subjected them to the yoke of Christ. I do not mean that men are regenerated against their inclination. "Thy people, says the Psalmist, shall be *willing* in the day of thy power." Those whose minds have been directly opposed to faith and repentance, have, in their renovation, a disposition to these graces, sweetly, but powerfully wrought within them. Now what is this but creation? Darkness is turned into light; sin into holiness; hatred into love; and pollution into purity.

In describing these striking effects of the Spirit's operation, it is not intended to mark the *uniform* manner of his influence. Such examples are adduced, only as the most visible and irresistible proofs of the proposition to be established. In other, and perhaps in more numerous instances, the change from nature to grace, is much less conspicuous. In some, it may have been very silent, and apparently gradual. The habits of education and instruction may have so prepared the mind, that though there must have been some period when grace was first implanted in the heart, yet so small has been the sensible alteration produced, as not to be observed at all by others, and hardly known, but by its growth, to the individual in whom it has taken place. Still, however, a work of creation must have been wrought. Widely different are the silent stream and the gentle breeze, from the roaring torrent and the boisterous tempest; yet the agents are the same, and the benevolent designs of the Deity are alike accomplished by all.

It will only be necessary to observe, further, on this part of the subject, that in the creation contemplated, we do not mean that any addition is made to the natural powers of the soul. The moral disposition, or the heart, is the chief subject of the work of which I have been speaking. Those affections and feelings which before were employed and pleased only with sensual or temporal things, are now disposed to relish and delight supremely, in those which are spiritual and divine. For

II. The consequence of the great change of which I have spoken, is a new and impressive discovery of the glory of God. "To give us, says the text, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." This is an expression so highly wrought, as not to be altered, or amplified, without losing something either of its beauty or strength. The Apostle is not contented to say, simply, that the *light*, or the *knowledge*, or the *glory* of God, is revealed. But it is the *light of the knowledge of the glory of God*—the clearest communication of the highest species of knowledge, even that of the *glory of God*, which is made to the new born soul. The whole is likewise heightened, by the contrast which it forms with the description of unbelievers, in a preceding verse.

There it is said, that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

A perception of the glory of God consists in a just view of the infinity, harmony and moral beauty, of all the divine attributes. Some faint traces of several of the perfections of the Deity, the sinner might indeed perceive, and in a degree admire. The wisdom, the power, and the goodness of the great Creator, are noble objects of contemplation, for every intelligent creature. But to view the Supreme Being in a partial manner, is so far from beholding his glory, that it is rather a degradation of his excellence. Is he wise? His wisdom is not confined to the formation and government of the material creation. It extends, likewise, to the *moral* perfection of his system. And here he often "taketh the wise, in their own craftiness; and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong." But it is in devising and executing the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ, that the wisdom of God is most displayed, and appears the most glorious, both to saints and angels—"To the intent, says the apostle, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Is he powerful? Not merely in creating and upholding the visible universe, but likewise in executing all his plans and purposes for the salvation of his people; in defeating and punishing his enemies, and in protecting and rewarding his own children. So that he saith to the former, "I will break the pride of your power." "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." To the latter he saith—"He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength." "He shall send from heaven, and save thee from the reproach of him that would swallow thee up." Is God merciful? His mercy is not a weak and changeable pity, to contradict and destroy his other perfections; for "his work is perfect, all his ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." Let the unholy heart view the Creator in this light, and it will rise in rebellion against him. But it is in this light that the renewed soul delights to contemplate him. The saint cannot be satisfied with a partial view of the divine excellence. Having found by experience that his highest happiness consists in beholding fully and clearly the glory of his covenant God, nothing short of its most perfect perception, which the present state of man can admit, will satisfy his desires. Interested too, like an affectionate child, who is convinced that his father's character will appear the more amiable, the more closely it is examined, he dwells on every part of it with supreme delight. With these devout and pious dispositions of heart, God is well pleased; and reveals himself to the holy soul, in a manner in which he doth not reveal himself unto the world.

It is true, that in the present state, "we know but in part, and see through a glass darkly." Our imperfect natures could not endure the full effulgence of the divine glory. But that degree of it which is here given to man to know and to bear, is the source of the believer's highest joy; and with humble and patient expectation, he anticipates the happy period, when "this mortal shall put on immortality, and we shall know even as we are known."

When it was said that the believer delights not in contemplating a partial Deity, I did not mean to intimate that there are not some of the divine perfections, in which he may feel himself peculiarly interested. To the mercy by which he is saved, and from which he derives his

daily comforts and his eternal hopes, he may look with uncommon pleasure. But he never excludes one of the perfections of God, by an unreasonable extension of another. He adores the justice that punishes the obstinate sinner, as well as the mercy that pardons the returning penitent. He considers all the divine attributes as perfectly consistent and harmonious, and, in the highest degree, worthy of his admiration and praise—He sees that in the plan of redeeming love, “mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” The believer is enabled to take this just and delightful survey of the attributes of God, because—

III. He views them through the medium of the character and work of Jesus Christ.

The character of our great Redeemer is, as it were, the mirror which exhibits to the eye of faith the glory of God, in its greatest lustre. It was long an object of anxious inquiry among the most enlightened of the heathen world, how God could be just, and yet the justifier of sinners, even when repentant. Perfectly holy and righteous himself, no expectation of a return of indulgence could induce him to bestow pardon on the guilty; and how the moral government of the universe could be sustained, if every offender did not receive the punishment due to his transgressions, was a question of difficult solution. But by the death of Christ, this dark, important problem, was solved at once. The justice of God, which would not be pacified without satisfaction, when the life of his own Son was the price of its vindication, appeared awfully conspicuous; and the mercy, which would provide and pay such a price for offending sinners, shone forth in all the splendour of its charms. Here, then, in the redemption of Christ, the glory of God appears to the renewed soul, in a way of which the wisest of the ancient heathen were totally ignorant, and for which the men of the world, in every age, have had no relish. In creation and providence, they may have perceived his power, and admired his wisdom. Evident as they are to the eye of sense, it would not have been easy to resist them. But the *consistency* and harmony of the divine perfections—the union of justice and mercy—the very light of the knowledge of his glory, can be seen only by the eye of faith, in the plan of redemption—and to the lustre of this, the heathen were perfectly blind, and gossiped sinners are insensible and stupid. Nor is the union of justice with mercy, loudly demanding, as it does, our admiration and wonder, the only display of the divine glory, which is seen through the character of Jesus Christ. “He is himself the *brightness* of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.” In him the perfections of God, without being degraded, are, as it were, humanized, and brought more within the bounds of finite conception. In him the rays of uncreated glory are all centred; and from him they beam forth in all their separate or blended beauty, to the eye of the believing mind. Does it behove us to contemplate God as a being pure and spiritual? In Christ Jesus the believer is “filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” “He is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.” “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” The Redeemer’s kingdom is continually represented as spiritual. His saints “as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” Does the immensity of the Supreme Being overwhelm the contemplative mind? Christ Jesus is “the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” Do we admire the wisdom of God? “Angels desire to look” into the depth of that wisdom which was displayed in the redemption of Christ. Are

we struck with amazement, when we contemplate the Almighty power? By Christ "the worlds were made." When here on earth, "the winds and the seas obeyed him"—When he was assaulted by sinners, "twelve legions of angels" stood ready at his call. When he died, the sun was darkened, the rocks rent, the earth quaked, and the dead arose. When he was laid in the grave, the bands of death could not confine him—He broke them in sunder, and plucked away the sting of death for the benefit of all his followers. In his very submission to his enemies, he triumphed over them; and defeated their designs, by those events in which they thought them fulfilled. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Exalted to his father's right hand, God hath "set him 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 given him to be head over all things to the church." Do we adore the justice of the Deity? How inflexible was that justice which did not spare in Christ the incarnate God, when he became the sinner's substitute; but cried, "awake, O sword, and smite the man that is my fellow." Are we transported with the divine mercy? Behold, in the Redeemer the God of mercy dying for sinful man. "Feed the church of God, said the apostle Paul to the Ephesian elders, which he hath purchased with his own blood." "He loved not his life unto the death. He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." And hence it is triumphantly declared, that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Would we confide in the truth and faithfulness of our heavenly Father? "By two immutable things—his promise and his oath—in which it is impossible for God to lie, we have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us: which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth with that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." In this manner, it would be both easy and pleasing to pursue our subject, till we had shown how all the attributes of God are united, rendered harmonious, highly illustrated, and made strikingly visible to the eye of faith, in the character and work of the great Redeemer. Leaving this, however, to employ, as it often will, the retired hours of every real Christian, let us endeavour to improve what hath already been said on this subject, by reflecting,

In the first place, how absolutely we are dependent on God for our salvation. To effect it we have seen that a work of creation must be wrought on the heart. How ought the reflection to awaken our concern, and quicken our diligence? But to what purpose, it will probably be said, would be our most strenuous endeavours? The work is not ours but God's; to renew the heart, it has been affirmed, is beyond the reach of human power and finite exertion. This objection, however intended, expresses a solemn, and what ought to be an affecting truth. Would to God that those in whose mouths it is the ofttest found, felt in their hearts its high importance and its just consequences. It would not then be so frequently pleaded as an excuse for sinful indulgence. It would be the most powerful of all motives to watchfulness and care. Are sinners dependent on God for the renovation of their natures? and yet are they careless how much they offend him? how many provocations they give him to withhold the necessary influ-

ence of his Spirit for so important a purpose? Do men act thus, when they feel that they are utterly dependent on a fellow creature for an important favour? Remember, then, O sinner! that although you cannot save yourself, yet you may destroy yourself—You may put yourself, if not absolutely beyond the reach, certainly beyond the reasonable hope of salvation. And this you are in danger of doing, if you plead an appointment of God, as an excuse for offending him—It may be said of you, as of Ephraim of old, “he is joined to his idols, let him alone.” Ah, remember!—there is such a thing as divine dereliction; and that when it takes place the individual whom it affects, is as sure of perdition as if he were already in the place of torment. In infinite goodness and condescension, God has instituted certain means, for your instruction and reformation. In what manner these means possess an influence on the absolute determination of God, we know not. But we know the facts of the case—We know, that without the use of the means—which are as much in our power as any thing can be in our power—we have no just ground to expect or hope for the divine interposition. And on the other hand, we have reason to hope that if we are diligent and faithful in the use of the appointed means, and at every step look earnestly to God to attend them with his blessing, to work in them and by them a work of saving grace on our hearts—the result will be salutary. Not, be it remembered, as a matter of merit, or desert, but a gratuitous favour conferred on those who are found in the way, in which he has commanded sinners to seek him. Pervert not, therefore, the divine sovereignty into an argument for careless impenitence, and stupid security in sin. Use it rather as the most powerful motive to diligence and care; lest you provoke God to give you up to strong delusion to believe a lie. Cry mightily to him for his effectual aid, and endeavour, without delay, to cast yourselves truly and unreservedly on his mercy in Christ Jesus. Never did he spurn from the foot of his throne of grace, the soul that humbly resolved to be saved or to perish there.

In the second place—From what has been said, let us learn how important and sublime are the discoveries and employments of the Christian religion. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God, is the object which the gospel dispensation reveals, in every renewed mind. It leads to the contemplation of the Almighty, in all his majesty and in all his grace, as one of the most delightful exercises of all the true disciples of Christ. Is any thing more worthy than this of our rational nature? Is any subject of thought more noble, more sublime, more calculated to show the moral elevation of the human powers. Deprive man of his religious character, exercises, and hopes, and you condemn an immortal, immaterial being, to the concerns of a moment, and the indulgences of a brute. Never was there a more unjust and groundless slander, than that which the enemies of our holy religion have sometimes endeavoured to fix upon it, by representing it as an object suited only to weak, superstitious, and timid minds. What indication is there of a weak and timid mind, in delighting in the contemplation of boundless power, wisdom, and goodness? What can be more rational and important, than to discover the source of all our present and future happiness? What can be more firm and magnanimous, than, in confidence of his love and favour, to look up with holy boldness, satisfaction, and pleasure, to the King of kings, and the Lord of lords? Or in the decisive crisis of an endless existence, to exclaim in triumph, “O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory!—Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Well might the Apostle say “if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are

lost." Assuredly men do not slight or revile religion because it wants charms, but because they want sight to perceive, or taste to relish them. No sincere Christian ever yet complained, that his master's service was unimportant, unpleasing, or without reward. Its object is to honour and please the greatest and the best of Beings. Its pleasures are the purest and highest delights of an immortal soul. Its reward, is an eternity of unmixed and unsatiating felicity. Christians, I appeal to your own hearts—Which have been the happiest moments of your lives? Those in which the world has smiled most upon you? or those in which you have had the most intimate communion with your God and Redeemer? I know your answer—I am sure, you will testify, that the pleasures of religion have rendered the smiles of the world trifling, and its frowns contemptible. Now to rest the truth of any position on fact and experience, is to place it on its fairest, and firmest basis. To fact and experience, religion dares and wishes to appeal, for the confirmation of all its pretensions. Believe it, impenitent sinner, as yet you are ignorant of the noblest pursuits, and the highest gratifications, of which your nature is capable. And since *your* business, Christian brethren, is so noble, important, and pleasing—"forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus." For to him, let us remember,

In the last place, we are under infinite and eternal obligations.—

Had not the Redeemer come in the flesh, vain would have been all our discoveries of the divine nature, even supposing that without him they might have been perfect. To little, or rather, to a dreadful purpose, should we have studied the perfections of God, had the employment, as it certainly would, only have taught us the more clearly, that they were all engaged for our destruction. The light that blazes only to destroy, may indeed possess its splendours, but it cannot be beheld without dismay and horror. Yet even this wretched condition of existence would not have been ours. The god of this world hath blinded the eyes of the children of men, and we should have gone blindfold to destruction. If we had amused ourselves with dreams of future happiness, they would all have been founded on dark and false conjecture; and the fire that never shall be quenched, would have flashed truth and torment together upon us. From this dreadful situation, Christ the Redeemer, at the expense of a life of sorrow and a death of agony and infamy, hath delivered our guilty race. To make a return adequate to so great a favour lies not within the limits of created capacity. Such a return is not required—The benevolent interposition of God our Saviour, was intended to be in every view entirely gratuitous. All that is demanded of us is, by ardent gratitude to the bestower, and true and steady obedience to the precepts he has left us, to secure to ourselves the benefits of his ineffable grace. These favourable terms are, themselves, new and strong ties of obligation. How justly aggravated, therefore will be the condemnation of those "who neglect so great salvation"—Sinner, blest with the clear light of the gospel, remember, that your lot is cast for an extreme. If you perish, no middle region, in the world of wo, will be your allotment. By the atonement and intercession of Christ, a way is opened to the highest heaven, or the deepest hell. The one, or the other, of these important alternatives, inevitably awaits us all. One would think there need not be any great hesitation in making a choice—Oh be determined, immediately "to kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way."

To you, Christian brethren, who have already tasted that the Lord is

gracious, it would be natural to conclude that nothing need be said, to awaken a sense of obligation and gratitude. But alas! lamentable experience convinces us, that forgetfulness and ingratitude are not peculiar to unsanctified hearts; although in such hearts alone, can forgetfulness and ingratitude become habitual and predominant.—In the house of his friends the Saviour is often wounded. My brethren, can we seriously reflect on what the Redeemer of our souls endured for us—that he became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; that he was treated with indignity from his birth till his death—from the manger to the cross; that he endured the contradictions of sinners and the assaults of the powers of darkness; that in his agony he sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground; that he expired on a cross, forsaken by his friends, and suffering even the hidings of his Father's face—O can we think of all this—of all this endured for our sakes; and yet act as if we wished to open his closed wounds anew, and to crucify him afresh by our sins! What baseness inutterable! What blushing, and shame, and self-abhorrence, should we feel, when we dishonour our Saviour before the world—yea when we think of that want of ardent love which is known only to him and to ourselves; of the defect of that purity of motive which should characterize all our services; of those imperfections which cleave to all we do; and of that lack of holy zeal, and of entire devotedness in his cause and service, of which we must be conscious. Let us remember it is but little that we can do for him, who has done and suffered much for us—O let not even this little be neglected—But “whatsoever our hand findeth to do, let us do it with our might;” that we may give evidence to the surrounding world, by our conduct as well as by our profession, that “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Amen.

SERMON.

THE SIN AND DANGER OF BOASTING OF TO-MORROW.

