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Richards, James, 1767-1843  
Sermons



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*James Kirkwood*

# SERMONS

BY THE LATE

REV. JAMES RICHARDS, D. D.:

WITH AN

ESSAY ON HIS CHARACTER.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.



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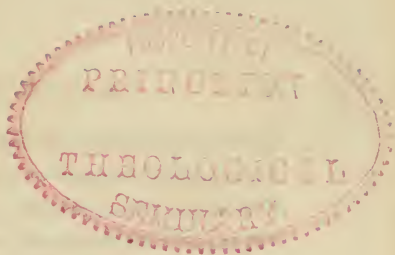
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## ESSAY ON THE CHARACTER

OF THE

REV. JAMES RICHARDS, D. D.

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There are not only many duties which the living owe to the living, but some which the living owe to the dead. Especially when a great and good man dies,—one who has occupied an important station, and wielded a powerful influence, and been not only extensively known but greatly beloved and venerated during his life,—when such an one is removed from the world, he has claims upon those who survive him which it were alike unreasonable and ungrateful to disregard. It is due to him, first, that his memory should be cherished with affectionate respect; that they who have been edified and improved by his wisdom, and they who have walked in the light of his example, and even they who have come more remotely under his benign influence, should embalm his virtues in their grateful and enduring remembrance. Nor is this the limit of their obligations: they are bound to do what they can to enlarge and perpetuate his usefulness; for though it is the ordinance of Heaven that the actions and charac-



ters of a good man should survive his earthly existence, and operate through various channels in moulding the characters and destinies of those who come after him, yet it is within the power of those who survive him greatly to increase the energy as well as to widen the sphere of his posthumous influence. This may be done in various ways: let it suffice here to mention only two. Such a person has certainly left to the world the legacy of an exalted character: it devolves on those who come after him to see that nothing be wanting to secure its legitimate effect, in suitably displaying its attractions and in giving it all due notoriety. Perhaps he has also left productions of his pen, which, by being given to the world, might be in the place of the living teacher, and might do much in aid of the cause of intellectual or moral improvement: such productions surely ought to be sent forth on a mission of good; and to keep them back were little less than to be accessory to the burying of talents in the earth.

It will not be denied by any competent and impartial judge that the individual whose character is to form the subject of these remarks, was one of the greater lights of our American church. If there have been those who have excelled him in particular qualities of mind, or particular departments of usefulness, who have moved in a more brilliant path or enjoyed a more extended popularity, it is believed there have been very few, at least of his own generation, whose general excellence and usefulness have been more universally acknowledged. As a sketch of his life and character has been given to the world in connection with his theological

lectures, it is not intended in the present brief Essay to attempt a repetition of that service; but only to hint at some of the more prominent facts and characteristics which have been already brought out in his Biography, in connection with their general bearing on the character of the ministry and the prospects of the church.\*

It may be worth while to advert briefly to the instrumentalities by which his character was formed;—the circumstances which Providence employed for that early development and direction of his faculties, which had so much to do in ultimately making him what he was in his various relations.

First of all, he was uncommonly favoured in respect to his birth. His parents were indeed in humble worldly circumstances,—only a single degree removed

\*As this work may possibly fall into the hands of some who have not access to the more extended sketch of his life, I have thought it best to present here an epitome of his history.

He was the son of James and Ruth Richards, and was born at New Canaan, Connecticut, Oct. 29, 1767. He served at a mechanical trade in his boyhood, and laboured successively at Newtown, Danbury, and Stamford. He became hopefully a subject of renewing grace when he was in his nineteenth year, and united with the congregational church in Stamford. He commenced his course of study preparatory to entering college under the Rev. J. Mitchell of New Canaan and finished it under the Rev. Dr. Burnett of Norwalk. He entered Yale College in the autumn of 1789, and from his inability to meet his expenses, was obliged to leave at the close of his freshman year. He returned to Norwalk and resumed his studies for a while under Dr. Burnett, and afterwards in 1791, he went to Greenfield where he enjoyed the instruction of Dr. Dwight through his whole subsequent course until he entered the ministry.

above indigence; but they were rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom: his mother particularly possessed sterling intellectual as well as moral qualities,—great natural common sense and discretion as well as energy and perseverance, while the crowning attribute of her character was an earnest and consistent piety. It were impossible but that a child of such parents should early be brought in contact with those influences which are best fitted to give a right direction to the youthful character; and such we find was actually the case in respect to young Richards: the best efforts which parental solicitude and discretion and piety could dictate, were put forth, during his earliest years, to form him to virtue and usefulness; and there is no doubt that the influence which was thereby exerted gave the permanent stamp to his character and life. It is in the Christian nursery that the hopes of the ministry and ultimately

He was licensed to preach by the association in the western district of Fairfield county in 1793. He was engaged for a short time as a supply at Ballston, N. Y., and afterwards simultaneously at Sag Harbor and Shelter Island. In June 1794 he was called to the pastoral charge of the church at Morristown: he finally accepted the call though his installation did not take place till May, 1797. He was married in November 1794 to Miss Caroline Cowles of Farmington, Conn., a lady of great excellence who has died within the last year. In 1809 he received and accepted a call from the First Presbyterian church in Newark to become their pastor, that church having been rendered vacant by Dr. Griffin's acceptance of an invitation to a professorship in the Andover Theological Seminary. In 1823 he accepted the professorship at Auburn, and was inaugurated October 29th of that year. He died August 2, 1843. He had seven children; four of whom survived him. One of his sons is a Presbyterian clergyman in Morristown, New Jersey.

the hopes of the church are peculiarly fixed. Instances indeed there are of extensive usefulness and even great eminence in the clerical profession, where there has not been the advantage of an early religious training,—where God has seemed to take the work of conversion so entirely into his own hands, that it has borne almost the aspect of a miracle; but in all ordinary cases, it will be found that faithful ministers of the gospel are the children of pious parents, and that their earliest impressions of the importance of religion are associated with the recollection of an excellent mother's counsels and prayers. In the distribution of blessings in the present life, it may well be doubted whether God deals more bountifully with any than with those whom he renders instrumental of forming their children to exalted piety and usefulness. Such a mother may be little known on earth, but there is a glorious record of her in Heaven. She may live in obscurity and poverty, and after she is gone there may be no monument to tell where her ashes repose; but if she has done nothing else than put one mind on the track to honorable usefulness and to a glorious immortality, she has done that which will confer upon herself enduring honour, and which will ultimately throw the brightest exploits of mere worldly heroism into the shade. It were well for the church that Christian parents should have their privileges as well as duties constantly held up before them. Let the obscurest mother in Israel take courage and comfort in the thought that she knows not but that by God's blessing upon her parental efforts, she may set up some great light in the church, which shall



connect her humble instrumentality with the progressive triumphs of God's grace through all coming generations.

The next thing worthy of notice in respect to Dr. Richards,—and it is to be referred immediately to the circumstances of his birth,—is that he was a self made man. As the straitened condition of his parents forbade their giving him the advantages of a liberal education, he saw, when the purpose of devoting himself to the ministry was formed, that his own faculties must be tasked to the utmost in order to accomplish it; and he went to work with all the zeal inspired by a strong conviction of duty on the one hand, and a naturally heroic and persevering spirit on the other. During his earliest years he suffered not a little from ill health; and even after he had commenced his preparation for college, he was obliged to suspend it for some months, on account of bodily indisposition and especially a distressing weakness of the eyes; but none of all these things moved him, or led him even to falter in his determination, if his life were spared, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Providence kindly brought to his aid good friends, whose timely benefactions were a great encouragement to him; though they did not, by any means, supersede the necessity of his own vigorous exertions. His college course was early interrupted for want of the requisite pecuniary means; and after he had left college and was still struggling to carry forward his education in private, amidst the inconveniences incident to poverty, severe sickness came again and brought him so near the grave that his re-

covery was regarded as an almost miraculous interposition. At a still later period we find him engaged in teaching a school with a view to sustain himself in his subsequent studies; and in the last stage of his preparation for the ministry (for in his case the literary and the theological were necessarily blended into the same course) he enjoys the instruction of that great and good man, Dr. Dwight, who afterwards became President of Yale College, and was instrumental in procuring for him the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Thus it appears that his course from the beginning was made up of a succession of struggles with poverty and misfortune. But for his own indomitable resolve to preach the gospel to his fellow creatures, he never could have submitted to such a protracted course of self denying effort. And yet it is worthy of remark that during this whole period Providence kept him in contact with those influences which were best fitted to aid in the formation of an exalted character. His religious associations were of the purest and most elevated kind; and during a large part of the time he breathed an intellectual atmosphere than which the country scarcely afforded any that was more quickening and healthful.

It is no doubt to these manifold and varied conflicts with difficulty, that we are to look for some of the primary elements of Dr. Richards's commanding character and usefulness. Had he been born and reared in circumstances of opulence, and always felt himself independent of any personal effort for education or even subsistence, it is no wise improbable that he might

never have been heard of in the walks of usefulness and honour,—never have learned the use or scarcely the existence of his noble faculties. But Providence placed him in the very circumstances which were best adapted to quicken both his intellectual and moral faculties into vigorous exercise; and though it seemed a severe discipline, no doubt it will be seen at last to have connected itself with his noblest achievements on earth and his holiest hallelujahs in Heaven.

It were a matter of no small interest to ascertain what proportion of the master spirits in the various departments of honorable usefulness, have been subjected in early life to the discipline of poverty, and to the necessity of reliance on their own personal efforts. That very many who have had such an experience have risen to great eminence, no one will question; and a moment's reflection suggests all the considerations that are necessary to account for it. The fact that the resolution should be taken amidst such discouraging circumstances, to gain the requisite qualifications for any profession, and especially for that of a minister of the gospel, shows a strength of purpose that will be sure to triumph over any difficulties that may lie in the way; and then the very discipline of the faculties by which such triumph is achieved, is a fitting preparation for yet higher intellectual efforts; for while it reveals to the mind more and more of its own capabilities, and renders it increasingly familiar with the legitimate use of its own powers, it imparts additional intensity to the desire of knowledge, and additional energy to the spirit of perseverance. And it is easy to see how this

influence extends to the religious character also. Great attainments in piety are never the result of superficial or feeble efforts. The mind in its communings with itself and its God, in exploring the depths of its own depravity, and in ascertaining the various practical bearings of divine truth upon its condition and prospects, in such a manner as to subserve in the highest degree its own spirituality, can never be in a sluggish frame: its faculties must be tasked to the utmost; and that not for any given period, but until it has sustained its final conflict in death. Now admitting that the new creating act hath been performed upon the soul, and the faculties have once received a right direction from the spirit of God, there is much in such a condition as is now supposed, to encourage the hope of a sound and rapid growth in piety. To say nothing of the fact that in all ordinary cases, there is a comparative absence of those temptations which usually act upon young Christians with the greatest power, particularly the temptations to a habit of worldliness and gaiety,—the very circumstance that the faculties are kept in vigorous exercise in the pursuit of knowledge from right motives, will be likely to enlist a corresponding degree of vigor in the exercises of devotion, and in all those efforts that have special reference to the cultivation of the spiritual mind. Cases indeed there are in which the desire of intellectual improvement seems for a time to get the ascendancy over the desire for religious culture; but in the great majority of instances it will be found that the intellectual and the spiritual keep pace in some good degree with each other, and that of those who



enter the ministry, not only the most vigorous and thoroughly furnished minds but the best disciplined hearts are rather more frequently found among the class who owe their education under God to their own efforts, than any other.

The character of Dr. Richards's early religious experience also, deserves to be considered in its bearing upon his subsequent life. The leading truths of the gospel he learned from his mother's lips; and though for some time the seed which she had sown in his infant mind, did not seem to vegetate, or at least to bring forth fruit, yet in due time, those precious doctrines, under the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, asserted their power over him, waking his intellect, his conscience, his whole inner man, into vigorous and solemn exercise. It was no superficial view of the evil of sin, and the corruption of his own heart that constituted the preparation for his acceptance of the terms of the gospel: on the contrary the arrows of the Almighty well nigh drank up his spirits. He was brought to realize not only his aggravated guilt, his utter ruin, but his absolute helplessness. In the spirit of self righteousness, he cast about him for some other refuge than the Saviour, unwilling to be indebted for his salvation to God's sovereign grace; but he saw that his efforts were all unavailing, and he found no peace to his troubled spirit, till he let go of every other hold for the Lord Jesus Christ. As his conviction of sin was uncommonly deep and pungent, and as his exercises at the commencement of the Christian life were eminently evangelical, it cannot be doubted that these fea-

tures of his incipient religious experience had much to do in giving the complexion to his religious character through life. Some there are indeed who seem to be brought into the kingdom by the same thorny way, evincing at first great depth of anguish and great depth of penitence, who subsequently disappoint the hopes inspired by their earliest experience; but in *his* case there was never the semblance of a retreat; what he was at the beginning was a sample of what he was ever afterwards, except that his path was always growing brighter. There is no evidence that there ever was a period when he could be said to have declined materially in the vigor of his religious feelings; and those who knew him best were most strongly impressed with the depth and power of his experience. It was a striking feature of his ministry that in his intercourse with those who were awakened to a sense of sin, and those who indulged the hope that they were reconciled to God, he was specially cautious to put them on their guard against a spurious religion; taking all pains to give the law its legitimate supremacy over their consciences, that they might feel themselves absolutely shut up to the faith, and might cast themselves without reserve on God's sovereign grace in Jesus Christ. Hence it came to pass that in his latter days, when revivals of religion for a time and in certain parts of the country had degenerated into scenes of extravagance, and conversions had become little more than a mere matter of mechanical impulse, he saw in this state of things every thing adverse to the progress of evangelical and vital piety; it was a new type of religion that had no counter-

part in his own experience; and he felt himself called upon boldly and earnestly to protest against it, even at the expense of being denounced as an enemy to the cause for which he was willing to die.

The most important element of power in the ministry no doubt is its religious character; and that is decided in this country at least, in a great measure, by the character of revivals. Let such revivals prevail as the American church has known at some periods of her history, in which the conversions for the most part are substantially such as that of which Dr. Richards was the subject, and we may expect that our young men who come out of these revivals into the ministry, will bring with them an earnest evangelical spirit, and will be safe guides in the great matter of directing souls to Christ. But let the mechanical mode of "getting up" revivals and making converts prevail,—let it be understood that the occupancy of a particular seat brings a person near the kingdom, and the avowal of a purpose to serve God brings him into it;—and if the ministry is to be supplied from the ranks of such converts as these, we have every reason to believe that it will be a ministry of death rather than of life; and though it may possibly bring many into the church, yet few of them will be such as shall be saved. There is no more important reason for guarding the purity of the church, and the avenues to the church, than the bearing which it has upon the future character of its ministers; for a godless ministry, a worldly ministry, even a fanatical ministry, is an incubus beneath which the church can never rise in her strength and beauty.

The period at which Dr. Richards entered upon his professional career, must not be overlooked in an estimate of those influences by which his character as a minister of the gospel was formed. It was just about the dawn of a new and brighter epoch in the history of the church;—when she had begun to awake from a long and ignoble slumber,—to cast off her works of darkness and put on her armour of light. It was just at the time when she was receiving a fresh baptism of the spirit of revivals and the spirit of missions, and her heart began to throb in more vigorous pulsations as her faith grasped the promise of millennial glory;—it was just then that this excellent man entered upon his work as an ambassador of the Son of God. And he drank in largely the quickening spirit of the times. He took the most comprehensive views of the nature and objects of the work to which he had devoted himself. He mingled with men who were fervent in spirit and mighty with God, and he became himself as fervent and mighty as they. And the impulse which he received then had no doubt much to do in giving the complexion to his life. He was a zealous and successful promoter of revivals as long as he lived; while he lamented in his latter days that the gold had become dim and the fine gold changed. Connected as he was with some of our earliest modern missionary operations, his eye and his heart were always fixed upon the ultimate regeneration of the world; he watched the progress of events continually, in its bearing on the interests of Christ's kingdom; and every propitious sign he noted with overflowing gratitude. Had he come

upon the stage a quarter of a century earlier, when the storm of the revolution was gathering and bursting upon the country, and the church and even her ministry was absorbed in a great degree in matters of political import, who can tell by how much less of devotion to his master's work, and of usefulness in his master's cause, at home and abroad, his course might have been marked? Who can say that he would have even been heard of by posterity as a faithful minister of Christ,—much less as such a noble witness to the power and honour of the cross?

If there was much in the state of the times when Dr. Richards entered the ministry to give a favourable impulse to his mind and to secure to his labours the happiest results, surely there is that in the present condition of the church and the world that is fitted to impart still higher encouragement and operate with still greater power, in respect to those who engage in the same sacred vocation now. Be it so that revivals of religion have in latter years declined in purity, and as a legitimate consequence, in frequency too; and that the argument for exertion here is drawn rather from the lamented absence of the Spirit's quickening influence than from the visible and glorious triumphs of divine grace,—yet the case is far different in respect to missions: the desire to give the gospel to all the nations, accompanied by a corresponding course of conduct, has been regularly growing stronger and reaching farther, until now a large part of evangelical Christendom may be considered as enlisted in this glorious cause. And the success has greatly exceeded



the measure of effort that has been put forth: God has shown himself more ready to give than the church has been to ask; and He is at work now on a large scale, by his providence as well as by his grace. These convulsions that are taking place among the nations in such rapid succession as to have assumed the character of ordinary events, will no doubt be seen a little while hence to have been the harbingers of the Redeemer's universal reign. What advantages are conferred, what obligations are devolved, by such a state of things as this upon the rising ministry! What a privilege to be called to thrust in the sickle when the fields are white, already to harvest! What mighty responsibility to be charged with the spiritual interests of the church, when she is moving forward with an ever increasing rapidity! It were bad enough to be an indolent, inefficient minister of Christ in any circumstances; but to be so now, would seem like a deliberate attempt to obstruct the chariot wheels of Zion's King. A minister sleeping at his post amidst the deepest darkness, were a pitiable object; but who shall describe the sin and the shame of being found asleep, when the light of the sun of righteousness shines with so much strength that the church is expecting soon to see it brighten into millennial glory?

In attempting an outline of Dr. Richards's character, it is not necessary, even if it were possible, to distinguish accurately between the provinces of nature and of grace; to show how much he was indebted for his greatness and excellence to God's creating power and goodness, and how much to the sanctifying influences of his Spirit, and how much to the benignant orderings

of his providence, for the favourable development of his intellectual and moral faculties. Instead of instituting any comparison between these several agencies in the formation of his character, we contemplate it as actually formed in all its noble and goodly proportions; and though the view we take of it be a rapid and general one, it can hardly fail to minister to our growth in virtue and usefulness.

To begin with what was external and visible—Dr. Richards was eminently favoured in respect to his person. He had a fine, commanding stature, towering above men of ordinary and even extraordinary dimensions. He was every way well proportioned, and though his movements were not otherwise than easy, yet they were perhaps characterized rather by dignity than gracefulness. In his face there was a delightful blending of the intellectual and the moral: there was expressed in it an honesty that invited confidence, a generosity that awakened admiration, a tenderness that could wake to the first notes of sorrow, a firmness of purpose that was like the everlasting hills, and a power of thought that inspired even the casual passer-by with respect and veneration. And his manners were in fine keeping with his person: they were bland and dignified, without the semblance of affectation or austerity on the one hand, or of any thing that approached to levity on the other. In short, he was a fine specimen of a Christian gentleman. His majestic form, his bright and cheerful countenance, the *tout ensemble* of his manner, prepossessed the stranger in his favour before he opened his lips; and it is hardly ne-

cessary to say that when he *did* speak, all that was promised in his appearance was fulfilled in his conversation.

It must be acknowledged, that in respect to the advantages of mere person, it is not given to men to exercise any control; this being a matter which the Creator has kept entirely in his own hands. But it is otherwise in regard to the manners; and though even here some have originally much the advantage of others, yet every one, and especially every one whose lot is cast amidst decent society, may, if he will, avoid offensive peculiarities,—may render himself at least acceptable, if not attractive. It is the more important to advert to this subject here, as it cannot be doubted that the intellectual and moral attainments of many a clergyman are undervalued and his usefulness not a little abridged, simply from his neglect of those numberless and nameless little things which enter into the character of a gentleman. A clergyman, from the very nature of his vocation, moves in all circles of society, not excepting the highest; and if he have no respect to decent and polite usages,—if he offend at every step by his rudeness and vulgarity, even though it be the effect of mere ignorance, it is impossible but that a revolting association with him and even with his office will be established in many minds. It is possible indeed that a man may have such transcendent intellectual powers as shall in some measure neutralize this unpropitious influence; but there is no man whose powers are so great but that he would accomplish far more with good manners than without them. Fortunately there has been an admira-

ble treatise on this subject, written by a venerable professor in one of our theological seminaries—himself one of the finest examples of “clerical manners and habits,”—which every student of divinity ought to read and inwardly digest, till it has had its legitimate effect in forming him for the most cultivated society.

It is easy to speak of Dr. Richards’s intellect, as indeed it is of his whole character, from the remarkable clearness of his mental operations, as well as from the just proportions in which his mind in its different faculties was constituted. He possessed an uncommon quickness of perception: the difficulties that beset any subject he would often discover at a glance, when a more sluggish but perhaps equally powerful intellect, would linger in a protracted course of investigation. But notwithstanding he saw quickly and clearly, he was as far as possible from being precipitate in his conclusions: he would hold an abstruse subject in earnest and patient inquiry, throwing his mind into a great variety of attitudes and bringing it into every light that he could command, until he had become satisfied that he had reached, if not the ultimate limit of human investigation,—at least the remotest point to which his own faculties could carry him. His mind was constituted with far more than a common degree of strength;—while he looked at subjects critically and carefully, he laid hold of them also with a comprehensive and vigorous grasp, and sometimes with an intensity of spirit that was nearly allied to enthusiasm. As he was conducted to the result of his inquiries by successive and distinctly marked steps, so he had usually no difficulty

in making what was clear to himself equally clear to others. But for nothing was he more distinguished in the character of his mind than practical common sense, far reaching sagacity, the ability to form a right estimate of men and things, and to discover at a glance the remoter bearings of human conduct. He was not deficient in taste; though it is not improbable that in this respect he suffered some disadvantage from his early embarrassments resulting in the premature termination of his college course. His writings give evidence of little imagination; and there is reason to believe that this faculty had less prominence in his intellectual constitution than any other.

Dr. Richards was not more favoured in respect to his intellectual than his moral qualities. He had not only a nice perception but an exquisite sense of right and wrong, and out of this arose an integrity so strongly marked that malice itself scarcely dared to assail it. Notwithstanding his great sagacity, which it was difficult even for the most wary to surprise or circumvent, he was always found on the high ground of fair and honest dealing; and though he was almost sure to detect the arts of the cunning and unscrupulous, yet no one had the least reason to fear that he would, under any circumstances, take an unworthy advantage. He was condescending in smaller matters, and would cheerfully yield an opinion or a measure which he deemed unimportant, for the sake of preserving harmony; but in a matter which involved principle and conscience, no man perhaps was ever more inflexible. He was benevolent, generous, magnanimous, in his dispositions;



he was alive to every project for meliorating the condition of his fellow men; he never manifested a spirit of triumph over a fallen foe; he wept over the infirmities and sins as well as the miseries of his fellow creatures; and he rejoiced exceedingly in every thing that foretold the reign of peace and truth and righteousness in the earth. If his Christian character is to be distinctly considered, then it must be said that it embodied all the graces of the gospel in unusual purity and beauty and power; the depth of his humility, the fervour of his devotion, the strength of his charity, the heavenliness of his temper, and the consistency of his walk, all combined to impart to his character as a disciple of Christ an unwonted attractiveness and elevation.

It is evident from the preceding remarks,—and the fact is otherwise well attested,—that there must have been a remarkable symmetry pervading Dr. Richards's entire character: the physical, the intellectual, the moral, the spiritual, were so admirably commingled, that it seemed as if the balance between the different faculties of his nature was well nigh perfect. And it admits of no question that a character formed after such a model is best adapted to extensive usefulness. The world are indeed accustomed to bestow their admiration more upon what is striking and eccentric; they prefer the startling and brilliant course of the meteor, to the regular and powerful shining of the sun; but in this preference they give little evidence of wisdom. If the whole history of the church could be brought to testify in relation to this matter, it would be found that those who

have lent the most efficient aid in promoting the cause of Christ, and whose memories are cherished with the highest respect and gratitude after they are gone, are not usually the men who have enjoyed the highest reputation during their lives for what is commonly called genius;—on the contrary, they are the men whose intellectual and moral constitution at once disposes and enables them to discharge all their duties with fidelity and alacrity;—men of sound judgment and quick sagacity and tender conscience and devout, philanthropic and magnanimous feelings, whose course is as noiseless, yet as steady, as the march of the sun through the heavens. There are indeed instances in which eccentric, very eccentric men, are rendered eminently useful; and they are enabled to meet certain exigencies to which, with a different constitution, they would be utterly inadequate. But these cases form exceptions from the general rule. And it is not too much to say that whenever a young man of great eccentricity enters the ministry, there is danger, and unless he possesses extraordinary piety,—imminent danger, that as much of evil as of good will hang upon his footsteps. He may indeed be much talked of, and talked of even with admiration; and yet the very things which provoke this admiration, may not improbably constitute the most formidable clogs upon his Christian and ministerial usefulness. Let it always be remembered that eccentricity supposes imperfection;—it supposes either defect or excess in some part of our nature. In the character of the Supreme there is not the semblance of eccentricity; nor is there any thing that approaches it in the character

of the Lord Jesus Christ as it was exhibited on the earth. They who come nearest to the standard of perfect excellence, are those who reach the highest point of improvement in respect to *all* their faculties.

Dr. Richards's characteristics as a preacher were just what might have been expected, in view of the peculiar qualities of his mind and heart. His discourses were generally written, with the exception of the closing part, which he usually left to be supplied, so far at least as the language was concerned, by his feelings at the moment. They were characterized by great simplicity and perspicuity of style, and by strict logical accuracy in the arrangement of the different parts, so that a child might easily follow and comprehend him. The doctrinal, the practical, the experimental, were mingled in them in just proportions; so that it was impossible to listen to them attentively, without gaining more enlarged views of divine truth, and finding fresh inducements to the discharge of duty. No subject seems to have occupied his thoughts more habitually, or to have contributed more to fix the tone of his ministrations than the character and claims of God; and in his exhibition of these he is believed to have put forth his greatest power in the pulpit. His manner was sober, dignified, earnest. His voice was commanding and his utterance rapid,—sometimes so rapid as to become slightly indistinct; but what gave to his manner its greatest attraction was the fervour of his spirit breathing in every expression and glowing in every feature. It was not at the option of any hearer to believe or not to believe that his utterances in the

pulpit were from the very depths of his spirit: the impression that this was so, was so irresistible, that it may reasonably be doubted whether it was ever a matter of question with any one who listened to him. Even those who may have differed widely from him in his religious views, were still constrained to feel that he was giving expression to his own deep and earnest convictions. It must be acknowledged that he was not in the common acceptation of the word an eminently popular preacher,—that is, a preacher whom the multitude would run after in blind admiration; but they who coveted sound scriptural instruction, and they who were anxious to be directed into the path of life, and they who could sympathize with the exercise of a spirit glowing with love to God and man, never failed to place a high estimate upon his ministrations. And the results of his preaching were such as its character would lead us to anticipate. It was owned by the Spirit of God as an effective instrumentality in connection with some of the most extensive and powerful revivals which have been enjoyed in the American church.

If it be conceded that in some respects the style of preaching has been improved in latter years, it certainly admits of great doubt whether in other respects it has not proportionally deteriorated. The desire to avoid the appearance of formality has in too many cases driven out all method; and the preacher, in order to prevent himself from being anticipated in his thoughts, leads his hearers through such deep mazes that when he is at the end of his discourse, they know not where they have been, or how they have reached the point to

which he has conducted them. And then there are those too who seem to do homage to the intellectual and the philosophical, at the expense of the evangelical and the spiritual; who preach much upon the beauty of virtue, but little upon the love of Christ; whose discourses, if they were to be judged as essays, would be pronounced splendid, but if judged as sermons, are miserably jejune and poor. It were well if all the young ministers of the present day who have reformed themselves into this mode of preaching, would be contented to sit at the feet of Dr. Richards. They are sacrificing the mighty power that resides in their office, when legitimately exercised, to a dream of vain ambition. They are preparing the church to put on the garments of heaviness, because her spiritual energy and vitality are gone. They are making themselves responsible for evil which is visible and palpable now, but which may have only begun to operate when they are called to their account. May Heaven deliver us from these erratic untoward tendencies that are discoverable here and there in the rising ministry. Let it be a maxim with every young preacher and every student in theology, that, in the construction of his discourses, however original he may be, he never leads his hearers by a way in which they get bewildered,—that however argumentative he may be, he never substitutes the deductions of his own reason for the substantial realities of God's word.

Few men have been more eminently qualified than Dr. Richards for the successful discharge of pastoral duties. His fine social qualities gave him ready access



to persons of all classes; his excellent judgment enabled him to adapt his conversation with a discreet reference to circumstances and characters; his devoted piety led him in all his intercourse to regard chiefly the spiritual interests of all; his unsuspected generosity and sincerity secured to him an almost unbounded confidence; and his own wakeful sensibilities and sympathies rendered him most welcome as well as most useful amidst scenes of calamity and sorrow. Much as he was respected for his efforts in the pulpit, perhaps it is not too much to say that he was yet even more beloved for his labours out of it; and it is confidently believed that those who have enjoyed the privilege of his ministry embalm in their deepest gratitude the memory of his pastoral qualities.

It cannot be denied that some men are constituted with qualifications for the pastoral office, which no amount of effort could secure to others; and hence while some have wrought with the greatest advantage in the pulpit, others have been chiefly useful in the discharge of the more private duties of the ministry. The great Edwards is said to have had little to do with his congregation except from the pulpit; and there he exhibited a power which was well nigh unrivalled; whereas some others who have been signally blessed in turning souls to righteousness, have scarcely been heard of as preachers, but have been eminently favoured in respect to their pastoral qualifications. No doubt the perfection of the ministry consists in the union of the preacher and the pastor; and every one who enters the sacred office is bound to exemplify both to the extent of his

ability; and though it is too much to say, (for experience would disprove the assertion) that the two may not be in some measure separated in consistency with usefulness and even eminent usefulness, yet we are not, in any ordinary case where such a disjunction exists, to look for the highest results of the ministry. Because Jonathan Edwards is said not to have been a pastor, let no young minister imagine that it is safe for *him* to neglect his pastoral duties on the ground of being eminent in the pulpit: certainly let him not come to this conclusion until he is satisfied that he has Edwards's power both in the pulpit and in the closet. It must be confessed that visiting regularly and frequently from house to house, is, by no means, the easiest part of a minister's duty; but it is vastly important not only for its direct but indirect influence,—not only for the immediate good which may be accomplished by this kind of intercourse, in administering appropriate instruction and counsel, but in the greater good will which it secures to the minister from his people and the more earnest attention which is rendered, on account of it, to his public ministrations.

Notwithstanding the eminence to which Dr. Richards attained in the discharge of the ordinary duties of the ministry, it was probably in the chair of a Professor of Theology, that he rendered the most important service to the church and gathered the most enduring honors to his own name. He was in all respects well qualified, and in some eminently so, for this important station. He was familiar with the ablest theological writers of by-gone days; but while there were those among them

whom he regarded with great veneration and to whose general views of Christian doctrine he cordially subscribed, yet he called no mere man master; he recognized no authority as ultimate but the authority of God's word. He studied the Bible continually and earnestly in the languages in which it was written, *as* God's word; divesting himself, so far as possible, of the prejudice of education and of every thing like superstitious reverence for uninspired authority; comparing scripture with scripture, and never intermitting his enquiries, till he had become satisfied in respect to the divine testimony. Here he rested as upon a rock; ready always to defend his own convictions with calmness, and yet with power. His taste and ability for philosophical investigation in connection with the quickness and clearness of his perceptions on every subject, and a naturally fervid spirit that could easily kindle into a generous enthusiasm, gave him a great advantage in communicating instruction; and though he held his students in earnest and profound thought, yet they always felt that he was leading them in a broad and luminous path. As there was no tendency in his mind, so neither was there in his system, to extremes. He maintained with equal zeal the authority of God's law on the one hand and the fullness and freedom of redemption on the other;—the obligation of the sinner to obey God's commandments, his utter inexcusableness for not obeying them, and his entire dependence for salvation on the sovereign grace of God in Christ. He regarded philosophy as a handmaid and only a handmaid to Christianity; and he took care in

showing its bearings on Christian doctrines, that it did not mar their consistency, or neutralize their power or mould them into another gospel. His views of divine truth were chiefly of the old New England orthodox school; though he regarded the differences which existed in the Presbyterian church in the earlier part of his ministry as in no wise interfering with substantial unity of sentiment.