PROV. xxvii. 1.—“Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

The complaint has been long and justly made, that the conduct of men is frequently in open hostility with their reason and sense of propriety. It is against an evil of this description that the text remonstrates. We all acknowledge the impropriety and imprudence of trusting to an uncertain futurity, for that which may, and ought to be ensured, by present attention. Yet, in direct opposition to this acknowledgment, and the sanction which its truth and importance receives from the constant experience of the world, *procrastination*, or *delay*, is a fault of the most frequent occurrence. Present reluctance, or the imaginary prospect of more favourable circumstances, disposes the mind to postpone, till some future period, the performance of a duty which now demands regard, and which conscience might not suffer us to neglect, did we not flatter ourselves that it might hereafter be performed with more advantage. Let me then, possess your serious attention, while I endeavour, in discoursing on the text before us—

I. To ascertain, distinctly, the evil which it condemns.

II. To show how unreasonable and malignant this evil is in itself, and how dangerous in its tendency and consequences.

First, then, let us endeavour to ascertain distinctly the evil which the text condemns. In doing this, it is proper to begin with observing, that it cannot be intended to condemn, indiscriminately, all concern about the future events of life, nor all provision for meeting them when they shall occur. Both reason and revelation are opposed to such an idea. The business which cannot be completed to-day must be delayed till to-morrow, and we may indulge a degree of concern, as well as make the necessary arrangements, that it may then be accomplished. In the very chapter which contains the text, its author tells us, that “a prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself; but the simple pass on and are punished;” intimating plainly that there is on the one hand, a lawful and commendable anticipation of the occurrences of life, and preparation for them, which is productive of advantage; and that, on the other, there is a foolish and blameable thoughtlessness and improvidence, the certain consequence of which is inconvenience and injury. While this allowance, then, is fairly and fully conceded, we may recognise the evil after which we inquire in the two following particulars; *First*, in placing a too confident dependance on futurity for the performance of things lawful in themselves, and necessarily demanding delay; and, *Secondly*, in placing any dependance at all on the time to come, for that which we ought immediately to perform, or attempt, and especially for that which we ought never to attempt or intend.

It has already been intimated, that to provide for the support and comfort of ourselves, and of those who depend upon us, is not only a permitted but commanded duty. He who neglects to do this is declared to be “worse than an infidel.” In discharging this duty, it has also been stated that plans of future industry and management must be laid and pursued. But be it now remembered, that these plans are to be concerted and executed, without that excessive anxiety which implies a distrust of providence, and a supreme devotion to worldly concerns and acquisitions. “Take no thought for to-morrow,” says our Saviour,—or as it should be rendered—“be not *anxious* for to-morrow, for to-morrow shall be anxious for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” But if painful and distrustful solicitude about futurity be contrary to the spirit of the gospel, much more so is that confident and presumptuous reliance upon it, which implicitly denies our dependance on God. This is boasting of to-morrow in a very impious manner; even though the design which we propose to pursue be not unlawful in itself. Hear how pointedly this presumption is condemned by the Apostle James—“Go to now, ye that say to-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain;—whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil.” We see then that the offence condemned in the text, is committed by those who, in contemplating and planning even the necessary occupations and pursuits of life, do not keep in mind that they may die before their purposes are accomplished; that they are constantly and absolutely in the hand of God,—entirely dependant on his sovereign will, not only for the prosperity of their schemes, but for the continuance of life itself.

2. But the evil we are seeking to ascertain is chargeable, in its high-

est degree, on those who place any dependance at all on the time to come, for the doing of that which they ought immediately to perform or attempt; and especially for doing that which they ought never to attempt or intend. The author of our text elsewhere admonishes us in these words—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor device, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." We are here reminded, that as life is utterly uncertain, we can have no assurance that duty neglected or delayed, shall ever be performed. Whenever, therefore, it calls for discharge, and we do not immediately set about it, we give up a certainty for an uncertainty; we risk the danger of final delinquency, with all its endless train of unhappy consequences—In every such neglect or delay then, (as we cannot be supposed to intend our own injury) we boast of to-morrow. We arrogantly challenge and count upon it as a certainty; we act upon it as a matter of which we have the possession and disposal.

But especially, when the things which we purpose to do at a future time are things unlawful in themselves, and which, consequently, we ought never to do or to intend, this boasting reaches its ultimate point of criminality. It is, at once, to claim to-morrow as our own, and to appropriate it to a service worse than neglect itself. This leads us to consider the high concern to which the text chiefly and immediately points, and which is, undoubtedly, *the salvation of the soul*—To this, therefore, our attention shall be confined through the remainder of the present discourse. In this most interesting business of human life—the care of the soul—men boast of to-morrow in the manner just pointed out. The call and command of God, constituting their duty, with all its solemn sanctions, is—"To-day if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts"—That is, "To-day lay most seriously to heart the situation in which you are placed, while enemies to me by wicked works. To-day resolve, in reliance on divine grace, that you will break off your sins by repentance, and that you will make it your great and principal concern, to secure a saving interest in Jesus Christ. Resolve determinately *to-day*, that this all-important business shall no longer be delayed; but that it shall occupy the most serious and engaged attention of your minds, till it be satisfactorily accomplished—till you have good evidence that, by the renovation of your nature, manifested by a true faith in the Redeemer's merits, and a life of cordial holy obedience to all his requisitions, you be truly reconciled to your offended God." "No—no,"—replies the practice of every delaying sinner—"To-morrow—a far distant to-morrow, shall be the period of obedience to this call. A considerable space I must yet spend in pursuing the devices of my own heart. But when I have spent it, then I will yield to the command; then, assuredly, I will embrace the offered mercy; then, without doubt, I will avail myself of the benefits of the Redeemer's purchase." Is not this impiously boasting of to-morrow? first to continue in sin, which ought never to be intended, and finally to obtain salvation, when the opportunity for it may be past forever. But I am anticipating—

II. The second division of the subject—where we are to consider distinctly, how unreasonable and malignant is the offence we contemplate, and how dangerous in its tendency and consequences. This, I apprehend, may best be effected, by showing more particularly and fully than has yet been done—1. That when sinners boast themselves of to-morrow, they act in a manner highly impious, inasmuch as they

assume to themselves the prerogative of God, at the very time that they presume on his indulgence or forbearance: 2. That it is imminently dangerous, because the time may never arrive, at which they even purpose to begin a serious attention to their souls: 3. Because, if this time actually arrives, it is probable they will not be more, but less, disposed to enter on this important business *then*, than *now*: 4. And finally, because delay grieves the Spirit of grace, and may provoke him to withhold from them at last, those aids which are essential to repentance and reformation.

My brethren—The nature of this subject seems to demand that doctrine should be mingled with, and not separated from, enforcement and exhortation—This method, therefore, will be adopted in very shortly illustrating the particulars I have specified; and you must expect me to address myself as directly and pointedly as possible, to those who are concerned in the subject.

First, then, boasting of to-morrow is highly impious, because it is an assumption of the prerogative of God, at the same time that it is a presumption on his patience or forbearance. The full and absolute knowledge of futurity is possessed by God alone. To his creatures he has, indeed, revealed it on some occasions, and in a partial and limited manner, in the execution of his purposes of wisdom and goodness. But to none of his creatures, not even to the highest angel, hath he given the capacity or the privilege of discerning, indiscriminately, the events which are slumbering in the womb of time. We are told expressly that—“Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” When, therefore, we assuredly rely on the future for the performance of a duty or a business, do we not, by assuming that *future* as a certainty, practically usurp to ourselves this right of omniscience? Do we not act as if we saw with certainty, that it would then be in our power to perform what, in our own minds, we thus engage? Deceive not yourselves, my hearers. Is there one amongst you who does not intend to secure the salvation of his soul? Where is the person who will say he does not even intend it? Not one will do it—and yet there are many—I appeal to your consciences—there are many, who depend on carrying this intention into effect, on the morrow; on the next year; at that period of their lives, be it when it may, which they fancy will be more favourable to their designs than the present. What is this but assuming that period to yourselves as a certainty? Do you not verily challenge it as your own, by setting it apart to the execution of the most important purpose of your whole lives? Would you throw into it the decision of your everlasting destiny, if you did not assume it as a certainty? Disguise it as you will, and delude yourselves as you may, the very language of your conduct and your heart, is all in the style of this offensive arrogance. In this very manner it impeaches the exclusive right of God to know and to dispose of the events of futurity. Not that the reason or conscience of any man will, when consulted, justify or endure such language. But on this account the criminality is the greater. Reason and conscience testify, at once, that it is, in the last degree, absurd and wicked thus to act. They testify that you most grossly trifle, and most impiously presume, in thus hazarding your eternal all. They testify that you add provocation to presumption, when you make the expectation of living, an encouragement to continue in sin. Let me reinforce the dictates of reason and conscience, by a plain illustration of this impiety. Suppose that a number of men in civil society

should rebelliously wrest from their sovereign a portion of his prerogative; and not content with this, should then actively employ what they had insolently taken, in giving the most deliberate provocation to him to whom they owed allegiance. What would you say? what do you say, in such a case? You say every thing that can express your sense of the daring character of such guilt. But impenitent and delaying sinners act this very part to the Sovereign of the universe. The fact has been clearly shown. I beseech you to view and detest its baseness, to fear and dread its consequences, and to secure yourselves against its danger, by making the forbearance and goodness of God an argument to lead you to immediate repentance, rather than the ground of hardening yourselves against him: For be it deeply impressed on your minds—

2. That delay is unspeakably dangerous, not only for the reason already assigned, but because the time may never arrive, at which you even propose to begin a serious attention to the eternal welfare of your souls. What force is given to this remark by the considerations already suggested? How very probable is it that the God whose patience and grace you are so awfully abusing, will not spare you to the time which you have appointed to seek his favour; will not suffer an encouragement to such wickedness to be given to others, by permitting its plans, in any instance, to be realised. Remember the case of the worldling and sensualist, whose destiny is described by our blessed Saviour. While this miserable sinner was pleasing himself with the prospect of unhallowed pleasure, for a long time to come, the awful declaration was made—"this night thy soul shall be required of thee." And has not the intention of this scriptural example been enforced upon you, by what you have seen with your own eyes? How many have you known whose period of years, whose vigour of constitution, and whose precautions against danger, were as flattering as your own, who have been swept away by the sudden stroke of death. Without apprehension—with all their fears drowned in the tide of "superfluous health"—perhaps they were rioting, in imagination, on the luxury of unlawful pleasure which to-morrow was to bring to their embrace, when the chilling hand of death was laid upon them, and the opening buds of sensual enjoyment were blasted forever. If such awful instances as these do not prove a warning to those who observe them, verily they have reason to fear that they themselves shall next be cut off, with a sudden destruction.

But alas! presumption, with many, is not satisfied with asking for to-morrow; if by this we understand a short period, to be devoted to impenitence. It is not till years shall have rolled away in the indulgence of their lusts, that they have fixed the time, even in imagination, when they will listen to the invitations and accept the offers of divine mercy. Often, indeed, the time is so distant, that if a worldly concern of any moment were to depend on their continuance in life to the proposed age, its insurance would be at the highest price. Often it is the hour of sickness and distress, which is to furnish the occasion for reflection and repentance. Very often, it is delayed till a more easy and comfortable state of their worldly affairs shall afford them more leisure to set about it—Inconsistent mortals! hear me, I beseech you. Would you defer till a far distant period the securing of a rich inheritance, which you might now make your own? If persuaded to such a delay, would you not immediately suspect that he who persuaded you was desirous that you should never possess it? Would you not instantly

answer him, that the risk was too great to be hazarded on any terms, but that it would be folly in the abstract, to endanger so valuable a possession, when it might as well be made secure. In this example, then, see a faint picture of your folly. An unfading inheritance, an eternal weight of glory, is actually now offered to your acceptance: and yet you will risk the final loss of it, for years on years to come, rather than secure it by present attention. Oh why will you venture thus! Why will you be wise in the fading enjoyments of time, and yet exercise no prudence or care, in relation to the infinite felicities of eternity? Why will you suspect a man when he tempts you to injure your temporal interests, and why will you not suspect the adversary of your immortal souls, when he tempts you to put them to the most awful hazard?

Is it in sickness that you propose to attend to this great concern? And do you believe that it is a favourable season for the mind to be employed on the most important of all subjects, involving the destinies of eternity, when the body is racked and tortured with disease? Or what assurance have you, that even the use of your reason will be left you then? How numerous are the instances in which danger is not suspected, or, if foreseen by others, is concealed from the sick, till, by delirium or stupor, it becomes utterly impossible to make the least preparation for death: and will you hazard eternal happiness or misery on such unpromising chances as these? It is an infatuation, this, which forbids us to reason with those who practise it. Suppose at once, the veil to be lifted, which covers eternity from mortal eyes. Look into the mansions of hopeless misery. Ask there—what has peopled those dreadful abodes? Scarcely one despairing ghost that descended thither from under the light of the gospel, but will tell you, that *he* intended, as *you* do now, to escape that place of torment. But before he had reached the period, or found the promised circumstances for repentance, his eternal, hopeless destiny, was fixed by death: And will you, now, travel the same path that has led those who thus warn you, to endless perdition! God forbid it! Heaven and hell forbid it! Improve the present hour. Begin to cry to God from those very seats on which you now sit; and never cease to cry, till you have escaped the danger that awaits you—Be farther urged to this,

3. By considering, that if the time to which you have postponed an attention to your eternal concerns shall actually arrive, it is not probable you will be more, but less, disposed to regard them seriously *then*, than *now*. If experience has left any thing incontestable, it is, that all habits strengthen by indulgence, and that every escape from danger hardens the mind against it. These principles apply with as much force to religion, as to any other subject. Hear them recognised in the following strong terms, from the oracles of unerring truth. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may ye, also, do good, that are accustomed to do evil—Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." The representation here is, that the habits of sin strike such a deep shade of darkness through the whole texture of the soul, as to render it all but impossible that it ever should be purified; and that the divine forbearance itself, which affords time for reformation, is generally perverted into an encouragement to offend with the more daring obstinacy. We know, indeed, that the power and grace of God are competent to cleanse the most polluted spirit, and to reclaim the most daring rebel. But we know, also, that they are not often employed for this purpose—only

often enough to preserve a penitent prodigal from absolute despair. In the spiritual, as in the material or natural world, the general system of operation is conformed to what is called the order of nature—which is God's order. Youth is the season for forming and furnishing the mind, maturer age for confirming it by experience, and fixing it by habit. That this holds in religion, as in every thing else, all observation demonstrates. He who passes youth and middle age without religion, is likely to pass through life, and into eternity, without it. Those, then, who are now in youth, have, at this hour, the most favourable period for attending to their souls, that they will probably ever have. In like manner, those who are advancing, or who have considerably, or even greatly advanced into life, have, at the present instant, an opportunity the most conducive to success, that their past negligence has left within their power. Every step they go forward, they are rendering their situation still worse and worse. The very point on which they are standing, is the point from which, with the most advantage, they may start, if they ever mean to start, in the Christian race. That at any future time, after certain circumstances are arranged to their mind, they will be more disposed to this great concern, is all a delusion—a delusion which all experience, which human nature itself, cries out against. It cries—"You will be less disposed then than now; now, therefore, attend to your souls, if you do not intend to lose them forever." An additional reason for this I am now to assign, in the last place—

4. Namely, that delay grieves the Spirit of grace, and may provoke him to withhold from you, at last, those aids which are essential to repentance and reformation. That there is such a thing as outliving the day of grace, must be allowed by all who admit the authority of divine revelation. The scripture speaks of some who seek admittance when "the door is shut;" of some who are "given over to a reprobate mind;" of some to whom "strong delusions are sent"—But listen, in particular, to the following terrible representation. "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded: But ye have set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." Instances of the kind here described, where sinners are brought to a sense of their danger when it is too late to escape it, are often, and perhaps only seen, in that very place—on that very bed of disease and death—where they had presumptuously flattered themselves they should not fail of making their peace with God. Brought to the burning verge of eternity, they have found that they could not command divine aid at their own pleasure; they have found it refused them; their eyes have opened on their danger just time enough to leave an awful warning to others, but too late to escape it themselves. But generally, and perhaps always, except in such cases as I have just mentioned, when the strivings of God's Spirit are finally withdrawn, the unhappy subjects of the dereliction remain insensible to the last. Do you ask for examples of this? I fear you may see them very frequently, in persons who were once,

and perhaps long or often, impressed with a serious concern for their souls; but by neglect, by carelessness, by delay, they lost their impressions; became first cold, then indifferent, then hard as the nether millstone, and remained so to their dying hour. Certain it is, that the Spirit of grace was once working on the hearts of these unhappy creatures; and equally certain is it (so far as we can judge) that he afterwards deserted and left them forever.

But perhaps some will be ready to turn this argument against the speaker, and say—"How can we know but that the Spirit of grace has deserted us already; and if he has, vain will be all our exertions, and fruitless all our anxiety"—I answer, God only knows whether some to whom I am speaking, may not actually be among the number of those who are given up to judicial hardness. Those are the most likely to be so, who can hear this subject discussed without anxiety and alarm. But those whose minds are tenderly affected with what they hear—those who are ready to say, "we would now delay no longer, if we may hope for divine assistance"—all such have an evidence, in their present feeling, that they are not yet finally deserted; for if they were, they would not be likely to experience this sensation. What they now feel they should consider as one more call from the Spirit of grace, to delay no longer: and if the emotion now felt, shall not be suppressed and lost—if it shall be indulged, cherished, and pursued—there is reason to hope for the most salutary event. But while I say this, I must solemnly warn you, that if you extinguish your present convictions, or refuse the present admonitions, you will greatly increase the danger that your day of grace may be over, even though your life should be prolonged. Here, then, having pursued the deceitful heart through many of its windings, and shown, as far as reason or Scripture can show it, the danger of all its pretences—here I close my address. I close it with offering you, on the authority of God's word, life and eternal salvation, if you *to-day* repent of your sins, and cast your guilty souls into the arms of Jesus Christ. *To-day*, if you do this, salvation is yours; though your past transgressions be as crimson or as scarlet. But if you *boast of to-morrow*—witness against yourselves—I tell you that you are likely to perish. I tell you the probability is against you. I tell you there is every reason to fear, that the pretences which have so long deceived you, will deceive you to the last. May God dispose you, "while yet it is called to-day," to turn and live. Amen.

A CHARITY SERMON.

IN BENEVOLENT CONTRIBUTIONS WE SERVE GOD WITH HIS OWN.

1 CHRON. xxix. 14, last clause.—The whole verse is thus—"But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?—for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."

These are the words of David, king of Israel, "the man after God's own heart." He had purposed to build the temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem, that the ark of his covenant might no longer abide in a tent, but occupy a permanent place of deposit;—a structure which, by its magnificence and costliness, might be a standing and striking monument of the devotion of the nation to Jehovah the God of Israel; and by its spaciousness and accommodations, might enable both the

priests and the people to perform the service of the sanctuary in the most perfect and agreeable manner. This was a work which, for a long time, lay near the heart of David. He was commended of God "in that he had it in his heart," but was expressly forbidden to carry it into effect himself; and as expressly commanded to commit it to his son and successor Solomon. David—possessing a temper wholly unlike what we sometimes witness in zealous men, who seem to be but little desirous that good should be done, if it be not done by themselves—David determined that if he could not be a principal and conspicuous agent in this business, he would, at least, be an humble under-workman—If he might not be permitted to build the house, he would employ himself in gathering and preparing the materials. In this employment, accordingly, he engaged with activity and effect. Having made many preparations, for a length of time, when he drew toward the close of life, he completed them by a great and noble effort. He assembled together all the men of rank, authority, influence and wealth, in his kingdom; made to them a solemn and affecting address on the subject; and charged Solomon in their presence to go forward with the work, and them to assist him in it. But he did not content himself with making a persuasive and pious speech. He set them an example of munificence, by giving of his own private property three thousand talents of gold, and seven thousand talents of refined silver. This example had—what such examples will usually have—a very powerful effect. All who beheld it seemed to catch the spirit of liberality; and donations to a surprising amount were freely and cheerfully made. The heart of the good old monarch appears to have been so gladdened and melted by this event, that he could not restrain his emotions. He broke forth into solemn thanksgiving to God, before the august assembly. And here his humility was as remarkable, as his liberality had been great. He arrogated no praise to himself, nor bestowed any on the other donors, for what had been done. He ascribed it all to God, who had first enabled and then disposed them, to make these offerings—"Who"—says he in the text—"Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?—for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." Happy they, who do acts of liberality with such a spirit, and afterwards review them with such a temper! "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee"—In farther discoursing on these words—the original occasion of which has been explained—I shall endeavour—

I. To illustrate the truth asserted in the text, that "all things come of God," and consequently that we serve him "with his own," when we employ his gifts in doing what he requires.

II. Deduce from the truth illustrated, a number of practical and important inferences.

First, then, I am to illustrate the truth that "all things come of God," and consequently that we serve him with his own, when we employ his gifts in doing what he requires.

My brethren—The assertion in the text that "all things come of God," needs no other limitation or qualification to render it a truth in the full extent and meaning of the terms, than that we should understand that only all *good* things are here spoken of; and this will be immediately perceived to have been the understanding of him who used the words, by any one who considers their connexion or design. It would, therefore, be a doctrine, true in itself, and capable of the full—

est proof both from reason and Scripture, to maintain that not only all our earthly possessions, but all our intellectual endowments and improvements, all our moral dispositions and habits, and every inclination that we ever feel, either to serve God acceptably, or to do good to men, are really and strictly of him “from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift;” and therefore that in the employment or exercise of any of these things, we do no more than serve our Maker with a part of his own bounty. As this, however, is a doctrine too extensive in its nature to be suitably handled in a single discourse, as well as somewhat beside the immediate purpose for which I now address you, so it is not, I think, the doctrine which the text was specially designed to teach. When David says in the text—“All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee,” there can be no doubt that he directly refers to that worldly affluence, wealth or property, which he and others possessed, and which had enabled them to make such costly offerings to the Lord.—In this limited view, therefore, I shall at present treat the subject; and I do this the more willingly, because I believe that this is a view of the subject which, although by no means unimportant in itself, or perplexed in its nature, yet is too seldom taken, even by serious persons. They are ready to allow that *divine grace* is the gift of God, and that *singular dispensations of Providence* come immediately from his hand. But in regard to their *worldly substance*, perhaps gradually acquired, and in the acquisition of which their contrivance and management, their laborious efforts and persevering industry, have been constantly exerted, they are not so sensible of the truth. They do not at least, so deeply and constantly realize that whatever they possess in this way, cometh as truly of God as if he had given it to them by the most remarkable and extraordinary dispensation of providence; and of course, that when they use it in his service, they do no more than serve him with his own. This, therefore, is the point which seems to call for our special attention, and which we are particularly to regard on this occasion:—And yet, my brethren, when we distinctly fix our attention on it, we shall find it, as already hinted, a matter of great plainness, in regard to which the mind does not so much need conviction or argument, as to be refreshed with truths which have slipped from its recollection, and to which it is prepared to assent as soon as they are again distinctly presented to its view. In a word, the doctrine before us is nothing else than the doctrine of a particular providence, applied to a specific point or subject.

Let us suppose, in the first place, that a competent, or a liberal, or a profuse measure of worldly wealth is possessed, as an *inheritance* from parents, ancestors, or friends: and then we ask—who was it that enabled those parents, ancestors, or friends, to acquire that wealth at first? and who disposed them, after it was acquired, to give it to you as your inheritance? How many instances have you seen, of persons who once had the power, the prospect, and the expectation of bequeathing riches and independence to their posterity, or their friends, who have, at last, died in poverty themselves, and left the same portion to those who succeeded them? How often, by occurrences that could not be foreseen, or by fraud, treachery and deceit that could not be prevented, has a patrimony, or a legacy, been entirely and forever kept from those for whom it was intended, and to whom, in justice, it belonged? Pursuing aright the thoughts which these inquiries may suggest, it will appear that property possessed by inheritance cometh

of God, as really as that which is obtained in any other way—Nay, as it comes to the possessor without any of his own labour or care, a tribute of thankfulness seems to be especially due to that kind providence which ordered his lot so favourably; and it becomes him peculiarly to remember, that in employing this property in any benevolent acts, he does no more than serve God with his own gift.

Or has any one become rapidly or suddenly possessed of wealth, or an easy estate? It has already been remarked, that men are sometimes more ready to allow that this cometh of God, than in cases where property is gradually and laboriously acquired. Yet to this very case, a remark which belongs generally to the whole subject applies with peculiar force—It is, that as all possessions which are not lawfully or honestly obtained, do not, in the sense of the text, come of God, so this is more frequently the case when riches are rapidly accumulated than in many other instances. “He that maketh haste to be rich, says Solomon, shall not be innocent”—“They that will be rich, says the apostle, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts that drown men in destruction and perdition.” All the gains of unrighteousness, in whatever way acquired, come not of God: that is, they come not as a blessing, and are never held with his approbation. He even rejects them from his service, for “he will not have robbery for a burnt offering.” Whoever expects to bribe the approbation of heaven to deeds of fraud and injustice, by giving to charitable or pious designs, will find himself awfully disappointed. Such a man attempts by giving a part of what is not his own, to obtain a license to hold the remainder. No. Let him restore to its rightful owner that which has been unlawfully taken; or if this owner cannot be found, let him give to the Lord the last farthing of his ill-gotten pelf. “Behold—said the truly penitent Zaccheus—behold the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken aught from any man, by false accusation, I restore him four-fold.” But if, by the peculiar smiles of providence on our lawful enterprise or industry, we are prospered in an unexpected and unusual degree, and wealth is suddenly or rapidly thrown into our hands, then indeed, we have reason to say with special propriety, “this cometh of the Lord:” and if we have any right views of duty, we shall see that we but serve God with his own, when we are liberal of this property, in promoting every pious and useful design.

This is also true, in regard to those possessions which are acquired slowly, difficultly, and laboriously. Did you use much management and contrivance in getting what you possess? Were you very diligent, assiduous and persevering? Were you frugal and economical in all your concerns, that you might save a little? And who was it that gave you that capacity, that turn of mind for management and enterprise, which has made the whole difference between you and those improvident creatures, whom the want of foresight, contrivance, or resolution, keeps in perpetual poverty? Who was it that gave and preserved to you that health and activity, without which all your endeavours must have been suspended or prevented, and for the want of which, so many labour under the accumulated pressure of penury and disease? Who was it that produced those favourable occurrences, which introduced you into business, and which rendered that business profitable? Who was it that saved you from those disastrous mistakes, and accidents, and losses, by which hundreds of honest and industrious men are constantly thrown backward, and kept from getting on prosperously in the world? Who was it that has rendered *your* business-enterprises suc-

cessful, when thousands, who have wanted neither skill, nor diligence, nor integrity, can scarcely keep themselves and their families above absolute want? Who has preserved your property, since it was obtained, from the destruction of fire and storm; and from a thousand incidents, against which human wisdom and power cannot provide, and by which “riches make to themselves wings and fly away?” Who was it?—It was God that did all this. He did for you that which you could not do for yourselves—that, without which, you would have been, at this hour, as poor as any unhappy mortal that asks your charity. All your possessions, then, have actually come of God—He has given them to you; and whenever you lay out a part of them, in any service that he requires, you only give him of his own.

It were easy, my brethren, to pursue this train of thought to a much greater length—It were easy to show in detail, that as “the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof,” as he is the Creator—the original and absolute proprietor of all the good things that we possess; and as it is by the order of his providence, and by that alone, that they are conveyed into our hands, they do all, in the most emphatic sense, “come of him:” And that, whenever we expend, in a service that he requires, something of this store that he hath put in our keeping, it is no more than serving him with his own property. But these ideas are too plain to need explanation, although they well deserve a careful remembrance. I therefore proceed—

II. To deduce from what has been stated a number of practical and important inferences.

First, then, If all that we possess be given us of God, and we do but serve him with his own, when we make the best and most liberal use of our property, then assuredly, we have no reason to be proud, or to appear great in our own eyes, either on account of what we possess, or of any good purposes which we may promote by it. This is the important and practical truth which is taught us in the text and context, by the language and the conduct of their royal and inspired author. He possessed much, and he did and devoted much to the service of God, and yet he takes no praise to himself—Nay, he was truly humbled, as every good man will be, in thinking that so unworthy a creature as he, should be so favoured and distinguished by a kind providence, as to be able to do the desirable service which had been performed. Contrast with this, the arrogant and impious spirit of another monarch, the proud king of Babylon; and let his awful doom prove a warning to us, not to ascribe to our own wisdom or efforts what belongs to the divine bounty—“All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months, he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake and said—is not this great Babylon which I have built? for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty. While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven saying—O king Nebuchadnezzar! to thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee: And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; they shall make thee eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.” Brethren, be our situation what it may, let us always remember that “pride was not made for man.” Gratitude—the most lively and the most humble gratitude to God—is the sentiment that we ought to feel and cherish, when the divine bounty renders our worldly cir-

cumstances comfortable, or enables us to do good to others. But the moment that pride begins to swell and inflate our foolish hearts, we act the very part of a beggar, who applauds himself because he has received an alms.

2. If worldly wealth cometh of God, then he has an undoubted right both to withhold it, and to take it away, according to his sovereign pleasure. Children of poverty—God has done you no wrong, in not giving you the riches of this world. Shall he not do what he will with his own? Perhaps he has seen your present condition to be best for you.—Perhaps he keeps you poor at present, that he may bestow upon you “the true riches” in an eternal state. Let no murmuring or repining emotions be indulged against his sovereign will: And if any to whom I speak, were once in other and better circumstances than they now are permitted to enjoy, let them remember, that what they possessed was only lent of God; and that he had a right to call and take it whenever he pleased.

“He gave, and blessed be his name,
He takes but what he gave”—

Think of the language of holy Job when deprived, not only of all his wealth, which had been great indeed, but of all his friends, and his bodily health and ease—“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!”

3. If all that we possess comes of God, and we serve him with his own, in all the good that we do, then surely it follows, that the kindness, grace and condescension, of our heavenly Father is most conspicuous, in rewarding us for every good work, as if it had been wholly our own. In the great day of final account, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Judge, represents himself as conferring the heavenly inheritance, purchased by his own infinite merits, and conveyed to his people by his own infinite grace, on those who have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, and relieved the prisoner, from a regard to him and to his commandment. Most generous master!—most condescending Redeemer!—thou givest us all the means, and all the disposition to do good that we ever possess, and then thou commendest and rewardest it, as if it had belonged wholly to ourselves. Let this be an example to those who receive the charity of others. It indeed comes from God, and to him your principal gratitude is due; but if he rewards the instruments that dispense this bounty, you certainly ought to love, and to pray for a blessing on them.

4. We learn from this subject that a truly godly person, so far as he acts agreeably to this character, does and will, consider himself in no other light than as a steward of that portion of worldly wealth, which divine providence has entrusted to him; that agreeably to this idea he is to dispose of his property, and agreeably to this idea he is to account for it at last. It is this, my brethren, which distinguishes the real practical Christian from the man of the world, in regard to worldly things. The man of the world considers them as his own,—his property,—his portion: but the real Christian who views them in the light of faith, sees that they are not his own,—not his property—not his portion. The whole belongs to God, and he is only a steward, put in trust, to manage it to the best account. He serves indeed an indulgent master, who permits him to take enough for his own comfort, and to make a suitable provision for his posterity, or dependents. But he is not at liberty to consume more than this: he is to waste nothing; he

is to use no more than his comfort requires, and he is to give no more to his children than, in his best judgment, he believes will make them most useful. All the rest, be it more or less, he is to employ in serving God. This is the rule by which a Christian should walk; by which some have actually and honestly walked—And yet—tell it not in Gath—there are many worldly men who will give more—and more cheerfully—to any charitable or pious design, than some who make a high profession of Christian piety.

“That man may last, but never lives,
Who much receives but little gives;
Whom none can love, whom none can thank,
Creation’s blot, creation’s blank.

But he who marks, from day to day,
With generous acts his radiant way,
Treads the same path his Saviour trod,
The path to glory and to God.”

SERMON.

CHRIST A ROCK.

1 COR. X. 4.—“For they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.”

By figurative representations some of the most important instructions of divine revelation are communicated. Under the typical dispensation of Moses especially, there was scarcely any public act, occurrence or institution, which did not import more than at first appeared; and while it served some obvious present purpose, did not point also to some more remote and hidden, but yet more spiritual and important object or end. This spiritual signification of the ancient Jewish symbols, though it was often perceived, and was highly beneficial to the believing Israelites, was not intended merely, nor perhaps principally, for their benefit. It is under the gospel dispensation that the intention of all the types is most clearly unfolded; so that by viewing them in retrospect, and with the advantage derived from the light of the gospel, more may be discovered by a Christian than could be known to a Jew. To aid us in this useful investigation, the inspired writers of the New Testament often become our teachers and guides. They frequently advert to the Hebrew scriptures for the illustration and enforcement of what they deliver: and thus by a kind of double revelation, the wisdom of God is most conspicuously displayed, the faith of believers most powerfully confirmed, the beauty of sacred truth most engagingly exhibited, and its whole design most fully accomplished. Among innumerable passages which show the truth of this representation, the text is one of the most striking.

The apostle labours in the context to excite a holy circumspection in the Corinthian Christians, lest slighting or misimproving their peculiar privileges, they should lose the blessings which these privileges were calculated to convey. With this view, he points their attention, both for encouragement and warning, to the history of the people of Israel under the conduct of Moses in the wilderness. Speaking, in this connexion, of the miraculous supply of water which followed them on their journey, he denominates it “spiritual drink;” and then to explain the reason of his giving it this appellation, he says—“For they drank

of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." By a figure of speech, too frequent in its use and too obvious in its import to be misapprehended, the people are here said to have drunk of the *rock* that followed them, instead of the *water* which flowed from it; and the attention is awakened to investigate the meaning of the bold and comprehensive metaphor which is used, when the apostle affirms that this rock was Christ.