In his private intercourse with his students he was always condescending and amiable; ready to answer their inquiries, to counsel them in difficulty, and especially to do every thing in his power in aid of their spiritual progress. The consequence was that they regarded him with a truly filial feeling; and if there were any in respect to whom it was otherwise, the fact only needed to be known, to fix them in no very enviable place in public estimation.

Nor ought it to be omitted, in this connection, that Dr. Richards was an uncommonly skilful, even an eminent financier. No doubt this was to be referred partly to his great natural sagacity, and partly to the necessity of the most rigid economy induced by his early straitened circumstances. While he was as far as possible from any thing like meanness,—so far that he was generous and even noble in his dispositions,—he took care that nothing in his own pecuniary concerns was left at loose ends; and the same spirit of exact calculation he exhibited in reference to the concerns of others, and especially of the institution with which he was connected. He *became* connected with it while it was yet in its infancy; and he identified himself with

it in all its earlier and later pecuniary struggles; and but for his great wisdom and energy and perseverance, it seems scarcely possible that even its existence should have been continued. He was often abroad among the churches soliciting the means of relieving the seminary from its embarrassments, and giving increased efficiency to its operations; and the high veneration with which his character was every where regarded, rendered *his* applications frequently successful, where those of perhaps any other man would have failed. And he *managed* the funds as well as collected them; he knew how to husband every thing to the best advantage, and the most watchful and jealous friends of the seminary had full confidence that every thing in respect to financial matters was moving forward securely, while it was under his direction. Those who would form a suitable estimate of the amount of service which he rendered to that institution, must look much beyond the faithful discharge of his duties as a theological professor: they must remember that for several years the institution well nigh had its being in his unremitted efforts often made under the pressure of great bodily infirmity, to meet its necessary annual expenses.

It is obvious to the least reflection that nothing involves more immediately the interests of the church, than the character of those to whom is committed the training of her ministry. To say nothing here of the paramount importance of their holding the truth in its purity and having all the requisite intellectual furniture for its illustration and defence,—the fact that they lack common prudence, or eminent piety, or that they



are prone to speculate where inspiration hath interposed its authoritative mandate, is of itself enough utterly to disqualify them for such a station. Let a spirit of the most liberal inquiry be encouraged, only let not human reason intrude into the province of faith. Let the faculties be tasked to the utmost, only let due care be taken that they operate in the right direction. If a theological professor, from taste or habit or any other cause, suffers himself to become a mere metaphysical dreamer before his class, rather than a sober expounder of the divine verities, it may confidently be expected that many at least who listen to him will not only imbibe the same spirit, but will carry it with them to mar and neutralize their ministrations in subsequent life.

Great importance is moreover to be attached to the manners, the general bearing in society, of young men who enter the ministry; and in this respect also, it is of great moment that they have good models in their instructors. However we may regret that there are many who can not discern substantial merit through so thin a veil as ungraceful or unpolished manners, the fact admits of no question; and there are at this moment not a few clergymen in our own country who occupy places of less importance than they might have done, and probably would have done, if they had been more at home in cultivated society. Dr. Richards, though he enjoyed few advantages in early life for the cultivation of his manners, was nevertheless a fine example of a Christian gentleman; was always attentive to the courtesies of life, and never neglected any of the

thousand nameless things fitted to minister to the ease and comfort of those around him. It was worth a great deal to his pupils to live under such an influence. Other pupils beside his know the value of such an example from having it before them; and it were well that all who enjoy such an advantage should remember that the improvement or the neglect of it will probably have much to do in deciding the measure of their usefulness.

Dr. Richards's general influence in the church, as well while he had a pastoral charge as while he was a theological professor, was equally benign, efficient and extensive. His great wisdom and integrity were every where acknowledged, and every where confided in. He was a most active and useful member of ecclesiastical judicatories; and in cases of difficulty especially, great reliance was placed on his judgment and counsel. He was chosen moderator of the General Assembly at the age of thirty-seven; an honour rarely conferred upon an individual so young; but he discharged the duties of the office with great propriety, dignity and acceptance. He was one of the master spirits in the great benevolent movements of the day,—not only in sustaining, but originating them; and when he was taken away from this department of Christian effort, it seemed as if an armour-bearer had failed. In short, such was his reputation as an eminently sagacious and honest man, and a devoted Christian, that there was scarcely any important project having a bearing on the interests of the church, formed within the range of his influence, but that his wisdom in counsel or his energy in

action, was put in requisition for the accomplishment of it.

During the latter years of Dr. Richards's life he was tried in common with many other good men, by the grievous disturbances that existed in the Presbyterian church. He was an attentive and deeply interested observer of the inroads of that fanatical spirit which about the year 1827 or '28, began its desolating operations in western New York. He was ready to admit that, as in days of old, there might be some commingling of good with the evil; but he entertained not a doubt that it was chiefly a ministration of fanaticism and error; and with this conviction, he set his face against it as a flint. He resisted at the expense of being denounced as an enemy of revivals; at the expense even of being most offensively, not to say calumniously, prayed for by some of his own students; for with all the precaution that he could use, the storm swept through the seminary; and while some were swept away, others *prudently* bent to the blast, and others still stood up with their venerable professor in the attitude of stern and dignified resistance. Suffice it to say that the views which he maintained were the same in which the Christian community now generally repose; to which it may be added many have long since returned, who, for a season, yielded to the popular impulse, and both in theory and in practice set at naught the first principles of evangelical order.

But notwithstanding Dr. Richards's vigorous and hearty opposition to the system of new measures and to the attempted innovations upon the faith of the

Presbyterian church, he was not prepared for the ultimate remedy which the General Assembly adopted for curing these disorders—the excision of the three western Synods. He believed *that* to have been both unconstitutional and unwise; but it impaired not his confidence or his affection for the great and good men who differed with him, and he rejoiced in the belief that at no distant day, the two branches of the church would again be united in greater purity and love. That grateful anticipation seems now to be cherished by a constantly increasing number; and before this generation shall have passed away, it is perhaps safe to predict that it will be fully realized.

Dr. Richards was eminently favoured in his life, and he was not less favoured in his death. His latter years were years of great feebleness; but he was still, with slight interruptions, able to discharge his duties as a professor, and not unfrequently to preach in the town or the neighborhood. The waning of his life was as gradual and as glorious as the going down of the sun. He had some afflictions in his old age, but the darkest clouds that gathered over him were fringed with bright hues from the sun of righteousness. Whether in sorrow or in joy he sustained himself with the dignity of a patriarch. He was blessed in his family; blessed in the circle of his friends; blessed in all his relations; and when he was gathered into the community of the glorified, there was deep mourning on Earth, corresponding no doubt to the joyful welcome that he met in Heaven.

Shortly after his death a volume of his theological

lectures was published, in connection with the sketch of his life already referred to, which even those who may not fully accord with his views, will acknowledge, are highly creditable to him as a judicious, acute and able theologian. Many of his old friends, especially those who were accustomed long to enjoy the benefit of his ministry, felt that they should more easily recognize him in his sermons which were addressed to themselves than in his lectures which were designed for his students; and it is in obedience to such a wish that the selection contained in the present volume is given to the public. It is not claimed for them that they are either brilliant or elaborate productions. They were written in the ordinary course of weekly preparation for the sabbath, without the least expectation on the part of the author that they would ever see the light; and they are probably little, if any, superior to his ordinary discourses. It will be the reader's fault, however, if they do not serve to render his views of divine truth more clear, to quicken and elevate his religious sensibilities, and to make him more conscientious and earnest in the various duties of the Christian life. I have cheerfully complied with the request of his family to introduce the work with this prefatory notice of his character, as it has given me an unexpected opportunity of bearing testimony to his worth, and rearing a slight monument to his honoured and cherished memory.



# SERMONS.

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## SERMON I.

### GOD'S UNIVERSAL PRESENCE.

PSALMS CXXXIX; 7, 8, 9, 10.

*“Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in Hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”*

Had we no other proof of the inspiration of the scriptures, the very description which they give of God, would go far in supporting this claim. In no other writings can we find such exalted sentiments, which never clash with each other, and which never verge in the slightest degree, to any thing inconsistent with the most absolute perfection. When they speak of his moral character, it is with a dignity and purity altogether unrivalled. When they describe his natural attributes,—his eternity, his immensity, his power, there is a sublimity of thought and a force of expression wholly peculiar to themselves. Whence can this peculiarity arise? Were not the poets and orators of heathen antiquity men of transcendent genius, as well

as of highly cultivated powers? Could not Homer and Virgil, Demosthenes and Cicero, rise to the lofty conceptions of a Moses, David or Isaiah? The truth is, the writers of the scriptures, were much better acquainted with the glorious majesty of Heaven and Earth, than any of the ancient heathen; and therefore could speak of him in a manner more worthy of his exalted character. They had more than the light of human reason, or the effulgence of the loftiest genius to guide them. They were holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Their powers were elevated and enlarged, by a special, divine influence; and hence their conceptions are marked with a grandeur and simplicity, which demonstrate their heavenly origin.

The passage just read in your hearing, and indeed the entire psalm from which it is taken, may be regarded as a striking illustration of this remark. In vain will you search the celebrated writings of Greece and Rome, to find any thing which can equal it in sublimity. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend into Heaven thou art there; if I make make my bed in Hell— behold thou art there; If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

The Psalmist here professes his belief in the *universal presence* of the Deity; and he does it in a manner which shows that his mind is completely overwhelmed with the subject. He not only felt that he was sur-

rounded with God—where he was, but that it was utterly impossible to go from his Spirit, or flee from his presence, because that Spirit, that presence, was as illimitable as the universe,—as boundless as immensity. “If I ascend into Heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in Hell,”—plunging into those dark and unfathomed mansions of the dead, where imagination loses itself in the obscure abyss—“behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,”—if, with the swift-ness of the shooting sunbeam, I transport myself to the utmost verge of the western ocean—“even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.” God’s Spirit, he perceives, must necessarily be with him to sustain him in his flight, and in whatever corner of the universe he should light, still he would be surrounded with God, whose almighty agency would be employed in upholding his being, with all his varied powers. And with no less certainty, he perceives the impossibility of escaping the notice of God’s eye. “If I say surely the darkness shall cover me,—even the night shall be light about me; yea the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day:—the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”

The scriptures hold but one language on the subject of God’s presence. They uniformly describe him as filling immensity. Excluding all inferior and subordinate deities, they represent him as the Creator, the Preserver, and Disposer of all things;—as being in the Heavens above, and in the earth beneath, and as doing his pleasure in all places of his dominion; and *that*,

because he is necessarily over all, in all, and through all. Wherever his works are, there they describe *him* to be, in all the plenitude of his wisdom and his power. It is in consequence of his universal presence and agency that God himself puts these solemn questions—"Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass, and the Lord commandeth it not? Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it? Behold I create light and I create darkness. I, the Lord, do all these things." And again, "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord: do not I fill Heaven and Earth, saith the Lord.

But how is God present in all his works? Is he so by his influence and by his agents merely? or is he so by his very essence. He is so by his essence, as is clearly implied in our text, and in various other passages of scripture—"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?—or whither shall I flee from thy presence? It is God himself, and not merely his influence or his agents, which is here represented as filling the universe. How indeed can it be otherwise, if it is as St. Paul declares in his address to the Athenians—"That in him, we live and move, and have our being."

But the Bible goes a step further, and asserts the being of God to be absolutely illimitable and immeasurable,—above and beyond all his works. "Behold," says Solomon, "the Heaven of Heavens can not contain *thee*, how much less this house that I have built." It is plain, that he speaks of God's *being*,—not of his providential influence, or his agency. But if God not only fills the Heaven of Heavens—(and

beyond these creation does not extend,) I say, if God not only fills the Heaven of Heavens, but is above and beyond them, as he certainly must be, if they cannot contain him—then he is where his works are not: and if he is where his works are not, can we set bounds to his essence, or with any color of reason suppose such bounds to exist?

That God's being is absolutely boundless, not only pervading all things, but extending indefinitely beyond them, is a doctrine, not of revelation alone, but of reason also. That God is omnipresent, by which is commonly understood his presence with all his works, appears obviously to be a dictate of reason. If no cause can act, where it is not, (and that it cannot, by any direct and positive agency, is an axiom generally admitted,) then wherever God operates, there must God be; his agency must be regarded as conclusive evidence of his presence.

It is utterly inconceivable that God should create a being where he himself is not; and it is alike inconceivable that he should uphold, or preserve a being that he has created, without being present in this operation. But perhaps he does not uphold the creatures which he has made:—perhaps, having given them an existence, they have power to preserve themselves in being, independent of his agency or care! This can never be said by a believer in revelation; since that testifies not only that God is the Maker of all things, but that by him, all things consist: nor can it be said by him who rejects revelation, without contradicting the current sense of mankind, who have always ac-



knowledged the same power requisite to preserve as to create. What indeed is preservation, but the continued effect of that almighty agency which gave to the different orders of being their existence and their power? Second causes, we know, are concerned in this effect; but what are second causes, and what their influence, separate from the energetic will of the great First Cause? It is as irrational as it is unscriptural to suppose that any thing exists, or continues to exist, but through his almighty agency directed to this end. No man is so blind as not to see a power at work in the vast movements of nature;—a power which operates with design, and with directing and controlling efficacy through all the multiplied forms of existence, in the natural and moral world. What is this power? It certainly is not chance, (which by the way is no power) for then it would not be so regular, and specific in its operations. Is it nature, or the laws of nature? What is nature, or its laws, but the regular operation of an infinitely wise and powerful Being, who, as he gave existence to creatures, does not cease to preserve and direct them? His powerful will alone constitutes the whole energy of nature. Must he not be present then in all places of his dominion? And must not the mere fact of his working prove him to be wherever his works are?

But it is not his omnipresence only, or his presence with his works, that we are endeavoring to establish, but his absolute immensity. We have asserted it as the doctrine of the Bible, that God exists above and beyond his works; and that there is no imaginable space

where he is not. And will not the deductions of reason lead us to the same result? God, I take it to be certain, is somewhere:—for I believe it impossible by any species of abstraction, to form the idea of existence, without place, any more than the idea of existence without time. But if God exists somewhere, what is there to limit his existence to any supposed region? Why should he not inhabit immensity as well as eternity? If his existence be limited, it cannot be from any thing without; for as he is independent and underyived, he must, necessarily be before all other beings; and the very same that he would have been had they never existed. Their existence, therefore, can have no effect in limiting or modifying his. Can his existence then be limited from any thing within? To what properties of his nature shall we refer to authorize such a conclusion? Certainly not to his self-existence; for that would lead us to say that the same reason why he exists in any place, must be a reason for his existing in every place; just as the ground of his existence at any moment, must be a ground of his having existed through all past duration, and will be a ground of his existing forever. We can easily see that he exists always, for the same reason that he exists at all; and by the same mode of reasoning, we can see that he must exist every where, for the same reason that he exists any where. I know that finite beings can have no adequate, and I may say positive idea of immensity. The very term is negative, and signifies space without limits, or space to which all limit is denied. At the same time, it is true, that we cannot divest ourselves of

the idea of immensity; nor can we conceive it possible that God should not fill immensity, without supposing an abridgment of his power.

Conceive the created universe of whatever extent you will, still the imagination comes to its limit. Multiply creation a thousand fold, and again the mind flies to its utmost verge and fancies a void still beyond. Is it reasonable to say that God does not exist without or beyond these limits? Or, which is the same thing, that the creation, finite as it must be, is the boundary of his being? Might we not rather say, in the paradoxical language of one of the ancients, that God is a circle, whose centre is every where, and whose circumference is no where? Or in plain terms, that his existence is boundless? For if this be not the case, and his existence is confined to his works, what must he have been before those works existed? And how can he now extend those works? Can he operate where he does not exist? Or does the nature and extent of his being depend upon his own volition? To suppose that there are any bounds to the divine existence, (I speak in relation to space)—is, in our apprehension, not only to set limits to his power, but to imply that he may change place,—a thing as incompatible with our ideas of his self-existence and infinitude, as it is with his immutability.

But waiving all abstract speculation, how shall we conceive of the divine immensity? “We are tied down,” says one, “to a little spot, to a mere point. But from this point let us extend our imaginations to the distant mountains, and God is there, as well as here.

From thence let us extend our thoughts over all lands, over all seas. Behold God is there likewise: and from thence beyond the bounds of the earth, beyond the moon, beyond the sun, beyond the fixed stars, beyond all the worlds, and all the matter in the universe, still God is there. Nor have you come, nor can you come, where God is not. He is above all height, below all depth, beyond all measure, and where there is nothing else, still there is God." He pervades the universe intimately and perfectly; and still the universe neither bounds him, nor becomes a part of him. There is no confusion of his nature, with that of his creatures. "He is all in all, but above all, and distinct from all. He penetrates the darkest recesses; but is yet purer than the ether, clearer than the light." He is indivisible and impassible,—pervading all his works, sustaining and acting upon them, while nothing in the universe sustains or acts upon him.

In the review of this subject, I remark,

1. That from the divine immensity, we may infer the various attributes of God;—his spirituality, his omnipotence, his immutability, his omniscience and eternity, and perhaps too his holiness or moral rectitude. We have not time to discuss this inference; but it is an axiom in theology, that where there is one divine attribute, there are all the rest; and it is inconceivable, that an infinite attribute should belong to any other than an infinite subject; and where the subject is infinite, it draws after it considerations which show that all its attributes are of the same illimitable character. But without the aid of this argument, you can easily per-

ceive that he who has immensity, can not be material, but must be spiritual; for, otherwise, he could not have called the material world into being; as two material substances can never exist in the same place at the same time. He who has immensity also, who exists before all, and above all, must be both almighty and eternal. Having nothing to limit his existence in point of space, he can have nothing to limit it in point of time; and having given existence to all, he must of course, have the control of all. For like reasons, he must know all things. He is every where to see, and consequently nothing can escape his notice. All that has existed was the result of his purpose, and all that shall exist, comes alike within the range of his counsels. It is impossible, therefore, that the past and the future should not be as open and naked to him as the present. And to a being of such knowledge, and such power, what conceivable motive can there be to depart from the dictates of his own all-searching understanding? He knows what is right, and why should he not act according to his knowledge? It is obvious that none of the motives which induce his creatures to swerve from the path of rectitude, can have any place with him. Even his natural perfections, in the very nature of the case, exclude them. All this might be clearly shown, could we descend to detail. But I consider it more important to remark,

2. That the divine immensity presents in a strong point of light, the miserable and degraded condition of those who worship a local deity. Thus it was with all the ancient idolaters—and thus it is with four-



sixths of the human race still. Instead of lifting up their eyes to a being who fills the universe with his presence, and whom the universe itself can not contain, they pay their devotions to gods as they suppose of certain hills or valleys, temples or streams. They know nothing of the greatness of the true God, nor of the unspeakable glories which invest his sacred throne. How much are they to be pitied by those on whom the true light shines! And how ready should we be to convey to them the knowledge of their infinite and adorable Creator and Redeemer! This is a charity to which the Christian world have at length awoke; and it is a charity in which every friend of the living God and of the human family will feel it a privilege to embark. Do you know that God fills immensity; that he is almighty and eternal; that he is infinitely wise and infinitely good; that he is your Creator and Lawgiver, your Redeemer and Judge; and will you not impart this knowledge to others, especially when he himself tells you that they who are ignorant of him shall *perish*? But,

3. From the divine immensity we may learn a lesson of humility. What little things are we, in comparison of the great God? Less than a mote in the beams of the sun, or a drop of water in the mighty ocean. Comparing ourselves with those beneath us, our pride is apt to gather strength; and hence it is that one poor worm is often seen proudly to elevate itself against another. But how much wiser part should we act, by contrasting our own littleness with God's unspeakable greatness! David was sometimes

occupied in comparing himself with the immensity of God's works, and we know the result was salutary. It had the effect not only to humble him, as an insignificant being, but to fill him with admiring and adoring thoughts of God, and especially of his infinite and amazing condescension. "When I consider thy heavens," saith he, "the work of thy fingers—the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained—what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" He was astonished at the insignificance of man; nor less astonished that God should regard him in the midst of his mighty works with such condescending kindness and care. The same might be the effect, were we oftener to look up to God, and consider the immensity of his being. One would think it could scarcely fail to convince us that we are less than the least of all his mercies and lighter than vanity.

4. The omnipresence of God, lays a foundation to remark both the folly and the sin of sin. What can set its folly in a stronger point of light? God has not only given us laws worthy to be obeyed, but he is always present to see whether we obey them. His all-seeing eye is never turned from us a single moment. Whether we wake or sleep, whether we weep or rejoice, whether we adore or blaspheme, he is always round about us, and his penetrating glance passes through our souls. His almighty power and everlasting mercy continually sustain us, while his justice is nigh, and ready to cut us off. Who would think under such circumstances, that we should dare to offend him?

But the poor blinded sinner beholds him not. He foolishly imagines that God is afar off,—too far to notice his transgressions, or to inflict upon him the merited punishment. Hence the language of his heart is, “Can God judge through the dark cloud? Surely God doth not see, neither will the Almighty regard it.” The presence of a servant or a child, is often sufficient to deter him from sin; but the presence of the great God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, his Maker, and Judge, is inadequate to produce this effect. What greater proof can we have of human blindness and folly? And yet it is a folly, every where to be seen, and of which thousands are habitually guilty. Why does the thief dig through houses in the dark, which he has marked out for himself in the day time? Why does the adulterer wait until the twilight, saying “no eye shall see me?” Why do sinners of any description cast around them the curtains of darkness, and think it enough, if they can but conceal their iniquity from the eyes of mortals?—why, but because they forget, or do not believe that the eye of their holy and eternal Judge is upon them? We have called this *folly*, but it is folly which borders on madness;—for can the fish escape from the waters of the ocean through which it swims, or the bird from the air through which it flies? If they can, then can the sinner hide his works from the Lord, and flee from the vengeance of him, in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being.

But the divine immensity shows not only the folly, but the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It does this by teaching the greatness and glory of that Being against

whom sin is committed, and the circumstances of atrocity, which attend it. By how much greater God is, by so much the more are we bound to respect his authority; and by so much greater is our guilt, if we violate that authority. What then must sin be, which breaks the law, and insults the throne of the great Eternal,—that Being who fills immensity with his presence, who centers in himself infinite power, and wisdom and goodness, and who has made the richest display of all his perfections, in that immeasurable kingdom which he has created and governs? Who can conceive of the infinite baseness of that conduct, which questions his authority, and tramples upon the rights of his Godhead? And yet this is the character of every sin, in whatever circumstances committed.

But the immensity of God's presence suggests a circumstance, which exceedingly aggravates the guilt of sin; it teaches us to regard it as an audacious affront to his face. Sin is not committed behind his back, or in some remote corner of the universe, never visited by his presence. Even if it were, nothing could excuse its guilt and presumption. But it is always done, while he surrounds us, and penetrates us. How deeply this enhances the demerit of sin, every one can see at a glance. For shall not the presence of his glorious Majesty restrain us? Shall we dare to offend him in the very sight of his throne; with his almighty hand stretched out before our eyes, and his authoritative voice falling upon our ears? It would be difficult to credit the fact, if we had not such painful proof of it, both in ourselves and others.

5. As the omnipresence of God argues the great guilt of sin, so it likewise demonstrates the greatness of his forbearance towards those that offend him. How amazing that his wrath should not wax hot against those, who continually trample upon his authority, without fear or remorse;—who do it, and persevere in doing it, in spite of his most solemn and earnest remonstrances,—treating his eternal Majesty as if his sceptre was but a bug-bear, and his existence a dream! We know how soon we kindle, when any one insults us to our face;—especially if it be one who is below us, and from whom we consider ourselves as entitled to more immediate regard.

But the Lord is God, and not man; else the children of iniquity would be speedily consumed. He is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth. He knows our iniquities, and all their aggravations; for they are committed under the immediate notice of his eye; but he knows also how to restrain his anger, and to display the exceeding riches of his forbearance and long-suffering. May we never mistake this for forgetfulness; nor think that his long-suffering is an act of forgiveness.

Finally. This subject presents a comfortable view of divine providence; and invites us to place our trust under the shadow of God's wings. Is he every where? He is every where, the almighty, infinitely wise and gracious God. His power and grace are as near to us as his essence, and he cannot fail to be a present helper to all those who know and put their



trust in him. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth, even forever.

Cultivate, my Christian friends, a sense of God's presence. It will enlarge your conceptions of his divine majesty. It will fortify your minds against temptation—it will encourage and strengthen you in duty,—and in times of darkness and trouble, cause your consolations to abound. Trust in God, and you will have no cause to fear, though the earth should be removed and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea.

## SERMON II.

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### GOD'S THOUGHTS AND WAYS ABOVE OURS.

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ISAIAH, LV., 8, 9.

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways saith the Lord. For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

There needs no argument to show that there is an infinite disparity between God's thoughts, and the thoughts of his creatures;—between his ways and their ways. Every one is prepared to admit with the prophet, that, as the Heavens are high above the Earth, so are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. And yet, strange as it may seem, there is a proneness in us all, to judge of God by ourselves;—to measure his wisdom by our wisdom; his righteousness by our righteousness; and his goodness and mercy by ours. Hence it comes to pass that there is so little fear of his majesty, so little confidence in his government, so little faith in his promise, and so little hope in his mercy.

The wicked would tremble at the apprehension of his wrath, if they did not either doubt his existence, or fancy he was one altogether like themselves, having as

little hatred for iniquity, and as little concern for the maintenance of his authority as they: and the good would cheerfully fly into his arms, at all times when evils pressed or dangers threatened, if they did not compare God with themselves, and entertain low and unbecoming thoughts of his being, his attributes, or his designs. To meet men at this point, and to remove from them that jealousy and distrust, which is too apt to rise, when he comes to them even with messages of mercy, the Lord declares that *his thoughts are not their thoughts, nor his ways their ways.*

He had just said by the prophet, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." But he knew their unbelief would consider this as impossible,—or at least as stretching so far beyond the bounds of probability, as not seriously to merit their attention, or offer a suitable ground for their hopes. He points them, therefore, to the wide difference between his thoughts and their thoughts, his ways and their ways, and illustrates it by a comparison which instantly strikes and overpowers the mind;—a comparison whose beauty and sublimity nothing can surpass. "*For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" Not only the wide difference between God's thoughts, and ours, but their transcendent excellence above ours, is strongly portrayed by this beautiful similitude. We raise our eyes to the starry Heavens, beyond which human sight cannot penetrate:

we behold the celestial orbs, with their sparkling and cheering light, spread out over our habitations; but at such an immense distance above us, as to baffle our conceptions the moment we attempt to compute, or even to imagine it. Yet *there*, we behold as in a glass, the immeasurable height, the boundless extent, the salutary influence, of the mercy of Jehovah. *There* we see an instructive emblem of the infinite superiority of all God's thoughts and ways to ours,—a superiority, which should render our confidence in him the most unshaken, and our worship of him the most humble and profound.

But the point to which I wish more especially to direct your attention is, That *God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts, but that a wide and astonishing difference exists between them.* By God's thoughts, we intend not his perceptions merely, but his counsels, his purposes and designs:—and by his *ways*, the execution of his purposes in the various operations of his hand, whether in the creation, preservation or government of the world. God's ways are the interpretation of his thoughts and designs. His thoughts are not our thoughts, we remark,

1. As there is no succession in them: they all exist in his own infinite mind, at the same time, and without any variation of their order, or the least shadow of change. He has no new thoughts, and none, which are not at all times equally present. Hence his view of objects is always the same, and that view absolutely perfect. It is altogether different with us. Our thoughts follow each other in rapid succession, and are never the same at one moment that they are at another. Many

of the same thoughts do indeed return; but it is always with some new combinations, and with some diversity in their character and order: and from this source it is, that our views and impressions of objects are so fluctuating, even where there is no radical change. Our thoughts may fitly be compared to a stream, whose waters flow on in constant succession, but whose depth and breadth, though not perpetually the same, are at all times extremely limited; while God's thoughts are better resembled to an ocean, where the stream disappears, and where there is neither bottom nor shore. Which leads me to remark,

2. That God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, because they embrace an infinitely greater number of objects; they encompass the universe with all its parts, with its infinite variety of movements; and *that* not through any given period only, but from the first moment of created existence, through the boundless ages of an unwasting duration. Not a leaf in the forest, not a grain of sand upon the shore, not a mote which glitters in the sunbeam, not the merest atom in all God's works, which is not the object of his thoughts, and the subject of his eternal counsels. He sees it through every part of its duration. He presides over all its changes, he determines all its results, whether single or combined.

How different is it with us. Our thoughts extend but to a few things, even in the world which we inhabit, while we are left almost in total ignorance of the universe which surrounds us. Not only are we creatures of yesterday, and comparatively know no-



thing, but our sphere of observation is extremely circumscribed; we have contemplated as yet but the minutest portion of God's works. Like some insects which never travel beyond the leaf on which they are formed, we are, in a great measure, strangers to that infinitude of objects, which spread through boundless regions on every side. Nor is this all; how imperfect are our conceptions of those objects which pass under our notice. After all our research, we see but the mere surface of things, and know nothing perfectly, in its nature, qualities and relations. But as for God, his way is perfect. All things lie open, and naked to his view. He sees and pervades them in the most intimate and perfect manner. Hence we observe,

3. That God's thoughts and purposes never change;—a circumstance which renders them widely different from ours. Our schemes of operation are seldom laid with such intelligence as not to undergo considerable modification, as new events unfold, or as a deeper investigation presents the subject more fully before us. Often we are obliged to abandon our plans altogether.

It is far otherwise with the Almighty: His counsels are laid with such deep and unfathomable skill as never to require alteration. He sees the end from the beginning. He has a perfect knowledge of all that does, or will, or can exist; and therefore with him, there is no variableness or shadow of turning; there is no motive to change. His views being the same, his purposes must be unalterable. Hence we read, "He is of one mind, and who can turn him?" There be many

thoughts in man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.

4. We notice another striking and important difference between God's thoughts or purposes and ours,— he is never disappointed. All his purposes go into full effect. That which he determines, he accomplishes; and accomplishes at the very time and by the very means, he before appointed. Nothing of all his eternal counsels, whether great or small, fails of its existence, its manner or its end.

How extremely different with us. We purpose, but often our purpose proves abortive; we do not effect the thing we intend, and even when we do, the event not unfrequently disappoints us. Things continually cross our expectations; what we have often dreaded perhaps never comes to pass, and what we have fully expected and desired, is never realized. Nothing is more common than for our hopes to expand with eagerness and delight on some future good, when nothing but the grief of disappointment, and the darkness and bitterness of despair are before us. To day our vessel leaves the shore, with wide spread sails and prosperous winds: no dark cloud lowers in the horizon, to excite our fear or dampen our joy; but ere to-morrow's sun our sky is overcast; the winds howl; the storm descends; and we are engulfed in the mighty waves. But with God, every thing moves on in an even course, according to his wise and eternal counsels. The events that occur, so far from crossing his expectations, only present a regular developement of the purposes of his own infinite and unsearchable mind.

Shall I remark,

5. That we find a great difference between God's thoughts and ours, in the different ends which are pursued by him and by us, even where the same events are concerned. God's purposes and ours in this respect often run counter to each other. We intend one thing by a certain course; he intends another; and therein displays the depth of his eternal counsels. It is thus that the wise are often taken in their own craftiness, and made to minister to purposes and designs, which they would willingly and with all their might, have contributed to destroy. See an illustration of this in the history of Joseph. His brethren sold him into Egypt, with a view to prevent the accomplishment of his dreams. They did, however, but fulfil the divine intimation by the very steps which they took to counteract it. They meant evil against Joseph, but God meant it for good; intending thereby to nourish Jacob's family in a time of famine, and to save much people alive; and thus to pave the way for that illustrious manifestation of his own glory, which stood connected with the future destination of the Israelites.

We see the same thing illustrated in the conduct of the proud Assyrian king, whom God styles the rod of his anger and the staff of his indignation. He had laid waste Israel and other nations, not with a view to chastise them for their sins, or to fulfil any purpose of the Almighty in regard to them, but solely to minister to his pride, his covetousness and his ambition. His views were totally different from God's; and therefore when God said, "I will send him against an hypocri-

tical nation and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire in the streets," he adds, "Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so—but it is in his heart to destroy and to cut off nations not a few."

The very interesting fact of our Lord's death presents a similar illustration of the same truth. Judas had his ends in betraying Christ; the Jews had theirs in accusing him and demanding his crucifixion; Pilate had his in giving sentence against him contrary to his own conscience, and the importunity of his bosom friend; the soldiers had theirs in executing the orders of their governor; and the powers of darkness doubtless had theirs, different probably from all the rest, in stirring up and pushing forward all the guilty actors in this scene; and God had his, not only in permitting, but in so ordering and disposing events as to make the death of Christ certain, and all the circumstances of it precisely what they were. For we are expressly told "that they did nothing to his holy child Jesus, but what his hand and counsel had afore determined to be done." What can impress us more that God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts, than such deep and unsearchable workings of his providence, where the instruments he raises up pursue ends totally different from his, and yet in the issue do but the more effectually accomplish his own immutable counsels.