To unfold the intention of this metaphor, and explain and apply the design of the whole expression, is the object of the present discourse. In doing this, it will be useful, in order to avoid the danger of torturing the figurative language of the inspired penman to a meaning foreign to his own, to consider attentively the *spiritual truth* intended to be conveyed; to state this truth distinctly and summarily at once; and then to recall the sensible images, only for the purpose of illustration or enforcement. Agreeably to this, let it be carefully remarked, that there are three distinct things comprehended in the type we consider. First,—The rock, which was the source, or fountain, from which the water flowed: Secondly—The streams themselves, by which the thirst of the people was allayed, and their strength invigorated: Thirdly—The ultimate object for which the whole was done; namely, to conduct the Israel of God to the promised land. Now, as the apostle asserts that this rock was Christ, I think the propositions of evangelical truth corresponding to the sensible and temporal things just stated, are plainly the three following—

I. That the believer's hope of salvation must derive its very origin from Christ Jesus, or be placed on him alone.

II. That a resort must constantly be made to the never-failing fulness of the Saviour, for all those supplies of grace and strength, which are necessary to refresh and invigorate the Christian, in his passage through the world.

III. That the ultimate design, and the sure result of all, is, that the faithful disciple of Christ shall at length possess the heavenly inheritance.

After speaking very briefly to each of these points, the discourse shall be concluded with a practical application.

First, then, we are to consider—That the believer's hope of salvation must derive its very origin from Christ Jesus, or be placed on him alone. As the rock smitten by Moses furnished the fountain, from which sprang forth the water which saved the thirsty Israelite from death, so Christ, when "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted," poured forth that blood of the atonement, which alone can save from eternal death, the perishing soul, which hastens to it for relief. Hence the Saviour himself, "in the last day, that great day of the feast, stood and cried—if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." His atonement and righteousness only, are the "fountain opened to the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." Or if, taking another figure furnished by the sacred writers, you view this rock, not as a fountain, but as a foundation, on which the hope of eternal life is built,—then we are assured that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ—Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." But, my brethren, to the fountain contemplated none will come, on the foundation laid in Zion none will rest, till the absolute necessity

of doing it is felt, in a manner the most urgent and pressing. Till a sinner see clearly and undoubtingly, that without a vital union with Christ he is sure to perish, he will never embrace the Saviour "as all his salvation and all his desire." Without such a perception indeed, it is impossible that the necessary application should be made. How great is the number of those who enjoy the gospel, to whom the Redeemer never appears precious? They hear the declarations of his suitableness, and the invitations of his grace, without interest or concern. Asleep in their sins, they perceive not the burning gulf that is working beneath them, and therefore see no necessity of escaping for their lives to a place of safety. Nor is it enough merely that the sinner be alarmed. Many have had their fears excited, who have never "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them" in the gospel. If the awakened conscience be quieted with the belief that some tears of penitence, a partial reformation, or abstaining from gross sins, will be sufficient—nay, if making many prayers, attending on all ordinances, attempting all duties, and exhibiting an unexceptionable deportment, be relied on as the meritorious cause of acceptance with God, the sinner is miserably deluded. Ah! my brethren, this specious self-righteousness, in whatever way, and many are the ways, in which men attempt to build upon it, is not the rock which will sustain the fabric of your eternal hopes. Here is "the sandy foundation," against which our Lord himself hath warned us; and whoever builds upon it, will find that in the day of trial, when the wind shall blow, and the storm shall beat, and the floods shall come, this "refuge of lies" will be swept away, and he who had taken shelter in it will be lost in the abyss of final ruin. But when, under the influences of the Spirit of grace, an effectual conviction of guilt takes hold on the conscience of a sinner; when he sees the depths of depravity which exist in his very heart and nature, and the violations of the holy law of God which have filled up his whole life; when he sees that he can offer no excuse and make no escape; when he is made impressively sensible that nothing he can do, or work out of himself, can be any recommendation of him to the divine favour; when he realizes that an infinite atonement and a finished righteousness is what he needs, and must have, or be undone forever; then in very deed he is "shut up unto the faith" of the gospel. And when, by the enlightening and regenerating influences of divine grace, he is made to discern clearly, that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;"—that in him there is all that can be asked in a Saviour; that the veracity of God offers him even to the chief of sinners who will accept him freely; that "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life;" and when the will and affections fully and delightfully approve of this plan and offer; then the soul is won to Jesus. Then, throwing away with abhorrence every remnant of his own righteousness, abandoning every plea, and every hope, and every wish of deliverance from any other quarter; viewing with holy rapture the glory of God displaying its splendours in the gospel plan of salvation, the sinner grasps the Saviour as his all—choosing with infinite preference that Christ should be "made of God unto him wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption;" then the soul is founded on the *rock Christ Jesus*—the rock of ages, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. Now, "being justified by faith, the believing penitent has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"—The sweet sense of this "peace which passeth all understanding," the joy which arises from the humble confidence of

pardoned guilt, the assurance that sin shall not have dominion over him, and that all that God hath promised he is not only able but assuredly engaged to perform; this is the first draught of the fountain of life flowing from the rock Christ Jesus, which rejoices and enlivens that which a little before was a weary and heavy laden spirit. But still, though the believer be thus comforted and strengthened for the present, the wilderness is not yet passed; it is only entered, and through it lies yet before him the tedious and trying journey which leads to the heavenly rest—And, therefore, I have said—

II. That a resort must constantly be had to the never-failing fulness of the Saviour, for all those supplies of grace and strength, which are necessary to refresh and invigorate the Christian in his passage through the world.

Speaking of our blessed Lord, the author of our text asserts that “it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell:” yea, that “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily:” And the apostle John affirms, that “of his fulness have all we received and grace for grace.” By the most various and impressive language of inspiration is the doctrine taught and inculcated, that all the spiritual wants of the believer are provided for in the Redeemer, and that from him relief is to be sought and obtained. Like the unfailing and inexhaustible streams that followed the chosen people of Heaven through all the dry and inhospitable deserts which they had to pass; so the streams of divine grace which flow from the fulness of their redeeming God, follow his chosen ones through all the thorny and thirsty wilds of their mortal life: And happy is it, beyond estimation, that such is the fact; for their wants are both numerous and incessantly recurring. He can only have entered the school of Christ, who supposes that when a vital union with him is effected, every difficulty is past. Alas! they who know most by experience of the Christian course, can tell most of the various difficulties that lie in the way. When, indeed, a full draught has been received of “the water of life,” whether at the beginning of a converted state, or after much progress in it, the soul is so cheered and satisfied, that it seems as if distress was gone forever. Like one who has just extinguished all his natural thirst by drinking largely at a pleasant fountain, the idea can scarcely be realized that the painful sensations, now completely removed, will speedily return. The present relief is so complete, that it seems as if it must be lasting. But in both cases the event is the same. As the natural refreshments which we take to-day, however agreeable or abundant, will not serve us for to-morrow, so in the spiritual life, no comforts or cordials of which we have tasted in time past, will suffice us for the time to come. “Give us day by day our daily bread”—is a petition not more applicable to the body than it is to the soul. It was not more necessary for the Hebrew in the wilderness to go daily, and more than once in a day, to “the rock that followed him,” than it is for the Christian pilgrim, in the wilderness of this sinful world, to go as frequently to the rock of his salvation,—to the fulness of Christ, there to beg and to receive the supply of his new necessities.

It is an important advice given by the penman of the text, in his epistle to the Colossians, “as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him:”—That is—“Be careful to preserve inviolate the union that is formed between your souls and the Redeemer; and in the same manner in which you came to and embraced him at first, continue to come, to the end of life—Continue, after you have known him ever

so long, to receive him by the acts of faith, just as you received him at first; as a complete Saviour, to pardon freely all your sins, and to quicken, sanctify, uphold and preserve you." The present state, my Christian brethren, was intended to be a constant trial of the faith and patience of the saints. The world, the flesh and the devil, are their enemies; and in all the multiform ways in which they can produce annoyance, it will to the very last be experienced. A volume would scarcely suffice to delineate all the difficulties and distresses, all the doubts, fears, conflicts and temptations, that may assail the Christian pilgrim who has set his face toward Mount Zion above. But blessed be God, there is not one case, nor one situation, in which a child of his ever can be placed, but there is provision made for it in the covenant of grace, in the fulness of Christ. To him, therefore, let the constant resort be made; to him let the importunate application be incessantly addressed; and though for a time, and for a trial of faith, he may seem to refuse, yet in the end he will assuredly afford relief. If your necessities, Christian brethren, be frequent, numerous and pressing, let your entreaties be as frequent, numerous and pressing as your wants. When you suffer most, imitate your Saviour in his agony, and cry to him the more earnestly. When you are the most thirsty, come the most frequently to the fountain:—"To him that is athirst will I give (saith Christ,) of the fountain of the water of life freely." And to thy Saviour, in the hour of death, as in every past hour, be thy soul, O believer! committed; and he will not fail either to cheer it by his sensible presence, or to keep it in safety by his almighty power. For we are now to show—

III. That the ultimate design and the sure result of all this provision of grace is, that the faithful disciple of Christ shall, at length, possess the heavenly inheritance.

The miracle which was wrought by the instrumentality of Moses to supply the camp of Israel with water, was only a mean necessary to an important end. The God of their fathers had engaged to give them the land of Canaan for an inheritance and possession.—To preserve them from death, in crossing the parched and barren regions which lay between them and the promised land, the waters were made to flow at their side. The relief which these waters afforded from threatening death, and the temporary comforts which they produced in a sultry climate, were indeed blessings in themselves; but still they were only preparatory to greater and more durable blessings in reserve. They were but the indispensable provision for those who were travelling to a fixed home and a settled rest, and were given to insure an arrival there. There, when they arrived, they would, in place of a solitary stream, find "a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness; thou shalt not lack any thing in it." Just so the supplies of divine grace which are now afforded to the Christian, are only a foretaste and pre-sage of better things to come. They are given to strengthen him on his way to the heavenly Canaan, to the rest which remaineth for the people of God, and to insure its eventual possession. This is the declaration of our Lord himself—"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." That is—"The graces of the divine Spirit, given to those who truly

believe on me, shall produce within the possessor a source of happiness that shall ultimately extinguish every uneasy desire after it—for these graces shall continue and increase till they terminate in that everlasting life of which they are the earnest, and of which they insure the possession.”

Yes, beloved brethren, to whomsoever the special grace of God is imparted, it insures eternal glory as the consequence. This is the divine purpose in the gift, and nothing can prevent its accomplishment. Hence, saith the apostle, “he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God. Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” And the divine Saviour declares—“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand—I and my Father are one.” The most of those indeed who left the land of Egyptian bondage under Moses fell, through unbelief, in the wilderness; and this should serve as a solemn admonition to all professing Christians to guard against the same evil—For the apostle warns us in the context—“That all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come—Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” But though many nominal and visible Christians who have partaken of all ordinances in the church on earth, shall never be admitted to the church triumphant above, still it is a truth, that none of the real people of God shall fall, as the faithless Israelites did in the wilderness—He who is able to make them stand will still uphold them; will recall them from all their wanderings; will preserve them from all their enemies; will at length bring every individual to the Canaan above; and confer upon them “an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” There their sorrows, their sufferings, and their sins, shall cease together; and they shall drink of the rivers of pleasure that flow at God’s right hand. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light upon them nor any heat. But the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes:—and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.”

It now remains to apply the subject.

In the first place, then—From what you have heard, let professing Christians be exhorted to examine with frequency and care, whether they have truly rested their souls on the rock Christ Jesus. Many, we are assured will, in the day of final retribution, say—“Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets”—to whom he will profess, “I never knew you; depart from me, all ye that work iniquity.” And how dismaying, beyond conception, must be the rejection and condemnation of those who have gone into eternity confidently expecting to meet the plaudit and acceptance of their judge? Let us, then, my Christian brethren, with frequent and jealous scrutiny, examine whether we have been taught and enabled to place our salvation truly and wholly in the hands of Christ: whether we have felt, and do constantly feel, that we are infinitely vile and unworthy in ourselves, and in consequence of this, are looking to him, and depending on him as our all: whether we do earnestly desire that

he would help us to contend against all sin, and that he would more and more deliver us from it: whether he appears as a precious Saviour to our souls, because he is “to save his people *from* their sins:” whether we do resolve to cleave to him and his ways, in all the acts of holy obedience, even to the end of life—looking to him while we thus resolve, “to work in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure,” and to “keep us by his almighty power through faith unto salvation.” If this be the temper and these the exercises of our minds—however we may mourn our darkness and our difficulties—we have good reason to hope that we are founded on the rock Christ Jesus, and that our hope shall never make us ashamed. But if, on the contrary, we are seeking justification by the deeds of the law, and do not feel most sensibly, that without a vital union with Christ by faith, we must perish: if the Saviour do not constantly appear necessary and sometimes precious to us; if we do not feel our obligations to obey all the laws of God; and yet, after all we have done, that we are emphatically unprofitable servants:—or if we are resting on some supposed spiritual views which we *once* had, while we do not most earnestly seek *new* views of Christ and his fulness, nor endeavour to walk as he hath commanded; then truly we have reason to fear that we have “neither part nor lot in this matter.” Let all such be exhorted, as they value their eternal peace, to take no peace to themselves, till they obtain it on other grounds than those on which it is now resting.

Secondly, Nearly allied to what has just been stated, is the application which should be made of this subject, by awakened and inquiring souls. Let them be most earnestly entreated to take up with nothing as satisfying, short of good evidence that they have been truly brought to rest on the Saviour alone, and are consequently his in the everlasting covenant of his grace. Better to bear the pains of a wounded conscience till they are healed by the blood of Christ, than to have them healed slightly by any other remedy. Cease to seek justification by your own efforts or obedience. Come, at once, to the Fountain which can cleanse you from all your stains. Are you altogether vile—altogether unworthy—altogether helpless? Just such the Redeemer came to save—As such you are invited to go to him for salvation. If you ever attempt to come to him in any other character than this, he will reject you. If, therefore, you feel this to be your character, that sentiment exactly suits your case to the Saviour, and the Saviour to your case. To you he must be precious.—Throw yourselves entirely upon him, and he will not reject you. “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money come ye buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not. Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your souls delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your souls shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

Thirdly, The subject which we have been discussing applies itself, in a peculiar manner, to the people of God—urging them to “abide in Christ,” and to animate themselves with the sure prospect of the heavenly inheritance. Hear, my brethren, the words of the divine Jesus—“Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine ye are the branches; he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do

nothing." Truth, blessed Saviour! without thee we can do nothing. Help us, therefore, by thy grace constantly imparted; and then, "through thy strengthening us, we can do all things." Christians, let us never exchange the holy delight which arises from a life of faith on the Son of God, for any of the polluted pleasures of the world. Let us live simply upon him; and under all the trials we may bear for his cause, or meet with in his service, let us solace ourselves with anticipating that heavenly rest, which shall, in a few fleeting days, succeed to all our toils, and which will be the sweeter for every painful sensation we now endure.

Finally—The import of this subject, to those who are yet "at ease in Zion," is both awful and alluring. It is awful, as it indicates their danger; it is alluring, as it exhibits, in the most attractive view, the way of escape. Christless sinner! thou art in the midst of a howling wilderness, in which thou wilt certainly perish, if thou dost not flee to the rock of salvation. Thy outward enemies, Satan and the world—and thy inward diseases corruptions and lusts, that produce a mortal fever in the soul; all conspire thy eternal ruin; and they will certainly prevail, unless Christ be thy refuge, Christ thy captain, Christ thy physician, Christ thy sole reliance, Christ the water of life to thy perishing immortal spirit. Behold, then, this hour he offers to be all this to thee. On thy peril, refuse not the offer. By the worth of thy soul, by the value of heavenly rest, by the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, I exhort, charge and entreat thee, hasten to the Saviour—But why do I speak of my entreaties?—Listen to and embrace with unutterable gratitude, the invitations of the whole church, and of the Spirit of grace—"For the Spirit and the bride say, come—and let him that heareth say come—and let him that is athirst come—and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." Amen.

SERMON.

THE NATURE, EMPLOYMENT, AND HAPPINESS OF THE HEAVENLY STATE.

2 Cor. v. 1.—"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

In these words the apostle Paul describes the future possessions of the righteous, under the figure of a building—"A building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It is by figures, and by negative expressions, that the state of future happiness is, for the most part, made known to us, in the oracles of inspiration. While we remain in our "earthly house," we cannot have a full and distinct knowledge of "the house not made with hands." For this our mental faculties do not qualify us in our present state. Here we obtain our original ideas through the medium of our bodily senses; and to these our very language, when we speak of spiritual objects and operations, has almost a necessary reference. Of unembodied existence, therefore, and of the exercises and feelings of purely spiritual beings, our apprehensions must be inadequate. But that we may, by analogy, obtain some just notions, however imperfect, of that blissful state, the hope and expectation of which supports and animates every Christian,

metaphorical language is employed in the word of God. In the text heaven is called *a building of God, a house not made with hands*; and elsewhere we find it spoken of as *a mansion of God, a temple, a city, a paradise, an inheritance, a purchased possession, a better country, a kingdom, a crown of glory; and as rest, peace, and the joy of the Lord.*

In discoursing to you, at this time, on the state and exercises of the heavenly world, I shall not confine myself to the text, but seek aid in every part of the sacred volume, for the illustration of this important and most interesting subject.