6. God's ways and thoughts are very different from ours, in the estimate he puts upon objects and events which stand related to our happiness. There are things

which we deem of the utmost importance to ourselves and others, which God, who takes all the circumstances into view, regards as no favor at all, and which therefore he will not grant or continue, however importunately we may desire them; and there are things which we deprecate as the greatest of all evils, which God nevertheless deems necessary to our highest good, and which he resolves shall take place, whatever may be our prayers or wishes to the contrary. We have reflected but little upon our own case, or that of our friends, if we have not seen this remark often verified. Most of our afflictions give us an important lesson on this subject, always indeed when they are of the nature of a gracious moral discipline. They consist in the privation of some apparent good, or in the infliction of some positive evil; but whenever they take place, we have occasion to remark how differently God judges of things from what we do. But if God's ways are different from ours in things which are undesirable to us, and contrary to our wishes, they are certainly not less so,

7. In things that are dark and mysterious. And O how often does he pursue a path which we can not trace! How often, both in his works of creation and providence, does he do things great and wonderful, and past finding out! I do not now speak of things whose hidden causes we can not investigate, or whose principles and relations equally baffle our research; but of things which apparently contradict our reason; which to say the least, are precisely the reverse of what we should have expected, antecedent to their occurrence.

In casting our eyes over the face of this world, how



many things do we meet with which astonish and confound us, in the formation of the earth, and in the character and condition of its inhabitants? Who would have expected so much water on the surface of the globe; so many inaccessible mountains,—the region of eternal frost and barrenness,—so many vast and frightful deserts, unsuited for the habitation of either man or beast? Who would have expected to find so many noxious plants and animals, whose effect seems to us little else than to mar the other works of God? Why is man an enemy to his Maker? Who could have believed prior to the event, and reasoning only from the holiness and goodness of God, that sin ever could have found its way into the moral kingdom of Jehovah? But here it is, and here it is likely to be in a greater or less degree to all eternity. How strange is it, that so great a portion of the human race, probably more than one-half, are cut off before they are five years of age! How strange that, since a Saviour is provided, so few of the human race have yet been brought to the knowledge of his character and work,—that more than four-fifths still remain in a state of heathenish darkness! How passing strange that by far the greater part, where the word of life is dispensed, go down to perdition, age after age, in all the madness of impenitence, and the guilt of unbelief!

It is contrary to all our modes of reasoning and judging, and what seems no less dark and mysterious now, than it did thousands of years ago, that the young, the wise, the virtuous, the useful and the happy, should often be plucked away from the most interesting stations

and relations in society, while those of a very different character, whose lives perhaps are a burden to themselves and a heavy trial to others, are suffered to drag out to a surprising length their apparently useless and miserable existence. But there is no end to the mysterious dispensations of divine providence, all of which proclaim his ways not to be as our ways, and his thoughts not as our thoughts.

8. God's ways are not only widely *different* from ours but infinitely *above* them. They have an excellence which no finite thought can conceive, and no comparison illustrate. All that he does and all that he purposes, is infinitely wise, holy, just and good. Nothing can frustrate his wisdom or disconcert his infinitely glorious designs. He never errs in judgment; his truth is firmer than the everlasting mountains; his benevolence is unwearied and expansive, embracing the highest good of his great kingdom; his righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and his mercy, infinitely tender, endureth to all generations. It was this glorious attribute more especially, that he intended to set before us, when he said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." And well, my dear brethren is it for us that his mercy stretches itself so infinitely above and beyond ours. What could we hope for, vile and polluted as we are, if we had not the mercy of a God to repair to? This David saw and felt, when, under the expectation of being corrected for his sins,

he said "Let me fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of man." And this was all his hope, when, smarting under a sense of his amazing guilt, he cried, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."

It would be an interesting part of this subject, did our time admit of it, to show wherein God's mercy differs from our mercy, and infinitely transcends it;—that in the choice of its objects,—in the measures it adopts towards them, and above all, in its endurance under the vilest provocations, and in the incalculable blessings it bestows, it is a mercy exceedingly different from that which dwells in the bosoms of men, and is as much above it, as the heavens are high above the earth.

Let us close with some brief reflections.

First: Since God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts, but infinitely above them, how great the criminality and the folly of arraigning his proceedings and judging of them at our tribunal. What is short sighted man,—a creature of yesterday, that he should think of sitting in judgment upon the ways of God? Can a child enter into the concerns of a mighty empire? Can he decide with correctness upon the measures of government, necessary to be adopted, in managing those concerns? Can he say what would be wise, or what unwise, in a policy embracing interests so vast, so various and so complicated? Could he even understand that policy, should the reasons of it be set forth in language intelligible to others? Equally incompetent is man to judge of the wisdom of him who

is infinite, and to scan the proceedings of a government which has the universe for the field of its operations, and an eternity in which to develop the full effect of its designs. Instead of questioning, therefore, either the wisdom or goodness of God in things which we can not understand, how much more becoming our condition to fall at his feet and adore!

Secondly: Since God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, limited to a narrow sphere, but embrace the whole system of creatures and events, the most minute, as well as the most enlarged, we should be careful not to forget God, but humbly acknowledge him in all our ways. As no event is too insignificant to become the subject of his eternal counsels, so none is too small to be followed with amazing consequences of good or evil, as his providence shall direct. This is a sufficient reason for casting our care on the Lord; and even in the most trivial circumstances of our lives, begging for the guidance and protection of his most gracious and powerful hand.

This thought should impress us the more, as we have come near to the close of the present, and shall, if God spare us, shortly enter upon the events of a new year. Ah, who can tell what is before us—what scenes of darkness and perplexity, and what need we shall stand in of being guided by his gracious counsels, and having our hope firmly fixed in his abounding love.

Thirdly: As God's ways are extremely different from ours, and often marked by the most unsearchable proceedings, we ought to beware of imagining that we are his friends, merely because we are favoured with

great outward privileges, and the Lord employs us as the instruments of signal good to others. His thoughts and counsels are very deep. He raised up Jehu, and set him upon the throne of the house of Israel to execute his wrath upon the family of Ahab, but he did not admit him to the secret of his covenant. For aught that appears, he was finally abandoned of God and utterly cast away. The Lord raised up Judas, introduced him into the family of Christ, endowed him with miraculous gifts, and sent him forth to preach the gospel; and after all had no pleasure in him, but left him to die a horrible death and to go to his own place.

Let us then be cautious of inferring our interest in God's favour from any external privileges or blessings which may attend us. The only proof we can have that we are entitled to his friendship is that we love him and keep his commandments.

Fourthly: If God's thoughts are not only diverse from ours, but infinitely above them, it ought not to surprise us that the wheels of his providence often move high and dreadful, and that his paths are in the deep waters where his footsteps are not known. How can it be otherwise, since his providence embraces a scheme of government so widely extended in its objects and which is to endure forever?

Fifthly: If God's thoughts and ways are not as ours, but infinitely above them, devising and carrying forward a glorious system of operation throughout his immeasurable kingdom, how unspeakably happy are they who are numbered among his friends. Their highest interests are as secure as eternal power and



wisdom can make them. Nothing can fall out, aside or beyond his wise and holy counsels;—nothing which shall not ultimately advance the happiness of his people and the glory of his name. Here is a strong foundation, my dear brethren, for your hopes. Here is repose and quiet for you amidst the storms and troubles of this adverse world. God is on the throne, and under his direction all things will work together for good to them that love him. You are embraced in the folds of his everlasting covenant.

Finally: Since God has a government wide as the universe and durable as eternity, rich in counsel and unfathomable in design, what new and wonderful scenes are the friends of God destined to witness in the progress of their being: nay, what a glorious place will Heaven be when God shall unveil to his children in a succession which shall know no end, the high and glorious purposes concealed in his bosom from eternity,—purposes which have been gradually unfolding in the creation and government of the world. Christian, surely it doth not yet appear what thou shalt be, but this know,—that it shall be thine everlasting employment to explore the works, to admire the perfections, to celebrate the praises of a covenant keeping God.

## SERMON III.

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### GOD'S FAVOUR TO THE UPRIGHT.

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PSALM LXXXIV., 11.

*“For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”*

The author of this psalm had been excluded, for a time, from the tabernacle of the Lord; but under what particular circumstances, it does not appear. It is certain however, that he deeply felt the privation, and longed with ardent desire for another opportunity of waiting upon God in his sanctuary. He seemed to envy the very swallows, which made their nests in the summit of the building; while he pronounced those blessed, in an eminent degree, who by their frequent visits to the house of God, might be said to dwell in his courts. He knew, by his own experience, what joy thrilled their hearts, while they uttered the mighty acts of the Lord, —and what inward strength was imparted to them, while they attended upon the institutions of his appointment. “Blessed,” says he, “is the man, whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them; who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.” Yes, blessed are they

whose thirsty souls are refreshed by the waters of the sanctuary. "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." And why? Was the service delightful? Was it profitable? He answers in the words of our text—"For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." The words need no comment; they express clearly and strongly the safety and felicity of God's true worshippers. God will be all to them which they need, for time and eternity;—a sun to enlighten them by day, a shield to protect them against every rising danger, an all sufficient friend in every season of want or sorrow, granting every needful succor in this world, and everlasting glory in the next. But that we may mistake neither their character nor their privileges, let us consider more particularly who they are, that, in the sense of our text, may be said to *walk uprightly*, and then notice the *blessings* which the Psalmist here attaches to their condition.

1. Who are they, that may be said to *walk uprightly*?

We embrace in this description those who are upright in heart and upright in life; whose general course of action accords with the law of duty laid down in the Bible, and whose inward principles and motives are regulated by the same rule. In the language of the world indeed, we often speak of a man as upright,

when nothing more is intended, than that he is just and fair in his dealings, correct and honorable in his general intercourse, in opposition to duplicity, shuffling and fraud. We vouch nothing for his piety, nor even for his sobriety and self-command. He may be upright in the common acceptation of the term, without possessing either of these virtues. But not so in the language of the scriptures. Here an upright man is a truly good man; one that fears God and keeps his commandments. Uprightness is but another name for rectitude of action, the law of God being the standard with which the action is compared. Where there is no degree of conformity to this law, there is no degree of uprightnes; nay, where there is not a prevailing conformity, the truly upright man cannot be found. Men have their characters given to them in the Bible, not from a single act, but from a series of acts. They are good, where the course of action is good; and they are evil, where the course of action is evil. Hence, in our text, they who are the subjects of the divine favour, are said to walk uprightly. Walking is a continued action; and in a good measure uniform. It supposes purpose, and steadiness of purpose; and is upon both accounts, a just and appropriate figure to express one's habits of life. We must keep in mind, however, that these habits are not merely external: they proceed from inward and corresponding principles; and in the case of those who walk uprightly, they proceed from true love to God, and from a just regard to the welfare of his kingdom. I could not better express the character of an upright man, than by affirming these three things concerning

him. First—He keeps God's commands from choice; they are not grievous to him. Secondly—He keeps all God's commands, without selecting one in distinction from another. His aim is universal obedience, and that, because every part of God's law is equally sacred, having been ordained by equal authority. And, Thirdly—He thus obeys, not at particular seasons, or on special occasions, where interest or other circumstances favour it, but as an habitual and prevalent course of action. It is his main business—his life. With this view of those who may be said to walk uprightly, let us, in the

2. Next place notice the *blessings* which the Psalmist, in the words of our text, attaches to their condition. "The Lord God is a sun, and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

*The Lord God is a sun.* He is so to the upright, inasmuch as he sheds light upon their path, while travelling through this gloomy wilderness. Without this light—the light of his holy word, they would not know what to believe, or what to do, or would know but imperfectly. But they open his word, and there they discover those great and precious truths, which otherwise would have been but partially revealed, or altogether unknown. There they see what a great and glorious being God is; how holy, wise, just, merciful and true. There they learn the nature and extent of his law, and the great ends of his moral government. There sin is seen, and the awful punishment which God has annexed to it, and there above all, they learn

that God can and will forgive sin, and the terms on which he will forgive it. In a word, life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel, and they see distinctly what men have to hope or fear in relation to a future world.

But does not God's word shed this light upon all, where it comes, whether upright or not? In one important sense surely it does. It is in many respects like the sun, a common privilege. But what we assert is, that it works this blessed effect in a peculiar manner in relation to the upright. They receive its testimony with greater cordiality, and more willingly yield themselves to be guided by its counsels. Taught by the Spirit, the very same Spirit which dictated the word, they are more clearly enabled to discern the truths it contains, and have a far deeper impression of their importance. "They have an unction," as St. John says, "from the Holy One, and know all things."

God enlightens his people, moreover, in the duties they are to perform, as well as in the truths they are to believe. His word not only lays down general rules by which their conduct is to be regulated, but it descends to innumerable particulars. It marks out their duty clearly, to God, to their fellow creatures, and to themselves. In this respect the entrance of God's word giveth light, making the path of duty so plain that he that runs may read.

It deserves, however, to be remarked, that the light which God sheds upon the minds of his people, is not merely speculative; it informs the understanding, but



at the same time, it also persuades the heart. The Spirit of the Lord is a candle, which searcheth all the inward powers, and in the light of which the spiritual beauty of divine things is discerned. Without this all remains dark and unattractive. Men may know what the truth is, and have a rational conviction of duty, without cordially approving of the one, or delighting in the other. It is no unusual thing indeed, to see a well informed mind connected with a deeply depraved heart. But God, in becoming a sun to his people, exerts an influence upon the affections, as well as upon the understanding: the heart is won at the same time that the reasoning faculty or the judgment becomes satisfied.

But further — God is a sun to his people, as he cheers and consoles them in the land of their pilgrimage. It is one of the natural effects of the sun, to comfort and gladden the animal world. Hence Solomon says, “Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. “All nature feels the enlivening influence of this glorious luminary; and hence it becomes a just and beautiful emblem of the God of all grace and comfort, who, by his diffusive benevolence, not only gladdens the hearts of his creatures generally, but in a special manner, cheers and consoles his people, under the various trials and discouragements which attend them while sojourning in this vale of tears. We have all experienced the delight which the sun occasions when it breaks through a cloud, after a long and gloomy storm; when every object around us, and especially every thing

which hath breath, seems to hail with gladness his returning beams. This is but a faint image of the joy which is felt, when God lifts up the light of his countenance upon the darkened and desponding soul; when the clouds of fear, of guilt, of sorrow, are dissipated, and a sweet serenity takes possession of the heart, and the happy subject is enabled to run with increased alacrity the way of God's commands. This was the light for which the Psalmist often prayed in his darkness; this was the light for which he waited and longed, when he said in the one hundred and thirtieth psalm, "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning, I say more than they that watch for the morning."

But it is not merely under spiritual darkness and trouble that God sheds the cheering rays of divine consolation into the soul. He is the light and joy of his people, in outward darkness and tribulation;—when worldly interests fail, enemies multiply, dangers press; when friends prove unfaithful, or are cut off by death; when want or disease stares them in the face, and troubles of various kinds gather around them like the sea, and threaten to swallow them up. Then it is that the Lord is their light and salvation, comforting and sustaining them by his word and his Spirit, and rendering them superior to every earthly trial.

It would be easy to point you to examples of this in the history of his suffering people. How was it with Paul and his companions in the gospel ministry? "They were troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not for-

saken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in their body." They had forsaken home and friends, houses and lands, and commenced a pilgrimage through barbarous nations and climes, exposed to want and suffering and peril in every form; nay they actually endured the most distressing privations, and the most wanton cruelties. Besides hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, they were publicly beaten with rods, loaded with chains, and thrust into dark and gloomy dungeons. Every where were they hated, and their characters traduced: they were treated as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things. "But none of these things moved them; neither counted they their lives dear unto themselves, if they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Nay, we are told that as their sufferings increased for Christ, so their consolations abounded by Christ. They had an inward support, which rendered them superior to every outward calamity, and enabled them to face even death itself, in its most terrible forms, without anxiety or dismay. The consequence was, that, instead of fainting under their accumulated sufferings, they counted it all joy that they were deemed worthy to endure them for the name of Jesus. The same consolations have been experienced by others in every age of the church, in trials which they have suffered for Christ's sake, as well as under the more ordinary calamities of life. But as often as this has hap-

pened, God has proved himself a sun to his people, chasing away the darkness of fear and of sorrow, and filling them with the light of joy and peace.

Let me say, once more, that God is a sun to those who walk uprightly, inasmuch as he is the source of their vigor, and enables them to perform with promptness and resolution the duties of their particular stations.

How quickly would the vegetable kingdom languish, without the vivifying influence of the sun! Many of earth's richest productions would utterly fail, without his warm and invigorating beams. So in the moral and spiritual world, nothing good flourishes without the genial influence of the moral sun. God must shine upon his people, or they will languish and die. They have no strength or sufficiency of themselves, but all their sufficiency is of Him. This the saints of the Old Testament well understood, as also the apostles under the New. Hence, says David, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer,—my God, my strength in whom I will trust,—my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." And again, "It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hind's feet, and sitteth me upon my high places." He felt his entire dependance on God, to accomplish any of the undertakings in which he was employed, and especially to perform the duties pertaining to his religious vocation.

The same was the case with Paul and his brethren. They acknowledged all their sufficiency to be of God,

and continually looked to him for strength suited to their day. They kept fully in view the solemn declaration of Christ to his disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing," and acting on this well known truth, they earnestly sought for themselves, and for their brethren, strength from on high, praying that God would strengthen them with all might by his Spirit in the inner man according to the exceeding greatness of his power. There is not an upright man upon earth, who does not feel and acknowledge a similar dependance, and cry unto God for a supply of the quickening Spirit, to strengthen, and sustain him in his course; and blessed be God, not one of his people shall cry unto him in vain. This consoling promise reaches them all—"They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength—they shall mount up on wings, as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Feeble indeed, sore broken, they would be, and never hold on their way, if the strength of Israel was not on their side. Nay, they might sit down in despair, if God did not prevent them by his power and grace—working in them to will, as well as to do; and thus being beforehand with them, as the efficient cause of their salvation. He begins the work of grace in their souls, as a matter of free and undeserved favour; he carries it on much in the same manner, and has pledged himself to bring it to a glorious consummation. Grace will complete what grace begins, and in every stage of it there will be manifested a power no less wonderful than that which raised up Christ from the dead, and set him at God's right hand in the heavenly places.

God is then a sun to his people, as he enlightens their minds, and directs their path; as he cheers and comforts them on their journey, and as he sustains and invigorates their steps. But the Psalmist tells us,

That He is also their shield. And he is so chiefly, as he is their defence, from the numerous enemies which they have to encounter. To Abraham, you know, God said, "I am thy shield," and this covenant language he still holds to all who by faith are the children of Abraham. A shield, literally speaking, was a broad piece of armour, carried by the ancients, in their left hand, or on their left arm, to defend them against the darts, and other missile weapons of their enemies. But when applied to God, the term denotes that he is a sure protection or defence; not from one kind of weapon or another, but from every species of danger incident to those who are the objects of his special care. Here they are assailed from a thousand causes: they have enemies without and enemies within; and these enemies are as subtle as they are powerful. They fight with every weapon which ingenuity or malice can devise. But no weapon formed against them can prosper. God himself is a broad and powerful shield, who never fails to interpose for their protection. Evils indeed are suffered to arise;—but none which a faithful God does not perceive will be for the best;—none, which he will not eventually overrule for their good, as well as for his own glory. From all ultimate evil they are absolutely safe; and this surely is as much as they can rationally



desire: more would be incompatible with their highest, their eternal welfare.

How happy, then, must they be, who have God both for their sun and their shield! For the Psalmist adds that "the Lord will give grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

He will give *grace*; grace to pardon their sins, to subdue their rebellious tempers and to transform them by degrees into his own blessed image. He will give grace; the grace of his paternal benediction, comprehending in it all needful good for soul and body in this world, with an exemption from all evil, not necessary to promote their highest interest. And he will give *glory*, crowning all the blessings he bestows in this life with everlasting honour and felicity in the next. Is not this enough? Are not our minds overwhelmed with the riches of the divine goodness? Such is the plenitude of God's promise to them that walk uprightly; a promise which the Psalmist received with unwavering confidence. And why cannot we also, make it the ground of our confidence and joy? It is the same in substance, with all those great and precious promises, which God has made to his people, and which he has confirmed by an oath. It must, and will, go into full effect. Hear it, my brethren, with corresponding faith and gratitude. "The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

But though I wish you to believe the promise with

the firmest assurance, I do not wish you to believe it yours, without evidence. This would be, to the last degree, irrational and dangerous. For if you are not among those that walk uprightly, the Lord God is no sun to you; nor will he be your shield. He has not promised to give you either grace or glory. But continuing as you are, you are exposed to be driven out of the earth with a curse, and to fall into everlasting misery.

I exhort such then, as are doubtful whether they are interested in this great and precious promise, to seek to have their doubts resolved, by ascertaining whether they are upright;—upright in spirit and in action:—whether they make the law of God, the rule of their conduct, and the principles it inculcates, the motives of their actions.

Dear brethren, let none of us be deceived. But if you have the comfort to know that you are included among them that walk uprightly,—survey this promise in all its richness and amplitude:—think of it as reaching through time and through eternity, and embracing all that you can desire for both worlds. Lift up your eyes to God continually, as your sun and your shield;—trust in that mercy and in that truth which hath said, “He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” In every season of outward darkness and trial, let this promise be as an anchor to your soul—sure and steadfast; for God, who hath spoken, can not lie. No matter how dark and terrible the tempest which hangs over you, no matter how high the billows rise, on which your frail

bark is tossed,—no earthly power can swing you from your mooring, or break that hold which you have on God, the eternal Rock. He has pledged himself to secure and defend you from all final evil; and as soon may omnipotence be defeated, or unchangeableness fail, as any evil arise which he will not overrule for your good, or any good thing be withheld, which would subserve the purpose of your highest felicity.

But there are not a few present perhaps, who know that however rich and consoling this promise is to others, it does not belong to them; and that it does not belong to them, because they do not belong to the upright. Ah! then my dear friends, what is your relation to God? You are the creatures of his power, and the subjects of his moral government;—and if he has not promised to be a sun and a shield to you, what is the language which he holds? Your own hearts answer. It is the language of threatening and rebuke. He regards you as his enemies, and declares his readiness, if you turn not, utterly to destroy. Oh be alarmed by the terrors, be allured by the mercies of God, to cast in your lot with his people while it is an accepted time.

## SERMON IV.

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### LIFE A PILGRIMAGE.

A NEW YEAR'S SERMON.

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GENESIS XLVII., 8, 9.

*“And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been; and have not attained unto the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.”*

The patriarchs were distinguished for their longevity. Abraham died at the age of an hundred and seventy-five years; Isaac at the age of an hundred and eighty; and Jacob it seems was an hundred and thirty years old when he was introduced to Pharaoh, and did not end his days until seventeen years afterwards. And yet they all considered their lives as a pilgrimage; and *that* not merely nor chiefly because they were sojourners in the land of Canaan, which was afterwards to be given to their posterity, but because life was short and they felt themselves to be at a distance from their inheritance on high. They believed in another and better world,—in a heavenly country, where their spirits, at the end of their mortal course, would enter into rest and find a sweet and everlasting home.

Their condition upon earth was peculiarly calculated to remind them that here they had no continuing city. They were literally strangers in the land in which they sojourned, dwelling in tabernacles here and there, as their convenience or safety required. But it was the state of their hearts more than their outward condition, which gave to them the character of pilgrims and made them look out for a city to come,—a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. They were men of faith,—“and having seen the promises afar off, they were persuaded of them and embraced them,” and therefore “they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” The unseen things of another world, which the promises reveal, appeared to them real, of unspeakable grandeur, and of endless duration. No wonder then, that life should dwindle to a span and that they should consider it only as a pilgrimage to their Father’s house above.

Jacob who had been literally more of a sojourner than any of them, and whose life had been filled up with a greater number of painful incidents, says to Pharaoh, “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been;” and yet he was then at the advanced period of an hundred and thirty. We call a man old who has reached his fourscore years. But here was one who had arrived at six score and ten;—venerable for his aspect no doubt, but with such care-worn countenance and other marks of years, as to lead Pharaoh to suspect that he was born in some distant age, and to put the question, “How old art thou?” The answer shows that in some distant age it was, and that he was

truly a man of other times; for where were those who began the journey of life with him? Most of them, if not all, were slumbering together in the dust. He had lived to bury a world; and many of them the dearest friends of his heart. And now, when he looks back upon life, long as it was, compared with the measure of ours, he could call it nothing but a pilgrimage made up of a few days, and these full of evil. Not but that he had been the subject of many mercies, of which he preserved a deep and affecting remembrance. The God of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, had been with him and kept him and fed him all his life long; the angel of the everlasting covenant had redeemed him from evil; still he felt that life had been short and full of trouble,—only a painful journey to that heavenly country, which he had in prospect, and where alone he expected to find a true and satisfying rest.

The question put to him by Pharaoh, “How old art thou?” naturally sent his thoughts through all the various stages of life, and brought up many a distressing incident which had embittered the days of his pilgrimage. He could not forget his troubles with Esau, while in his father’s house; the long and painful exile which those troubles occasioned while he sojourned with Laban at Padan-Aram, where, for more than twenty years he was subjected to the greatest hardships in contending with the avarice and injustice of that unprincipled man. There the drought consumed by day, and the frost withered by night. He could not forget the fears and alarms which attended him on his return from that country, both when pursued by



Laban and when met by Esau. These were occurrences of so striking and eventful a character, as never to be erased from his mind. To say nothing of the contentions and vexations within the circle of his own family, which must have grieved and distressed such a heart as Jacob's, how was his soul pierced at the conduct of Simeon and Levi, who were guilty of the basest treachery and cruelty towards the Shechemites! How must he have wept over Reuben, over Judah, and others in his family, whose immoral conduct was like a dagger in his heart!

The early death of his beloved Rachel, the unutterable anguish of his soul in the supposed death of Joseph, with his trial at parting with Benjamin and Simeon, were events which Jacob could never forget, and which served, with innumerable other circumstances common to our suffering nature, to characterize his days as evil. But after all, who would not like to come to the close of his pilgrimage with as pleasing a retrospect, and with as bright hopes, as the good old Patriarch enjoyed? Methinks I see him standing before Pharaoh, with locks silvered over with age, and leaning upon the top of his staff: bearing the marks of more than a hundred winters, and as many summers; but still his spirit is strong within him. He recollects the sufferings and dangers through which he has passed, and how the God of almighty power and everlasting mercy, by his watchful and gracious providence, has sustained him and brought him well nigh to the close of his journey. He has come down into Egypt at the call of God, by whose immediate inspiration he was directed, and

doubts not, that the same almighty Being will bring him up again, with an increased household, at the appointed time. He sees that the hour is at hand, when he shall go the way of all the earth; but he believes that while his body shall sleep with his fathers, in the cave of Machpelah, his spirit will join their spirits, in the city of God, which is above. His faith is of too strong and special a character to admit of any doubts; his virtues have been too well tried to throw any shade over his future prospects. He is a saint of the Lord, drawing near to the end of his course, and soon to receive the crown of righteousness, the palm of victory. Can a more venerable or soul-inspiring object be presented to our attention? Who would not desire to be a pilgrim like him, whether his days shall be few or many; and to come at last to the end of his journey, with equal marks of the divine approbation, and with as fair a prospect of the heavenly inheritance? But can this be, my brethren, without a deep and affecting remembrance that this life is only a pilgrimage? Can this be without cordially embracing the promises, and really seeking that better country, which the promises disclose?

1. Let us then, (while we are entering upon the new year), summon our attention to some of the facts and circumstances which remind us that this life is but a pilgrimage. I say *remind us*, because none of us will have the folly to pretend that we have already reached a settled and permanent abode. Adopt what creed we may concerning futurity, there can be no dispute about our stay in this world. Every man knows

that he is the certain heir of mortality; that if neither disease nor accident cut him off, the silent stream of time will soon bear him away. The fate of all preceding generations forever settles the question that after the succession of a few short years at most, he must close his eyes upon these heavens, and this earth, to lie down in the dust. What then is he now but a stranger, and sojourner upon the earth, as all his fathers were? But there are various facts and circumstances calculated to remind us of this passing state of things. Whatever indicates to us the progress of time, is a solemn memento that we are hastening to our end. Our bounds are set that we cannot pass. The whole of our mortal existence is embraced in the compass of a few short years, diminishing constantly, as the wheels of time go round. Every rising and setting sun proclaims with mighty voice that our days are numbering, and will soon be gone. Each returning season, and especially the close of the revolving year, holds a language on this subject of deep and awfully monitory import. If the clock strike, it is to tell us mortals that another hour has passed never to return; and even the pendulum vibrating seconds gives us warning that time is ever flowing on, and as it flows bears us onward to the ocean of eternity.

What is the growth of plants, of trees, of animals, together with their decay, but a silent monitor of the progress we are making in life's journey, and of the certainty of its termination? Look which way we will, and some object meets us which tells us of our departure from this world. The fleeting clouds, the

changing face of the sky, the falling meteor, the ever variable winds, the storm that rushes and the bright sunshine that follows, day and night, cold and heat, summer and winter, seed time and harvest,—nay the whole aspect of nature, reads a solemn lesson to us upon our mutable condition, and reminds us that the time of our departure is at hand.

Nor do the changes in ourselves, whether in body or mind, address us in terms less striking and prophetic. Are we ripening into vigour, or sinking into decline? The warning is substantially the same: it tells us that every thing is moving forward with the strong and irresistible march of time. True it is that marks of decay speak with a louder voice, and the greater will be our madness not to take the warning, when given by the grey hairs which are here and there upon us; by the furrowed visage, the faltering accent, the tardy, feeble, uncertain step, with their usual concomitants, dimness of sight, feebleness of spirits, and other bodily and mental infirmities. For what are all these things but precursors of our end;—changes of the most ominous character, giving assurance that the earthly house of this our tabernacle will shortly be dissolved.

But, after all, nothing perhaps strikes us so much as the changes which take place in society. How affecting are the changes that occur within a single year; but add a few years together, and what a mighty revolution is seen, strongly indicative of the progress of time, and the certain and amazing results which it is destined to produce.

Where are the children which a few years since were seen sporting in these streets? They are grown to manhood, and their sports have given place to the never ceasing cares and toils of life. They have become heads of families, parents of other children, fast ripening into maturity. Where are the men of business, who, but a little while ago, took the lead in the various branches of human occupation? Some have been removed by death; and others, worn out with labors or withering under the blight of time, have retired from the bustle of the world, as unequal to their former tasks, and are gradually sinking into that oblivion which the grave, the land of forgetfulness, will soon complete. Where are the old men, whose heads blossoming like the almond tree, used to whiten our assemblies, and give a venerable aspect to our devotions? The dark and silent tomb hides them almost all. Look around you, my dear brethren—Is this the congregation that first united for the worship of God in this place, and dedicated this house to the Lord? Some of them indeed still remain, but for the most part, it is a new generation, succeeded to the inheritance of their fathers. What is the language of these affecting changes? Is it not, O man, that thou art a pilgrim; hastening away from this earthly scene? A few years more, and another will take thy place in the house of God, in the workshop, in the field, or wheresoever thou hast laboured or enjoyed, and thou thyself wilt have gone to thine everlasting home.

But there are other changes which make a stronger appeal to our hearts. Was there a time when I could

say "my father," or "my mother,"—and has that time ceased? when I could say my brother, or my sister or my child—and are these relations dissolved? Have I lost my companion by the way, as Jacob did Rachel, a little before he came to Ephrath, a circumstance which he mentions with the utmost tenderness just before his death? How hard must be my heart, and how blunted all my powers of perception, if I am not awake to the consideration of my frailty, and do not bear about with me a lively remembrance that life is only a pilgrimage!

But is it enough that I keep this momentous fact constantly in view? What is the end to be attained by a deep and thorough conviction that I am but a stranger and sojourner upon earth? Is it not that my affections may be taken off from this world, and set upon that better country, which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sought, and towards which they journeyed in the days of their pilgrimage? Is it not that in a cordial belief of the promises, I may become a pilgrim too, and bend my footsteps towards that heavenly land which the promises disclose? Surely nothing short of this will bring me to the end of my journey in peace, or give me an entrance into that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

But what are we to understand by a cordial belief of the promises, and how do they who believe them become pilgrims, in relation to the heavenly country? The promises to which I refer, are the promises of God's mercy made in Christ Jesus, and in him, yea and amen, to the glory of God the Father;—the pro-



mises of God's rich and everlasting covenant, established with all true believers, and which contain in them all the good that the believer can desire, for time or eternity. They secure to him as firmly as the word and oath of God<sup>1</sup> can do, pardon of sin, sanctification of heart, as much of this world's good as is best for him, and everlasting life and felicity in the world which is to come. He that said to Abraham, "I am thy God, I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward," makes the same promise virtually to every true believer; and if God was not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because, though pilgrims, he had prepared for them a city, neither is he ashamed to be called the God of those who have like precious faith, at the present time, seeing he has prepared for them a city also,—a glorious city, whose light is seen from afar, and whose splendours will continue to brighten, when stars and suns shall be swept away.

But what is it to have like precious faith with the patriarchs, or a cordial belief of the promises?

It certainly supposes that we fully accredit the truth of the promises, in all their fulness and variety,—that we hear Jehovah himself speak in them, and entertain no doubt that all the blessings they comprise will be bestowed upon those who believe. This is what the Apostle means by being "persuaded of them;" and it is a persuasion so full and perfect as to make the objects of the promises appear real, and to impress the mind, in some good measure, as if they were seen by the eye of sense. And hence it is that he describes faith as

the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,—that is, as giving substance to the objects which it contemplates, and an undoubting assurance or confidence of their reality.

But though this persuasion of the truth of the promises is one thing implied in a cordial belief of them, it is not the whole that is implied. To this must be added an actual embracing of them, choosing the blessings which they offer, and relying upon the divine faithfulness for their accomplishment.

Many read or hear the promises, and have some understanding of the blessings they contain, but have no direct or prevalent desire to inherit them. Many are brought to consider them as the promises of God, and of course entertain no speculative doubts as to the certainty of their fulfilment,—still they do not regard them as proffering blessings to themselves, nor do they actually avail themselves of them. The veil of unbelief is still upon their hearts, so that they neither discern the glory of Him who promises, nor those rich and everlasting blessings which he freely proposes, and offers to secure. It is otherwise with him who cordially believes. He discerns the transcendent excellence and glory of God, who is in a great degree, the object as well as the author of the promises. He sees that the promises contain the very blessings which he needs, and which, from his inmost soul, he desires to possess. He sees that these blessings are freely offered to all who will accept them, and upon the condition of a bare acceptance. With humble confidence, therefore, he embraces the offer;—and takes the word of Jehovah for

security that the promised mercy shall surely be performed. In this way he begins, when he is first persuaded of the promises, and embraces them; and in this way he continues afterwards, while, as a pilgrim, he is prosecuting his journey towards Heaven. He lives upon the word of God, and is kept steadfast in his course, by the very same faith, which, at first, brought him into it.

Now if you inquire *how* they who believe the promises, become pilgrims in relation to the Heavenly country;—it will not be difficult to answer. It is by faith that they are brought into the way which leads to that better country, and that they commence their journey thither. It is by faith that they become citizens or heirs of that country: their belief in the promises entitles them to an eternal residence in it, and constitutes it their true and proper home. It is by faith that they are led to seek it, and to seek it with such earnestness as to make all other pursuits subordinate to this. Faith gives them the feelings of strangers and pilgrims in this world. It makes life appear short, and its enjoyments worthless, compared with those pure and eternal joys which are in reserve for them in the skies. In short, the life of the heavenly pilgrim is begun, and carried on in faith, and is perfected in the same manner. It is from first to last, the grand spring of action with him. Is he beset by cares, or encompassed by afflictions? Faith dissolves the perplexity which arises from the one, and gives strength to his fainting heart, under the other. Do enemies assail, or pleasures allure? Faith in God, and in another and eternal world, enables

him to rise superior to both. Is he weak? Faith invigorates him. Is he negligent, or tardy in his course? Faith carries him forward. Is he tempted sometimes to sit down discouraged, because of the length of the way; as were the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness to Canaan? Faith draws the veil, and lets him see, as from Pisgah, the "good land beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon," and convinces him that it is but a step or two thither.

But what sort of faith is this, my brethren? Not that cold and dead faith which satisfies too many a professor;—not that half formed persuasion of divine truth, which leaves a slumbering world still to slumber in their sins. No, it is a deep and powerful principle of the mind, a principle which actuates the judgment, at the same time that it sends a sweet and efficacious influence through the heart. It is a faith that works by love, and love of so pure and decisive a character as to issue in a sincere obedience to the divine will. Such we know was the faith of Abraham as well as of Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promises. Without a faith of this living, operative kind, they would never have commenced a pilgrimage to the heavenly land; nor would they have held on through the many trials and dangers which beset them in the way. Without a faith of the same exalted character, *we* shall never become pilgrims, in reference to the heavenly country, nor arrive at that city that hath foundations, whither their believing spirits have already gone. We may deceive ourselves, and thousands no doubt are thus deceived. We may think that

after all we have heard of Heaven's eternal rest and the means that have been used with us to excite us to seek it, we can hardly fail of reaching it at last. But none but those who are fully persuaded of the promises, and actually embrace them, will ever enter into it. This is the only way which leads to that blessed world,—the only way which pilgrims have trodden from the beginning. It commences with living faith and finishes with that faith. It is eminently the way of humility and dependance upon God; the way of obedience, and consequently the way of holiness; the way of self denial and mortification to the world. But still it is a safe way; it leads to no dangerous snares and pit-falls, but is sure to conduct every traveller to a peaceful and eternal home at last.

Shall I ask, in conclusion, whether *we* are travelling in this way? Have we, my dear brethren, really commenced this pilgrimage to the heavenly country? When did we commence it? And what proofs have we given to ourselves or to others that we are pilgrims indeed—pilgrims I mean, whose faces are set towards Zion's everlasting hills? Do we feel and act like pilgrims? Does life appear short and uncertain; and all its enjoyments too poor and transient to engage our affections? Have we bidden the world adieu, as our portion? Are we continually inclined to say of it, "this is not my rest?" Do we buy as though we possessed not, and rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and mourn as though we wept not? and all this because the fashion of this world passeth away? Has faith, through the medium of the word, discovered to us the unseen

things of eternity? Has it brought those things near, and given them such a reality and importance to our minds as to make every thing on earth dwindle into insignificance? Have we, in short, embraced the promises? Do we live as the humble and joyful expectants of that glorious inheritance which they reveal? Then our eyes will be turned upwards. Then our conversation will be in Heaven, and our affections also will be there. Then we shall shape our course through the world with a constant and ultimate reference to our eternal abode. Night and day shall we pursue our spiritual journey, and count those events happiest which speed us on the way and ripen us for admission into our Father's house above.

But what, my dear friends, if this is not our case? What if it be true that we have never yet commenced a pilgrimage towards Heaven? Then, alas! we are on a pilgrimage to Hell. There is no other alternative, taking the word of God as the rule of our judgment. Our journey through life is short, but conducts to one of those two worlds eternal, where all men shall soon take up their final abode. They who are not travelling towards Heaven, must of necessity be travelling, and with all the speed which the wings of time can give, towards a very different world. And how affecting is it to think of the numbers who are manifestly sauntering along this dangerous way! More affecting still to see them hold on their course with an obstinacy which no exhortations from God or man seem sufficient to restrain. But what shall be done? Shall we permit them to pursue this fearful journey



without lifting up the voice of remonstrance, and warning them of the danger which awaits them? O ye strangers and sojourners upon earth, ye travellers to eternity, will ye not for once, listen to the plaintive call of wisdom? Do ye not perceive that you are in the broad way to death; that the course you are pursuing will soon land you in the place of everlasting sorrows? You are as yet impenitent, and Christless: you have no meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, and can not be admitted to that blessed world, without a deep and radical change of character. If death overtake you as you are,—(and he may overtake you at any moment,) you will sink to the world of unutterable anguish. Why then not awake? The voice of divine mercy calls you; your own eternal interests demand your attention. You have escaped the shafts of death another year, while many of your acquaintance and some who bore the tenderest relation to you have fallen victims to his power. But who knows what is to befall you in the year which you have begun? Every thing future is shrouded in darkness. We know not what a day may bring forth. This very morning, I have been called to stand by the dying bed of another fellow mortal, who is called away in the morning of life, and almost without any previous warning. Oh who can tell in respect to himself what shall be on the morrow!

Shall I drop a word to those who trust that they are on a pilgrimage to Heaven? You too have come to the close of another year. Who knows but that you may be called to pass the cold stream of death before

this year is ended; yes, before the sun has half measured his annual course, you may be called to place your feet on the shores of the heavenly rest; to become denizens of that city whither Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are gone; whither the prophets and apostles and Jesus Christ their Lord and yours, have ascended; and where all the spirits of the just made perfect, are assembled in one glorified community. What manner of persons then, dear brethren, ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

## SERMON V.

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### THE RICH FOOL.

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LUKE XII., 20.

*“ But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee ; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided ? ”*

Never was the folly of a worldly spirit portrayed in stronger colours than in the parable before us. One had said to our Lord, while he was discoursing upon the danger of denying him before men and blaspheming against the Holy Ghost—“ Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.” To this unseasonable request, Jesus returns this answer,—“ Man, who made me a judge or divider over you ? ” As if he had said, I came not into the world to settle men’s disputes about their worldly estates. I had an infinitely more important errand ;—I came to save their immortal souls, which they are in danger of sacrificing to a spirit of covetousness and worldly mindedness. “ Take heed, therefore, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

To give the more effect to this seasonable and necessary caution, he relates the short and striking parable

from which our text is taken. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? and he said, this will I do; I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods; and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he" (adds the Saviour) "who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God."

There is none, my dear brethren, who can describe the heart of man like him who made that heart. There is none whose faithful admonitions so much deserve our regard, as his who came into the world on purpose to instruct us and die for us. He has a perfect knowledge of our case and the most disinterested regard to our welfare. We can neither doubt the correctness of his statements, nor the benevolence of his views. Let us then, for a moment, attend to his account of the rich worldling in the parable, whose fate and character are both comprehended in these awfully impressive words—"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

I bespeak your more earnest attention to this subject because it cannot be questioned that there are many among us who are acting the foolish part of this man, while others, though not wholly swallowed up by a

worldly spirit, are yet treading so closely in his steps as greatly to retard and embarrass, if not absolutely to prevent the work of their salvation.

It is a day, my dear brethren, of awful declension with us—a day when the love of the world has become strangely predominant, and the cry of many hearts is, “Give, give, and say not it is enough.”

But let us hear our Lord’s account of the rich worldling in the parable.

I. In the midst of his prosperity, he was unthankful. God had endowed him with wealth, and thus raised him above that humble and painful state of dependance to which multitudes are subjected. A blessing descended upon the labour of his hands, and his ground brought forth plentifully, so that he had not room where to bestow his fruits. Here was an opportunity for gratitude. Here he ought to have lifted up his heart to God, in humble and grateful acknowledgements, for the favours thus liberally bestowed. But God does not appear to have been in all his thoughts. His only concern was how to secure and to augment his abundance; regardless of the hand from which it came, and of the obligations which the beneficence of that hand had conferred.

Who does not see that this is too common a case, among those on whom God has bestowed the riches of this world? The more they are indebted to their great Benefactor, the more do they forget him. The more he causes their cup to run over with his bounty, the more presumptuous, hardened and ungrateful they appear. This is so plainly and undeniably the case, that if a

man were to ask us, 'Where shall I find the best friends of my God? Where shall I find the heart that glows with the warmest sensibility for the common blessings of divine providence?'—we must, for the most part, direct him to the humble dwellings of the poor, and often to those who subsist upon the slender charity of their fellow men. Read what Asaph has said of the rich, in the seventy third psalm—"Their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart can wish; they set their mouth against the Heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth; they say, how doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches." We know there are some happy exceptions to this case. We know there are those who, though rich in this world, are rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. But it too often happens that men who increase in wealth, increase in pride and self-sufficiency, and forget their dependance on God. Such, at least, was the fact with respect to the rich man in the parable.

II. But let us take a nearer view of his character. His grounds brought forth plentifully. God pours abundance into his hands. Does he not begin to think within himself, to what purpose this bounty should be appropriated; what deeds of charity he is called upon to perform! Perhaps he intends to be the father of the poor, and to make the widow's and orphan's heart sing for joy. Perhaps he meditates deeds of benevolence which shall immortalize his name on earth, and lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come.



Far otherwise. His selfish heart is occupied only with selfish and earthly things. He cares not for the cries and sufferings of the poor. If others choose to be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, be it so: he neither covets their work, nor their reward. His soul is bent on another purpose, and his heart filled with other things. He "thinks within himself"—but what does he think? He thinks only of room where to bestow his fruits and his goods! All his thoughts turn upon the low and grovelling purpose of increasing his wealth, and providing the means of voluptuous enjoyment, in the future. He does not seem to know that he has an eternity to provide for. He talks of his soul indeed, but not of its future and immortal destiny. All his attention is confined to the present life, and to those sensual and short lived enjoyments, which must soon pass away. On these his eager imagination seems to dwell.

III. But mark, my dear friends, they are to him still future. Much as he loves the world, and much as he possesses of it, all his enjoyment is in prospect. He has not yet reached the period in which he can say, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." Nor does he know any satisfaction in a moderate participation of the abundance which he possesses. An insatiable desire to hoard up, and to rise to a state of independence, is paramount to every other object. Thus his foolish heart postpones the certain enjoyment of the present, for the precarious and excessive indulgence of the future. He deceives himself by imagining that time and the increase of his fortune will

make him more liberal. How many there are, every where, who follow his example, who cannot enjoy to-day, because they are laying up for to-morrow; and when to-morrow comes, they cannot enjoy that for the same reason. All is prospect with them; and were they to live to the age of Methusaleh, the scene would not change. To swell their estates with the deceitful dream of enjoying them at some future period, constitutes the sum of their desires and exertions.

IV. But let us take another view of the rich worldling in the parable. His increasing wealth, while it fills him with care to provide against loss, puts him upon the resolution of pulling down his barns and building greater.—But attend to the self-confident and presumptuous language he employs,—“I am resolved what to do; I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow my fruits and my goods.” You do not hear him say, “If the Lord will, I shall live and do this or that;” he forgets his dependence on God for the accomplishment of his purposes and designs, and what is very commonly connected with it, he forgets the precarious tenure of that life on which all his schemes and enjoyments are suspended. He looks forward to the future, as if the events of the future were under his control. He relies as confidently upon his success, as if his own exertions were all that were necessary to secure it. Neither death nor disappointment makes any part of his plan. In all the height of self-flattery and presumption, he fixes on a period when he shall be able to say, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine

ease, eat, drink and be merry." Then nothing is to be wanting of all that he desires. Secured from the chances of misfortune, and free from the care and toil of his present condition, he is looking for the unrestrained indulgence of all his appetites and passions in scenes of unmingled joy.

⚡ This was the prospect which his own fond imagination was sketching out to him. But what was the sequel? In the midst of this dream, "God said to him, *thou fool*, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Awful reverse! In a moment his sky is overcast; the gilded prospect of the morning disappears; all his expectations are cut off, and his high hopes changed in the twinkling of an eye to deep despair. He dies; and that soul whose immortal destiny he had forgotten is summoned to the bar of judgment. It comes before God whose mercy it had abused, and whose power and justice it had defied. Where now is that wealth which he accumulated, or which he was so anxious to accumulate in this world? Will it fill him with confidence before his offended Judge? Will it soothe the anguish of throbbing guilt? Will it purchase a moment's reprieve from the miseries of the second death? Alas! riches profit not in the day of wrath. The remembrance of riches perverted and abused will sting with insufferable and eternal remorse.

Who can look at the picture without saying, miserable end of a self-deluded mortal! Fool indeed, to make this world his portion, while all that is honorable in a virtuous course, all that is valuable in the im-

mortal soul, all that is pure and exalted in Heaven, is madly sacrificed! And sacrificed with the Book of God in his hand, which set the path of duty and the retributions of eternity fully in view; sacrificed, when life was known to be a bubble, ready to perish on every wave—oh what can exceed this infatuation!

But pause a moment, my dear friends—on whom does this censure fall? We are indeed astonished at the man who is wholly intent on the pursuit of gain, whatever may be his expectations of enjoyment, while he neglects the care of his soul,—“a good all price beyond.” But are none of us treading in his steps?

The heart, my brethren, is deceitful above all things, as well as desperately wicked:—and a covetous heart is perhaps the most deceitful of all hearts. On no subject do men more frequently mistake, than their own character. You will often see those, over whom this vice reigns with the most unlimited sway, as apparently unconscious of the fact, as if their souls were baptised with the most fervent charity. They may even become a proverb for their want of liberality, and never suspect that this shameful disposition has found its way into their hearts. But whatever we may think of ourselves,—what ought others to think of us, when we are evidently so far absorbed in the world, as to have neither time nor inclination to attend to the great duties of religion? This is the case with many, who often plead the multiplicity of their worldly cares, as an excuse for not attending immediately to the great and solemn concerns of their souls. But the truth is, they are covetous. They indulge an inordinate desire

for the good things of this world. They are not willing to cast their care on Divine Providence, in the humble discharge of their duty. They are not willing to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, leaving it with the Lord to supply them with whatever is needful according to his good promise. They tread in the steps of the rich worldling, whose heart was supremely set upon the acquisitions and enjoyments of the present life.

And do not they also bear the same general character, who make the duties of religion subordinate to the purposes of this world? What if it be so, brethren, that we do not neglect the duties of religion altogether; yet if we attend to them only as our worldly interest and convenience will admit, we are among the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth. I will go farther:—suppose we are scrupulously attentive to all the external duties of religion, yet if our souls are not in them, what will it avail? If our hearts are not in Heaven, but on earth, are we not earthly? If we toil chiefly for the body and not for the soul, are we not like the rich man in the parable, who laid up treasure for himself, but was not rich towards God? What then shall be said of the man who, whatever may be his abundance, has seldom or never, any thing to spare for the poor, and whose well known covetousness chills the heart of every applicant? What shall be said of the litigious man, who has always some right in dispute with his neighbors, and who has a thousand fold more concern about the division of his earthly inheritance, than about securing a title to the promised rest? What

shall be said of the devouring usurer, who, in defiance equally of the laws of God and of society, grinds the face of the poor, to satisfy his greedy thirst of gain? Are not these men under the reigning power of covetousness? And are they not in danger of being accosted by God himself in the awful language in our text, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

But let us suppose, my brethren, that we could acquit ourselves of covetousness as a reigning sin, and that none of the characters now mentioned belonged to us,—yet has not this temper too manifest a hold in our hearts? Do we not think more of the world,—care more for the world, than in reason we ought to do? Do we not give less frequently, and less bountifully, and less cheerfully, than if a spirit of covetousness were wholly eradicated from our hearts? Alas! my dear friends, covetousness is the sin of our times. It is a sin in the church, and a sin out the church. It is a sin, which, under the deceitful names of prudence and economy, chills the spirit of piety in many a bosom, and which daily loads with reproach that heaven-born religion whose principle and end is charity.

But what shall we do to counteract its baneful and wide spreading influence?

Let us become deeply impressed with the immense folly of seeking to become rich in this world, when it is to be done at the expense of justice and charity, and especially at the hazard of injuring, if not destroying, our souls. Let us remember that wealth is but a paint-



ed bubble, which can never make us happy. It can not satisfy the covetous soul itself. It can not bring peace to the troubled conscience. It can not extract the sting of death.

Let us bear in mind also that we brought nothing into the world with us, and that it is certain we can carry nothing out; that death will soon strip us of all our worldly acquisitions, even if our days are protracted to the remotest limit of human life; and that, for aught we can tell, death may be nigh even at the door. Who ever felt more secure than the rich man in the parable, when he was occupied with the thoughts of pulling down his barns and building greater? And yet God said unto him, "Thou fool, *this night* thy soul shall be required of thee." We know not what a day may bring forth. Every moment we are liable to be torn from our possessions, and to pass into eternity. What madness is that which makes us so eager for the treasures of earth, so indifferent to the treasures of Heaven?

I beseech you, dear brethren, by the mercies of God, by the hopes of an eternal Heaven, and by the fears of an endless Hell, that you withdraw your affections from this world, and that instead of making it the grand concern of your lives to heap up silver and gold as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay, you strive to become rich towards God. Fear not to give alms of such things as you have: but remember that to do good and to communicate is a sacrifice with which God is well pleased. By and by you will be put out of your stewardship. O how desirable will it be to

find one who will receive you into everlasting habitations!

I press you the more upon this subject because it can not be doubted that if we held the world with a looser hand, we should enjoy much more real happiness while in the world, and should not find the same impediments to our entrance into the kingdom of God, when the business of this world is over. Let us rise on the wings of faith to that rich and undefiled inheritance above, where Jesus, the Saviour, is gone, and where he will gather all his true disciples at last. *There* are treasures incorruptible and immortal,—treasures which the more they are known, the more will they be valued;—treasures which can never be lost to their possessors by misfortune, or torn from them by violence; but which will continue to enrich and bless their souls through eternity.

But some are ready to felicitate themselves that this subject has nothing to do with them. With whatever vices or follies they are chargeable, they are not covetous. They have no desire nor expectation of hoarding up the wealth of this world. The parable of the rich worldling, they imagine, was certainly not spoken to such as they are. But are not your hearts fastened upon the world? It matters not whether it be honour, or pleasure or gain which attracts you. If you love the world, you must perish with the world. The rich man in the parable dreamed of one thing, you may dream of another; but his dreams and yours will be alike deceitful and ruinous. He who said to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of

thee," may suddenly pronounce the same awful sentence in your case. O then, my dear friends, withdraw your hearts from the world. Think of that dread eternity which must soon open upon you. Prepare to meet your God, who will surely bring you into judgment; whose favour is life, and whose loving kindness is better than life. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, while his wrath is kindled but a little.

## SERMON VI.

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### THE ARK OF THE LORD.

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II SAMUEL, VI., 1, 2.

*“And David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand; and David arose and went with all the people that were with him, from Baal of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of Hosts that dwelleth between the cherubim.”*

There are few persons mentioned in the Old Testament, whose lives are marked by so many striking incidents as that of David. We are much interested in him, when he is first introduced to our notice at his father's house in Bethlehem, where Samuel went to anoint him king over Israel. He was then a fair and ruddy youth, engaged in the humble and peaceful occupation of a shepherd, a stranger to those agitating and conflicting passions, which are usually attendant on public life. We feel a deeper interest in him, when brought into the house of Saul, where by playing skilfully on his harp, he was enabled to dispel the gloom which sometimes fell upon the mind of that unhappy monarch. But what are our feelings, when we behold him, with unexampled faith and courage, going forth with his staff and his sling, to fight the uncircumcised Philistine, who, for forty days, had appalled the Israel-

ites, and defied the armies of the living God? Every heart is moved to hear him say to the Philistine—"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come to thee, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." We rejoice with him when he returns victorious from the battle field, and feel that his achievement is the triumph of faith over a bold and blasphemous infidelity. We rejoice too in his advancement in the royal family, while his rising fame is swelling on every breeze, and the daughters of Israel are singing, "Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands."

We are equally surprised and delighted to behold the friendship which exists between him and Jonathan, the elder son of Saul, and the natural heir to his crown. All ambitious and selfish feelings appear to be extinguished in the purity and strength of their affection. They loved each other as their own souls, and doubtless they were of kindred spirit. But here the scene changes. David finds an implacable enemy in the person of Saul. His virtues had shone too bright, and his fame had sounded too loud, to be tolerated by this haughty and envious man. He resolves therefore to take the life of David; and no entreaty on the part of Jonathan could soften his feelings or divert him from his purpose. David is compelled to flee to the rocks in the wilderness. Behold him now at Nob, where he was impelled by hunger to eat the shew bread, which was not lawful, but for the priests only:—now, among the Philistines where he narrowly escaped death, by feigning a fit of madness;—now in the cave of Adul-

lam, in the south of Judah;—now at Mizpeh in the land of Moab;—and afterwards at Keilah, where the treacherous inhabitants, though deeply indebted for his kindness, stood ready to deliver him up, had an opportunity presented. Now he is in the wilderness of Ziph; now in the wilds of Maon, where the thousands of Israel were drawn out in pursuit of him; and now, in the cave of En-gedi, where he cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, instead of taking his life, which he could more easily have done;—a circumstance which melted Saul's heart for the time, and compelled him to cry out, "My son David, thou art more righteous than I." Afterwards we find him in the wilderness of Ziph, pursued by three thousand chosen men, under the direction of Saul. It was here that Saul had his spear, and cruse of water taken from his bolster, when a single blow, had David permitted, would have put a period to his life and his cruelty together. Saul confessed his wickedness to David the second time, and renewed his promises of kindness; but David knowing the depth of his malice, and fearing that he should one day fall by his faithless hand, left the land of Israel altogether, and took up his residence with the king of Gath. Here he remained until the death of Saul, when he returned to Hebron, and was made king over Judah. By degrees, the strength of the house of Saul was wasted, and at the expiration of a little more than seven years, all the tribes of Israel were gathered unto David, and the seat of government transferred to Jerusalem, when he entered upon a prosperous reign of more than thirty years.



But what are the views and feelings of David now that God has redeemed him out of all his troubles, and placed him at the head of a great nation, causing him to be respected at home and abroad? Does he think only of enlarging or strengthening his domain? Is he wholly occupied with the secular concerns of his kingdom? or does he lose himself in thoughtless and guilty pleasure? No! one of his first cares is the *ark of the Lord*, which had been neglected through all the days of Saul;—and one of his first public acts is to bring it up from Kirjath-jearim, where it had rested for more than half a century, and set it in a tabernacle he had pitched for it in the royal city. This is an object worthy of his pious and devout heart, and connected with an important reformation in the external worship of God,—perhaps in the power and spirit of true religion.

Some illustration of this remarkable transaction—together with the reflections which it may suggest, will constitute the subject of this discourse.

The ark of the Lord, or the ark of the covenant, as it is sometimes called, you will recollect, was the ark which Moses was required to make in the wilderness, after a pattern which was shown to him in the holy mount. It was a small chest or coffer, overlaid with pure gold, within and without;—a little more than four feet in length, two feet and an half in breadth, and the same in depth. The lid or covering to the Ark was of massy gold, and had round about it a golden edge or crown. This covering was called the mercy seat or propitiatory. Above it, but still attached to it, stood

the cherubim, two figures, all of beaten gold, with their wings spread out over the mercy seat, and their faces turned towards it and towards each other.

From between the cherubim God displayed his glory, after the tabernacle was pitched, and the ark removed within the veil; and thence he delivered to Moses the remainder of the ceremonial and judicial law, and communed with him, from time to time, as a man communes with his friend. Probably, in after years, answers were received from the same place, as here abode the *Shekinah* or cloud of glory, the sensible token of God's presence, to which there is an allusion in the words of our text, where God is called "by the name of the Lord of Hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubim." He is often invoked by this name in the scripture, and it is a name which should be dear to every sinner's heart, as it represents Jehovah, as dwelling upon a mercy seat, dispensing pardon to the penitent through the blood of atonement.

In the ark were deposited the two tables of stone, which contained the law of the ten commandments, written with the finger of God; and on this account it is called both the ark of the covenant and the ark of testimony. The ten commandments were the sum of that covenant which the Lord enjoined upon the people, and which the people promised to obey; at the same time that they were a solemn testimony of God's presence with them, his authority over them, and his readiness to reward or to punish according as they should be found to obey or disobey his voice. In the ark also were laid up the golden pot of manna, and

Aaron's rod that budded, both of which were distinguished memorials of the divine power and mercy, and never to be forgotten by the Israelites.

We have already remarked that, after the tabernacle was pitched, the ark was removed within the veil, or into the most holy place. This was the inner sanctuary, and nothing but the ark was allowed to have a place there. Here the high priest alone entered, and he but once a year. This was on the great day of atonement, when he went to burn incense before the Lord, (an emblem of his own and the people's prayers)—and to sprinkle the blood of the sin offering upon the Ark, or rather upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat seven times,—to make reconciliation both for his own sins, and the sins of the people.

How important then was the ark in the Hebrew worship; and how zealous must every friend of religion have been for the maintenance of its rites and its honours. No wonder the pious Israelites in every age should have felt for it the profoundest reverence, and have associated with it the honour of God and the interests of piety and virtue. It was the symbol of God's presence in the midst of them, and they had everything to hope or fear as its sacred rites were revered or disregarded.

While the Israelites remained in the wilderness, the ark of the Lord was placed in the centre of their camp, and none but the Levites were permitted to pitch their tents near to it. A pillar of cloud rested upon it by day, and a pillar of fire by night. When the cloud was taken up, it was a signal for the ark to move

forward, and for the armies of Israel to follow. When the cloud rested, *they* rested. The ark and the cloud corresponded in their movements: whence it is said that the ark of the Lord went before the Israelites, to seek out a resting place for them. On every occasion, when the ark set forward, Moses said, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee, flee before thee;" and when it rested, he said, "Return O Lord unto the many thousands of Israel."

We are not informed whether the cloudy pillar attended the ark, after the Israelites had passed over into the land of Canaan. We only know that Jordan was driven back, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth, when the priests who bore the ark dipped their feet in the brim of that river; and that the walls of Jericho fell down flat, after being encompassed by the ark seven days, and while the priests who preceded it, blew with the trumpets of rams horns.

On the Israelites' first entering the promised land, the ark was established at Gilgal, in the neighbourhood of Jericho. When they had gotten a fuller possession of the country, it was removed to a more central position in Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, where it remained for three hundred and twenty-eight years, till it was carried to the camp, and taken by the Philistines, at the news of which good old Eli fell from his seat, and died. He could hear with some composure, of the death of his two sons, Hophni and Phineas, and the great slaughter which had taken place among the people, but when the messenger told him that the ark

of God was taken, exhausted nature sunk;—he fell backward and expired.

The Philistines carried the ark in triumph to the temple of their idol in Ashdod; but the hand of the Lord was upon their idol and upon the people. They conveyed it to the city of Gath; but the judgments of God followed, and after a few months, the ark was sent back again to the land of Israel, borne on a new cart, drawn by two milch kine. It was first received by the men of Bethshemesh, and presently carried to Kirjath-jearim, to the house of Abinadab, where it remained in a great degree neglected for about seventy years until David assembled all the chosen men of Israel, to bring it up to Jerusalem. The importance of this transaction you will clearly perceive by the account we have given of the ark, and its connection with the public worship of God. But how did David perform this duty? With a zeal becoming the great occasion, he sent through all the land of Israel, and gathered together a vast concourse of people, and especially men of distinguished rank, to bear a part in this interesting scene. Every heart seemed delighted, and every face glistened with joy. The ark was brought out of the house of Abinadab, and set forward on its journey to the royal city, David and all the house of Israel playing before the Lord with all manner of instruments of fir wood, harps, psalteries, timbrels, cornets, connected with singing and sound of trumpets. But one important circumstance had been overlooked. The law of the Lord had not been consulted to know how the ark should be carried. Instead of placing it upon

the shoulders of the Levites, according to the express command of God, they put it into a new cart drawn by oxen, after the manner of the Philistines, when they sent the ark home, out of their own country. It came to pass, therefore, that when they had reached the threshing floor of Nachon, Uzzah one of the attendants, put forth his hand and took hold of the ark, because the oxen shook it, and the Lord smote him for his error, that he died. His unauthorized and presumptuous familiarity, whatever might have been his intentions, drew down upon him this signal token of God's displeasure. He was not of the family of the priests to whom alone it was permitted to touch the ark, without pain of death.

Who can well conceive the tumult and distress which this melancholy event must have produced? How suddenly did the sound of the harps and of the timbrel cease! Where are those demonstrations of joy, which, but a few moments before, were seen in this vast assembly? "O death, how unseasonable thy approach!" must have been the reflection of many a worldly heart. But God is holy, though he sitteth between the cherubim, and dwelleth upon the mercy seat. He hath said, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people will I be glorified."

As a door was now opening for the restoration of the ark to its original significance and importance in the worship of Jehovah, it seemed in some degree requisite, that a lesson should be given, which would not fail to impress every mind with the sanctity of the divine Being and the reverence due to his laws.



David, we are told, was displeased at the breach which was made upon Uzzah; but it is not expressly said against whom his displeasure was directed;—perhaps against the priests and Levites, for not giving due information as to the method of carrying the ark, or for not coming forward to a duty to which they had been specially appointed. But it is more probable that his displeasure was against the Lord himself, whose immediate agency had caused the breach of which he complained; and he is a stranger to his own heart, who never discovered any dissatisfaction with divine providence, when his strongest wishes were counteracted, or when publicly mortified and put to shame before the world. This was a temper, however, in which David did not long indulge, but which appears to have given place to a disposition far more becoming him as a man and a sinner. “He was afraid of the Lord, that day, and said, “How shall the ark of the Lord come unto me?”” Conscious of his own guilt, he trembled before a God of unspotted holiness, who was jealous for his own name. He dare not at this time bring up the ark to the place intended for it in his own city, but directed it to be carried to the house of Obed-edom, the Gittite, one of the pious sons of Levi, who willingly received this solemn guest, notwithstanding the breach which had been made upon the house of Israel. No doubt he fully recognised the justice of God in this awful stroke, and submitted to it as an event, painful indeed, but still calculated to magnify the Lord among his people.