I. I begin with remarking that when we speak of heaven, our minds and our expressions almost necessarily refer to some place; some local situation, in which God and glorified spirits are supposed peculiarly to reside. This is observable in the text; and as already intimated, the same, or similar language, we find employed in many other parts of the inspired writings. Not thinking it proper to consume your time with mere speculative notions, or suggestions, I shall not even mention some of the hypotheses and conjectures of learned and pious men, relative to the intellectual truth taught by the metaphorical language of sacred scripture touching this subject. It may, however, have its use very briefly to notice two opinions—the opinion of those who favour the idea that heaven ought to be regarded merely as *a state*, and not as *a place*; and the opinion of those who believe there is *a local heaven*, as well as a *glorious change of state*, into which the people of God enter, when “mortality is swallowed up of life.”

The favourers of the former of these opinions reason thus—There is nothing more necessary, say they, to our immediate perception of an unveiled Deity, and entering into the society of other spirits, whether happy or miserable, than that the soul should be disencumbered of the body. God is every where present; and for aught we know, every part of creation may likewise be peopled with spiritual inhabitants. By the laws of our present existence, we can neither converse with them nor perceive them. It may be the law of their existence, too, if such be the will of the Creator, that they can neither perceive nor converse with us, beyond what he on special occasions may permit. The walls of flesh and sense may cut off all ordinary communication between them and us; and the throwing down of these barriers may be all that is necessary to an immediate intercourse with them. This idea they thus illustrate—Imagine that you had been confined, for the whole of life, to a single apartment, through which only a few dim rays of light were permitted to penetrate, at five small avenues. Imagine that all you knew of the sun, the face of nature, and the busy scenes that were passing around you, was from some imperfect report—Then imagine that, in a moment of time, the walls of this obscure dwelling were all to be removed; and the sun, the face of nature, and the busy scenes of life, of which you never before had any perception, nor could form any correct notion, were to be ushered at once on your naked view. Into what a new and unknown world would you find yourself transported? Something like this may take place at death. Our earthly house of this tabernacle is a dark abode. Through five avenues, denominated senses, we gain some obscure intelligence of invisible beings, with which we may be all surrounded. But when, at the moment of death, the present obstructions shall be removed, the sensible perception of God, like the rays of the unclouded sun, may burst upon us at once; we may perceive ourselves to be in the midst of a countless host of active intelligences; we may be able to converse with them and they with us: and if we die

reconciled to God and loving him supremely, this will make our heaven.

The advocates of the latter opinion, to which I have referred, freely admit the possibility, and perhaps the probability, of all that you have just heard. But they say that the representations of holy scripture clearly teach us far more than this; and ought to leave us in no doubt that there is a local heaven. They remark, that although the language used in relation to this subject is figurative, yet the figures themselves, as well as some descriptions not figurative, manifestly refer to *place*; that a house, a mansion, a temple, a city, a country, and many other terms, can scarcely convey any meaning whatever, if they have no reference to locality; that the same idea is necessarily implied in what we read of angels conducting a departed spirit to the heavenly felicity; and especially that there *must* be a place, in which the translated body of our blessed Lord, and the bodies of Enoch and Elijah, now reside; and to which the glorified bodies of all the saints will be gathered, after the resurrection and the final judgment. In a word, that almost the whole of what we are taught in the sacred pages, relative to the future state of the righteous, leads us to believe that in the immensity of space, there is a region, or a place, where God is now manifested in his brightest glories to the blessed inhabitants; and where the whole of those who are redeemed from among men will, with the holy angels, eventually constitute the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. This appears to me to be perfectly conclusive, and to leave no ground for rational controversy, whether heaven be a state or a place. We are, indeed, not told where this local heaven exists, and therefore all speculations and conjectures on that topic, would perhaps better be forborne. But this forms no objection to the fact of its existence. It is analogous to all that is revealed on this subject, that a part should be told, and a part be concealed. It ought ever to be kept in mind, that it is contrary to all just principles of reasoning, to refuse our assent to facts, suitably authenticated, because, if we admit them, they will involve some things that we cannot fully explain.

We further remark in regard to the subject before us, that our being unable to form distinct ideas of the operations of our souls in a separate state, is no argument at all against the existence of such a state; any more than it is an argument against the being of a God, and of holy angels, that we can have no adequate conception of the mode of their existence, and of the manner in which spirits converse, or communicate their thoughts. Neither is the greatness of the change which must pass upon us, in order to our entering on the heavenly state, any reason why we should not believe in its reality. Changes, indeed, which bear a strong analogy to this, and which, for myself, I fully believe were chiefly intended to illustrate it, are constantly presented to our observation. Ten thousand beautiful forms of animated nature are, at one period of the year, flying with rapid motion through every region of the air, which, at another period, are dormant reptiles in the bosom of the earth, or sluggish worms on its surface, with scarcely the symptoms of life. Now the change from the mortal to the glorified or angelic state, is scarcely greater than this, nor the transition more wonderful. And what we see and know to be true in the nature of an insect, shall we think to be impossible, or improbable, in the nature of man?

II. The sacred scriptures teach us that all the natural appetites, and

all the pains and sufferings which are experienced in the present life, will, in the heavenly state, be known no more. Material sustenance cannot be necessary to the support of an immaterial and immortal soul. When therefore the spirit shall cease to be an inhabitant of "the earthly house of this tabernacle," all those appetites, which are seated in our animal nature, and necessary for its preservation, will cease at once. And when, at the resurrection, the happy spirit shall again reanimate its sleeping dust, that dust shall be so organized, by the power and wisdom of God, whose will constitutes all the laws of nature, as that "it shall hunger no more neither thirst any more." These sentiments are sustained by the plainest declarations of the word of God, not only in the expression just repeated, but in the following particular and beautiful passage of the same apostle on whose words I discourse. "But some man will say—How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die—But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." After which, in the same connexion, he adds—"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another: So also is the resurrection of the dead: It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Here, we see the apostle is particularly careful to mention, and to repeat, that there is a spiritual body—that is, a body which shall possess many of the properties of a spirit, and which shall not hinder any of its operations—which may pass, quicker than a ray of light, to any part of the creation of God, whither the will of its Maker, or his service, may require its presence.

This spiritual body will feel none of the wants or pains to which our mortal bodies are now subjected. Ah! my brethren, Lazarus, there, wants no more the morsel which here he solicited in vain. There shall the emancipated spirit of every humble Christian, who in this world may have endured hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, poverty and wretchedness, be freed forever from the pressure of its wants, and know the superior pleasure which arises from perfect happiness, contrasted with constant suffering. Bodily infirmities, often productive of spiritual distress, seem in many instances to be, as it were, the *furniture*, inseparably attached to the earthly tabernacle of the saint. But when the soul—the temporary tenant—shall resign its possession, it will be forever quit of all these inconveniences. Entering the house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, none of these incumbrances will there be found. There the martyr who has yielded his body to the flame or torture, for the cause of Christ, will find himself eternally secure of that undiminishable bliss, for which he despised the sufferings of the body. There the patient Christian, who has languished out a wearisome life of sickness, or infirmity, or lassitude, will find immortal health, activity, and vigour—there the labours and inquietudes, and perplexities, and griefs, and sorrows, and cares of the believer, will find a termination final and eternal—"There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest—And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Yes—the former things shall be passed away forever. Every clog and hindrance, every oppression and embarrassment, every difficulty and discouragement, which the Chris-

tian feels from a frail body and a state of trial, shall then be left far behind. The unfettered soul, escaping from all the entanglements and vexations of flesh and sense, like an eagle broken loose from her toils, shall wing her unencumbered rapid flight to heaven, and rove and bask with joyful liberty amidst the sunbeams of eternal day.

III. The state of heavenly happiness will be a state of perpetual and perfect freedom from all sin. This, indeed, is the foundation of that complete deliverance from suffering and sorrow, which we have just considered. From a state of imperfect moral obedience, pain is never excluded. But where holiness is complete, there happiness will likewise be perfect. And this we are assured, will be the condition of every soul which shall be admitted to the heavenly mansions. We are told "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." This must, in the nature of things, be necessary to complete the happiness of a holy soul. Being supremely and habitually attached to God and holiness, it never could be entirely satisfied, if sin, the opposites of these, were not totally destroyed. So long as God was offended, and his law violated, there regret and sorrow would necessarily succeed. This it is which mars all the Christian's happiness upon earth—this it is which mixes grief with all his joy. The remainders of sin; the awful measure of indwelling corruption which cleaves to him; the body of sin and death with which he is clothed, depress his soul; and as the apostle remarks in the verses which succeed the text, make him groan, being burdened, "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven." And blessed be God, when the time of release arrives, the Christian's enemies shall be able to annoy him no more forever—they cannot follow him beyond the grave—that is the barrier which they can never pass. All those evil propensities, desires, and passions, which have so often assaulted or seduced the soul; all those attachments to sensual and worldly objects, which have interfered with its spiritual exercises; all that coldness, sloth, indifference, unbelief, want of inclination and animation for the service of God, which made it drag so heavily along its Christian course; all the allurements of the world, which have so often drawn it away from communion with God, and the enjoyment of his presence and favour; all doubt, and distrust, and fear; all the dark veils which have separated between the mind and the clear perception of divine truth; all the temptations and tormenting suggestions of the great enemy of souls; will now have completely and finally lost their influence. Not one of these disturbers shall ever be able to intrude on the happy soul that arrives at the heavenly rest. Oh, desirable deliverance! oh, enviable state! to serve and enjoy God with perfect freedom, no more assailed by any enemy, no more polluted by any sin. What Christian but in the contemplation is ready to spring forward by anticipation to the happy moment, and think the time tedious which separates him from so desirable an event.

IV. The society of heaven will prove a source of high enjoyment, to every glorified saint. Of this we have clear intimations in the "oracles of God." "Many, (said the Saviour,) shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." And the beloved disciple, in his apocalyptic vision, "beheld, and lo! a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in 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"—In his very nature, man is formed for society, and with plain indications also, that his Maker intended that he should derive both his happiness and improvement, from an interchange of thoughts and feelings with his fellow men. All analogy would lead us to expect, that this law of his nature would not change with his change of state; and the passages of sacred writ just recited, with many others of similar import, clearly inform us, that there will be social acts and communications in the heavenly world. Those with whom departed saints have lived in the greatest intimacy, and the most endeared union, and with whom they have travelled the thorny path of human life—those with whom they have here mingled their warm affections, and who have shared in each other's affections, sorrows and joys, will doubtless recognise each other, and be united in purer fellowship in heaven, than they ever knew on earth. Together they may recollect and recount the feelings and fears, the pleasures and the pains, the darkness and the doubts of this shadowy state; and together rejoice that darkness and doubt have now vanished forever. Who, my brethren, can estimate the pleasure of meeting in glory, those who have been dearest to them here below, and who perhaps shall be the first to welcome them to the mansions above? To this it is no valid objection, that, in the present state, strong natural affections often subsist in the bosoms of the pious, towards some who live and die in hardened guilt and impenitence. Natural affection has its use in this life, in powerfully urging the pious to employ every mean and effort to reclaim the wicked. But in heaven, we have reason to believe that all affection for every unholy being, of whatever kind or character, will be entirely and forever extinguished, while love to all who bear the image of God, will, to the highest degree, be increased and purified. It is even now a transporting contemplation, to think of the sublime enjoyment which will arise from being admitted to the society of all the worthies of the earth, of all ages and of every clime—of forming an acquaintance and fellowship with them—of knowing from them what they were on earth, and what they have become in heaven. Adam and Enoch, Abraham and Elijah, David and Isaiah, prophets and apostles, Peter and Paul, martyrs and reformers, will ye not recount to listening myriads, what once ye were, what here were your thoughts and plans, your labours and your trials; and what in heaven ye have learned, beyond every conception which ye formed, till ye reached the celestial abodes! For I remark

V. The soul of every saint in a glorified state, will be placed in circumstances the most favourable to the acquisition of knowledge. There is in the human mind a natural and insatiable thirst, to examine and know the things which are offered to its observation. But in the present state, there are many obstacles to the gratification of this desire. Many have few advantages for making progress in knowledge. Our senses themselves, while they assist our inquiries to a certain length, do then, by their grossness, prevent a farther advance. Some things, it was evidently intended that we should not understand in the present state; and human life itself is so short, that the career of our inquiries, however happily commenced, is terminated almost as soon as it is begun. The observation of these circumstances, led even those who were not favoured with the light of revelation, to conclude the soul immortal; to conclude that the all-wise Creator, who makes nothing in vain, had not formed a being capable of endless improvement, to be struck out of existence, as soon as that improvement had well

commenced; but that in a future world the human capacities and powers should find space for their expansion, and have their desires fulfilled. This reasoning, the sure word of revelation explicitly confirms. Hear the apostle, on whose declaration I discourse. "For (says he) we know in part, and we prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known." According to this representation, the human soul at present is but in the bud of being; the present is a mere state of infancy and tutelage, in which the knowledge and conceptions of the wisest mortals are as much inferior to those of a glorified spirit, as the views and comprehension of a child are different from those of a man; or as the knowledge of an object, seen through a dim and obscuring medium at a distance, is inferior to that which is obtained by a naked, clear, and immediate view: and that hereafter such a view shall open on the soul of the saint, and the things of God shall be known by him, in somewhat the same manner as they are known to the infinite mind. Of this knowledge I will mention, although I can do little more than name, some of the principal subjects.

1. It will be a knowledge of God himself. Here the conceptions which we acquire of the Deity, are very imperfect. Our souls are, as it were, sensualized; and the notions which we form of an immaterial being, are, as already noticed, very inadequate. But when the glass of sense shall be removed, and spirit shall perceive and converse with spirit, then "we shall know even as also we are known." We shall have perceptions of the essential nature of God, and of his immediate presence and ineffable glory, unspeakably different from, and superior to, those which we now possess. We shall have something answerable to our expression of seeing him "face to face;" and this, I conceive, will be one of the radical causes of the happiness of heaven. There is much in the word of life, which indicates the holy pleasure which will arise from the clear knowledge of God—the standard of all excellence and perfection—and from dwelling in his sensible presence. There, probably, we shall acquire a much better conception, than we can now obtain, of the union and distinction of persons in the divine nature; though the full comprehension of this may transcend the capacities of angels, and exceed the bounds of created intelligence. There we shall certainly know more of the attributes of the Deity, than here we can comprehend. This will, no doubt, form a principal part of the employment of every saint in heaven, as it constitutes much of his holy pleasure here on earth. Here his progress is little, there it will be inconceivably great. There his soul will launch, boldly and delightfully, on the unbounded ocean of divine excellence, exploring regions still new and unknown before, but without being able, in its utmost progress, to reach the shores of infinite perfection.

2. The works of God will be better known to the departed and happy soul, than they can be on this side the grave. It is by the works of God, that his attributes are manifested in this world; and they will doubtless serve the same purpose in the regions of unclouded intelligence and bliss. There, it may be, beatified spirits will learn his *wisdom*, by being instructed into the nice and minute organization of the most subtle parts of creation; by seeing the first source and spring of

those that are called the *laws of nature*; by being shown the connexion between matter and spirit; and many things of which at present we have no conception. There we may learn his *power*, by contemplating more fully the myriads of worlds and systems with which he has filled immeasurable space; by seeing how they are connected with, or related to each other; and it may be, by roving free and unconfined amongst them all. There we may perceive his *infinite goodness*, in the innumerable orders of beings with which he has peopled these wide dominions, and the provision he has made for their happiness and improvement. It has been suggested by a pious and ingenious writer, that perhaps the souls of the just will pursue, in heaven, their favourite and peculiar contemplations here on earth. What degree of truth there may be in this, or what will be the mode and the measure of our knowledge in regard to the works of God, we cannot certainly pronounce; but that this knowledge will be unspeakably increased, we have ground for the fullest confidence.

3. The government of God will be more perfectly understood in heaven, than it ever is on earth. Of this there are, I think, numerous and clear intimations from Scripture, as well as from reason. To our present contemplations, clouds and darkness are often round about the ways of God; but there we shall see that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne—There we may learn more of the divine purposes or decrees, than we can now penetrate—We may see more clearly how sin entered the creation of God, while the creature was free and guilty, and the Creator holy and just in the execution of his own infinite plans. There we may understand the connexion between the governing influence of God, and the perfect liberty of the creature. These are subjects which, I apprehend, were not intended to be fully known in the present state; and to which the apostle might refer when he said, “I see darkly”—but which he expected to see clearly in a better world—There, too, may those inexplicable and trying events of Providence, which now perplex and distress thee, oh believer! be all fully explained, and the wisdom, goodness, and kindness of that which at present seems so dark and hard, be conspicuously and joyfully beheld.

VI. The plan of redemption, the character and purpose of the Redeemer, and the riches of his inheritance in the saints, will, in heaven, be seen in unclouded glory. To this place I have reserved what might have been introduced when I spoke of *the attributes* of the Deity—I mean the infinite *grace, mercy, and condescension*, of our God. These shine only in the work of redemption: And Christians, when you arrive at Mount Zion above, your souls will have views of these, of which at present you can have little knowledge. “For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” Oh, with what a transport of holy rapture, will you there meditate on the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! You will enter deep into it, and try to search its infinite extent. You will learn, perhaps, from the immediate communications of the Saviour himself, the mysteries of his wonderful work of redemption. He may explain to you the nature of the covenant, which took place in the cabinet of heaven before the birth of time, in which his people were given to him in promise, and of the fruits of which you will be then receiving. He may give you to understand how he left the bosom of the Father, how he united the divine with the human nature, and how, in this connexion, he executed the amazing plan. He may explain to you the awful agony of his holy soul in the

garden of Gethsemane, and when on the cross he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"—Passing to the effects of his work, he may show the triumphs of his love, in making you the happy subjects of it by his all-conquering grace; and in bringing you safely, in despite of all your enemies, to his blissful presence. Then he may unfold to you how the glory of God is intended to shine through this work of heavenly wonder, and the attributes of God to be illustrated by it, before all creation, and to all eternity. Oh, brethren! we are assured that "we shall see him as he is"—Yes, we shall see the Saviour. We shall look on his blessed and glorious person; and "we shall be like him," when we thus see him as he is. Our souls shall drink in the astonishing ideas of his grace and love; they shall ponder the mighty subject; they shall labour on in the heavenly meditation with increasing delight; they shall adore and bless his name; they shall ascribe to his grace their noblest praises; they shall attribute *all* to him; they shall give him thanks in his immediate presence, and before the foot of his throne, in heaven, for all the unutterable riches of redeeming love and mercy. Faith, brethren, will there be turned into vision; and the blessed Redeemer, to whom we now look—and so often feebly look by faith—shall there be seen without a veil, on his throne of power and glory. But I am anticipating what I propose to mention

VII. That the knowledge acquired in heaven, will not be merely speculative, but such as will touch all the springs of holy joy and ecstasy. There is a pleasure which the mind always receives from the simple acquisition of knowledge, or the discovery and contemplation of truth. But beside this, there is a peculiar pleasure, which arises from ascertaining certain truths, in which, from any circumstances, the mind had been deeply interested, and strongly desirous that they should be found to be, what they are, at length, discovered to be in fact. Such will be the nature of every newly opening view of truth, which will break on the mind of the saint in the heavenly world. It will be a truth which will awaken all the most exquisite sensibilities of his soul. He will feel a holy and inexpressible delight, in perceiving every thing which his growing powers will enable him to comprehend. The grosser passions will no doubt be all extinct; but the spiritual passions, if I may so call them, will be sublimed, and will receive new capacities of pleasure and gratification. Much is said in the word of God, on the sacred excitement, which will be given to the soul in the celestial mansions. Every thing in the Bible tends to show that heaven will not be a state merely of increasing perception, however desirable, but of divine animation and transport. Think, O Christian! of thy happiest hour; think of an hour in which it has been given thee to know a sacred serenity of spirit, in the possession of that "peace of God which passeth all understanding;" an hour when a still, and sweet, and solemn elevation of soul, in the contemplation of thy God and Saviour, made thee a partaker of "the joy of the Holy Ghost"—*That* probably is the nearest resemblance thou canst have on earth, of the delights of heaven. But better, infinitely better than that, in degree and purity, will be all the hours that shall carry forward thy existence in the mansions above. And this enjoyment, it must be remembered, will never satiate, or weary the glorified spirit—It will be ever fresh, and new, and vigorous, through all the periods of an endless duration. We know that mental and spiritual pleasures, even in this world, are in their nature the most durable. They do not give an impetuous or sudden gust of gratification, like sensual delights—followed often by a sense of repletion or

disgust. Mental pleasures may be long continued; and the fatigue which at length ensues, is the fatigue of the body, which clouds, and depresses, and enfeebles the mind. But in heaven, the soul will experience no hindrance from the body. She will rise in all her native vigour to the paradise of God; and when she resumes her body at the resurrection of the just, it will be, as we have seen, a spiritual body, which will aid, and not obstruct, her every exercise and enjoyment. The engagements of heaven, we doubt not, will be various; but, "Holiness to the Lord," will be inscribed on them all; and redeeming love and sovereign grace will be the favourite theme, on which all the ransomed of Adam's race will dwell with expanded powers, and with insatiable and untiring bliss.

Finally—The joys of heaven will be eternal. This is the consideration which gives them their highest value. Here our best enjoyments are short and transitory; and the recollection that they must be so, and that they are to be succeeded by new and painful conflicts, often abates them while they last. But in heaven there will be no fear of any change, or any termination of the felicity experienced. On the contrary, an endless increase, we have reason to believe, will be anticipated and realized. The human mind possesses an expansive property, by which, at every step of improvement, it becomes capable of making acquisitions more easily, and of taking in a larger measure of knowledge and fruition. If this property of the human soul shall be retained in its glorified state, as we have every reason to believe it will, who can estimate its attainments in the progress of eternity! May not the present capacity of the highest angel, be at length reached, and exceeded by the meanest saint? Through the soul of this saint, may not more happiness ultimately pass, than has yet been experienced by all the angels and saints now in glory! That amount is finite, and in eternity an individual may exhaust it all, and then an eternity will be still in prospect! O the breadth and the length, the height and the depth of this incomprehensible felicity! It absorbs and overwhelms our minds—In silent meditation let it suggest unutterable thoughts.

Long as I have detained you, beloved hearers, I do not feel at liberty to conclude this discourse, without a few plain practicable observations on what you have heard about heaven.

1. Let it be remembered that the heavenly delights of which I have spoken, and you have heard, can never be enjoyed by those who are not prepared for them in the temper of their minds. The desire of happiness is inseparable from our nature; and as heaven is ever represented as a state of consummate and endless enjoyment, unsanctified men, as well as others, often cherish and express the hope and the expectation of going to heaven when they die. But let them not be offended, when they are told, that they really do not desire heaven. They do indeed, with all sincerity and earnestness, desire *happiness*, but still they do not desire heaven; that is, *such a heaven* as actually exists, and which is the only one which ever can exist, in all the universe of God. The God of heaven is a holy God, and he certainly never will make an unholy heaven. Of the heaven which he has prepared for all who are qualified to enter it, perfect holiness characterizes every inhabitant and every exercise. But unsanctified men do not love holiness. Their taste, disposition, and feelings are all set against it, and will continue to be so, while they remain unsanctified. To suppose then that they desire a heaven of perfect holiness, is to suppose that they desire

what they hate; which is a contradiction in terms. No truly, let them understand themselves correctly, and they must see that it is only happiness—a sinful happiness—and not a holy heaven, which is the object of their desire. And hence it is plain, that without a radical change of heart and affections, they could not be happy if they were in heaven; for they would find nothing there but objects of disgust and aversion. Be it then imprinted on the memory of us all, and let every unsanctified sinner in this assembly bring his mind into close contact with the solemn truth proclaimed by the God of heaven, that “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord—Except a man be born again—born of the Spirit—he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Seek renovation then, fellow sinner—seek the influences of the Holy Spirit to renew you unto holiness—if you would, on any rational ground, hope for heaven. Let not this great concern be delayed for a single hour, lest death overtake you while you delay, and you hear the irreversible decree—“He that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous let him be righteous still; and he that is holy let him be holy still.”

2. Let the people of God be exhorted to meditate much on heaven. “Preach more about heaven—I have never preached enough about heaven”—said an aged and eminent minister of the gospel, to a young brother, who visited him on his death-bed. Yes, we ministers of the gospel ought to preach more than we are wont to do about heaven; and you, dear brethren in the Lord, ought to meditate more—much more than I fear the most of you do, on heaven. I verily believe, that in this very point, the primitive Christians were chiefly distinguished from those of modern times. They lived with heaven in their eye; and it was this that made them undervalue the world, and that raised them above the fear of death, even in its most frightful forms. Truly the secret of martyrdom is here. Let a man possess a holy confidence that death to him will be instantly followed by the vision of his approving Saviour, in all the glories and raptures of the heavenly world, and he goes to the cross, the scaffold or the stake with an unflinching step—yea, with a triumphant spirit—It will be, he says, but a momentary agony, and it will introduce me to eternal joys. We, beloved Christian brethren, have but little prospect of being called to the trial of martyrdom. Yet we have our trials; and some of them perhaps more dangerous, for the very reason that they are less feared, than were those of martyrdom. We have sicknesses, and sorrows, and bereavements, and disappointments, and worldly losses and vexations innumerable—these on the one hand—And on the other, we have the smiles, and the flatteries, and the ten thousand seductions of the world.—Now, the meditation of heaven will sustain and cheer us under the former, and teach and enable us to undervalue and despise the latter. By this meditation we go, as it were, from earth to heaven—We gain an elevation, from which when we look down, every thing on earth appears little. We breathe a purer moral atmosphere, and feel a delightful relief, in escaping for a short time from the murky air of this polluted world. O, brethren, you know—for I now speak to those who know it by experience—that heaven is begun on earth; and when we get something of this imperfect heaven, in our present weary pilgrimage, it does enliven and strengthen us wonderfully; and render us superior to all things here below. And as it is a holy happiness, it increases the spirit of holiness in our hearts, while we enjoy it. It makes the will of God our choice, and therefore every thing that

comes to us appears right—It likewise animates us to all present duty, and thus renders us most useful. It fills us, moreover, with a most ardent desire to take as many with us to heaven as possible, both from a love to our fellow men, and from a desire to glorify God our Saviour; and thus it consecrates us, with all that we have and are, to the promotion of the gospel of Christ: And finally, it dispels all the darkness of death and the grave, and puts into our mouth the conqueror's song—"O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory! The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ—Come quickly—Amen—Even so, come Lord Jesus."

SERMON.

THE NATURE AND REMEDY OF SINFUL SHAME.

PSALM CIX. 6.—"Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

To be able to look up to God with humble confidence, and to obey his commands with freedom and fidelity before the world, is, at once, the comfort and the glory of a Christian. This, however, is an attainment not to be made without a vigorous conflict—"For the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." The pleadings of corrupt nature, conspiring with the temptations of the world, and the suggestions of the great enemy of souls, seduce the Christian to the omission or violation of duty; and thus deprive him of the light of the divine countenance, and of firmness and activity in the divine life. The inspired Psalmist seems to have contemplated this evil, and to have intended to prescribe its remedy, when he exclaimed, in the words of the text—"Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."—In discoursing on the words, therefore, I will, in reliance on divine assistance, endeavour—

I. To explain the nature and operations of the sinful shame which the inspired writer appears so desirous to avoid.

II. Show how a regard to all God's commandments will destroy the existence of such shame, or prevent its embarrassments.

After this, a few practical reflections will conclude the address.

First, then, I am to endeavour to explain the nature and operations of that shame, which the sacred writer appears so desirous to avoid.

Shame has been defined—"the passion which is felt when reputation is supposed to be lost." This is no doubt the popular import of the term; and yet it is not, as we shall presently see, the only sense in which it is used by the sacred writers. I would remark, however, that considering it merely as a principle of the mind, which renders us sensible to the ill opinion of our fellow men, it is no inconsiderable guard on our virtue. It is, indeed, true, that this, in common with every other useful principle of our nature, may, by being turned into a wrong channel, produce injury instead of benefit. It too often happens, in fact, that good men, from being unduly influenced by a regard to the opinion of the worldly or profane, are brought to be ashamed of their duty; and this is a part of the very evil against which the text is di-

rected. Still, however, it must be admitted, that a sense of shame is, in itself, extremely useful, and when suitably regulated and rightly directed, is a restraint against vice and an incentive to virtue. A destitution of this principle is ever considered as marking the extreme of human depravity—We usually join together the epithets *shameless* and *abandoned*. The extirpation or extinction of the sentiment of shame, therefore, is by no means to be attempted. Our endeavours are only to be directed against suffering it to be perverted, and against laying ourselves open to those wounds which it may justly inflict. Now, with this view, we are looking for the origin and source of these evils; and I think we shall find them, by turning our attention from the creature to the Creator—from man to God.

In the sacred writings, the word we consider is frequently used to denote those painful feelings of the mind, which are produced by a conviction of our offences against the Majesty of Heaven; especially when those offences partake peculiarly of the nature, or are seen remarkably in the light of *baseness*, *unreasonableness*, and *ingratitude*. Thus, when the Jews, who had been mercifully restored from the Babylonish captivity, violated the command of the Most High, by improper connexions with the idolatrous nations, Ezra thus addresses Jehovah—"Oh my God! I blush and am ashamed to lift up my face to thee my God, for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is gone up unto the heavens"—Here shame is used to denote little else than the operations of conscience; or the oppression of soul which is produced by the sense of being guilty and vile in the sight of a holy God: And you will carefully observe, that the effect of this is, the destruction of all freedom and confidence in addressing the Father of mercies, and almost of the hope of pardon and acceptance with him. This, my brethren, is undoubtedly the origin of the evil which the text contemplates. It takes its rise from this point, and its baneful influence is extended through a long train of unhappy consequences. We may trace them thus—

All practical religion has its very foundation in a realizing belief of an all-seeing God, who, while he is perfectly acquainted with all the secrets of the soul, and with every action of life, is also of purer eyes than to behold any iniquity, but with detestation and abhorrence. But the mind, we say, in which this belief and apprehension exists, is conscious of dealing treacherously with the Most High; conscious that its affections are shamefully divided between him and inferior objects; conscious of not seeking his favour in secret with that holy earnestness which its value demands; conscious that its penitence for sin is miserably imperfect; conscious that hidden lusts and corruptions, not only rise and plead for indulgence, but actually obtain it; conscious that certain duties have been most criminally neglected and certain sins allowed; conscious of presumptuous sinning against light and knowledge; conscious of repeated violations of the most solemn resolutions and engagements; conscious, in a word, not merely of remaining pollution, but of inexcusable neglect, unfaithfulness and insincerity, in duty to God and devotion to his service. How, I ask, can he whose mind informs him of all this, look up, with any confidence, to that infinite Being who, he realizes, is perfectly acquainted with all this baseness? He cannot do it:—shame and confusion drive him away from the divine throne. He fears to draw near to God; or if he attempts it, the service is hasty and superficial. The mind is afraid of its own reflections, and seeks temporary and imperfect ease by over-

looking or endeavouring to forget its state. Still, a secret uneasiness continually preys upon it, nor will ever cease to corrode it, while it remains thus unsettled and divided.

Follow, now, this victim of shame before God, into his intercourse among men. Suppose that he has never openly professed a religious character. Then you see him most piteously embarrassed, confounded and distressed. Wicked companions solicit and endeavour to lead him into vice. His conscience is too much awake to permit him to comply with pleasure, and yet he is sensible of too much insincerity to allow him to refuse with firmness. He half refuses and half complies; and thus becomes the scorn of the licentious, without obtaining the countenance of the pious. Those who are strictly religious regard his friendship as uncertain; those who are openly profane consider his conduct as dastardly; and thus the hesitating wretch is covered with shame before the world, as well as before his Maker.

Or suppose—and, alas! that it is not a mere supposition—that the unhappy state of mind we have described, belongs to one who publicly professes to be a follower of Christ. How painfully must he feel the inconsistency of his profession, with the inward temper of his heart? How misgiving and wavering must be his mind? How unfurnished is he, while destitute of inward support, for all those conflicts with the world, and all those reproaches from it, with which he will be sure to meet? With what face can he reprove others, while secretly he condemns himself? When called to speak for God, how will his mind misgive him, and his face crimson with blushes, while his heart informs him, that he is espousing a cause in which his own sincerity is doubtful? How will it often seal his lips in silence, when he ought to speak? When censured and condemned by the profligate, how will he be wounded by the recollection that the sentence is partly merited? When his good works, themselves, are evil spoken of, how will he be dismayed by seeing the just chastisement of heaven for the improper disposition with which he performed them? When charged with the black crime of hypocrisy, how will he be confounded to think that, in the sight of God, the charge is bottomed on truth? When called to suffer for conscience sake, or to hazard his life in the discharge of duty, how will he be appalled and shrink back with fear, while conscience tells him that he is a backslider from God, if not a settled enemy to him? When only called to the open avowal of his Christian character, in the solemn acts of religious worship, how will inward upbraidings fill him with trembling and embarrassment, and mar the performance, by a diffidence equally distressing and dishonourable?—Nay, will not these causes drive him altogether from attempting many duties, and go near to turn him wholly from his Christian course? Yes, my brethren, these are the consequences of the shame of which I have spoken, as they take place in the discharge of religious obligations in the sight of men. The summary of its history, therefore, is—that it originates in a sense of guilt, arising from the consciousness of being unfaithful to God; which first destroys or prevents a filial intercourse with him, and confidence of his favour; and then, as a necessary consequence, abashes and confounds its subject, when in the eye of the world, he assumes a character, or attempts a practice, which is contrary to the feelings of his heart. This is the evil contemplated in the text—an evil of unspeakable magnitude, in the estimation of all who have not wholly lost their regard both to their duty and their comfort, in the Christian life. Listen, then, to the remedy prescribed—while I attempt to show—

II. How a regard to all God's commandments will destroy the existence, or prevent the embarrassments, of this sinful shame.