A blessing of so conspicuous a character descended upon the house of Obed-edom, that, at the expiration

of three months, David was encouraged to renew the attempt to bring up the ark to the place he had prepared for it in Jerusalem.

All Israel, therefore, are again assembled, and greater preparations made than at the first. But the law of God is not now overlooked. "None ought to carry the ark," says David, "but the Levites; for them hath the Lord chosen to bear the ark, and to minister unto him forever." The priests and the Levites are required to sanctify themselves, and to make those arrangements which are requisite for this great solemnity. They receive a strict charge that every thing should be done after the due order. Different companies of singers, and players upon instruments are provided. The ark of the Lord is placed upon the shoulders of the Levites, by means of the staves attached to it, as Moses had commanded, and with profound reverence, but with great joy and gladness, borne to the royal city, accompanied by David, and the elders of Israel, with all his captains and mighty men. What heart could have been unmoved at the sight of this vast procession, or at the sacred music flowing from so many voices and so many instruments, each company striving to excel, while they uttered the mighty acts of the Lord, and praised him with all their powers. A psalm, adapted to the occasion was delivered by David to Asaph and his brethren, and is recorded in the sixteenth chapter of second of Chronicles. But it is probable that other psalms were sung, and among the rest the twenty-fourth psalm, which seems, in a high degree, appropriate, when the ark had come near the gates of Jerusalem. What could

be more striking, than for the singers, who were accustomed to sing in responses, to say, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in," while another company answered, "Who is this King of glory?" and it was returned, "The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of Hosts, (a name ascribed to him who dwelleth between the cherubim,) the Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory."

Is it any wonder that David was greatly animated on this occasion, and that he almost lost himself in the general tide of joy? It is said that he danced before the Lord with all his might, being clothed with a linen garment, or girt about with a linen ephod. That is, he laid aside his royal robe, and dressed himself in the plain and simple attire of the Levites, who held an important rank among the worshippers of God and the friends of the ark; and was not ashamed to express his joy, which now rose to an ecstasy, by leaping and dancing, according to a practice sanctioned by the immemorial usage of his country.

But there was one at least, who thought his zeal *overdone*. Michal, the daughter of Saul, and the wife of David, looked from a window and saw him leaping and playing before the ark, and despised him in her heart; and as soon as she had an opportunity, reproached him to his face, and said: "How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who by laying off his

robes and acting the part of a singer and dancer, hath made himself contemptible to the lowest of the people." David replied with some spirit, and said—"It was before the Lord who chose me instead of thy father, that I did this, and if I have been vile, I will be yet more vile, and will be base in my own sight."

This was a great occasion in David's estimation, and it transported him a thousand times more than his most splendid victories. His heart was filled with piety towards God, and benevolence towards man. Here he remembered the vows which his soul had made in trouble;—and while he devoutly blessed the Lord for all his goodness towards him, and towards the nation of Israel, he was forward to imitate that goodness, in dealing to every one a portion of his bounty, and thus sending his people away joyful to their own homes. But he did not leave the ark himself, till he had made permanent provision for the public worship of God,—appointing the Levites to their service, both as porters and singers, and placing the different bands of musicians under their respective leaders. In making this arrangement, he was no doubt inspired by God, and acted rather in the character of prophet, than of king. Having finished this public service, he returned to bless his house,—that is, to the exercise of family religion, for which he had been eminently fitted by the solemn transactions of the day; thus combining in his life the duties of domestic piety, no less than those which pertained to the sanctuary of the Lord.

A crowd of reflections present themselves in view of this important portion of sacred history. I shall con-

tent myself with barely suggesting a few of them, leaving a fuller application of the subject to your own meditations.

1. Who can help remarking, in the first place, how happy it is when our prosperity does not make us forget God. In a multitude of cases, men who have been apparently respectful towards religion, if not devout, while in the vale of poverty or obscurity, have greatly altered their tone of feeling, when suddenly elevated to wealth or power. This was the case of Saul. He lost much of his respect for divine institutions after he ascended the throne of Israel, and finally came to disregard both the voice of God and of his prophet. It was otherwise with David. He felt the need of God's protection while a shepherd in the wilderness, and when hunted like a partridge upon the mountains by his cruel persecutors;—and he did not lose his sense of dependence upon God, nor his love to the duties of religion, when raised to the pinnacle of earthly greatness, and when all his enemies were cut off or laid prostrate at his feet. This was a proof of the reality and strength of his piety, and adds no small interest and beauty to his character. How desirable to resemble him, and to let our prosperity brighten our zeal rather than diminish it!

2. Who does not perceive also, in view of the subject before us, how important it is for men in office, and for men of rank and influence of every description, to take a deep interest in the cause of religion. They are the strong rods of the community, and may be powerful agents in the hands of divine Providence in pro-



moting the interests of piety. Their examples alone would do much in discountenancing vice, and in widening the influence of truth and virtue. Look at Moses, at Joshua, at Gideon, Samuel, David, and the pious kings who came after him;—what signal blessings were they to the generation in which they lived; how much good was done by their personal efforts! And besides, what could add a greater lustre to their character? Who does not respect David the more for the zeal he displayed for the ark of the Lord of Hosts.

3. We are taught, moreover, by this narrative, the great importance of doing everything in religion according to the rules which God himself has prescribed. Had this truth been thoroughly impressed upon the mind of David, and those that were with him, in the first attempt to bring up the ark, Uzzah had not been stricken dead for his error, nor this noble enterprise for the time defeated. God requires that we should understand our duty, and makes our ignorance penal, where it proceeds from an inattention to his written law. What an argument is this for a constant and prayerful application to his holy word. If we are ignorant with both testaments in our hands, woe be to our folly and perverseness.

4. The conduct of David in bringing up the ark, may lead us to reflect that while great zeal may have great defects, yet, where it proceeds from honest principle, it will not be easily discouraged. It may be chastened for its irregularity, for its ignorance, for its pride and vain glory. It may be foiled in its exertions; but it will not give over. Proceeding in the main



from love to God and a regard to his honour, it will renew its efforts until its desires are accomplished. If David had not been a true friend to the ark, the breach of Uzzah would probably have quenched his zeal forever. He would not have risked another mortification before the great men of his kingdom; many of whom were no very ardent friends to his religion. But as the case was, his want of success only humbled him, and made him observant of God's law, till at length his zeal awoke to greater ardour than before, and prompted him to efforts which God was pleased to crown with his blessing. Does our zeal, brethren, hold out? Or does it want that persevering character, which is the touch stone of sincerity?

5. The history before us presents us with another truth written as with a sunbeam—that a careless or presumptuous familiarity with respect to the great objects of our devotion, is highly offensive to God. We are not to speak to Him as to our neighbour. We are not to treat the great subjects of his attributes, his laws, his kingdom, with the same kind of levity or indifference, as we do things which are merely secular. We must be solemn when we treat with, or about the King eternal. Is he merciful—what then? He is holy as well as merciful. Uzzah was near the mercy seat, when he presumptuously laid his hand upon the ark, and fell dead before the Lord.

Let us be admonished also, not to busy ourselves with employments or things beyond our proper limits; but always to maintain upon our minds a due reverence for the bounds which God has prescribed to us, whether

in the opinions we form, or in the duties we discharge. Let us cultivate a reverent and lowly spirit, and treat every subject of religion with that seriousness and solemnity, which its dignity and importance demand.

6. But let us not be afraid to give religion a place in our hearts; nor under the pretext of fear and reverence, exclude the Holy One of Israel from a participation in our thoughts. Obed-edom was not afraid to give entertainment to the ark, though an awful breach had been made upon Uzzah, for his unhallowed touch. And we need not be afraid to give the God of Heaven a residence in our bosoms; for though He be the high and lofty one, who inhabiteth eternity, and dwelleth in the high and holy place,—yet He will notice with gracious condescension those that fear Him, and will dwell with the humble and contrite ones. He will revive their spirit; give them the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. The blessing which descended upon the house of Obed-edom will descend upon them, and they will know by joyful experience, that the Lord of Hosts, who dwelleth between the cherubim, is both able and willing to reward his servants.

7. The solicitude of David to place the ark in the royal city, and to regulate the public service of God according to the prescribed forms, teaches us that the externals of religion are not to be disregarded, but every thing to be done with decency and in order; and especially his great attention to psalmody, or the manner of publicly praising God in the congregation, shows us that this is no insignificant part of divine

service, even in the Christian church. David was inspired when he made arrangements for the music to be performed in the public worship of God, and his example is therefore more worthy of our imitation.

8. Let not the people of God be surprised if their zeal should sometimes be thought to be excessive. Michal had this opinion of David. She despised him for his lowliness of mind, as well as for the zeal which he manifested in the public worship of God. But he was neither discouraged nor mortified, by the poignancy of her wit, or the virulence of her satire. If he had been vile, he was willing to be more vile and base in his own sight. So let it be with you, my Christian friends,—if you should chance to meet with opposition or contempt for your attachment to the cause of religion. It may be that your bosom friends or dearest relatives will despise you in their hearts, when your zeal overleaps the bounds of their prudence or convenience. But remember they do not see with your eyes, nor with the eyes of the living God, whose laws, and not the feelings or opinions of worldly men, are to be your guide. It will be no comfort to you, on your dying bed, that you followed their counsels, or regulated your zeal by their maxims. Do your duty as in the fear of God, and take this truth along with you for your comfort,—that whatever derision or conflict you may now suffer, the ark and its friends will eventually prosper.

9. Do we desire to see a reformation in religion, or the return of God's gracious presence in the midst of

us? The conduct of David in bringing up the ark may furnish us important instruction. It will teach us that this is an object of the first importance, and ought to awaken all our zeal, while at the same time, it will direct us to take measures for this object, with a due regard to the divine honour, and with a scrupulous adherence to God's word. Our zeal should be both enlightened and sanctified. A constant care should be exercised not to give the ark an unhallowed, unauthorized touch. It is the ark of the covenant;—the ark of the Lord of the whole earth. He who dwelleth between the cherubim is holy. In desiring the return of the Lord's presence with us, we should do it with the recollection of our own unworthiness, and be ready to say with David, when smitten with a sense of his own guilt: "How shall the ark of the Lord come unto me?" Perhaps it is the want of this self-abasement, which has prevented, so to speak, the presence of the ark of God, in the midst of us. O let our desires for this object be fervent! Let our prayers continually ascend; let us say—"Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy." This is an object in which all should unite—old and young, high and low, rich and poor. Here is work enough for the thousands of Israel;—and there is not a man who is not deeply interested. We should be animated in seeking the Lord's special presence, from the gracious language which he condescended to hold towards Zion. "The Lord hath chosen Zion;

he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it." Let us arise and plead mightily with him to lift upon us the light of his countenance, and restore to us the joys of his salvation.

## SERMON VII.

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### BEHAVIOUR APPROPRIATE TO GOD'S HOUSE.

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ECCLESIASTES, VI., 1.

*“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools.”*

It is our privilege, my brethren, to live near the house of God, and often to meet within its sacred walls. We have no such distance to travel, to pay our public devotions, as had the ancient church of Israel, or even as many have now in our own land. The tabernacles of the Lord are easy of access to us, and the doors of his sanctuary may be said to stand open night and day. It is not only from sabbath to sabbath, but at seasons more frequent that we are permitted to send up our prayers and thanksgivings to God from this place, and that God vouchsafes here to address us by those who minister in his name.

Why is it then that so many of the Lord's people are ready to cry out, amidst this profusion of means and advantages,—“O my leanness and my barrenness?” Why is it that so many others go and come to this sacred place from month to month, and year to year, without perceiving any important change in their tempers, without acquiring the spirit of Jehovah's worship-



pers, or being fitted for the pure and sublime devotion paid him by his saints and angels in the courts above? Is there no reason to fear that we have too often overlooked the salutary caution given us in the words of the text—"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools?"

I am constrained to say, my brethren, that if our approaches to God had not been attended with some marked and criminal defect, we should have experienced far greater blessings from the ordinances of his house than we have recently done; we should have found a day in God's courts better than a thousand; our souls would have been satisfied with marrow and fatness, and we should have been able continually to praise God with joyful lips. It would have been seen by others and felt more strongly by ourselves, that "they who are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God."

My design, on the present occasion, is to consider the manner in which we ought to attend upon the duties of the sanctuary, and to urge a serious regard to this subject.

We shall naturally be led to this by the words before us. "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give or offer the sacrifice of fools."

The first part of this precept may be considered as a solemn caution against those imperfections which are wont to attend our public devotions. "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God." That is, in

general terms, do not step heedlessly or carelessly, but ponder well thy path. Remember that it is to the house of God that thou art going; that it is to sacrifice to Him who is perfectly acquainted with all thy ways, and whose greatness and glory demand the entire, the unequivocal homage of thy heart. Apprised of the temptations which lie in wait for thee, exercise a watchful and jealous care over thy thoughts, thy words and actions; that thou mayest avoid whatever would be offensive to God, or injurious to thyself or others in the duties of the sanctuary.

This, in few words, is what is meant by "keeping our foot when we go to the house of God." But the duty here enjoined is of such high importance that it deserves to be considered more at length. There are various particulars, concerning which the most jealous caution and circumspection should be exercised, if we would enter into the spirit of this precept.

I. In the first place, we should beware of entering upon the duties of the sanctuary in a thoughtless or inconsiderate manner, without preparation and without an object. Many hurry away to the house of God, when the appointed hour of public service arrives, without considering at all with themselves, what object they have in view. They go because others go, and because they themselves have often been, without reflecting upon the duties to be performed, or the deep and solemn interest which they have in those duties.

There are others who, possessed of more principle, attend the public devotions of the sanctuary from a conviction of duty, but who attend them without any

solemn preparation. They stop not to consider whose altars they approach; what sacrifices are required of them; and whether these sacrifices are offered with clean or unclean hands. They rush into God's presence as the horse rusheth to the battle, without that self-collection and awe which are indispensable to acceptable worshippers.

We should beware of such inconsideration, my brethren, if we would keep our foot when we go to the house of God:—and instead of coming into his presence in this careless and irreverent manner, we should, as much as possible, contemplate beforehand the solemn business we have to transact with him, and earnestly implore the gracious aids of his blessed Spirit. We should say with the pious David, “O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles; then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God, my exceeding joy.” But,

2. If we should beware of coming to the house of God in a careless and inconsiderate manner, and as it were without any specific object, we should be no less solicitous to avoid coming with improper motives. We should never enter the sanctuary to pass away an idle hour, which otherwise might hang heavily upon our hands. We should never approach this sacred place, merely for the purpose of entertainment, as men visit the theatre or the ball room;—while our thoughts and desires are far away from the great objects for which divine service was appointed. We should never come hither with the empty design of seeing or being seen,

and much less for the purpose of making arrangements for business or pleasure, the remainder of the week. Far nobler objects should possess our hearts in such a place and on such an occasion. We should come to worship the King eternal; to pay him homage, as our Creator and Lord;—we should come to hear what God the Lord will say unto us by his messengers, or by his Spirit;—to learn more of his character and of our duty, and to have our hearts inflamed with love to him and to one another. We should come, in a word, to prepare for death and eternity,—to get our minds abstracted from the world, our affections deadened towards it, and our thoughts, our desires, our hopes supremely placed on Heaven.

3. If we will keep our foot when we go to the house of God, we must not only attend to the motives which carry us thither, but to the whole of our deportment while we are before the Lord. We must see to it that our external carriage be such as becomes the worshippers of Jehovah. Not light and frivolous as though we were in a play-house,—not morose and gloomy as though our God delighted in austere and cruel rites;—but serene and solemn as those who worship a Being of infinite perfection, and who ardently desire to secure his friendship. Our eye must not wander over the assembly of our fellow worshippers, as if it were our chief business to observe their dress or demeanor, nor must we recline in the posture of indolence as if we took no interest in the duties of God's appointment, and were only anxious for the tedious service to close. The whole of our external demeanor

should be marked with gravity and devotion, for God is to be worshipped with our bodies, as well as with our spirits.

A far more important article however is, that our inward man should be duly regulated; that the thoughts and feelings of our hearts should be such as a holy and omniscient God will approve. It is the heart which God chiefly looks at in our devotions. Should we bow before him with the apparent reverence of adoring seraphim, it would be vain, unless our hearts were right with him. God cannot be deceived, and he will not be mocked. We should be careful to avoid all vain and unseasonable thoughts on such occasions, and to have our minds exclusively fixed on the great business to be transacted between God and our souls. This is often a work of difficulty. Our hearts are naturally unstable as water, continually changing the objects of their attention, wandering sometimes like the fool's eyes in the ends of the earth, instead of being absorbed in the duty in which we are professedly engaged. We have need to bring a solemn and earnest spirit with us to the place of our devotions, if we would counteract the temptation which arises to us from this quarter. We must verily believe that there is a God,—that this is the house of God,—that these are his worshippers, and this his service,—a service in which we are deeply and eternally interested, before we can say with the devout psalmist, “O God my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise even with my glory.”

But it is not enough that we keep our foot when we

go to the house of God, we must be "more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools." We must indulge a spirit of solemn and devout inquiry; we must feel a disposition to know and practice the will of God. But as this-part of the exhortation relates to a specific and important duty, too often performed in a very unprofitable manner, we beg you to give it a serious and prayerful consideration. "Be more ready to hear," says the voice of inspiration, "than to give the sacrifice of fools"—as though we were in danger of playing the part of fools in the house of God, instead of humbly and earnestly listening to his voice. There are many occasions when we actually do this; when we are nothing the better, but probably the worse, for our attendance upon the services of the sanctuary; when instead of being brought near to God in the prayers which are offered, or in the truths which are delivered, we go away with our thoughts dissipated and our hearts hardened. We have seen nothing of God, nothing of ourselves, no good purpose has been formed in us, no grace awakened, no virtue strengthened, no sinful passion mortified.

To avoid this unprofitable attendance upon the house of God, the wise man exhorts us to be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools. But how should we hear, if we would come up to the spirit of this precept? We should hear

1. With attention, in opposition to a careless or distracted frame of mind. It is but an act of decency to be seriously attentive to what is uttered in God's name. Besides, of what consequence will it be that



the preacher addresses us on subjects deeply interesting to our eternal destiny, if our minds are occupied with other things? Can we expect to be instructed or edified, if, instead of distinctly marking the several parts of his discourse, and weighing each sentiment as it passes from his lips, our imaginations are wandering over our farms, or transacting the business of our families, or secretly taken up with the advantages or disadvantages of a bargain? But in hearing the word of God attentively, it is important to remark, that our attention should be directed more to the truth itself than to the manner in which it is communicated. It is the truth which instructs and edifies. "Sanctify them through thy truth," said our Lord, "thy word is truth." It is by manifestation of the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God, that the great object of preaching and hearing the gospel, is attained. Believers therefore are considered not only as having purified their souls by obeying the truth, but as being begotten by the word of truth; as born again, not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.

Whatever has not truth for its basis, however much it may gratify our taste, or delight our imaginations, is like a gilded cloud, which passes pleasantly before the eye, for a moment, but presently disappears, and leaves no trace of its form or beauty behind. We want something to fix our principles, and to operate as a constant and powerful spring to our actions. Nothing but the truths of God's word, carried home to our consciences, will do this. To these, therefore, should our attention

be principally directed, when the servants of the Lord address us in his name. We observe

2. That if we would be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools, we must listen to the word with reverence; that is to say, we must hear it as the word of God, not as the word of man. We must not consider the preacher as coming to play a part before us for an hour, while we have nothing to do but to judge of the success with which that part is played; we must consider him as an ambassador of the Lord of Hosts, charged with a solemn message to our souls. We must regard him as actually coming in God's name and in effect speaking the words of God. So far as he speaks according to the sacred oracles, this is the fact; and it is a fact which should be distinctly recognised by us. Too often is God overlooked in the administration of his word: what is heard is not regarded as the authoritative voice of Jehovah, though it may be uttered in language which he himself has dictated, but as the simple unauthorised effort of human talents and skill. It is not surprising, in these circumstances, that the word of the Lord should produce so little effect; that it should so seldom come to us in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power. Confining our attention to the mere instrument, we lose sight of our relations to God, and of those tremendous sanctions of divine authority, which make the words of truth enter into the soul. We may be greatly interested, and even fascinated, with the power of the speaker, while our hearts are in no degree edified by the truth he delivers. We may go from the walls of God's sanctuary, admiring and prais-

ing the gifts of those who minister to us in his name, while the Lord hath sent leanness into our soul. Then only shall we profit by the labours of his servants, when God's voice is heard in their voice ; when we reverence their message as the message of the Lord of Hosts, and honor them chiefly for their Master's sake.

I speak more freely on this subject, because I believe it to be a fault among Christians of the present day,—a fault chargeable in a greater or less degree to every one of us, that God is so much left out of the account in the administration of his word;—that this part of divine service is considered rather as a matter of entertainment than as a solemn institution of Heaven, designed for our benefit.

I tremble to think how this must appear in the eyes of the great God, who is jealous for his name, and who will not see his ordinances perverted without testifying his displeasure. I blush to think how it must be regarded by the holy Angels, who are the witnesses of our devotions, and who know with what solemnity we ought to hear that word which shall judge us in the great and last day. And I doubt not that we shall all be astonished at our own guilt and folly in this particular, when we see more distinctly our relations to another world; when eternity, and not time, shall become the principal object of our attention. But I hasten to observe,

3. That if we hear the word of God, as we ought to do, we must hear it with an humble and teachable disposition, in opposition to a proud and captious spirit. This our Lord inculcated upon his disciples, when he

said, "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, shall in no case enter therein." And the apostle Peter had the same thing in view, when he exhorted believers to "receive with meekness the ingrafted word of truth, which was able to save their souls." It is the meek, whom God hath promised to "guide in judgment,—the meek whom he will teach his way." They who dispense the word are required to do it with a spirit of meekness and humility; and they who hear must have the same spirit. There cannot be a readiness to hear where an humble child-like spirit is wanting. There may be a disposition to inquire, or rather to speculate, and build systems of our own; but there can be no disposition to receive the great and soul humbling truths of the gospel, till we are in some measure humbled ourselves. Our pride must be laid in the dust, before we shall be willing to take the account which God has given us of his character or of our own. We shall then only be willing to hear and learn of the Father, when we are willing to place God on the throne, and ourselves at his footstool. Mary at the feet of Jesus, listening with joy to the gracious words which fell from his lips, is an example of that humble and teachable spirit which ought to inspire our bosoms, when we attend upon the instructions of the sanctuary.

4. Let us add to this, as an important circumstance, that we should hear the word of God with close and pointed application to ourselves. Many a judicious sermon has been lost for want of being personally applied by the hearers. What does it avail that the

character of individuals is drawn with great particularity, that their sins and dangers are pointed out with a bold and faithful hand, if these individuals never bring the subject home to themselves; if, after being told every thing, but "thou art the man," they are still looking on the right hand or on the left, to discover the person to whom the observation or reproof applies? Alas! my dear brethren, what is more deceitful than the human heart; and where does its deceitfulness more often appear, than in the artifice employed to hide from its own views the unsightly image of itself frequently and faithfully presented in the glass of God's word?

How ardently should we pray, "Search me, O God, and know me, try my reins and my heart. Let the light of divine truth penetrate the dark recesses of my soul. Let thy word, quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, pierce to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and become a discerner of the thoughts and intents of my heart."

5. I remark, that we shall but offer the sacrifice of fools, unless we hear the word of God, with faith and love, and especially with a desire to obey. Founded on the veracity of Jehovah, it demands the full and unwavering assent of our hearts. Containing a glorious system of truth and duty, it ought to be sincerely loved by us, and strictly and conscientiously obeyed.

To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. It is chiefly for the purpose of bringing our hearts to the obedience of the truth, that the truth is proclaimed in our ears. This is constantly

held up as the great end of all the instructions, warnings and reproofs of the scripture; and the very perfection of scripture itself is characterized by this circumstance,—“that it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work.” We cannot be said to hear the word of God in the highest and best sense of the expression, unless we obey; for, in the language of scripture, it is often one and the same thing. “Hear O my people,” saith God, “and I will testify unto thee, O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; there shall no strange God be within thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me.” That is, they would not obey. “Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea!” O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!—that is, that thou hadst kept them. “Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices (saith the Lord of Hosts,) and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices;—but this thing commanded I them, saying, obey my voice, and I will be your God and ye shall be my people. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear;”—that is they did not obey—“but walked in the



counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.”

These scriptures, while they teach us that to hear and obey God is often identical, suggest to us also, the immense importance of obedience. They teach us that all our sacrifices and oblations will be vain without this;—that it will be to no purpose that we appear in the house of God and join in hearing his word and offering our prayers and praises to him, unless it issue in a spirit of obedience to his will.

I close this discourse, my brethren, by urging a serious attention to the subject now laid before you, “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools.”

This is the voice of Jehovah himself directing his own worshippers. Shall not we regard it as such; shall we not set a double watch over our hearts—nay over the whole of our demeanor, when we come into his sanctuary? “Yes,” let us say—“God is to be feared in the assembly of his saints: to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.” While we would not be rash or hasty to utter anything in his presence, let us not trifle with any thing uttered in his name. Remembering that God is in Heaven, and we upon earth, let us approach him with reverence; let us hear him with submission; and let the whole of our services begin and end in him.

Again: We urge this, not only because God commanded it, but because it is in itself reasonable. Such a service is due to the great God of the universe, who

gave us our being and all our powers:—any thing short of this is reproachful to his honour, and unworthy of the relation we bear to him. The worship of his people on earth should bear a resemblance to the worship paid him in Heaven. The service of the lower sanctuary should, in all its parts, be celebrated not only with reference to the sanctuary above, but in the same spirit,—and be only a joyful anticipation of that exalted service, which shall employ our enlarged and sanctified powers throughout the ages of eternity.

O what preaching, what hearing, what praying, should we have, could our eyes be fixed on the temple above, and our devotions kindled from the fire of those altars, which burn with increasing brightness before the throne of God forever.

But I ask, my dear friends, what will it profit us to appear in the house of God, unless we attend upon its services in the manner which God has prescribed? Shall we enjoy him in his ordinances? Shall we find the temple of God a bethel; and be made to say with Jacob, “Surely this is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of Heaven?” Shall we find our souls penetrated with the light of divine truth, humbled under a sense of our sins, consoled with the hopes of pardon,—animated to run in the way of God's commandments,—and, in a word, made meet for the service and bliss of the heavenly world? No, my dear friends, none of these blessings will attend us, unless we keep our foot when we go to the house of God. So far from it, our sacrifices will be unavailing, as the sacrifice of fools; nay it will be an abomination unto

the Lord. Privileges abused have a natural tendency to harden the heart and to blind the mind. They often provoke God to give men up as incorrigible, or to remove from them the advantages they have enjoyed.

Certain it is that if we are not brought to wait upon God here on earth, in the spirit of true worshippers, we shall never be fitted for his temple above;—nay, all the means we have enjoyed in the sanctuary below,—the sermons we have heard—the prayers and thanksgivings in which we have joined,—will sink us to deeper despair in the world of woe. Yes, if we do not learn to keep our foot, when we go to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools, we shall finally curse the day and the place of our birth; we shall wish that we had been born among the savage tribes of the wilderness, where no temples of God are to be seen, no voice of mercy is heard, rather than in places, near the doors of the sanctuary, where from our infancy, the public worship of God has been celebrated, and the oracles of divine truth explained.

Let it be our constant and fervent prayer to God, that his Spirit may be poured out upon us, and our hearts so trained to his service here on earth, that we may enjoy the comfort of his presence in this world, and finally be made pillars in that temple of glory, where we shall go no more out.

## SERMON VIII.

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### DISINTERESTEDNESS OF TRUE RELIGION.

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JOB, I., 9.

*Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?*

The book of Job is nearly all written in Hebrew verse, in the dramatic form, and is certainly one of the most ancient and sublime poems in the world. We are not certain, at this distance of time, who was the author; some ascribing it to Moses, others to Ezra, and others to one of the prophets. All, however, agree that it is a poem written under the influence of divine inspiration, founded substantially in fact, and containing important instructions in relation to our duty.

That there was such a man as Job, distinguished for his sufferings and his virtues, admits of no dispute. He is numbered among the most eminent saints by the prophet Ezekiel; and St. James says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy to those that fear him."

As to the authority of this ancient book, it may be sufficient to observe that it has always been reckoned as a part of the inspired volume, both by Jewish and

Christian writers, and is frequently referred to in the Psalms, in the prophets, and in the writings of the apostles of our Lord and Saviour. We consider the historical parts of it, therefore, as a correct and faithful narrative of the sufferings and patience of an eminent servant of God, of the happy issue to which his sufferings were finally brought, and of the different opinions which were entertained of the dispensations of Providence in that early period of the world.

In the chapter before us, a brief statement is given of Job's remarkable piety, amidst the greatest worldly affluence,—a situation so intoxicating to human pride, and so ensnaring to all the corrupt passions of the heart, that few are able to withstand the temptations it presents, and fewer still, to exhibit in such circumstances an example of piety and moderation.

On some occasion, when the sons of God had met together, and Satan their watchful adversary appeared among them, the Lord said unto Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in all the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" To which Satan replied, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about all that he hath on every side. Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth now thine hand and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face;" hereby intimating that Job was completely selfish in all his religious services; that he was dutiful to God, because God was bountiful to him; but that in a change of circumstan-

ces, all his piety and virtue would fall to the ground. As if the adversary had said, "Let it be seen that he is no longer protected and blessed by the power that he worships, and instead of the sacrifices which he now offers and the multiplied prayers which he presents, he will despise thine altars, and blaspheme the authority which thou hast set up."

This is manifestly the spirit of Satan's accusation against Job; and though it was dictated by malevolence, and designed perhaps to justify his own rebellion, it goes to the establishment of this important truth—that true religion is by no means founded on the narrow principles of self-interest, but on the broad basis of disinterested and benevolent affection; or, in other words, in that pure and holy love which is the radical principle of all acceptable obedience.

The object of this discourse will be to illustrate and confirm this sentiment. And so important do we consider it, that we cannot but respectfully and earnestly solicit a careful attention to the remarks which are intended to be offered. It is not our design to make an attack upon any man's creed, nor are we anxious that others should adopt the very words and phrases which we employ. But we desire that the truth should appear, and appear in such an attractive and convincing form as to gain a lodgment in every conscience and heart.

That true religion is not a selfish, but a disinterested affection, terminating in the excellence of God's character, the glory of his great name and the welfare of his kingdom, we think might easily be demonstrated



from the tenor of the divine law,—the sum of which is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself.” Love is the fulfilling of this law; and of course comprehends the whole of our duty. For when we have loved to the full extent of the precept, and expressed our love in such manner as our conditions and relations demand, nothing more is left to be done. All that we owe to God, to ourselves or to our neighbour, is completely discharged. But what kind of love is that, which thus meets all the requisitions of the Divine law? Does it not embrace a love of complacency towards him, whose character is supremely excellent, and towards those who bear his image, while it includes a love of benevolence or good will towards every being capable of enjoyment?

That this is not a mere selfish affection, is evident not only from the terms of the law in which it is expressed, but from the fact that God’s law is a transcript of his own heart, and that we are required to be like God and like Christ, whose love is certainly not selfish, but in the highest degree disinterested.

Were not this the case indeed, how could loving our enemies, doing good to those that hate us, and praying for those that despitefully use us and persecute us, become a part of our duty? Or will it be pretended that we can love those that hate us, from motives of self interest?

Whatever may be said for the support of a favourite theory, I believe it will not be regarded as consonant to our experience, that the love we have for ourselves

exerts any influence in generating kind affections towards those who oppose us, and who do all in their power to destroy us. It is common in such cases to feel the spirit of hostility stirred within us, and to return evil for evil, and railing for railing; and it is only when that holy and benevolent love is in exercise, which subdues the selfish feelings of the heart, that we are enabled to love and sincerely to bless our enemy.

My design, however, is not to argue so much from abstract principles, as to illustrate this truth from the case of Job himself. The causes, the circumstances, and the issue of his afflictions, all conspire to show that true religion is not a selfish thing, but is founded in love of a holy and disinterested character.

God, you will observe, had spoken well of his servant Job, as a perfect and upright man,—one who feared Him and eschewed evil. Satan disputes the justness of this account, and alledges that Job's seeming goodness was the result of self-interest, and therefore that, in other circumstances, he would hate and reproach that very Being, whom he now professed to love and adore. The Lord answered, "I will put the character of my servant to trial. If he serves me only because I have made a hedge about him and about all that he hath, and would curse me to my face, if my favour towards him were removed, let it be ascertained by the trial. Behold all that he hath is in thy power; remove it when and how thou wilt, only upon himself put not forth thy hand."

With this permission Satan began his work; and the more effectually to surprise and overwhelm Job, he

contrives to throw him from the height of his prosperity to the deepest adversity, in one day. First, the Sabeans plunder him of his oxen which were ploughing in the field, and of the asses which were feeding beside them, slaying the servants with the edge of the sword. Next, fire comes down from heaven and burns up the sheep and the servants who fed them. Then the Chaldeans make out three bands, and fall upon the camels, and carry them away, slaying the servants with the edge of the sword. And last of all, to complete the desolating scene, a great wind from the wilderness smites the four corners of his eldest son's house, where all his children were assembled for the purpose of eating and drinking, and instantly buries them in its ruins, thus sweeping forever from his sight all that a fond parent could hope from being surrounded and sustained by his beloved children. Perhaps too, as they were suddenly cut off in the morning of their days, his pious heart might be smitten with fear lest they were taken away in wrath, and had gone to people the world of wo.

But what was the effect of these sudden and complicated trials? Did Job forget his obligations to God, as Satan had predicted? Did he cease to adore that eternal power from whom his existence and all his comforts were derived? Did he curse God because these comforts had been so suddenly and awfully removed? Did he so much as murmur or repine that a change so sudden and distressing had befallen him? No—he “arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worship-

ped, saying, 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." Thus far Job's religion endured the test, and the disingenuous charge of Satan was confuted. But unwilling to yield the controversy, the subtle adversary attempts to account for the submission of Job on selfish principles, and says, when God appeals to him for the persevering integrity of his servant, "Skin for skin; yea all that a man hath will he give for his life;"—as if Job had submitted wholly from a fear of greater calamities, not at all from a sense of duty; as though his apparent willingness that God should be on the throne, was nothing more than a disposition to compound with Divine Providence by cheerfully giving up a less good, when a greater one was at stake. "Put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh and he will curse thee to thy face." The Lord answered "Behold he is in thine hand, but spare his life." You know the sequel. Immediately he is smitten with sore biles from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, and thus not only bereft of the last drop of comfort, but filled with extreme anguish, and held up a spectacle of universal loathing and astonishment. Was ever so great a change in human condition? But yesterday the child of prosperity, dwelling in affluence, surrounded by children and friends, and all that heart could wish;—now stripped of all, and sinking under the weight of a loathsome disease. See him scraping his swollen limbs with a potsherd, while he seats himself alone in the ashes, as if unfit for the society of human beings, and

incapable of drawing the least consolation from his being numbered with the living. But this was not the whole of his affliction. So great a change in his outward circumstances had opened the mouths of all his adversaries. Those whose fathers he would have disdained to set with the dogs of his flock, made him the object of their indignant sneer, and triumphed in his fall. And even his best friends were staggered at his sufferings, and knew not how to reconcile them with the integrity for which he had long been distinguished. Nay, they withdrew from him their confidence, and instead of administering to his comfort, wounded him to the heart, not only insinuating that he was a hypocrite, but that he lay under the charge of some awful and unrepented iniquity.

To complete his misery, the wife of his bosom, who we might have expected would have remained a fast friend, when all the world had forsaken him, was, for a season, turned into a bitter and unfeeling enemy. In the language of cruel sarcasm, she says, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die," or rather as it is in the original, "Bless God and die." As much as to say, "If you are still resolved to bear your afflictions with patience, and to bless that Being, who has stripped you of all your worldly substance, and cut off your children in the morning of their days, whose hand is now pressing you sore with an insupportable disease—if, under all this, you are resolved to bless, go on blessing until you die; for the eye of man will not pity you."

The answer which he returned shows us how keenly



he felt the wound which her language was calculated to inflict; but, at the same time how firmly his heart remained fixed in its submission to the divine will—  
“Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?”

It may well be doubted if ever a man suffered as much, in a given period, from the calamitous dispensations of Divine Providence, or if ever one displayed an equal degree of patience and submission. Read the account which he gives of his sufferings in the nineteenth chapter of this book, and you will perceive that every cord of human misery was touched, every fibre of his heart was the seat of anguish; and yet such was his submission that not a word of complaint fell from his lips, until exhausted by disease, and worn out by the unkindness of his friends, he could scarcely be considered as any longer himself. His example indeed was not perfect, like that of the Divine Saviour; still it was such as showed the uprightness of his heart. Through all his sufferings he acknowledged the justice of God, and declared his unshaken purpose to serve him to the last. Nay, when all his friends had forsaken him,—when every thing in Divine Providence wore a threatening aspect,—even in his greatest darkness, he reposed himself upon the arm of the Almighty, saying “Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.”

Now, what was the point to be settled by this trial? Satan had alleged that Job was governed by a principle of supreme self-love, and particularly by a regard to his worldly interests,—that the very best that could



be said of him was, that he served God as an acknowledgment of the favours he had received, and that consequently a change of circumstances would lead to a change of character; in short, that should God remove the hedge he had placed about him, and lay upon him the rod of affliction, this devout worshipper of Jehovah, this thankful observer of his providence, would be turned into a despiser of his authority, and a complainer against his government. This is the spirit of the allegation, and if the fact assumed in it had been just, no doubt the conclusion built upon this fact would have been just also. But the experiment was made for the very purpose of showing that the assumption here was false, that Job did not serve God from sinister motives, but from a high and honorable sense of duty, from love to God, and a delight in his holy will. And if this was the character of Job's religion, it cannot be made a question that it is the character of all true religion, insomuch that where this disinterested spirit is wanting, there all true piety and virtue are wanting also. The point at issue was, whether Job was really a good man; and this point was to be determined by determining the motives which governed him,—whether they were of a selfish or of a higher and nobler character.

A few inferences and reflections will now close this discourse.

First. It is exceedingly obvious from the question which Satan agitated with God in respect to Job, that it is the motive of an action which determines it to be blame, or praise-worthy. As to Job's external

uprightness, there was no dispute. The only thing in debate was, whether his motives were good; and it was admitted by God himself, if this were not the fact, that he was hypocritical, and his character of no value. The whole trial in his case proceeded on the principle that the same external conduct may flow from very different motives, and these alone in God's sight will decide the question of moral character.

This is a truth which we shall none of us deny, but which, it is to be feared, is too little attended to in judging of ourselves. Our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and too often perhaps, we are ready to pronounce in our own favour, if our external conduct be regular, whatever may be the motive from which it springs. How many take to themselves the character of being honest and just, because they have not knowingly and deliberately defrauded their neighbour, though they may have been kept within the bounds of justice, not from any love to justice itself, but from the fear of detection, or from the selfish wish to establish a character for honesty and integrity in the world! How many flatter themselves with the idea of being charitable, because they contributed to the wants of the poor, or for the support of objects of public utility, while their hearts are total strangers to the principle of charity, and while they have had no higher motive, than to be seen of men, or to silence the clamour of conscience, and escape the wrath of their Judge! How many who claim to themselves the character of *religious*, because they are attentive to the externals of religion, though they look

not into the secret motives of their hearts, nor seek for purity of intention there?

Secondly: Our subject may render us important aid in the work of self-examination.

The character of Job, as an upright man, turned upon the single question, whether he served God from a principle of self love only, or from a sense of duty,—from love to God's holy character and will. Our characters as professors of religion, will turn upon the same question.

Do we serve God then because we love Him? Do we love Him because he is holy? Would our views of his character and our regard to his service be substantially the same, whether his favour were extended to us or not? Let these questions be carefully considered by us, because if a principle of pure and holy love to God be not the governing motive with us; if we serve him not because we delight in him, and delight in him not because he is holy, depend upon it, some sinister motive lies at the bottom of all,—a principle of selfishness which will render our whole character unsavoury to God,—as unsavoury as Job's would have been, if all that Satan alleged against him had been founded in fact.

Professors of religion, would you know indeed whether your religion will bear the test of the holy and omniscient scrutiny of God? Settle this one point with yourselves, whether you are actuated merely by a regard to your own happiness, or whether you are moved also by a sense of duty, and an affectionate regard to God's will.

Thirdly: Our subject suggests the remark that selfish beings are exceedingly inclined to impute to others the motives by which they are governed themselves, and perhaps to deny to others the possibility of acting from any higher motives than those which influence their own minds. This was certainly the case with the great adversary in relation to Job. Completely selfish himself, he was forward to charge the same disposition to others. The event proved, however, that he was in an error; and it proved no less that those are equally in error who argue from their own experience to the experience of God's people, and deny to them both the fact and the possibility of acting from motives of a disinterested character.

Finally: As the real character of Job was decided by the changes through which he passed, so it will be with ourselves. A great and awful experiment is making with regard to every one of us. By and by the grand result will be proclaimed, our characters will be formed, and our destiny sealed.

Let us bear this awful consideration upon our minds night and day. And let the period of our probation terminate whenever it may, may the great purpose of probation in respect to us be answered by our having formed characters that will bear the scrutiny of the omniscient eye.

## SERMON IX.

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### PROGRESSIVE COURSE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

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#### PSALM XCII., 12.

*“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.”*

This is one of the many passages of sacred writ, in which the lasting and increasing prosperity of the righteous is described, in opposition to the momentary joy and miserable overthrow of the wicked. The Psalmist had said, “When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever. For lo, thine enemies O Lord; for lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn shalt thou exalt, like the horn of a unicorn; I shall be anointed with fresh oil. Mine eye also shall see my desire upon mine enemies, and mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me.” Nor did he regard this state of prosperity as peculiar to himself; he viewed the whole congregation of the faithful as embraced in the same promises, and sustained by the same arm; and therefore he rises into this solemn and universal declaration;—“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in

Lebanon"—trees remarkable for thriftiness, and both evergreen: and upon this account the fitter emblems of the righteous, whose prosperity is rich and abiding. Keeping up the figure he adds, "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." But this prosperity of the righteous, so elegantly described by the Psalmist, has undoubtedly a principal reference to their spiritual welfare. Not indeed but that a virtuous course has, in the ordinary progress of things, much the fairest chance for the attainment of all that can render us honorable and happy in this world; but God has not bound himself by promise to make his people, in all cases, liberal sharers in the good things of the present life, nor even to protect them from the common calamities of this sinful and suffering state. Thousands we know have been destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy. Thousands and tens of thousands have been dragged to prison and to death, for their regard to the great cause of truth and righteousness. And others, in more peaceful times, have been the subjects of singular adversity, having waters of a full cup wrung out to them. Still they are interested in the provisions of the everlasting covenant, and have the assurance that "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and that "all things shall work together for their good."

It is in relation to their spiritual concerns, chiefly, that their prosperity is so strongly marked in the words before us; and whatever others may think, it is enough for them, if all be well here:—if they can only advance



in the divine life and enjoy the light of God's countenance, two things are certain;—they cannot be miserable in this world, and they will be eternally happy in the world which is to come.

But the great and leading truth taught us in the text, and which I propose briefly to illustrate, is, that the righteous not only hold on their way, in opposition to many who apparently begin in the spirit and end in the flesh, but they actually make progress in religion;—they flourish like the palm tree, and grow like the cedar;—they bring forth fruit, even in old age. I regard this not only as a fact, but as a fact of deep and vital importance; and I cannot but hope that the discussion of this subject, at all times proper, will be viewed as in a high degree seasonable, at the present moment.

In my remarks upon this subject I propose to illustrate the fact that the righteous make progress in religion; and then show that this is an essential and distinguishing trait of their character.

I. In what respects do the righteous make progress in religion?

It is not my intention to intimate that they never suffer any temporary decay, or that, when they go forward, they always move with the same uniform pace towards the mark of perfection. We know very well that the best are subject to occasional declension, and that those whose piety ought not to be disputed, do sometimes so far lose the vital power of godliness as to occasion great darkness to their own souls, and bring upon themselves the severest rebukes of Divine Providence. Our meaning is, that the righteous make

progress in religion, taking the several periods of their lives together, and that this progress consists in something more than mere negative virtue or forbearing to do evil;—that it implies an increase in those spiritual exercises and attainments which go to make up the divine life.

The righteous, we observe, first of all, make progress in divine knowledge. They become more minutely and extensively acquainted with the perfections of God,—his wisdom, his power, his holiness, his justice, his mercy, his truth. These attributes which struck them with wonder at first, the more they are contemplated, the more wonderful and glorious do they appear; their proper objects are more distinctly ascertained, and their beauty and harmony in the works of God, more decisively marked. They learn more too of the wonderful purity and breadth of God's law. At their earliest discoveries of its spirituality, they saw plainly that it reached to the thoughts and intents of the heart; but they grow in their acquaintance with its demands; they see more clearly both what it forbids and what it enjoins. At the same time, they receive deeper impressions of its reasonableness and authority. They increase too in their knowledge of the great principles and ends of God's government, and therefore better understand the nature and tendency of his providential dispensations.

Equally certain is it that they grow in their knowledge of Christ; his person, character, office, work. Every true Christian is supposed to know something of them at his first entrance upon the religious life.

But the experience of every day serves greatly to extend the boundaries of his knowledge. No single duty can be performed acceptably, but in the name of Christ, and by virtue of strength derived from him. This leads him often to contemplate the character and mediation of Christ; to learn more distinctly who he is, what offices he sustains in relation to his people, what they may expect from him, and upon what conditions they may expect it. Hence he becomes more intimately acquainted with the Saviour, and feels more sensibly his entire and absolute dependence upon him.

In learning more of God and of Christ, the righteous learn more of the relations which they bear to them, and consequently of the duties which they owe in these relations; especially as the law of God, which is the measure of their duty, is continually unfolding in its spirituality and extent. The consequence is, that they not only discover new duties in their course, but discern, with far greater clearness, the nature and importance of those which they had hitherto known. Hence also it is that they learn better to estimate the value of one duty, compared with another. The inexperienced Christian often discovers great zeal in performing duties of lesser moment, while those which Christ styles the weightier matters of the law, though not neglected, are attended to with comparatively little engagedness and punctuality. But as he advances in the divine life, his judgment grows more correct, and he estimates things in a truer light.

The righteous, moreover, learn more of themselves, as they advance. They become better acquainted with

their own weaknesses and temptations, with the deceitfulness and corruption of their own hearts. Perhaps their knowledge increases more sensibly on this point than any other. The sad experience of each day has a tendency to make them see more and more of that body of sin and death, which is yet undestroyed within them.

They learn more also of the vanity of the world, and the snares and temptations which the world presents. They obtain larger experience of the devices of the great adversary, who assails them in a thousand forms, and by instruments as various as the different objects they meet and the different scenes through which they pass; and they become better acquainted with the means by which he is to be resisted and overcome. In one word, they advance in the knowledge of religion, both as a system of truth and an inward practical principle.

Secondly: The righteous make progress in holy and devout affections. This may be regarded in part as the result of an increase of knowledge. For the more the doctrines and duties of religion are understood, other things being equal, the more will they be loved. Hence we are commanded to grow in knowledge, as a means of growing in grace; and hence also sound doctrine is considered as the proper food and nourishment of Christians. But to be more particular—

The righteous may be considered as increasing in love and reverence for God, entertaining more exalted views of his perfections, feeling a deeper interest in the progress of his kingdom, and acting more constantly and sincerely with reference to his glory. They in-

crease in holy gratitude to God, recognizing his favours with warmer sensibility, and growing in a conviction of their own unworthiness, and of the amazing riches of the divine mercy. As the character of God is more and more unfolded from the exhibitions made of himself in his works and in his word, so their hearts are expanded by degrees with those divine affections, which his character is calculated to inspire. They have more love, more reverence, more gratitude, more submission, more undivided concern for his glory.

They make advances also in their hatred of sin, and their sorrow for it. It is not with a true Christian, as some seem to imagine—that he begins his course, with the bitterest repentance for the sins that are past, and afterwards has no more sorrowing and repenting to do. His life is a life of deep repentance and unfeigned humiliation; and this is, in no degree, inconsistent with his making progress in holiness. For it is one way in which holiness in an imperfect being manifests itself,—to loathe remaining impurity and to sigh after greater degrees of sanctification. It cannot be pretended that the most exalted Christian on earth is perfect. In many things we all offend, and in all we come short of the glory of God. There must, therefore, be daily and hourly need of repentance: and why should not the heart that sees this, feel and act according to the nature of the case? It is past all doubt that, as the soul makes progress in the divine life, sin, in its estimation, becomes increasingly heinous; and hence, though the power of sin is more and more broken, still

the remains of it excite deeper sorrow, and cause a more unfeigned humiliation. There are none who so often cry out, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—as those who have attained the advanced sanctification of the Apostle. To such persons sin appears to be sin indeed. An improper thought, a mere defect which would pass wholly unnoticed by a conscience less quick, and a heart less sanctified and sensible than theirs, stands arrayed in awful colours, presenting a cloud of guilt, black with terror, and but for the blood of the cross, it would overwhelm them in despair. The consequence is that they walk softly before God, and continue to seek after conformity to him, while sin is daily more embittered and the cry for deliverance is repeated with greater frequency and earnestness.

The righteous increase in spiritualty moreover, inasmuch as they increase in patience, charity, meekness, self-denial, deadness to the world, hope in God's mercy and faith unfeigned. Their progress is especially and strongly marked by an increase of faith and hope. Joy may not be so lively: the various sensibilities of the soul may be less awake; but faith and hope will be even more firm and vigorous. The repeated instances which they have had of God's faithfulness, and the large experience of his mercy, in times when every thing around looked dark and boding, can scarcely fail to increase their confidence in him. These things give them a firmer trust in his promises, and greatly strengthen their hopes of acceptance with Him, beyond



what they had experienced in the earlier periods of the Christian life. But not to protract this part of the subject, I very briefly remark, once more,

That the progress, which the righteous make in the path of religion, is seen in the consistency and uniformity of their conduct. They are less and less liable to those sudden transitions of sentiment and feeling, which they experienced in the first entrance on their course. They go forward with a firmer step, and if they do not appear to move so rapidly, still their progress is more uniform, and their advance, on the whole, more certain as well as more considerable. They are more able to encounter difficulties and receive less injury from the enemies who would willingly obstruct their path. In short, you may compare them in their progress to children who are rising to manhood; they lose some of their vivacity,—some of their zeal: but they acquire more industry, more strength, more skill, and consequently reach a higher eminence in the divine life. In these respects, and in others which might be mentioned, do the righteous make progress in religion. But I call your attention to the

II. Second branch of the discourse, in which I am to show that this advance in the divine life is an essential characteristic of the righteous; or, which amounts to the same thing, that the righteous, notwithstanding any partial declensions, do eventually hold on their way, and make progress in the knowledge and practice of their duty.

We might rest assured of this from the single passage on which we have grounded our meditations at

this time. For unless we admit that the righteous make progress in religion, how could it be said of them that "they shall flourish like the palm tree, and grow like the cedar in Lebanon?" That "those who are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God?" that "they shall still bring forth fruit in old age;" that "they shall be fat and flourishing?" But the language of Scripture is uniform on this subject. The Psalmist tells us in the eighty-fourth psalm, not only that the righteous have their strength in God, but that "they shall go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appearing before God." We read also, "That the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." And we are told not only, that God will bless and establish the habitation of the just, but that "the path of the just is as the shining light, which increaseth more and more unto the perfect day;" words, which strongly mark the progress of the just in those great principles of truth and righteousness by which they stand distinguished from the wicked.

Does not our Saviour bear testimony to the same truth, not only when he describes his disciples as those who love God and keep his commandments,—as those who enter upon a religious course, and who endure in that course to the end, but especially when he teaches us that the kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed, which, though the least of all seeds, yet when it is grown, becomes the greatest of all herbs, so that the fowls of the air come and lodge in the branches of it? And then again, when he likens it to a corn of wheat

cast into the ground:—"There is first the blade, then the ear, then the full or ripe corn in the ear." If he alludes to the kingdom of God, as established in the hearts of men, as well as to this kingdom set up in the world, the inference is irresistible that the work of grace in every renewed heart is progressive;—that they who truly become heirs of the heavenly kingdom, increase in their meetness for that kingdom, as they advance in life and come nearer to the time when they shall take possession of it. And why should not this be thought reasonable? So, we are assured it was with the Apostle, and his companions in labours and sufferings. Though the outward man decayed, yet the inward man was renewed day by day. Forgetting the things which were behind, and reaching forth to those things which were before, they pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. "The weapons of our warfare," they could say, "are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

God has implanted in the heart of every true Christian substantially the same principles;—I mean a hatred of sin, and an inextinguishable desire to be holy; and shall these principles work no change in his character? God has given unto him the hope of everlasting happiness in a world where he shall be as free from sin as he shall be from sorrow; and shall not this hope lead

him to purify himself, even as Christ his Lord is pure? We cannot assert the contrary, without denying the most solemn and explicit testimony of an apostle. God has commanded true believers to grow in grace, and has furnished them with the means; and can we suppose that these means will prove abortive, though at the same time, he has promised to give them his Spirit to abide in them—and to work in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure?

It is a doctrine of the Bible that evil men and seducers wax worse and worse;—their corrupt principles they manifest in their lives, and the longer they live, the more palpable is this manifestation. Is it not agreeable to the analogy of providence that good men should evince their principles, and grow wiser and better, by the advantages they possess or the means they enjoy? There is certainly the more reason to expect this, when we are assured that the gospel and its privileges exert a transforming influence upon the hearts of believers. For, says Paul, “We all with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” The same progressive character is ascribed to the believer in terms equally explicit by another apostle, while the means of this improvement are no less unequivocally declared—“To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

We could easily add to this testimony; but enough has been said to show you that it is one essential and distinguishing trait in the character of the righteous to make progress in religion. They do not merely hold on their way, and endure to the end, but they make advances in the divine life. They flourish like the palm tree, and grow like the cedar of Lebanon.

Yet certain and demonstrable as this truth is from the Bible, it is not without its objections. It may be said that it is no uncommon occurrence among those who profess religion, that the zeal which they display in the commencement of their course, after a little while, subsides; and though they do not cease their attendance on religious duties, yet they never appear to recover their former life and vigour. May we not suppose that they have lost their first love, without supposing that they were insincere,—and that they may continue in this state of backsliding, without giving in to the opinion, that the love of God was never shed abroad in their hearts?

That such facts do occur, and occur with lamentable frequency, there is no question. But they are always to be accounted for in one of three ways;—either that the persons in this state of decline never had any religion, but have merely compassed themselves about with sparks of their own kindling, and therefore have not been able to keep the fire burning amidst the rude storms of the present life; or they have fallen into a temporary decay, from which eternal mercy, according to its own promise, will yet recover them; or else much of their former zeal was owing to a mixture with human

passions, which gave them the appearance of much more religion than they really possessed. The latter is a case by no means uncommon in the Christian world. A man suddenly brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, will be likely to be much affected by the mere novelty of his views;—and if he possess a warm imagination, and is not careful to discriminate his motives, nothing is more probable than that his zeal will burn high, while the selfish passions are the chief instruments in feeding the flame. When his judgment comes to be better informed, and the novelty of his views a little worn away, much of his ardour may be supposed to abate, without his having less love to God, or less real desire to serve and honour him. We do not regard the fact therefore, that many, and perhaps even the greater number, of those whom charity would induce us to receive as real Christians, show less zeal in the subsequent, than in the early part of their course, as in any degree militating against the doctrine which we have attempted to support, that the righteous, taking the whole of their lives together, really make progress in religion. The flame may not ascend so high, and yet the heat be more intense. There may be less of animal feeling,—less of human passion, and yet more of the Christian temper, more sincere love to God, more benevolence to man, and a greater steadfastness and uniformity in duty.

Is it not time then, my Christian friends, to pause and enter into a close and serious examination of our own case? Our subject presents a most important and decisive test of Christian character. Let us look back



upon our course, and with all the impartiality of those who are willing and anxious to know the truth, let us ask, have we made progress in the divine life? Is it true of us as of the righteous, that we flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon? Is our path that of the just, which as the shining light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day? I must confess I have many fears, that this is not the case with us all. There is a declension among us which is truly alarming;—a declension not only deep in itself, but which in many cases, has been of such long continuance, as to excite the most fearful apprehensions. Let each professor of religion then put it to his own heart,—Have I made any progress in the great principles and practice of Godliness, since I began my religious course? Have I learned more of God my Creator, Benefactor and Preserver? Have I a clearer apprehension of his glorious attributes, purposes and designs? Does his majesty awe me more, and his fear make a deeper impression upon my heart? Do I think more of his cause in the world, and feel a stronger desire that his kingdom may be established in my own heart and in the hearts of others? Does his glory strike my eye with increasing power and delight, and become to my soul a more constant as well as a more distinct motive of action? Have I learned more of Christ my Redeemer, and the only appointed medium of my approach unto God? Do I better understand the glories of his person, comprehending both a divine and human nature? And do I see more the reasonableness and necessity of his mediation? What views have I gained of him in his

infinitely important offices of Prophet, Priest and King? Is he regarded by me, with increasing interest, as the only hope of my lost soul? Does his blood appear increasingly precious, as the only and all sufficient sacrifice for sin; and his righteousness as the meritorious ground of a title to life? Do I go to him daily, and go to him with renewed confidence, as the medium of forgiveness, and the author of strength? Can I say that he is more and more precious to me in his character, offices and work, that I feel the constraints of his love more, and that I desire with greater sincerity and ardour to be devoted to his cause, and thus live to Him who died for me?

Do I love the word of God more, and peruse it with increasing diligence and satisfaction? Do I make it the man of my counsel, and regard its dictates as paramount to every other law? Have its precious truths a transforming influence upon my heart? And while I advance in knowledge, do I advance also, in the love and practice of the truth? Do I love to pray more, and if I do not increase in the gift, do I at least increase in the spirit of prayer? Is my daily cry more humble, more ardent, more believing, more disinterested embracing the wants of others as well as my own? Do I feel a deeper regard for God's people, compassionate their infirmities more, and with greater constancy remember them before the throne of our common Lord? And is my heart touched with increasing tenderness for sinners who live in impenitence, and lie under the awful sentence of God's broken law? Or do I care less and less what is to become of their

never dying souls, provided they do not disturb my present tranquillity?

In what point of view do I regard sin? Is it more and more a terror to me? Have I a growing sense of its awful turpitude, as a breach of God's law? Do I groan more and more under its remaining power, and, like the holy Apostle, cry with increasing earnestness, to be delivered? And does the work of mortifying sin go on within me? Do I find that any sinful appetite or passion is losing strength, while the opposite virtue or grace is manifestly gaining the ascendancy? Am I more patient under afflictions, more meek under injuries, more self-denied when my worldly interests are threatened, or any of my worldly desires crossed? Have I become more kind, more benignant, more charitable? In a word, have I got at a greater remove from all the selfish passions, while, at the same time, I am more spiritual, more heavenly, living with my hope fixed on God, and my expectations on his promised rest? Then I am a Christian,—certainly I am a Christian, whose lineaments I find in the Bible. I am a righteous man who flourishes like the palm-tree, and grows like a cedar in Lebanon.

But what if, upon this examination, I find it otherwise? What if my conscience brings in a different verdict, and tells me I have made no such progress in the divine life; that, though I have been years in the school of Christ among his professed disciples, yet I have not perceptibly advanced in knowledge or in grace; or if I have gained in a speculative acquaintance with divine truth, I have made no such proficiency

in a heavenly temper;—that I am not more like Christ in my own eyes, nor in the eyes of my brethren, than I was at the commencement of my course? Nay, what if my own heart joins with all around in testifying that I have manifestly lost much of what appeared hopeful at the beginning, and that I have slidden back with perpetual backsliding? Alas! what dreadful proof is here of my insincerity; and what reason have I to tremble in view of that judgment which is approaching! Shall we venture forward, my brethren, under such circumstances, and hug our delusions till we die? Or shall we make a solemn pause, and determine that, unless we can find we are Christians indeed—Christians that grow in grace, we will abandon our hopes, as having in them the elements of self-deception and eternal ruin?

## SERMON X.

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### CONFIDENCE IN GOD PRODUCTIVE OF PEACE.

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ISAIAH, XXVI., 3.

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.*

The heart of man is often disquieted in his journey through this world. From causes infinitely various, his comforts and his hopes forsake him, and he finds the need of other support than can be derived from any resources of his own. Often he feels the need of friends, who will enter into his sufferings, and extend the balm of sympathy to his wounded spirit.

But there are seasons when his sorrows lie too deep to be reached by human power. He has griefs which cannot be imparted, or if imparted, can in no degree be lightened or removed. Then it is that his own weakness is felt, and the weakness of those who surround him; then it is that he is willing to hear something of God, the everlasting God who fainteth not, neither is weary and who has styled himself a present help in every time of trouble; then it is that he rejoices to believe that the same Almighty Power which stilleth the noise of the seas, stilleth also the troubled mind, and gives a peace which nothing on earth can destroy.

If there be any in this assembly whose experience accords with this statement, they will listen with some degree of interest to the words of the prophet which I have just read, in which he declares, under the authority of inspiration, that God will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are stayed on him. The prophet had been favoured with extensive views of God's power and justice—nay, of His truth and mercy, in the judgments He had executed upon the wicked, and in the salvation He had wrought for the righteous. Enlightened by the Divine Spirit, he could not only survey the wonderful works which God had already performed in the earth, but look forward to those which were still more wonderful, and which the divine faithfulness had pledged itself to accomplish. He could see the time when Moab, long an inveterate enemy of God's people, "Should be trodden down as the straw is trodden down for the dung-hill; when his fortress and high towers should be brought down and laid even with the dust; and when the branch of all the terrible ones should be brought low." He could see the delightful period when God should destroy, by his own Almighty hand, the face of the covering cast over all the people, and bring the Gentile nations to the knowledge and acknowledgment of the truth. Then he tells us "A time will have come, when death shall be swallowed up in victory, and God shall wipe away tears from off all faces, and take away the rebuke of his people from off all the earth; then shall this song be sung in the land of Judah, We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks;



open ye your gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth, may enter in." And to give a still higher idea of the safety and happiness of God's people, at that period, as well as to minister present hope and consolation to every disquieted heart, he adds as in the words of our text, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

In discoursing farther from these words, I propose to direct your attention to two things:

I. To the duty of staying the mind on God:

II. To the privilege connected with this duty. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

I. To the duty of staying the mind on God.

I hardly need remark that this expression is nearly equivalent to that of "trusting in God," "casting our care upon him," and "looking to him" for whatever is needful in time or eternity. This idea is attached to the term in the tenth chapter of this prophecy, where it is said, "that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped from the house of Jacob, shall no more stay upon him that smote them, (that is upon the Assyrian,) but they shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel in truth." The prophet uses the expression in the same sense, when he reproves the children of Israel for going down into Egypt for help, and staying on horses and trusting in chariots, and when he directs—"If there be any among you who feareth the Lord and walketh in darkness and seeth no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay himself

upon his God." But to enter a little more into the import of this expression,

I remark, in the first place, That he who stays himself upon God, has a deep and affecting sense of his own insufficiency. He clearly perceives that he has no power, independent of God;—that he can neither provide for his wants, nor protect himself against his fears, without the agency of Divine Providence. In particular it may be said, that he has no confidence in his own wisdom and fore-sight, as if he were able to penetrate the dark folds of futurity, and to find out for himself a secure path, amidst the ever-varying scenes in which he is called to mingle. He feels, in this respect, all the humility and dependance of a little child, who is willing and anxious to be led. He goes to God, therefore, continually, and seeks counsel from Him. He has no confidence in his own virtue, as though he were able to perform his duty, or to stand the shock of temptation, without strength derived from on high. He knows well, "that in himself, that is, in his flesh there dwelleth no good"—or to use another expression of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, that "he is not sufficient of himself to think any thing as of himself, but that all his sufficiency is of God," who must "work in him, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

He is equally convinced of his own insufficiency to sustain himself in the day of calamity and rebuke, or to bear up under the common ills of life, if not supported by a hand which is almighty. He ceases, therefore, all proud reliance upon himself. Nor is he ashamed

to acknowledge that the very feeblest of his enemies has power sufficient to destroy him, if unprotected by Him, whose eye is over all, and whose hand directs and governs all. In this view of his absolute dependance, he is weaned from his own understanding and his own strength; and is thus far prepared to lean upon the Lord. But we remark,

In the next place, that as he has a deep conviction of his own weakness, so also he has a lively sense of the weakness and insufficiency of all other creatures. He perceives that they are as little capable of administering to his wants and of becoming a full and satisfying portion, as he himself is. This is absolutely necessary to his staying himself upon the Lord. The streams must dry up before he will go to the fountain:—the creature must vanish in his sight, before he will repair unto God. God is indeed a strong rock, on which men may constantly repose; an everlasting tower in which they may hide; but they will never fly unto Him, until all other refuges have failed. Naturally they love and serve the creature, more than the Creator, who is God over all, blessed forever; and they will seek the creature, and stay themselves upon it, until its vanity is made fully to appear. There never was and there never will be a soul brought to stay itself upon the Lord, until it has attained a deep and powerful conviction of its own insufficiency, and the insufficiency of every other creature, fully to meet its desires and to make it truly and substantially happy.