In entering on this part of the subject, it may be of some importance to endeavour to obtain clear and distinct ideas of what was intended to be conveyed by the expression—"having a respect unto all God's commandments." Does it intend a perfect obedience to all the divine laws, or a sinless observance of them? Certainly not—For the inspired penman evidently fixed his views on an attainment, which he not only proposed to labour after, but which he actually hoped to make, in the present life;—and we have the unequivocal testimony of revelation "that there is not a just man on earth, who doth good and sinneth not," and that "if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Neither can it be intended, that any man will ever yield such an obedience to the divine requisitions as shall, of itself, be the just ground of his confidence before God; or so place him on the footing of merit, as that he may claim the approbation and favour of heaven, as a matter of right. The impossibility of this is, indeed, implied in the last remark; for nothing less than an unsinning respect to the commands of God, through the whole of our existence, could entitle us to this claim. The finished work of the Redeemer,—his atoning sacrifice, his complete and perfect righteousness, and his prevalent intercession, constitute the only meritorious cause of pardon and acceptance with God, for any of the apostate race of Adam—It is only in Christ Jesus that God is "reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" because "he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The first freedom, which any soul that has been suitably convinced of sin obtains, to look up to a holy God with a measure of filial confidence, is wholly derived from seeing the ample provision which is made in the plan of salvation, for extending pardon and eternal life to the sinner, in consistency with the divine honour; and from a disposition to embrace this plan with thankfulness, and to trust it in faith. It is, therefore, so far from being true that the expression warrants any reliance on our own merits, that it necessarily implies the opposite doctrine: "As it is written, behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence, and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed"—Not to be ashamed, is here predicated, and it is certainly true, only of those who believe in Christ. It is, moreover, written, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," and therefore we cannot have respect unto all the commandments of God, while a compliance with this is wanting.

I detain you with this statement, my brethren, because it is to be regarded, not merely in the light of a negative, or as intended to guard against a misapprehension of the truth, but because it contains the essence of the truth itself. It is an undoubted fact, as I am sure every exercised Christian will testify, that when he has wandered from God, and is sunk down into despondence under a sense of his backsliding and unworthiness, the first and only relief that he obtains is, from a heart melting, and a heart attracting view of the infinite fullness of his Redeemer, and the freeness of the riches of his grace. It is this view that encourages him to return; it is this that brings him back with true brokenness of heart; it is this that enables him to cherish hope though most undeserving; and it is this that sweetly con-

strains him to devote himself more unreservedly to God than ever he had done before, from a strong sense of gratitude and obligation. In having such respect, therefore, unto all God's commandments as will deliver us from the influence of shame, a lively exercise of faith in Christ, lies at the bottom of all. It is also the constraining influence of the love of Christ, which is the source of that new obedience, which reaches the extent of the requisition—It produces what has sometimes been called *a gracious sincerity*, in the heart of the believer. It awakens in him a strong desire to be delivered from the dominion of all sin; so that he will not knowingly and allowedly indulge in any transgression; he will desire that every lust and corruption may be mortified and subdued; and will pant after greater conformity to God. He will be so far from desiring to rest short of any thing which Christ requires of his people, that he will press forward, and ardently long after the highest attainment, and lament that higher attainments are not made. He will, in short, seek his supreme happiness in communion with God, in the diligent use of all the appropriate means of holy intercourse with him. Thus the author of the text, in the 8th verse of the psalm where it is found, says—"Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed." It is this soundness of heart—this gracious sincerity in the sight of God—this impartial regard or respect to every command of the Most High, without taking one and leaving another—this careful employment of all the means and methods of avoiding transgression—that answers completely the condition of the assertion on which I discourse. And let us now see how strictly the assertion will be verified, in those who comply with the condition.

I remark then, in the first place, that a compliance with this condition removes, naturally and radically, *the cause* of all the guilty shame, and embarrassment of which I have spoken, by producing *a consistent character*. Shame is the natural consequence and proper punishment of guilt. The only methods of getting rid of the pain which it occasions are, to extinguish the principle, or to avoid the causes of its excitement. The former of these methods is actually and frequently pursued by the abandoned. By plunging into the excesses of vice, and familiarizing themselves with all its pollutions, they extinguish shame and conscience together—On the middle character, contemplated in the former part of this discourse, that character in which there is still a sensibility to the demands of duty, and where, notwithstanding, those demands are disregarded or left unsatisfied, it is here that the principle of shame inflicts, as we have seen, all its chastisements. But where the demands of duty are satisfied, there the cause of shame itself is taken away; and though the utmost sensibility be retained, it creates no uneasiness, because it meets with no violation. This is the case of those who have that respect unto all God's commandments, which we have just considered. Through the peace speaking blood of Jesus, they have received the full remission of all their sins. By maintaining a close and humble walk with God, they preserve an habitual persuasion of this comfortable truth; or rather they experience a daily and habitual renewal of its effects. In the exercise of the spirit of adoption, they draw near with a holy confidence, and cry "Abba, Father"—They have a blessed assurance, that God will realize to them all the benefits of the covenant of grace; and esteeming "his favour as life, and his loving kindness as better than life," they rejoice in him "with a joy which is exceeding great and full of glory." In one word, they verify in their own experience the declaration of the Apostle, where he

says—"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God: and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight"—And thus when that which we have seen to be the very fountain of shame, namely, a want of confidence in God, is dried up in the heart of a Christian, it can send forth none of its bitter streams to poison his pleasure, or to wither his strength, in the public discharge of his duty. "His heart is fixed, trusting in God." His heart is in all that he says, and in all that he does; and therefore he becomes—as we are told the righteous shall become—"bold as a lion." Is it incumbent on him to reprove the vicious and profane? he can do it without embarrassment, for he only speaks against that which his soul abhors. Is an occasion offered to speak for God? his mouth speaketh from the abundance of his heart, and therefore he speaks freely, pertinently, and composedly; and he is ever ready to speak, when a fit opportunity occurs. Is he branded as a hypocrite? he is sensible that his all-seeing Judge knows the charge to be groundless, and therefore it disturbs him not—he pities and forgives his accuser. Is he called to avow his Christian character? he does it freely and cheerfully, for it is the character in which he most of all glories. Is he subjected to reproach for the cause of Christ? he even glories that "he is counted worthy to suffer shame for his name," remembering that "if any man suffer as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but to glorify God in this behalf." Or if he is called to give up life itself, in an adherence to his duty, he can do it cheerfully, even though it were amidst the scoffs of a deriding world; for he knows that the honour which cometh from God, and of which he is sure, is infinitely greater than that which cometh from man only.

Brethren, the history of the church is a continual confirmation of these truths. Supported by the principles I have explained, three unprotected young men could face an assembled nation, could face a burning fiery furnace, could face the mightiest monarch on earth, and say—"Be it known unto thee, O king! that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Supported by these principles, two ignorant and unlearned fishermen, dragged from prison, and from chains before the Jewish Sanhedrim, could say—"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, doth this man stand here before you whole." Supported by these principles, a host of martyrs, in later ages, have courted a scaffold, or been consumed at the stake. And, without recurring to such striking instances, it is the support of these principles which enables every Christian, who leads a life of real nearness to God, to adorn the doctrine of his Saviour in all things—The blessed assurance which he habitually maintains that his God is his friend, makes him fearless of the world—It raises him far above its influence, and puts, without his seeking it, a dignity into his conduct and his very presence, which nothing else can confer.

2. By having respect to all God's commandments, we acquire the advantage which arises from a *decided character*, and are thus delivered from many temptations to those sinful compliances which are the cause of shame. The person who cherishes the inward sentiments, and maintains the outward deportment which has been explained, will unavoidably assume, in the eye of the world, an appearance and character which will distinguish him as one who is not governed by its maxims, and who does not follow its fashions. It will no longer be *doubtful* to

whom *he* belongs—Those who are conformed to this world, will see and feel that he is guided by other principles than those which influence them, and pursues a totally different system of living and of happiness, from that which they have adopted. Hence they will not solicit an intimacy with him; for intimacies exist only between parties of a similar taste. When thrown together by the calls of business, or in the intercourse of life, (for this character by no means requires austerity or abstractedness,) it will not be expected that the decided friend of piety will relish or take part in questionable liberties. His presence will even prove a restraint on others; or to say the least, his character will be a protection to himself, from solicitations to unlawful practices. That character will also be both a guard on himself against doing or saying any thing that might wound his conscience, and will afford him an advantage in speaking or acting against every thing improper. The desire of appearing consistent, will be a natural call on him to defend what he professes to esteem, and the expectation that he will act this part, will enable him to do it with freedom and with advantage. And thus will temptations to those sinful compliances which are the cause of shame, be greatly diminished, and the principles of religion be guarded, even by the care of reputation.

This decided character for piety, will moreover, render its possessor extremely dear to all who are Christians indeed; and from this cause he will gain an immense advantage. The influence of social intercourse, on all our opinions and practice, is ever great; and it is not less in regard to religion, than in reference to any other subject. Christians inform each other by their conversation, encourage and animate each other by their exhortations, assist each other by a comparison of their exercises, embolden each other by a recital of their hopes, and help and strengthen each other by their prayers. He who is joined to this happy society, is continually imbibing more of the spirit which distinguishes and animates it, and is therefore less in danger of acting unworthily of his Christian character, and of wounding his own peace.

3. A respect unto all God's commandments, will deliver us from the influence of sinful shame, inasmuch as *it will exceedingly lower the world, and every created object, in our estimation and regard.* This idea has been a little anticipated, but it is of so much importance, that it deserves to be brought distinctly into view. When men are conscious of guilt, it has been admitted that they ought to blush and be confounded—But whence proceeds that fear of man which bringeth a snare? why are men timid and abashed in the discharge of duty? in doing that which their consciences dictate and approve? In some individuals, this, no doubt, must be in part resolved into constitutional make, or natural infirmity. But after every just allowance, much will still remain to be attributed to the high estimation in which we hold the opinions of our fellow men, even when they come in competition with duty and conscience. If it were with us, as it was with the apostle, “a small thing to be judged of man's judgment,” we should be wholly delivered from this inconvenience, as far as it arises from principle; and should go far to get the victory over it, even as a natural infirmity. Now, a life of nearness to God, will assuredly give us this estimation of all human opinions, so far as they militate with our Christian obligations. The fear of man whose breath is in his nostrils, will be absorbed in the fear of him “who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.” The mind which takes clear and frequent views of an infinite God, and a boundless eternity; which places them often be-

fore it, brings them into ideal presence, and dwells as it were surrounded by them; such a mind will look down on the world with a holy indifference. Its censure or its applause, its smiles or its frowns, will be regarded as matters of small estimation:

“His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
Then bids earth turn, nor feels the idle whirl.”

He feels that his heart and his treasure are in heaven; his thoughts, his hopes, his desires, are principally there. Not setting a high estimation on earthly possessions or human applause, he is not much agitated with anxiety when he contemplates them, nor when they are denied him. This appears to have been eminently the temper of the Psalmist, when he said—“Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee.” This was the temper of the great apostle of the Gentiles, when he said—“I am crucified to the world and the world to me—Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.” This, in fine, is the temper which every one will, in a good degree, possess, whose conversation is in heaven; and possessing this, he will, as a natural consequence, rise above a sinful and ensnaring fear of man, and be able, with comfort and composure, to support and adorn his Christian profession.

Thus, it appears that a respect to all God’s commandments, by giving us *a consistent character*—producing confidence in God; by rendering that character *decided*, in the view of the world; and *by lessening our estimation for the things of time and the opinions of men*; will deliver us from shame and embarrassment in the discharge of every duty.

In how strong a light, my brethren, does this subject place the folly of those, who are balancing in their minds between the demands of religion and the allurements of the world; and endeavouring to reconcile a regard to both? We see that, in fact, they obtain satisfaction from neither—they are the most unhappy persons upon earth. If I speak to any of this description; to any who are doubting and hesitating about coming forward to an open avowal of a Christian character; to any who are half inclined to this, but are held back by a fear of the world; I would entreat them to lay aside their hostility to their own happiness, by a resolute discharge of duty. Believe it, your efforts to reconcile the service of God and the friendship of the world, will be forever vain, and you will be forever tormented while you attempt it. If you will be for God, you must be for him wholly and unreservedly; without seeking to accommodate his service to the opinions and feelings of unsanctified men. Your interest, no less than your duty, enjoins this—“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

In a still stronger light does this subject place both the folly and impiety of professing Christians, who are stealing away to the forbidden pleasures of sin; as if religion were not able to afford them happiness. Be it known that the very reason why it does not afford you happiness, if I speak to such, is because you are not devoted to it; because you mingle it so much with the world, that you debase its nature; because you only retain enough of it to wound your consciences, and to cover you with shame and confusion, but have not enough to enable you to take

hold of its divine supports, and to taste its heavenly consolations. Cease then to pierce yourselves through with many sorrows—Return unto the Lord, and cleave unto him with all your heart, and with all your soul, and you shall find that it is not a vain thing to serve him.

On the whole, let us all be exhorted to endeavour to walk more with God—We cannot wander from his presence, without unspeakable injury to ourselves. In his presence only is the light of life—While we remain here, we bring down a portion of heaven to earth. Let us, therefore, set it as our mark to obey all God's commandments, without choice or exception. Let us pray unceasingly for the aids of his Holy Spirit, that we may be enabled to do so; and let us guard against every thing that might have a tendency to interrupt our intercourse with our Father in heaven. Amen.

A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

Christ the Desire of all Nations.

HAGGAI, ii. 7, middle clause.—“The Desire of all nations shall come.”

The occasion on which these words were uttered by the Prophet was as follows:—After the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, they began to rebuild the house, or temple, of Jehovah, the God of Israel. Before they had proceeded far, their undertaking was interrupted by a prohibition from the Persian monarch, to whose authority they were still subject. It was not long, however, that this obstacle needed to have hindered their proceeding in their design. But in the mean time their inclination to proceed had subsided; and it was not till several severe judgments had been inflicted on them for their negligence, and the prophet on whose words I discourse had been sent to awaken them to a sense of their duty, that they could be induced again to engage in the work which they had relinquished. At length, however, it was resumed with spirit; and yet it was soon after retarded, anew, by another discouraging circumstance. Some of the persons concerned in rebuilding the temple were old enough to recollect that which had been destroyed; and all of them, no doubt, had been informed of its magnificent appearance and costly furniture; and it was obvious, at once, that the edifice they were engaged in erecting would be far inferior, in point of splendour, to the one in place of which it was to stand. This thought damped the ardour of all those who were concerned in building it; for nothing is more discouraging than to know that after every effort, we must rest far short of what others have performed, and of what we ourselves are desirous to achieve. To remove this new difficulty, the same prophet who had been employed to stir them up to the enterprise, was sent with a new message to encourage them in its prosecution. He, accordingly, informed them, by the command of Jehovah, that although the temple they were erecting would, in external grandeur, be inferior to that which had been built by Solomon, yet, in another, and far more important particular, it should be superior—That a great and glorious personage, who should be emphatically “the Desire of all nations,” should enter and make his appearance in it; and by his presence there, put an honour upon it, unspeakably greater than any which had been conferred on Solomon's—“I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts—The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith

the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.”

In discoursing farther on the passage, thus illustrated, I will endeavour to show,

I. That our Lord Jesus Christ is the personage here spoken of, as the Desire of all nations.

II. In what respects he might with propriety be thus denominated, or described.

III. Improve the subject.

In showing that our Lord Jesus Christ is the personage intended or described in the text as the Desire of all nations, the chief consideration is—that the truth of the whole passage with which these words are connected, is incapable of vindication, unless we admit that the Messiah was the subject of the prediction; and this being admitted, it must appear incontrovertible that our Lord was the only person, during the period to which the prophecy refers, who can be imagined to have possessed that character. If the advent of the Messiah, so long expected by the Jews and foretold by their prophets, was not contemplated in the text, as the circumstance or event which was to render the second temple more glorious than the first, it is impossible to say what was intended, or to clear the prediction from the charge of falsehood. For in every respect, except the presence of the Messiah, the glory of the latter house was not greater, but incomparably less, than that of the former. The nation and the individuals who respected and offered their devotions in it, were less important in the eyes of the world, and much more inconsiderable in number, than in the days of Solomon. The temple itself, although very much enriched and adorned in the time of Herod, yet never was, at any period, either as large or as magnificent, as that which preceded it: And as to that which might be called the spiritual furniture, the first temple possessed the honour and advantage, probably of the Urim and Thummim, certainly of the ark of the covenant, the fire from heaven, and the glorious Shechinah, or visible manifestation of the presence of Jehovah; all of which were wanting in the second.