Nor is this all; for to a conviction of the insufficiency of the creature, you must add, in the third place, a just

and lively apprehension of the infinite excellency and glory of the Creator,—or, which amounts to the same thing, a firm and heart felt persuasion of the being and perfections of God. When God's attributes are not distinctly apprehended, there is no foundation laid for staying ourselves upon him. He must appear to be the rock, and his work perfect, before we can make him the object of our confidence. "They that know thy name," says the Psalmist, "will put their trust in thee." But they that do not know God's name, and who do not see Him to be what He is,—a Being of infinite wisdom, power, holiness, truth and mercy, will not put their trust in Him; and the reason is that they see no just reason for it.

But let us not suppose that a mere speculative knowledge of God will suffice. God must be seen in his spiritual excellence and glory,—in other words, he must be loved, before we can make him the object of our trust. The devils know Him speculatively, but they do not trust in Him, because they do not love. The same is the case with thousands of wicked men under the light of the gospel. They are not speculatively ignorant of God's attributes but being destitute of any spiritual discernment of his moral excellence, they do not stay themselves upon Him. Their aversion begets jealousy, and jealousy fear, and fear is but another name for distrust. They and they only can stay themselves upon the Lord, who have a full and unwavering conviction of his being and attributes, and who feel a cordial approbation of his character.

There is yet another important principle involved

in this duty, viz: a knowledge of God in Christ. It is only in and through the Lord Jesus, that a holy and just God can dispense favour to sinners. If I know nothing therefore of this medium of mercy, how can I stay myself upon the Lord, as the ground of my security or happiness? He may be infinitely glorious in Himself, and yet not show kindness to me; he may rule in infinite wisdom and love, and yet make me the object of his increasing and dreadful abhorrence. Nor without a knowledge of a Saviour and the infinitely precious promises that are founded upon him, can I see how God can maintain the honour of his government, without punishing every transgression and disobedience with a just recompense of reward. What then shall I do? Whither shall I look for refuge? Certainly not to God, who is infinitely holy, and whom I have most grievously offended, unless He shall vouchsafe to tell me that he is merciful, and upon my return to Him, will put away my transgressions, and become my sure and everlasting friend. This He has nowhere done, but in the gospel of his Son; nor from any other source can I learn that sin is pardonable, or that God is willing to become my refuge.

To stay myself upon Him, therefore, must suppose that I am acquainted with the revelation of his mercy in Christ, and that I distinctly recognise those great and precious promises which are made in him, and which in him are yea and amen to the glory of God the Father.

Let me add also to stay ourselves upon the Lord, implies not merely that we confide in Him, but that we

have a strong and unshaken confidence. There may be a partial and wavering trust, occasioned by the warmth and buoyancy of natural feeling, or by some remarkable interposition of Providence in our favour, when very little of the divine character is seen, and very little of faith is in exercise. But those who *stay* themselves upon God, have a fixedness of heart and steadfastness of reliance, which show that they have enlarged conceptions of what God is, and what He has promised to do for his people. They feel themselves surrounded by One, whose power is unlimited, and whose faithfulness cannot fail; and they find it as natural and easy to cast themselves upon his care, as for a child to recline upon his father's bosom, or for the weary traveller to sit down to rest. God appears to them a strong rock, a high tower of defence, a full and never failing portion of the soul. Hence they lean upon Him with a firm and steady reliance, which brings peace and quietness to their minds.

But how, it may be asked, does this confidence in God make itself known? Do they who possess it grow negligent and presumptuous in proportion as their reliance upon God is increased? Far otherwise—the more they stay themselves upon Him, the more solicitous do they become to walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing; being found in the active discharge of those duties, which are assigned to them in the places and relations which they hold. One great object they have in going to God and putting their trust in Him, is that they may derive strength to do his will and approve themselves to his holy and all-searching eye. There



can be no confidence where there is no love,—and surely there can be no love, where there is not a dutiful regard to God's will. Their confidence and obedience will always keep pace with each other.

They show their reliance upon God, further, by cheerfully submitting to his hand under the dark and trying dispensations of his providence. God often has his path in the great deep, where his footsteps cannot be traced. The wheels of his government are high and dreadful; and to the eyes of mortals, so complicated in their movements, that no human wisdom can penetrate their design. But this is no ground of discouragement to those that stay themselves upon the Lord. They never expected that the counsels of infinite wisdom could be measured by the short line of their understanding. It is enough for them to know that God is upon the throne; that he cannot possibly err in judgment, or fail to accomplish those infinitely important objects, which, in the measures of his government, he proposes, and which in their results embrace the highest good of creation, and the glory of his own great name. Let God envelope himself in clouds and darkness if he please, is the language of their hearts, so long as we are assured, that all events are in his hands, and that he rules in infinite wisdom, and love. Dark and tumultuous as the present scene now is, we have nothing to fear. He rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm. The time must come, when order shall spring out of confusion, and light out of darkness, till confusion and darkness shall be no more.

But they trust in God, not only under dispensations

which are dark and incomprehensible, but under those also which are peculiarly painful and calamitous. Sometimes it pleases God severely to try them by his chastening rod; and they are in trouble, not so much because they cannot comprehend the dispensations of his providence, as because these dispensations contradict their strongest earthly wishes and desires. But here they learn to renounce their own will and quietly and patiently submit to his. Such views have they of the wisdom and equity of God's government—such assurance of the fulness, kindness and stability of his promises, that they find no heart to complain, however repeated and heavy may be their trials. In the language of Job, they can say "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Or in that of David, "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."

Can it be strange that such a temper should bring peace with it, even a peace which passeth all understanding? It is the very spirit of the gospel,—a strong and decisive characteristic of true love to God. But this leads us to consider in the

II. Second place, the privilege of those who thus stay themselves upon the Lord. God will keep them in perfect peace. But what *is* this peace?

Shall I say it is a peace which stands opposed to all those corroding cares which so often disturb the minds of men in relation to their present wants; and which leads them to cry, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" This

is the perpetual anxiety of multitudes, and even of those who are possessed of a competent share of the good things of this life. Some are troubled because they are poor and have nothing laid up in store for a future day; and others because, though possessed of abundance, they have no certainty that this abundance will continue. They perceive a thousand causes at work, which may possibly dispossess them of their present means, or put it out of their power to command them. Thus an uneasiness is engendered which makes their days drag heavily, and turns the current of life into a perturbed stream. But the peace of which we speak stands opposed to all this. It supposes such confidence in the power, wisdom and goodness of God, and especially in those great and precious promises in which God has bound himself to watch over his people, and provide for their wants, as to lay these anxious and devouring cares to sleep. God's providence is regarded as an ample resource, and the heart sweetly reposes upon his infinitely gracious and powerful arm.

Again: This peace stands opposed to all those inward tumults which arise from discordant and malignant passions. Where these are indulged, they make the soul like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. But they who stay themselves upon God, are in a measure conformed to his will; they have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts; and consequently experience in their own bosoms the truth of that declaration—that "the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever." They are not

indeed sinlessly perfect, and therefore something like a warfare must be going on between the old man and the new; still "this is their rejoicing, even the testimony of their conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, they have their conversation in the world, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God." Having sincerely aimed to do the divine will, and looking to the blood of Christ for the pardon of whatever is amiss, they have confidence towards God, and rejoice in the hope of eternal life. Hence comes a sweet and heavenly tranquility, known only to those whose souls are sanctified by the Divine Spirit, and sprinkled by the peace-speaking blood of the Lamb. The tormenting and guilty passions are subdued and the forebodings of an accusing conscience taken away.

But finally: the peace which God promises to those whose minds are stayed upon him, comprehends in it a deliverance not merely from the specific evils already named, but from all those endless inquietudes, fears and disgusts which spring up in the heart of man in this world; while it spreads the sincerest satisfaction and the most sublime and heavenly tranquility through all the powers of the soul. Do you ask how this is accomplished? I answer in two ways;—by finding in God a complete security against every possible evil, and a provision for all that the soul needs in this world or that which is to come.

They who stay themselves upon God may be assured that they have nothing to fear. God has undertaken to be their Almighty Guardian: his eternal wisdom, power and goodness stand pledged that nothing shall

befal them which shall not eventually work for their good. And they have an assurance no less strong, that he will withhold nothing which is needful to their highest felicity. In short, they behold in God an all sufficient portion;—enough to satisfy the most expanded desires of their souls. What then can disturb them? Why should not their peace be unshaken and entire,—in other words, a perfect peace? Such it is, and such it will continue to be, so long as their confidence in God is firm and unwavering. No matter what changes may occur—they may boldly say with the church, in the forty-sixth Psalm, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea: though the waters thereof roar, and the mountains shake with the swellings thereof. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

What remains is a brief application of the subject. Who can help remarking in the

First place: How thankful we ought to be that God has opened a way for our happiness, which is equally accessible to all men, where the gospel comes. Whether rich or poor; honorable or despised; learned or ignorant; bond or free—whatever may be our external circumstances, there is nothing to prevent our being truly and substantially happy, if we will but return to the Father of Mercies, and place our confidence exclusively in Him. In every condition God is able to come near to us, and pour the light of his glory into our souls; He can so fill us with Himself as to shut out fear

and want and sorrow of every kind, and make us the subjects of a peace which is sweet and sublime, and which passeth all understanding and knowledge. Nay, he has promised to do this, in every case where we abandon all ultimate confidence in the creature and trust in him alone. If we are not happy then, it must be our own fault; for here is a wide and effectual door opened for it, and a door which is equally free and inviting to all. Say not then, O man, that thy lot is hard; that a thousand cares and wants and anxieties press upon thee, and thy life is only a scene of vexation and sorrow. This is reproaching the goodness of thy Creator, and the tender mercies of thy Redeemer. Rather fall at his feet in thankful acknowledgement of his kindness, and receive from his infinite bounty the good which he offers thee. I remark,

Secondly: How incalculable must be the folly and guilt of those who still keep at a distance from God! What do such persons expect? Do they expect that their experiments will issue differently from those which have been made by others in every preceding generation? When did a human being ever find a true and soul-satisfying peace in the acquisitions and enjoyments of the world? Millions have made the trial, and have made it under every possible advantage, and the result has always been the same. With Solomon they have been forced to cry at last, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." If the world could make men happy, *why* this perpetual disquietude in their own bosoms? Why do they look forward for enjoyment—and not sit down content with the present?



This restlessness, this continual reaching after something which is not yet attained;—this happiness of next week, or next year, is a shrewd indication of the poverty of the world. It proclaims loudly in every ear, if men would but hear it, that they have set out upon a wrong course,—that they are pursuing shadows instead of the substance; and that if ever they design to be happy, they must tread back their steps and take a new direction. Yes, it calls them to abandon the broken cistern, and come away to God the fountain of living waters, where they may drink and thirst no more.

To Him then let me invite you, one and all, to return. You will never find a peace in your bosoms which deserves the name of peace, till this is done. God has so constituted our minds that nothing but Himself can be to them a satisfying portion. Our souls are immortal, and they thirst for a happiness which is commensurate with their being. They will not, they can not be content with objects which we see every day perishing before our eyes. O then let us come unto God, the infinite God, for He is the fountain of Being, and an ocean of blessedness. Let us come with an humble and broken heart, for our past sins and follies,—and with a believing and child like confidence that we may henceforth stay ourselves upon Him, as upon the eternal rock. Let us say to ourselves, in the language of David, “My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.” And especially let me exhort those to do this, who are in any peculiar trouble, whether of body or mind. Does want or poverty assail you? Go and repose yourselves upon Him, who

opens his hand and supplies the wants of every living thing. He knows all the fowls of the mountains; and the cattle upon a thousand hills are his. His providence is not only rich and extensive, embracing the interests of all worlds, but in the highest degree minute and special; it extends its regards even to the falling of a sparrow, and to the numbering of the hairs on your head.

Does your heart bleed under a separation from the dearest earthly friend? Go to Him who will be better to you than father or mother, son or daughter, or any earthly relative. Now that the stream is dried up, you have a new call to hasten to God, the fountain, and unbosom yourself to Him. Roll all your cares and burdens upon his arm;—say with David, “The Lord liveth, the Lord liveth and blessed be my Rock.”

Are you grieved with those who have deceived and forsaken you? Go to God, the everlasting God, whose friendship is sincere and unchangeable, like Himself. His promise is, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” “The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.” Those whom he loves, he loves unto the end. Nothing can separate between him and them. “Fear not,” saith he, “I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward.”

Do you find yourself alone and unprotected in the world; subject to a thousand cares and anxieties which you cannot disclose? We invite you to Him, who is the friend of the friendless, and the judge of the fatherless, and the widow in his holy habitation. Come and

stay yourself upon Jehovah, for in Him is everlasting strength. He is ever near you, and his Almighty arm shall be round about you. He will quiet those fears which agitate your bosom; he will soften or banish your cares, and fill you with that blessed composure of mind, which results from a confidence in his wisdom and love.

Do enemies, powerful and malignant, lie in wait for you? Do they watch for your halting, and with the greediness of lions, stand ready to devour you? Go to Him who will hide you in the secret of his pavilion, from the strife of tongues, and from the violence of those who would injure you. He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye, says this Almighty friend; and as soon could Omniscience be surprised, and eternal power defeated, as one hair of your head injured while you repose your confidence in him.

Are you all your life time subject to bondage through fear of death? This is the unhappy case of multitudes. But I exhort you to go to Him who can turn the shadows of death into the light of the morning,—to Him who is the resurrection and the life, and who has graciously promised that whosoever believeth in Him shall never die; and though he were dead, yet shall he live.

Do you feel unhappy or restless from any cause? (and many there are who thus feel without being able to trace their wretchedness to any particular source.) Go to God, the fountain of all felicity. He, and He alone, can calm your disquietudes, and wipe away your tears. Hear the melting language which he ad-

dresses to you, and to all who resemble you. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: and he that hath no money; come ye buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour, for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me and hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

## SERMON XI.

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### THE HEART OF MAN PROVED BY THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

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#### DEUTERONOMY VIII., 2.

*“And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no.”*

Every thing around us tells that we are in a probationary state. The mixture of good and evil which attends us, the inequalities of Divine Providence towards the righteous and the wicked, the temptations which assail us and the numerous succours offered to our aid, proclaim, with united voice, that this world is not itself the world of retribution, but only preparatory to it. No man can seriously reflect upon the circumstances of his present existence, without perceiving that he is borne along to some other and higher destiny. The events of each day exert upon him a moral influence; and whether he attends to the fact or not, he is growing better, or growing worse, by every change through which he passes. In each fleeting moment something is done or omitted to be done, for which

he is responsible;—something which developes his character and fixes his habits, while the course of Providence towards him is such as to settle the great question, whether he will walk in the paths of virtue or not. This we take to be the voice of reason, when properly consulted on the subject of our present existence, circumstances and relations. Most certainly it is the voice of God's word. We no sooner open the sacred page, than we see written with a sun-beam the solemn fact that this world is but a scene of preparation for eternity, and that all the events of it are designed in Providence to have an influence on our character, and to stand connected with our immortal destiny.

What other sentiment do you gather from the words which I have just read to you, in which Moses requires the Israelites, just come to the borders of the promised land, to “remember all the way which the Lord their God had led them in the wilderness, for the space of forty years;”—a way which had been full of wonders,—full of suffering,—full of mercy; a way, therefore, which was at once adapted and designed to “prove them, to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep the commandments of God or not.”

God's dealings towards them indeed had been very peculiar, and there was a necessity for that peculiarity;—but the moral design was the same which he has had towards other nations and other individuals in his dealings with them, merely to prove them, to show what was in their hearts, and whether they would obey him or not. As to ourselves, who live under the light of



the gospel, there cannot be a doubt that God has the same moral ends to answer, by the course which He is taking with us. He considers us on our trial for eternity, and would have us consider it. What happened to the Israelites in the wilderness, he has given us to understand, happened to them for an example, and was written for our instruction and our admonition, upon whom these ends of the world are come. We are as certainly under the moral government of God, as they; and this fact draws after it, the certainty of our being under a course of moral discipline, which must end in the formation of a character, which will fit us for the endless retributions of the future world.

The single object I have in view, on this occasion, is to point out some of the means by which it pleases God to prove or try us, and by which our characters will be formed, and our final state unalterably decided.

I. God proves us by his word. His word is, in an eminent degree, a touchstone of the heart.

It is rendered so by the doctrines it teaches. There is nothing perhaps which more certainly determines the temper of our hearts, than the doctrines of the Bible. If our hearts are unholy, and of course unhumiliated, we shall find little in these doctrines to delight us; and much to displease and mortify us. The views which the scriptures give us of the character of God, as a Being of unspotted holiness, who cannot look on sin but with abhorrence;—the purity and extent of his law; the awful condemnation threatened for the least violation of it; and the final issue of his moral government in exalting some to everlasting felicity and

banishing others to the regions of eternal despair, are all calculated not only to alarm, but to awaken hostility in every unrenewed soul. The carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be, never contemplates these truths with satisfaction. The native and entire depravity of the human heart; the sovereignty of God in the calling and salvation of sinners; the doctrine of the divinity and the incarnation of the Son of God;—the expiation of sin by his blood,—and the forgiveness of sins and eternal life only through his name, occasion no small dissatisfaction to unrenewed men, and often become fatal obstacles to their reception of the scriptures. Whereas all these doctrines, so far as they are understood, are cordially received by every heart sanctified by the divine Spirit.

God's word is a touchstone of the heart also by the precepts which it inculcates. They are an unwelcome restraint upon the appetites and passions of unholy men. They call for that deadness to the world,—that constant and deep self-denial,—that surrender of all we have to God,—that purity of affection and that ultimate regard to the divine glory and the interests of another world, which the unrenewed heart can never think of with pleasure, but which it always considers, when it can be brought to consider at all, as a grievous yoke of bondage, to which it submits with the greatest reluctance.

We need no other proof of this than what every wicked man will find in his own bosom, and the testimony which is constantly given to this point in the

indifference and contempt which multitudes show towards the commands of their Creator.

It is far otherwise with those who have been renewed by divine grace, and who are training up for a state of perfect holiness and happiness in a better world. They love the precepts as well as doctrines of God's word: they love them because they are perfectly pure; because they are a transcript of the moral character of Jehovah. Far be it from their hearts to wish that the law of God was less strict in its requirements or less severe in its sanctions. All the change they desire is in themselves: they wish to have their hearts more sound in God's statutes, and are disposed to say with the Psalmist, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

We have a striking illustration of the different effects produced both by the doctrines and precepts of God's word, in the ministry of our Saviour. All that He taught and all that He enjoined operated as a test of the moral dispositions of his hearers. The humble, the penitent, the poor in spirit, the self-denied, received Him. They embraced his doctrines and his precepts with joy; all who were his sheep, heard his voice and followed. But those who were of a different character, did not. The proud, self-righteous Pharisee; the philosophising and half infidel Sadducee; all indeed who were lovers of themselves and lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God, found something which offended them in the precepts and doctrines of the Saviour, and that too notwithstanding all the great and benevolent

works which He performed. Thus it has been in every age. The word of the Lord is not only a *tried* word, as the Psalmist calls it, but a *trying* word, which, as a touchstone, tries the hearts of men, and shows what dispositions they possess.

We remark, again, that the word of God tries men by the very character of the evidence which supports it.

If it had pleased God, He could have given us the same evidence that the scriptures are his word, as that the sun is the fountain of light, or that He himself is the author of the universe. He could, in every case, have compelled the assent of men, and left no individual, where the gospel is proclaimed, with any speculative doubts as to the divinity of its origin. But He has chosen a different, and for aught we can perceive, a wiser course. He has chosen to place before men evidence on this subject sufficient to convince the humble and candid inquirer; but not such as necessarily to exclude all doubt. The principle by which He is governed in this case, was solemnly affirmed by our Saviour, when he said, "If any will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine which I teach, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." That is to say, if he has an humble and teachable disposition, ready to know and do the will of God, he shall be at no loss to ascertain what that will is. Evidence shall be afforded sufficient to satisfy *him*, but not sufficient to remove every degree of prejudice which a disobedient, stubborn and malignant heart can present.

God intends hereby to make proof of the honesty, the candour and uprightness of men's hearts. But what

proof in this way could there be of any of these virtues, if the evidence which supports the authority of the word was of a kind to compel belief in all cases,—whatever the state of the heart might be? Is it any proof that I have a good and honest heart, not governed by odious prejudices or selfish views, because I believe that a whole is greater than a part, or that a circle is not a square? Here is no trial whatever of the temper of the mind, because the belief will be the same whatever the temper of the mind may be. But the case is widely different in deciding upon a fact, supported by reasonable testimony. Here is room to examine evidence, and to compare the probable with the improbable. Here is an opportunity for candour or for prejudice to operate; to give due weight to the testimony, or to add or deduct from it, as the nature of the prejudice may be. Here the heart is more or less concerned in the decisions which we form, and these decisions will be a proper test of the moral character of our minds. We need not say this is precisely the case in forming our judgment of the truth of the scriptures, and of the doctrines they contain. Evidence enough they bring with them to satisfy the humble and candid inquirer; but not enough to bear down obstinate and wilful prejudice. “He that will do God’s will, shall know of the doctrine.” He that hath an ear, will hear and will understand. But with regard to others, the word of the Lord may prove a burden; a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; and thus, the very character of the evidence which supports that word,

will operate as a test of the candour and sincerity of those to whom it is made known.

II. But we observe, secondly, that God will try us by the imperfections of those who profess to embrace his word, and especially those whose business it is to explain and recommend it to the world. Why is it that the professors of religion are not more exemplary; why is it indeed that they are not in a good measure perfect, on the supposition that they are sincere? If they have been called out of darkness into God's marvellous light, and partly with a view that they may shine as lights in the world, how comes it to pass that their light does not shine with greater purity and brightness?

It is not, my dear brethren, because God has not power to sanctify them. It would be as easy for Him to complete their sanctification and make them perfectly holy in this world, as to do it in the world which is to come. But He has important reasons for not doing it.

He leaves them for a time to struggle with the remains of an unsanctified principle, to teach them more effectually the dreadful nature of sin, and their dependence on his power and grace to deliver them from it; and thus at last to heighten their gratitude for so great a mercy. He leaves them also in this state of imperfection, that they may exercise the candour and charity of the world, and the charity of one another. The mixed character which they possess,—the light and shade, discoverable in their actions, form a test of our own hearts wonderfully strong and decisive.



If we are not their friends and the friends of the cause which they espouse, it will be seen. We shall eagerly catch at their imperfections, and employ them as the means of throwing an odium upon their character and of secretly or openly undermining the cause in which they have embarked. On the other hand, if we are their friends or the friends of that religion which they profess, it will be natural to us to cast the mantle of charity over their infirmities; to be humbled and grieved and not to rejoice at their fall.

I cannot dwell upon this article; but among all the various tests held up to us in the providence of God, there is scarcely one which will more certainly unfold the heart and show to us whether we are on the Lord's side or not.

But if these observations will hold true with respect to the professors of religion generally, they will be found not less true nor less applicable to the ministers of religion in particular. Such men are set for the defence of the gospel, and for the falling and rising again of many in Israel. They are of course watched with a jealous eye, and their imperfections, if strongly and distinctly marked, cannot but exert an unfavourable influence upon the cause of Christ. Why then, has not God given them more grace, that they may exhibit a more blameless and edifying example among the people of their charge, whether believers or unbelievers? Why indeed has he ever suffered them to fall into sins reproachful to his cause, or permitted them even to be suspected of such sins? Surely it is that he may hum-

ble them, both individually and collectively. It is that he may prove the candour and the charity both of the church and the world. These remarks are not intended as an apology for the sins and infirmities of any class of men ; but merely to exhibit a fact in which we are all interested,—that God will prove us by the imperfections and follies of those who profess to embrace his word. He could easily have ordered it otherwise; and in our zeal for his cause, we may sometimes be tempted to wish it had been otherwise. But we should remember that He has purposely permitted this shade to be cast over the interests of religion, not to disparage religion, but to lead us to distinguish between its true and false professors, and between religion itself and professors of any description. He has suffered this state of things to exist, to exercise our charity and candour, and to stir us up to honest and persevering inquiry.

For the same reason too, has He permitted a diversity of sentiment among the friends of his kingdom. Not only have good men honestly differed among themselves about points unessential in the scheme of Christianity, but men of corrupt minds have risen up, who have laboured with incredible zeal and ingenuity to obscure the light of divine truth and to draw away disciples after them. There were false prophets anciently among the Jews, as there were false prophets and false teachers among the early Christians; and the design of both, was to prove men, whether they would wholly follow the Lord or not. Sufficient helps were afforded to dis-

tinguish truth from error, and if men did not distinguish, the fault was their own, and they suffered justly the consequences of delusion. Thus it is still.

III. But we hasten to observe, in the third place, that God proves us by the various dispensations of his providence. Every event, whether prosperous or calamitous, does something in unfolding the heart, and determining the character. Even the most trifling occurrence sometimes seems to have the greatest influence. Our lives are truly said to be made up of little things; and it is in these little things, where there is the least guard upon our sentiments and conduct, that our dispositions are most decisively displayed.

It would not be easy to enumerate all the ways in which God proves us by his kindness. Does He bestow upon us firm and continued health? If our hearts are not right with Him, we are in danger not only of ingratitude for this mercy, but of forgetting in a surprising manner our dependance on God, and calculating with an unbecoming confidence on the events of tomorrow. Does He prosper us in our worldly interests, making wealth to flow in upon us like the tide,—or give us places of honour and distinction among our fellow men? Ah! how easily is the heart lifted up; and how ready to yield to the indulgence of appetite; and how unwilling to be controlled by the authority of reason and religion! Does God surround us with endeared relatives and friends and cause us to live in a thousand hearts; and a thousand to live in ours? Who does not see that this is a place of temptation and trial, and that we are in the utmost danger of fastening our

affections too intensely on those to whom we are so tenderly united, and giving them that ascendancy in our hearts, which is due to God alone?

But the Lord sometimes reverses the scene, and proves us by the crosses and afflictions which He lays upon us. We are smitten by disease, and confined for weeks or months to the bed of pain and languishment. Our wealth is scattered by misfortune or torn from us by violence; all our worldly enterprises fail; embarrassment, disappointment and mortification succeed. Our friends forsake us, and want presses upon us, and upon those who are placed under our protection. Perhaps death makes an inroad upon our connections, and sweeps away our best hopes in this world; or if our connections are spared, they live only to be the witnesses of our degradation and suffering.

God has a thousand ways to afflict us, and can multiply our trials in any variety or to any extent, as He pleases. But in whatever way He passes before us,—whether in prosperity or adversity, whether in things great or in things small, (for nothing of any description falls out, without Him,) it is to prove us; to make known what is in our hearts:—It is to try us, whether we will keep his commandments or not.

I might say, if we had time to pursue this subject, that God proves us by the callings which He allots to us; by the particular character of our friends and associates; by the defects of our own natural temper, and the defects of those who surround us; by the flatteries of friends and the reproaches of enemies; and finally by the snares and devices of the adversary, who

goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. We cannot dwell upon these topics; we only name them.

Let us then, my dear friends, pause a moment and consider the solemn circumstances in which God has placed us. We are in a state, where life and death are set before us—all that can kindle hope and all that can awaken fear. At the same time, we have innumerable motives of lesser consequence, springing from every quarter, to draw away our minds from these great interests, and to put our souls at hazard. Our appetites and passions, our cares and pursuits, our wants and sufferings, our mercies and comforts, our friends and enemies,—all of them separately present us with some temptation to deviate from the path of duty. In the midst of so many motives, within the call of such jarring interests and the conflicts which these interests occasion, we have to make our way through this world. Every step we take is a victory gained, or a triumph lost. The heart is unfolding as we proceed, and every advance in life is an advance in wisdom or folly, in duty or sin. Shortly we shall reach the end of our course, and find that our character is formed, and our condition unalterably fixed.

What an affecting period, my brethren, will that be when we shall look back and remember all the way which the Lord our God has led us, to prove us and to show us what was in our hearts; when we shall contemplate the instructions which have been afforded us, the mercies we have enjoyed, the changes and sufferings through which we have passed,—and more than

all, the influence which these various events have had in fitting us for the retributions of eternity!

How distressing will it be to some to find that they are not the persons they hoped to be in a dying hour; that the siftings of God's word and providence have at length demonstrated to them that they have no claim to the character of the righteous, and can never inherit their rewards? Often, it may be, they have had their fears how it would issue with them at last, when they have observed the evil propensities of their own minds, and the many irregularities which these propensities have occasioned. But now the great question is decided; the events of life have shown what was in their hearts; they have been tried, and instead of coming forth as gold from the furnace, seven times purified, they appear to be only dross and tin. This must open to them the spring of unutterable and interminable sorrows. To escape a fate so dreadful let us, for once, endeavour to call up the past; let us ask ourselves before God what influence the various scenes of life have already had upon us; whether the ghosts of our departed hours bring us good report, and give us ground to hope for the future.

What reception have we given to the word of God? Have we made its doctrines the subject of our careful investigation? Have we weighed with impartiality the evidence by which they are supported, while we have faithfully endeavoured to distinguish them from the doctrines and commandments of men? Have we been willing to know the truth, and do we delight in it after the inward man? When the great doctrines of the gospel



have been set before us, have we embraced them with cordiality, and rejoiced in them as a glorious exhibition of the divine wisdom, holiness and mercy? Or have we secretly or openly murmured against them, as hard sayings which we were unwilling to hear?

In what manner have we regarded the precepts of the gospel? Have we set them as a seal upon our arms, and bound them as with cords of love upon our hearts? Has it been our constant and ardent desire to be more conformed to them, or have we lived in the habitual and allowed neglect of these precepts, disregarding alike their requirements and their sanctions?

What effect, dear brethren, have the various dispensations of Divine Providence had upon us? Do we perceive that either mercies or afflictions have drawn us near to God—and that they are actually working out for us the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? Have we narrowly watched our tempers? Have we considered often the dangers to which our companions or our callings expose us, and guarded ourselves accordingly? In a word, do we perceive, by all that passes before us and within us, that we are ripening for the world of retribution,—ripening for the complete and everlasting enjoyment of God?

What effect would it produce upon us could we see the liberty and happiness of a nation, for a single century, staked upon the conduct of one man? With what awful circumspection, should we say, ought he to demean himself! How precious should his time appear to him! How careful to seize every occasion to secure or promote an object of such immense im-

portance! And what untold guilt and vengeance would justly fall upon his head, if, by any negligence or folly of his, an interest so precious, should be sacrificed? And yet every one of us, has an interest incomparably more important staked upon his conduct in this world. Oh that we were wise to consider our latter end—wise to get ready for eternity!

## SERMON XII.

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### THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

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ROMANS VIII., 9.

*“Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his.”*

No, my dear brethren, he is none of his; Christ will never acknowledge him as such. If he has not the spirit of Christ, he is not Christ's disciple, Christ's friend. He can hold no fellowship with Christ in this world, nor will he be partaker of his glory in the world to come. If he has not the spirit of Christ, he is not a true Christian; whatever he may profess, or whatever he may appear. He is still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; under the power of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. There are no exceptions to this statement, mortifying and painful as it is. Whosoever has not the spirit of Christ, is unequivocally pronounced, by the passage before us, to be in a state of deep and total alienation from God.

But what is it to have the spirit of Christ? In the sense of the text, it is to have the Holy Spirit, the third person in the ever adorable Trinity, dwelling in us, by his sanctifying or renovating power. This Spirit,

which is so often called the Spirit of Christ, because sent by him and acting by his authority, is given to all true believers, to abide in them as a perpetual source of life, while its operation in their hearts is compared to living water, and to a well of water springing up to everlasting life. It is so given to them, as never to forsake them, but by its sweet and invisible power to form them into the divine image, and to make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

You have only to glance your eye upon this passage, in its connection, to perceive that the Apostle is speaking of the Divine Spirit, and of his sanctifying energy in the hearts of all true Christians. At the same time his words suggest another proposition, not less true or appropriate,—viz., that if any man have not the temper or disposition of Christ, he is none of his. This proposition results from the former. For if a man cannot be Christ's without the sanctifying and indwelling influence of the Holy Spirit, he cannot be Christ's, unless the very temper and spirit of Christ be in him. It is to form this temper that the Holy Spirit is given, and that he dwells in the heart of the believer; and the only proof that a man can have of the indwelling of this Almighty Agent is, that he is like Christ, or has the spirit and temper of Christ. Here then is a subject of deep and eternal moment to us all;—a subject which may well demand attention, at the close of a revival, when many are forming hopes for another world. The grand question now to be settled is, whether we have the spirit of Jesus Christ or not; for on this depend the reality of our discipleship, and our prospects for eternity.