The prophecy, therefore, that this house should be more glorious than the former, has not been and never can be verified, unless the presence of the Messiah, was the circumstance to which it referred as that which should give truth to the declaration. The presence in the second house of the incarnate Son of God, would completely and most signally verify the prediction; because, as he was the great object to which every symbol, and indeed the whole Jewish dispensation pointed, his coming into this temple would make it as much superior to the former, as the substance is superior to the shadow—the thing which is signified to that which is only a faint emblem of it. There was moreover, no other person or thing so far as we know, that could with any show of propriety be denominated the Desire of all nations; so that it seems impossible not to believe that it was the Messiah, to whom the prophet here referred: And if the Messiah was really the object pointed at, our Lord Jesus Christ must unquestionably be he. For although there were others who laid claim to this character during the existence of the second temple, yet they have long since been considered as impostors, both by Jews and Gentiles; and from the nature of the case can never hereafter be considered in any other light. Christ Jesus, therefore, is the only individual who can ever be supposed, with any degree of probability, to have possessed the character of the Messiah, the anointed of the eternal

Father, and Immanuel, God with us, during the period of which I speak; and he, consequently, must be the illustrious personage whose presence in this temple was to do it an honour, with which nothing that belonged to Solomon's could pretend to vie. In this temple he, accordingly, did make his appearance—In this temple he was presented to the Lord, while an infant, according to an established ordinance; and was, on that occasion, solemnly recognised as the Messiah, by holy Simeon and Anna, acting under the influence of divine inspiration. He honoured the temple by his presence again, when he visited it with his parents, at the age of twelve years: And he purified it from the abuses that were practised in it, when, after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he scourged from it those who pursued an unlawful merchandise there. Nay, we are told that he daily preached in the temple; and that after his crucifixion and resurrection, the apostles began to publish the gospel here. This it was that eminently constituted the glory of the second temple. It was from this, as from its central point, that the rays of the glorious gospel began to dawn on the benighted world. Here first broke forth that fountain of living water, whose salutary streams shall never cease to flow, of which whosoever drinketh shall never thirst, in which whosoever washeth shall be cleansed and healed from every spiritual pollution and malady, and from the efficacy of which all who drink of it imbibe the principles of eternal life. This was an honour infinitely transcending all the pomp and splendour of the world—And thus was the prophecy most illustriously and strikingly fulfilled in Jesus our Saviour; and thus evident is it that he is the glorious person spoken of, as “the Desire of all nations.” Let us now consider, more particularly,

II. In what respect he might, with propriety, be thus denominated or described. Here I begin with remarking, that if we take the word *all*, as we often must, in a qualified rather than an absolute sense;—as implying *many* nations, and these contiguous or known to the Jews, rather than every tribe, or community of men who inhabit the earth, Christ might with literal propriety be called “the Desire of all nations.”

From the fall of man to the time of his appearance in the world, he had been the object of esteem and love, of hope and trust, to all the faithful, not only among the Jews, but among other nations who had heard of his name; and they looked forward to his advent with great desire and expectation, as a period at which much light and spiritual advantage and consolation should be conferred on the world. Some knowledge of his name and character was, no doubt, handed down by tradition from Adam to Noah. They had at least heard of the promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Of this knowledge the descendants of Noah would, we may be sure, scatter some remnants in the various parts of the earth which were populated by them. The more distinct predictions of the Messiah which were given to Abraham, would be made known by him among the nations of the East where he dwelt; would be carried by his posterity into Egypt, which was then the school of science to the world, and augmented by the memorable prophecy of dying Jacob, in regard to the posterity of Judah, would be widely diffused. The nations bordering on the land of Canaan, after it was possessed by the Israelites, and many of whom became proselytes to the Jewish religion, would acquire and disseminate the information on this subject which the Hebrews possessed during the whole period of their judges and their kings. The same information would be carried by the Jews to Babylon, when they were led captive there, and be communicated freely in the capital, and throughout a con-

siderable part of the Assyrian empire. In particular, the clear revelations of the Messiah which were made to the prophet Daniel, would be likely, from the influence and high station which he possessed, to be heard with reverence and regard, and to be extensively circulated—In addition to all, there seems to be some reason to believe that the heathen oracles themselves, were made instrumental in publishing that a Saviour should one day come into the world. We, at least, know, that the soothsayer Balaam, was made to utter an unwilling but very remarkable prophecy, of the coming and character of Christ. From the causes now cursorily noticed, it is certain that there was some knowledge of the Messiah among almost all the Eastern nations, even from the remotest periods of time, and that this knowledge gradually increased and became more precise, till at length the very time of his appearance was generally understood, and as it approached, excited much attention and expectation.

The sacred records give us, at a very early period, a short but very interesting account of Melchisedeck, who, as he was an eminent type of our Redeemer, we may reasonably conclude possessed some information of his character. Abimelech, the king of Gerar, flourished nearly at the same time, and as he appears to have been truly pious, was certainly not altogether ignorant of the Messiah. Job, who probably lived not long after this, and who appears to have been an Eastern prince, had such clear views of Christ, and such a lively faith in him, that he could say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.” The case of impious Balaam has already been stated: And we know from the records of the evangelists, that when our Lord actually assumed our nature, and was born in the land of Judea, such was the expectation and desire of his appearance, not only there, but among the surrounding nations also, that wise men from the East were deputed, and actually came, guided miraculously by a singular star or meteor, and paid their homage and made their offerings to the infant Saviour. With strict propriety, then, might he be called the Desire of all nations, when his advent was so long and so anxiously desired, contemplated and looked for, by them.

2. Christ might with propriety, be called the Desire of all nations, by a very common figure in which the abstract is put for the concrete—that is, the circumstances and necessities of those nations were such, that his coming and the consequences of it were *very desirable*, a thing which might well be earnestly wished for by them.

Although there was, as you have heard, some general knowledge, among the nations contiguous to the holy land, that a Saviour should arise, yet this knowledge was imperfect in itself, it was not possessed by the great mass of the people, and it had little or no practical influence on their moral and religious character. This character, indeed, was truly melancholy and shocking. “Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.” The multitude, at least, possessed no knowledge of the true God. Their worship was in exact opposition to the command of Jehovah to his chosen nation, relative to idolatry, and no doubt was the ground of the prohibitory precept—The likeness of every thing in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth, was the object of their adoration. Nay, vices and passions of the most abominable nature, were treated by them with religious reverence, and imputed to their imaginary deities—In a word, their whole religion was a degrading compound of ignorance, error, impurity, cruelty, and impiety.

Even among their philosophers, where notions of the great First Cause of all things, in some measure just, were possessed, at least by a few, difficulties of an insurmountable kind still existed. Although some of them hoped for a future state, none of them were sure or satisfied about it; for after all the reasonings on this subject, *certainty* can only be obtained by an express revelation from God. They were, moreover, in much doubt and uncertainty whether the Deity could consistently, or would in reality, forgive the sins of men.—The circumstances which excited their hopes and their fears on this topic, seemed to be equally balanced; and one of the wisest and best of them declared, that no one could decide with certainty, unless God should please to reveal it. Among the Jews themselves, although a much better state of things existed, yet their knowledge of a future state, and of the way of pardon, was imperfect and obscure; and the ceremonial part of their religion had, in practice, almost absorbed its spiritual and moral design. The church of God, moreover, was, at this time, confined to the Jewish nation. The whole Gentile world, with the exception of a few proselytes, was excluded. The breaking down of the middle wall of partition between the Gentile and the Jew, was not to take place till the advent of the Messiah. How inexpressibly desirable, in this state of things, was the coming of Christ? How desirable that the church of God should be opened for the entrance of the whole world? How desirable was it that the clear knowledge of the unity, spirituality, and holiness of his nature, and of his other glorious attributes, should chase away that awful ignorance, which had debased and sunk the greater part of mankind, in point of knowledge, almost to a level with the beasts that perish. How desirable that a just system of instruction, in regard to the divine character, should raise the human mind from its prostrate subjection to superstition, immorality and vice, and teach it wherein true piety consists? How desirable that life and immortality should be brought to light by the gospel, and mankind be assured, by their Creator himself, that he had formed them for an endless existence, and that they should live eternally beyond the grave? How desirable that he should inform them that he had provided a way in which he could consistently, and in which he was ready actually, to forgive the sins of every penitent offender? How desirable that this way should be explained, both to Jews and Gentiles,—that the great atonement and finished righteousness of the Redeemer should be presented to their view, as the unfailing foundation of their hopes;—that thus they might see *how* it is that God is just, while he justifieth the believing sinner? How desirable to know that the Holy Spirit should also be given, to renew and sanctify the human mind, to quicken and comfort it, and to prepare it for glory? A general diffusion of the knowledge of these things depended on the coming of Christ. By his coming these truths were actually published, first in Judea, and then, in a very short space, to all the neighbouring nations; and finally they will be published to all the nations of the world. In this view of the subject, where shall we find language that shall express, with sufficient energy that Christ was, at the time the prophecy was uttered, the Desire of all nations.

3. Christ Jesus may be called the Desire of all nations, as he hath been, in all ages, the object of the highest esteem and affection to the people of God, and will eventually be so to all the kindred of the earth.

That our Redeemer is “all the salvation and all the desire” of those who are saved by him, is a truth to which each of his sincere disciples will most cheerfully subscribe. It is the language of his church, as

dictated by the spirit of inspiration in an early age, that he is the chief among ten thousand—yea he his altogether lovely. From the first promise that was made of his coming after the fall, till his Archangel shall call the whole human family to judgment, he was, and is, and shall be, the “corner stone” on which the hopes of his people rest,—the source of their purest and sublimest joy. They look to him as the great Captain of their salvation: They view him as their Almighty friend: They see that if it had not been for his work they had been undone forever: They see in his obedience and death, the only ground of their pardon and justification: They see in his infinite fulness, the fountain from which all their spiritual wants are supplied: They see, in his faithful promises, the food, and support, and consolation of their souls: They perceive, in his intercession, the only medium of an acceptable approach to God: And from the infinite efficacy of all, they expect the heavenly inheritance to be conferred upon them. He is therefore dearer to them than all earthly friends and possessions. Rather than renounce his friendship, they are ready to forsake father and mother, wife and children, yea and life itself. “His favour is life, and his loving kindness is, in their esteem, better than life.” In one word, he is their “all in all.” As soon as they begin to see their need of him, they desire, and seek, and esteem his favour beyond all that the world calls good and great—Thrones and empires, if they possessed them, they would cheerfully give for a saving interest in Christ; and when they obtain it, the dominion of the universe would not tempt them to give it up. In this high and emphatic sense is Christ the desire of all his real disciples, among all the nations that ever did, or that ever shall, people the earth.

And swiftly is the period advancing, when all the nations of the world shall, in this manner, be his people,—be “the nations of our Lord and of his Christ.” He shall reign on earth a thousand years, and during this period, he shall be the Desire of all nations, in all the extent and strictness of the statement you have just heard; for he shall be “king of nations as he is king of saints.” To him “every knee shall bow and every tongue confess;” and this guilty world, so long the theatre of crime and carnage, and of aversion to the Saviour, shall lay its homage at his feet; and its inhabitants shall turn their eyes on him as the highest desire and delight of their souls, become the subjects of his peaceful kingdom, and most cheerfully consecrate themselves to his glory and praise.

Thus, then, it appears that Christ may, with propriety, be denominated “the Desire of all nations”—1. Because, in a qualified sense, all nations desired his coming: 2. Because the spiritual necessities of all nations rendered his coming, in the highest degree, an object of desire: 3. Because he hath ever been the desire and delight of his faithful people, in every nation and age, and will eventually be so, in the strictest sense, to all the nations of the earth. It remains,

III. Briefly to improve the subject.

First, then, from what has been said we see in a striking light, the blindness and obstinacy of the Jewish nation, in rejecting the Saviour; and we should be led to pity their unbelief, and to pray and labour for their conversion to the faith of the gospel. In the preceding discussion it has been shown, that a plain and express prediction of one of their acknowledged prophets, and of one who lived nearest to the time of the Messiah, is incapable of explanation, and must absolutely be given up as false, unless it be confessed that Jesus was the Christ. For

the temple of which the prophet spake, and in which he declared the Messiah should make his appearance, has long since been destroyed; and consequently, if he hath not actually appeared—if he did not appear in that temple—this prediction never can be fulfilled. The same thing, indeed, is true of several other prophecies. Yet such is the effect of obstinate prejudice—or such, rather, is the consequence of that awful imprecation “his blood be on us and on our children,” that no arguments or circumstances have hitherto prevailed to convince them as a people, that Christ Jesus was the Messiah promised to their fathers. They look, and wait, and wish, and pray, for a Messiah yet to come. Unhappy people!—he will never come, till he come the second time, to judgment. Blessed be God! he has come already. On this morning—if this be his natal day—On this morning, near eighteen hundred years ago,* Messiah became incarnate. The angelic host, in “choral symphonies,” filled earth and heaven with hallelujahs at his birth. This Saviour—seed of Abraham—is your only hope; for it was inspired and eternal truth which his dauntless apostle proclaimed to your persecuting priests and rulers—“This is the stone which was set at nought of your builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is their salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” Brethren, let us pity and pray for the descendants of the ancient Israel of God, and use every means in our power to bring them to the knowledge of the truth that they may be saved. We have reason to believe that we press hard on the time, when they shall again be grafted into the church, from which they have so long been broken off by unbelief. Let us earnestly, and frequently, and perseveringly beseech of God, that he would hasten the accomplishment of this glorious event; and that with it, he would also bring in the fulness of the Gentile nations, that there may be one sheepfold and one Shepherd, that all Israel may be saved, and that our Redeemer’s name may be precious from the rising to the setting sun.

2. From what has been said, we may perceive—and we should observe it with the liveliest gratitude to God—how much higher our religious privileges are, not only than those of the heathen world, but than those of the most favoured people of heaven, before the coming of Christ. Like the heathen, we are not left to an utter ignorance of the true God; to dark and doubtful conjectures about a future state; to perplexed and inconclusive reasonings whether sin be pardonable. On us “the true light hath shined.”—On us the sun of righteousness hath risen, and the gloomy mists of error are chased away. Nay, we have that which none of the ancient patriarchs possessed. Not even Abraham, David, or Daniel, had as complete and extensive a knowledge of salvation in all its parts, as we possess. Of this it may be truly said—

“Prophets and kings desired it long
But died without the sight.”

Let our hearts overflow with thankfulness to God, whose indulgent providence has so highly distinguished us,—has cast our happy lot under a dispensation of divine grace, the fullest and richest that the world has known: And let us remember, too, that this will awfully and justly aggravate our condemnation, if we perish amidst such advantages. Therefore—

* This discourse was delivered Dec. 25th, 1797.

3. Finally—Let us be urged, on this occasion and by this subject, to inquire most seriously of our own hearts, whether Christ has ever appeared above all things desirable to us; and whether we have by faith appropriated him as our Saviour, and embraced him as our all in all. The word of life assures us, that “to those who believe,” in a saving sense, “Christ is precious;” and christian experience will inform us, that the reason of this is, that those who thus believe, have had such views of their need of a Saviour, to deliver them both from the condemning power and polluting dominion of sin, that when they find and appropriate such a Saviour—full and complete in Christ Jesus—he is truly and inexpressibly precious; his name is “like ointment poured forth,” and they can scarcely repeat it, without calling him *precious Christ*. Have we, then, my brethren, had these views of our necessity, rendering the Redeemer thus desirable, and issuing, at length, in that hearty closure with him, which has made him the supreme delight and joy of our souls. If this be the case, Christ is truly ours, and we are his; and we have reason for humble and constant praise to God, who has made us “accepted in the beloved.”

But if the Saviour has never appeared, in the manner just explained, *desirable* to us, and we have not, in this view, embraced him, we are yet in our sins—We are forbidden to speak peace to ourselves for a single moment, in this state: For though the benefits of Christ’s purchase are infinitely great in themselves, they will profit us nothing, unless they be applied to our souls. Therefore let me say to every individual present, who is conscious that he has never seen in Christ Jesus “one altogether lovely,” to whom his soul has been drawn in faith and love—you are yet in a state of unpardoned sin, and that from this state you must be delivered, and that speedily, or perish, with a far more aggravated condemnation than that which will be experienced by either Jew or heathen. Your education has not imbued your mind with an early prejudice against the only Saviour; you have heard of his name and of his great salvation, and he has been recommended to your acceptance, trust and love, by the most powerful considerations—the most constraining motives that can be addressed to a rational being. In opposition to all these, you have hitherto practically rejected Christ; for remember that in this great concern, *neglect is rejection*. You are perishing; Christ Jesus calls to you and says, “come unto me and be saved.” If you do not obey the call, you refuse, you reject it. And little as you may think of it, this refusal of the invitation of a bleeding, dying, redeeming, incarnate God, is the great damning sin of *unbelief*, committed by every impenitent sinner under the light of the gospel. Bethink yourselves seriously, I entreat you. View your guilt; be deeply abased for it before God; implore the aid of his Holy Spirit to enable you to repent of it unfeigned; and to help you to exercise that faith in Christ Jesus, with which alone the salvation of the soul is connected. And I repeat, that if this is ever done, it must be done *speedily*. If you do it to-day, this will be indeed to you *a happy Christmas*, in a far better sense than that of the world’s empty compliment. It will be the happy day to which you will look back with unutterable joy, in the ages of eternity. That so you may *now* act as that you may *hereafter* eternally rejoice, may God of his infinite mercy grant through Jesus Christ our Saviour and our only hope. Amen.