Accordingly the single design of the discourse will be to point out the leading characteristics of Christ's spirit, all of which are necessary to constitute us his friends.

I. I begin by remarking that his spirit is eminently a spirit of humility.

Christ courted no splendour, and made no vain and empty parade in the days of his flesh. He even concealed the glories he possessed, the glories of his divine nature, and appeared in the form of a servant, when he might have appeared as the uncreated God, the Lord of Heaven and earth. He did not strive nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. When he performed miracles of the most stupendous character, which astonished alike the subjects and the beholders, he often gave a charge not to make them known: and when the multitudes, struck by the power of his preaching, and the splendour of his works, gathered themselves together, and sought to make him king, he instantly withdrew from them and retired into a secret place. Born in deep poverty, he was contented to live in it till the day of his death, though he was the original Proprietor, and rightful Lord of all things. He travelled up and down the world on foot, often weary, often hungry and thirsty, and often the subject of the bitterest reproach. He never rode but once that we read of, and then it was upon an ass's colt, that he might fulfil the prediction of the prophet concerning him. Every action savoured of humility. With what condescension did he treat his disciples, and those who approached him for the benefit of his instructions, and

for his healing power! Ah! with what condescension did he leave the throne of glory, to take upon him the form of sinful, dying man, and to become obedient unto death, even the accursed death of the cross! Herein he "humbled himself," says the apostle; and it was an act of humility which will forever surpass the powers of angels fully to explore. God alone can adequately conceive or comprehend it.

Now this temper, in its essential qualities, is indispensable to the disciple of Christ. A man can no more be a Christian without humility, than he can be an intelligent being without reason.

To be a Christian is to put on Christ; and to put on Christ is to be like him in the grand features of his moral character. But can we be like him without lowliness of mind, and without manifesting this spirit in our daily intercourse with men, and in our approaches to God? The fact is that Christian humility requires us to esteem others better than ourselves, and in honour to prefer one another, while it supposes us to have some just views of our own sinful characters, and a disposition to lay ourselves low before God. A proud, self-righteous, self-satisfied Christian, is a contradiction in terms, and as much a mockery of reason, as a kind or benevolent fiend.

But how shall I know, it may be asked, whether I am truly humble, and especially whether I am humble before God? I answer, When you feel like the publican, who stood afar off and durst not so much as lift up his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, and cried God be merciful unto me a sinner; when you



feel like Mary, who stood behind Jesus, as he sat at meat, and began to wash his feet with her tears, and to wipe them with the hair of her head; when you feel like the returning prodigal, who said to his father, "Father I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants,"—give me the lowest place if it be but under thy roof, and I am content; I deserve not even this, but might justly be excluded from thy family altogether—when you feel like those pardoned Israelites, described by Ezekiel in the sixteenth chapter of his prophecy, who, while they remembered their ways, did not open their mouths (in a confident, noisy, showy humility,) but were confounded before God, because of their shame, and because of the evil of their doings; then may you be assured that you are the subject of genuine Christian humility. If you are truly humbled before God, you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for all your sins and abominations; you will stand amazed at God's mercy in not having cut you off; you will desire above all things, to be delivered from the power of sin, and to be perfectly transformed into the divine image; and of course you will not live allowedly in any known transgression, but will fear God and show yourselves kind and placable towards men.

II. The spirit of Christ which every true Christian possesses, is a spirit of meekness and forbearance. This is closely allied to humility, though not exactly the same thing. Humility stands opposed to pride and self-valuation,—meekness to cruelty and revenge. The

humble man forms a proper estimate of his own character, and is full of condescension to those who are beneath him. The meek man is kind and gentle towards all; soft and forbearing towards those who have injured him. This, you are well aware was eminently Christ's spirit. "When he was reviled he reviled not again; when he was persecuted he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Nothing like hastiness, keenness or revenge, appeared in his whole character. This indeed cannot be said of his followers,—not even of the best of them—I mean those who are most distinguished for a careful imitation of their heavenly Master. Yet it can be said, and must be said of all those who truly belong to Christ, that they have a portion of this spirit. Great allowance we are willing to make for a man's natural temperament. Some are by nature more quick to feel an injury than others, and more ready to resent it. Some, though slower to wrath, yet when once kindled are hard to appease; like the lion in the forest, not soon excited, but when stirred up, dreadful to the foe. But let a man's natural disposition be what it may, if he have the spirit of Christ, he will not be destitute of that meek and lowly temper, so conspicuous in the character of the Saviour, and which the Saviour himself singles out as an indispensable requisite to those who actually take his yoke upon them and learn of Him. Show *me* a man, who in his general deportment is hasty, rash, cruel, vindictive, who, upon the slightest injury, kindles into

a flame and forms the malignant purpose of revenge, and I will show *you* a man who is ignorant of Christ; a man, who, if he thinks himself a Christian, knows not his own heart. Such a man may have been baptized with water, but he never was baptized with the Holy Ghost. He may have made a loud profession of Christianity, but he is certainly a stranger to its spirit and its power. What ! a Christian—a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, and yet bitter and spiteful and revengeful—a saint called to be holy and consecrated to God in a new and heavenly life, and yet no gentleness, no forbearance, no long suffering! It is impossible. Of such men we may say, notwithstanding the mask which they wear, as Jacob on his death bed said of Simeon and Levi—“ Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united. For in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.”

III. The spirit of forgiveness is another characteristic of the Christian temper. It is not strange that a meek and forbearing spirit should forgive. Having no resentments to cherish, no revengeful purpose to execute why should it not forgive? A man has done me an injury, but if I feel a kind and benignant spirit towards him,—if from the bottom of my heart I sincerely wish his welfare, and do not fail to pray for it; if I am willing to wipe the remembrance of his injustice or

unkindness from my bosom, and henceforth to do him all the good in my power, what is this but forgiveness itself? This is surely the spirit of the gospel,—the spirit which Jesus himself exhibited in the most wonderful manner on the cross. Surrounded by those who were filled with the most implacable malice, mocking and insulting his dying agonies, and thirsting for the very last drop of his blood, no other emotion is felt by him but that of benevolence and compassion. “Father,” saith he, “forgive them for they know not what they do.” Such also was the spirit of the martyr Stephen, who while his enemies were stoning him to death, breathed forth the prayer,—“ Lord lay not this sin to their charge.” And, brethren, let us not be deceived. If we can not from the heart forgive those who have trespassed against us, we shall lack an essential point in the Christian character, and may be sure that we ourselves shall not be forgiven.

This our Lord taught his disciples in the prayer commonly called the Lord’s prayer, but more explicitly and with greater emphasis in the parable of the unforgiving servant mentioned in the eighteenth of Matthew. Read that parable, my brethren, at your leisure, and reflect upon the solemn application which Jesus Christ makes of it. The servant was delivered to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due. “ So likewise,” saith Christ, “ shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” But what if my brother does not repent,—am I bound then to forgive him? I am not bound to restore him to my fellowship or my confidence.

This would be both unreasonable and impossible. But I am bound to exercise a forgiving spirit. I must show a readiness to receive him to favour, the moment he relents and returns; and if he never return, I am still to wish and pray for his welfare, and am forbidden all desire of revenge. The example of Jesus upon the cross is a sufficient warrant and guide upon this subject.

IV. I remark, in the fourth place, that the spirit of Christ is a spirit of patience under suffering, whether it be suffering immediately from the hand of God, or from the hand of man.

We live in a world of suffering, and the best men are often the deepest sharers in it. To endure what God in his providence lays upon us, and to endure without murmuring, is a virtue of high importance to the Christian character. Jesus Christ has set us an example here. He was eminently a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. But who ever heard him complain? When did he utter a murmuring word, or vent an impatient sigh? He had his name cast out as evil; he was a reproach and a bye word among the people. For his love, they were his adversaries. The more he labored among them for their salvation, the more pointed was their malediction and the more hardened their cruelty. They mocked him, they blasphemed him, and inflicted on him the tortures of the cross;—but still his patience failed not. In the garden, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and the dreadful weight of his Father's wrath was pressing upon him, he cheerfully suffered the will of God—"The cup which my heavenly Father hath given

me to drink," saith he, "shall I not drink it?" And although in the moment of his bitterest agony, he prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," yet he immediately subjoins, "Not my will but thine be done." The most eminent disciple of Jesus will no doubt fall far short of this bright example; still it is an essential part of the Christian temper to be patient in tribulation. Tribulation, indeed, is sent for the very purpose of working patience, and where this virtue is wanting, there also is the spirit of Christ wanting.

V. To this, I add, that the spirit of Christ is eminently a praying spirit.

None of you can be ignorant how much the divine Redeemer inculcated prayer. By his example, no less than by his instructions, he often pressed this duty upon his disciples. Surprising as the circumstance may appear, he sometimes spent whole nights in prayer. When no eye but his own was awake, he poured out his soul into the bosom of his heavenly Father, and committed himself to Him, who had promised to sustain him. On some occasions when he had much to occupy him through the day, he rose up very early in the morning, and engaged in this duty. His benevolent heart found full and delightful employment in praying for others, if not for himself.

If we are Christians indeed, we are partakers of the same spirit. We shall not merely pray, and pray with constancy and regularity, as often as the proper season of devotion returns, but we shall delight in the duty. We shall love to come into the presence of our hea-



venly Father, and unbosom to Him all our wants and all our sorrows. We shall feel it a privilege to extol and magnify his name, while we remember and supplicate his mercy, and send up to Him our songs of thanksgiving and praise. He does but deceive himself, who imagines that he is a Christian, unless he possesses a spirit of prayer. I say a *spirit* of prayer, in distinction from the *gift* of prayer. A man may have a great gift for the performance of this duty, and be much admired by his fellow worshippers for the fluency and pertinency with which he pours forth his supplications, and yet be utterly destitute of the spirit. Prayer is desire, sincere, unequivocal desire, offered unto God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ; and where there is no desire, or none which flows from an humble, believing and sanctified heart, *there* there is no prayer in the view of Him who trieth the heart and the reins. It is only a solemn mockery, which unless repented of, God will expose, sooner or later, to the assembled universe, to the everlasting confusion of the presumptuous and self-inflated individual who is guilty of it.

VI. I remark, further, that he is no less deceived who indulges the hope that he is a Christian, if he be not dead to the world. The spirit of Christ is a heavenly spirit,—a spirit which draws not its hopes and its comforts chiefly from this transitory state. How was it with the blessed Redeemer himself? Did he teach that “a man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth?” Yes he taught this, and he actually felt as he taught. He sought not

the honours and pageantry of the world. He desired neither its wealth nor its pleasures. His soul was borne aloft to the glories of the unseen state,—the glories which he had with the Father before the world was; the glories which he expected to enjoy hereafter with all his redeemed; and to enjoy forever, when the darkness and suffering of the present scene should have passed away. This was the joy set before him to which he constantly looked, and for which he endured the cross, despising the shame.

We may, if we please, dream that we are Christians, while our hearts are buried in the world, and while it is manifest to every body but ourselves that we are seeking to lay up treasures here. But one thing is certain: we have not Christ's spirit while we hold on, with such a death-like grasp, to the world. "He that loveth the world," says the Apostle, "the love of the Father is not in him." "The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life,"—these are of the world; and if they govern us, though we may be too blind to see it or too perverse to acknowledge it, it is certain we have not the spirit of Christ, and shall never be owned by Him as his.

VII. The spirit of Christ is also a resolute and persevering spirit in the discharge of duty. Jesus Christ, though meek and gentle as a lamb, was nevertheless fearless and determined. He had a host of wicked men and devils to oppose, but no difficulties terrified him, no sufferings and dangers forced him back. Whatever became duty he resolutely performed it, though Sadducees reproached, and Pharisees blasphemed. Such also

was the spirit of the apostles, and such, to a certain degree, is the spirit of every true Christian. If a man merely truckle and calculate, if he balance his interest with this party and that, or with this friend and that, if he will risk nothing for conscience sake, or be driven from his own convictions by a little worldly loss or gain, what claim can he have to the bold and manly Spirit of Jesus Christ, who walked so fearlessly in the path of duty, and who said—"Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God, yea thy law is within my heart."

VIII. I mention a disinterested love to man as another branch of the Christian temper; and was not this emphatically the spirit of Jesus Christ? What brought him from Heaven to earth? What induced him to take our nature upon him, with all its weakness and infirmities, sin only excepted? Why did he pass through that wonderful scene of humiliation and suffering which reached from the manger to the cross? Why did he bow his head, at last, in unknown agonies, and sink to the weakness and dishonours of the grave? Was it to redeem a race of beings who had been kind and dutiful to him, or who, when redeemed, could make any adequate return for his love? No! it was for his enemies literally that this amazing sacrifice was made;—for those who had not implored this mercy at his hands, nor would be willing to accept of it, but through the interposition of his sovereign and all-conquering grace. Here was love without a parallel,—love stronger than death,—love of the most tender and disinterested character.

If we have the spirit of Christ, a compassion like this will dwell in our own bosoms. We shall take a deep interest in the happiness of our fellow men, and especially in their eternal happiness. Whoever they are, and wherever they are, we shall desire sincerely and intensely their highest welfare. It will not be enough that we love the immediate circle of our friends, that we are kind to those who are kind to us. Our generous bosoms will warm with affection towards the whole human family. We shall be able to love those that hate us, and pray for those that despitefully use and persecute us.

Finally: The same virtuous and heavenly disposition will show itself in supreme love to God and in a tender regard for his honour. This was præeminently Christ's spirit. His Father's interest and his Father's honour lay near his heart. He had dwelt in the bosom of the Father from eternity. He surveyed His glories with more than an angel's eye, and burned in affection to Him with all the powers of Deity and humanity united. It was to unfold his Father's character, to set his glory high in the presence of the intelligent universe, that he made his appearance in our world. "I came not," saith he, "to do mine own will or to seek mine own glory, but to do the will, and to seek the glory of Him that sent me." His zeal in the temple, when he drove from thence those that bought and sold, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, sufficiently demonstrates his tender concern for his Father's honour, and his readiness to vindicate the rights of his sacred cause. A similar zeal though far less pure in

its operation, glows in the heart of every sincere disciple of Jesus. Enlightened from above, he discerns enough of the divine glory, to throw a shade over all terrestrial things. God appears to him to be the chief good, and his glory worthy to be the supreme end of all his actions. He feels himself tenderly united to his interest and honour. Such, my dear brethren, is the spirit of Jesus, and such, in a greater or less degree, is our spirit, if we are in reality his friends.

What then can we say for ourselves, in a review of this subject? What indeed has conscience said already? Does the spirit of Christ dwell in us,—yea, or nay? I do not ask if it dwell in our neighbours or in our Christian brethren generally—does it dwell in our own souls? Let each waiting heart before God this evening, answer the question for himself, personally. Say, my dear brother, or my dear sister, hast thou the humility and condescension of Jesus? Hast thou his meekness and forbearance? Canst thou forgive like him, suffer like him, pray like him? Like him, are you dead to the world, while you are fearless and resolute in the discharge of duty? Like him, is your bosom warmed with disinterested love to your fellow men, and with a pure but supreme love to God, the Father of us all?

If such be the fact with us, we are Christians indeed. We are united to Jesus by bonds which are indissoluble and eternal. Christ is ours, and we are Christ's ; and as certainly as he is heir of all things, so certainly are we heirs with him. We are children of the same Father—He the elder, we the younger brethren. Has he



gone to Heaven to take possession of an immortal inheritance—he has gone in our name; and it is his promise that where he is there shall we be also. Let it be our concern then, to grow in a conformity to him in all things, drinking more deeply into his spirit, as we advance, and bringing forth fruit more abundantly to his praise. But if the Spirit of Christ be not in us, be assured we are none of his, whatever shining qualities we may possess, or whatever hopes we may entertain.

Oh let us not be deceived, with the Bible, that great fountain of light, in our hands. God and not man will judge us; and the judgment He will pronounce, will be final and decisive. And let us bear in mind that He will judge us, not as we judge one another,—by what passes without, but by what passes within. He has his eye directly fixed upon our hearts, and sees most perfectly every latent thought, and spring of action there. Shall we not then cry with David—“Search me, O Lord, and know me, try my reins, and my heart, and see if there be any evil way in me, and lead me in the way which is everlasting.”

Let all those who are convinced that they have not the Spirit of Christ awake to a conviction of their sinfulness and danger. Remember that there is no neutral ground here. If you are not for Christ, you are against him; if you gather not with him, you scatter abroad. If you are not numbered with his friends, he will certainly reckon you among his enemies. And can it be safe for you to remain in such circumstances? Can you dethrone Omnipotence, or successfully oppose the



mandate of the Eternal? Your only safety is in yielding at once to his authority, and becoming the humble and obedient disciples of the Lord Jesus. Only let the Spirit of Christ be in you, and He will own you as his when you meet him in the character of a judge.

## SERMON XIII.

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### DARKNESS SURROUNDING GOD'S RIGHTEOUS THRONE.

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PSALMS, XCVII., 2.

*“Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”*

This psalm is commonly supposed to have been written by David, on his restoration to the throne of Israel, from which he had been driven, for a time, by the rebellion of his son Absalom. The mysterious and distressing circumstances attending this portion of his history, and the evident interposition of the hand of the Almighty, prepared him to look deep into the ways of God, and to adore the administration of his providence. He was brought to realize that God's hand was more immediately or remotely concerned in every event; that in things great and things small, in things above our comprehension as in those which are level to it, in things which contradict our wishes no less than those which accord with them, God acts with unerring wisdom and with the most perfect rectitude.

The psalm begins thus—“The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him;

righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." By clouds and darkness round about God, we are to understand, the mysteries in which his being, attributes and ways are involved. Clouds and darkness obscure those objects which they surround. They prevent a clear and satisfying vision. Any thing hidden behind a cloud, or seen through a dark and obstructing medium, must be seen and known imperfectly. It is often even painful to contemplate objects thus obscured by intervening obstacles. And is not this, to a certain degree, verified, when we contemplate the being and attributes of God, as proclaimed by his works or by his word? Many truths respecting them are too obvious to be denied; and yet so far are they above our comprehension, that clouds and darkness may be said to rest upon them. In many cases, the more we push our inquiries, the more does the darkness thicken upon us; and it is well if we do not sometimes conclude our researches by doubts dishonourable to God, and injurious to the cause of religion and virtue.

But what is to be done? Shall we give over thinking upon God, because we cannot comprehend Him? Shall we renounce the truth of his being, and the certainty of his moral government, because we find things in both which are to us unresolvable? Or shall we abide by the declaration of the Psalmist—that "clouds and darkness are around about Him, while righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne?"

Two propositions are here asserted, both of them

unquestionably true, and both of the deepest importance. Let us consider them separately.

I. The Psalmist asserts that "clouds and darkness are round about God,"—a truth which we cannot but admit, if we reflect a moment upon his being and attributes.

That there is a God, a Being of infinite wisdom, power and goodness, every object around us proclaims. These heavens and this earth assure us that they must have had a cause, and a cause adequate to their existence, and to the intelligence and design which they every where display. So glorious a structure we are certain could never have been the result of chance, or a blind unmeaning necessity. As soon could we persuade ourselves that a book was written or a house builded by chance, as that the world had such an origin.

But when we have satisfied ourselves that God is, and that He is the glorious author of every thing we behold, we have ascended to the highest step to which our reason will carry us. The moment we begin to ask *how* God exists, or whence the foundation of his being, the subject rises above our sight—clouds and darkness rest upon it.

We say indeed that God must have existed from eternity; and that he must have existed without any antecedent cause of his existence; for if there ever was a time when God did not exist, and exist as the first cause of all things, there never would have been a time, in which he could have existed;—there never would have been any first cause, nor effects flowing from it, unless the first and most perfect of all

causes could arise absolutely out of nothing. Yet after all, what adequate conceptions can we have of God's eternal existence? What idea can we form of a Being who has no beginning, with whom there is no succession of thought or of time, who is no older so to speak, now, than he was millions of ages past? Is it not all darkness when we attempt to think or speak upon this unfathomable subject?

We say too, that God is *self-existent*, being well assured that He could not derive his being from another. But do we understand the full import of this proposition? Can we see how it is that a being should exist in and of himself, without any prior or extraneous cause whatsoever? Might we not almost as well conceive of his existing without any proper ground or reason of his existence? Or that there should be an effect without a cause? True, it may be said that he exists *necessarily*, and that this necessity has from eternity been a reason or ground of his existence. But have we any clear ideas of such a necessity? Is it an operative cause producing an effect? Or is it something different from a cause? Is absolute Deity to be predicated of it, or of that which it causes or occasions? Who does not see that impenetrable clouds and darkness rest upon all such inquiries?

We are taught, moreover, and it seems to be a dictate of reason, that God is everywhere present,—that He exists in all places, for the same reason that He exists in any place. But if God be everywhere present, is He not partly within these walls, and partly without, just as we suppose that a part of infinite space is within

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these walls, and a part without? Yet what have parts to do with infinity? That which is divided cannot be infinite.

The *omnipresence* of the Deity is an attribute above our comprehension. That infinite wisdom and power should dwell in every point of the universe, and be the same in all points collectively as in one,—no greater—no less,—who can search it out? Clouds and darkness are round about God here. But his *omniscience* is as incomprehensible to us, as his omnipresence. There is no searching of his understanding. Who can tell how it is, that God sees perfectly, at one view, all that ever has been and all that ever will be transacted by men or angels; how every event both possible and actual, should lie so naked before him, that there can be neither addition nor diminution to his knowledge?

The moment we enter upon this subject, we find ourselves beyond our depth. We perceive thick darkness overspreading our feeble powers, and our minds sinking with pain under the weight of a truth which they can not comprehend.

As believers in divine revelation, we might call your attention to the threefold existence of the Deity, as a subject around which clouds and darkness are still hung. The scriptures assure us of this fact, and on their testimony we are bound to believe it. Not that the persons of the Godhead are one in the same sense that they are three—this would be a contradiction in terms; but that they are one in *some* sense that we cannot comprehend. No one can justly pretend to fathom this mystery. It has remained inexplicable



from the beginning, and every attempt to unfold it is only darkening counsel by words without knowledge. It is a doctrine of revelation solely; and to be received only upon the authority of scripture. We mention it, at this time, merely to illustrate the declaration of the text, that clouds and darkness are round about God.

But further, God is enveloped in clouds and darkness, not only with respect to what He is, in his being and attributes, but also with respect to what He *does*, both in creating and governing the world. Who will undertake to show the wisdom or goodness of God in many appearances of nature around us, all of which are the works of Him, who is perfect in knowledge? What wise or good design can be seen in covering the earth with so great a portion of water, in forming so many deep and extensive marshes, so many lofty and inaccessible mountains? Was it the primary object of this material world to be a convenient habitation for men and the lower orders of creatures which move upon it? If so, what was the intention of vast tracts of burning sand and uninhabitable deserts? Will any one pretend to see the wisdom of God in these things, and to show that they are worthy of the contrivance of an omniscient and benevolent mind? To what purpose were noxious plants and animals created, which in their effects seem only to injure other parts of God's works? Who knows the object and design of millions of motes and insects floating in the air? Who can see the wisdom of causing one order of beings to subsist upon the sacrifice of another, instead of providing for all, as God has provided for the flocks and herds of

the field? You may say that this plan gives more existence in the same compass—but can He who fills immensity, want compass? Is there not room enough in the boundless fields of space, for Him to multiply his works and to give any assignable amount of existence?

These are things in the natural world which rise above our comprehension. They are the operations indeed of an infinitely wise God, but they are operations in which He envelopes himself in clouds and darkness in respect to us. They proclaim the weakness of our understandings, when compared with his deep and unfathomable designs.

But let us look into the moral world and see if we are more competent to judge of the dispensations of God towards his rational offspring. Why are so many millions of the human species born into the world, only as it were to gasp and die, who do not continue long enough in life, to possess any visible moral character, or to answer any of the purposes for which we should suppose human beings were made? Why are so many cut off in the flower of their age, just as they begin to enjoy life, and to act a useful part, while others are continued beyond all degrees of comfort to themselves or usefulness to mankind? Where does the wisdom of this dispensation appear? Certain purposes we know it may answer; but still it contravenes the principles and maxims which govern the human understanding.

Who can discover all the reasons why a rebellion hath taken place under the government of God? In human governments opposition to the laws and the

established authorities argues some weakness in the head or governing power; some want of wisdom to prevent, or power to control disorder; and we should suppose, leaving facts out of the question, that, when there was perfect wisdom in the head to devise, and Almighty power to execute, *there* would be entire subordination to the governing power; *there* universal peace and good order would prevail. But yet it is not so under the government of God. Though a being of infinite wisdom and power, there are those who rebel against his authority and trample upon his laws.

We need not go to the regions of darkness—to the abodes of fallen angels, for proof of this fact. We ourselves are a race of rebellious creatures. We have violated the laws, and risen up against the authority of our Creator. And it is a matter of just surprise that He should suffer us to exist and continue our rebellion against Him from generation to generation. And we are the more confounded with this subject when we reflect that God is not only wise and powerful but infinitely benevolent; and if He had not permitted sin and misery in his kingdom, we should have been ready to pronounce that He never could have permitted them. Reasoning from the attributes of God alone, prior to the introduction of sin and misery, none of us would ever come to the conclusion that either one or the other could happen under his wise, benevolent and powerful government.

But contrary to what we might have supposed probable, how much sin, how much misery, how much disorder, do we see in the kingdom of God! What

distressing scenes has every age witnessed in every part of the globe; scenes of pillage and blood;—of oppression and desolation and wo! All this we have seen taking place under the eye, and by the permission, of an omnipotent, infinitely wise and benevolent Being:—And is there nothing confounding to our understandings in such dispensations?

Revelation indeed has thrown much light upon this subject,—enough perhaps to put an humble mind to rest; still it is but little that we know; and notwithstanding all our researches and inquiries, clouds and darkness are round about God here.

It would be easy, were it necessary, to protract this part of the discourse by referring you to other facts and events, in which God's ways are unfathomable to us, where He hath his path in the deep waters and his footsteps are not known. But it is time to proceed to the

II. Second branch of the text, in which the Psalmist declares that “righteousness and judgment are the habitation of God's throne.”

What an infinite relief to the pious and humble mind is here,—That though clouds and darkness are round about God, (as to the manner of his being, his attributes and his providence,) yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne;—infinite rectitude presides in all his counsels, and directs every act of his government. How gladly does the wearied eye look off from the clouds and thick darkness to this bright and cheering view of the divine character! Here it gains an assurance that whatever takes place under the government of a righteous God, must ultimately

terminate in his glory, and the highest good of those that love Him.

Righteousness and judgment, as the words are here used by the Psalmist, comprehend the whole moral character of the Deity. They signify not only the infinite rectitude with which God governs the world, but by necessary implication, they signify his goodness and truth; and even his wisdom. Infinite rectitude cannot be displayed unless infinite wisdom dictate, and regulate the means. And where infinite rectitude and wisdom are employed, infinite goodness and almighty power will be combined. One divine perfection implies and involves all the rest. The phraseology here used by the Psalmist, is very peculiar and worthy of special notice. He says not that God is righteous and executes judgment among his creatures; but that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Though God over all, and having a sovereign right to dispose of his creatures according to his pleasure, yet his throne is established in infinite wisdom and righteousness. He cannot possibly err in judgment or do injustice to the weakest and meanest of his subjects. Their rights are as sacred to Him as his own. Both are adjusted on principles of unalterable rectitude, and guarded by almighty power.

Do you ask for the proof of this? Reason itself affords probable arguments for this statement.

That God is a being, wise and powerful, and independent of all other beings, is a proposition which none of us will deny. As the first cause of all things, he must of necessity possess all the wisdom and power



in the universe. And with these attributes, what motive can He have to do wrong? His own infinite understanding must dictate what is right, and if there be no bias, from mistaken or sinister views, how is it possible that He should err? But infinite wisdom can never act from mistaken views; and how can a Being who is greater than all other beings, and comprehends within himself the sum of all, act from sinister or selfish views? His regard to himself can never exceed the greatness and excellence of his own being, and as He is necessarily and infinitely above all want, it is impossible that He should be tempted to neglect or injure the work of his own hands. When men depart from their duty, it is always in expectation of some good, real or imaginary,—something which they have not, and which they fancy can not be as easily and as readily obtained by adhering to their duty, as by departing from it. Their transgressions of course can always be traced to some weakness or deficiency arising from their limited natures and powers. Would there be any room for self-valuation, if men were not limited in their capacities and therefore in danger of over-rating them? Would there be any room for envy or discontent—any room for artifice, covetousness, fraud, or venality, if the same limitation of power did not exist, and consequently a limitation of enjoyment? In a being therefore who is absolutely unlimited in his nature and attributes, who is over all and possesses all, who can neither err in judgment nor be the subject of any weakness or want,—can we conceive it possible, that in such a being there should be



any motive to depart from the dictates of his own all-searching understanding? We have not time to pursue this argument, but if we mistake not, it contains a strong presumptive proof of the holiness and rectitude of the divine character.

The same truth might be shown, from the sense of good and evil, which God has impressed upon our minds; for He who has caused us to distinguish between right and wrong, must himself make this distinction. He who has taught us to condemn ourselves and to condemn others for a breach of the great law of righteousness, must himself condemn us for a breach of that law; and in his judgment at least be the friend of virtue, and the enemy of vice; nay, in the temper of his mind he must accord with that which is good and praiseworthy, and be opposed to that which is evil. This is farther manifest from the penal sanctions which he has annexed to the law of our duty, and which are visible in the administrations of his providence. How many crimes there are, which carry their own punishment along with them; and which carry this punishment in the very constitution of nature as a token of God's displeasure against sin! How many more, which, by the dispositions implanted in man, receive their reward from the hands of the civil magistrate, and from the overwhelming voice of public censure! There is not indeed an equal providence in this world, or a full and just retribution of the righteous and the wicked. But there is enough in the dealings of God towards men, to excite the most certain expectation of such a retribution hereafter. We see the beginnings of that

moral government, which is to have its completion in another world. But why should we attempt to draw arguments from the light of reason, that God governs the world in truth and righteousness? It is no farther useful than to show that reason and revelation speak the same language and mutually confirm each other. To the scriptures we must chiefly repair for our knowledge of God. Here a light shines with inexpressible brightness, and the darkness restraineth it not. Here we find the most direct and solemn assurances that the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and that there is no error or iniquity with him; that though "clouds and darkness are round about him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." This, every where, is so manifestly the language of scripture that I forbear to quote.

As an application of what has been said, we may remark in the first place, that the mysteries which surround the Divine Being, ought not to be made an objection to the duties of piety, or hinder us in the performance of those duties. What if we can not comprehend every thing in relation to the great God? Neither could David; and yet he was both constant and fervent in the duties of piety. What if we can not penetrate into the mysteries of God's self-existence and eternity; his omniscience or omnipresence? What if we can not always see the wisdom of his works, whether of creation or providence, or comprehend the sublime truths of his word? Neither could David; and yet he not only rejoiced in the government of God, but called upon all the world to rejoice in it. "The

Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.”

The clouds and darkness that are round about God, are no proof that his throne is not established in righteousness, and therefore no reason why we should not confide in his government, and offer him our warmest praise.

There are some who reject the scriptures, and the worship of Jehovah which they prescribe, because they contain things above their comprehension. There are others who reject the particular providence of God for the same reason; others who deny his moral government and even his very existence, because they find things pertaining to these subjects, which stretch beyond their faculties. But how unreasonable is this! Shall we fall into downright atheism, because God is great and we are insignificant? Shall we plunge into the darkness of universal scepticism, because we have not light enough in this embryo of our existence, fully to explore all the depths of God's word and providence? How much more becoming our condition as creatures of yesterday, to acknowledge our weakness, and to yield to testimony sufficient to command our assent on other subjects, though clouds and darkness should rest upon some of the doctrines we embrace! Surely it cannot be thought surprising, that the works and ways of an infinite mind should often rise above the grasp of our feeble powers!

This leads me to remark, in the second place, that so far should we be from doubting or complaining under the darkness which attends the government of

God, that we ought to humble ourselves before Him in view of our own littleness and guilt, and bless his glorious name for the proof that He has given us of his boundless wisdom, and perfect rectitude.

What a foundation does this view of his character lay for contentment under all the allotments of his providence, for tranquillity amidst the various storms which agitate this lower world, and for joy in the prospect of seeing all disorders rectified, and the<sup>o</sup> greatest possible good in the kingdom of God finally accomplished.

Let God envelope himself in clouds, and thick darkness if He will;—let Him make darkness his secret place and his pavilion round about Him dark waters and thick clouds of the skies; so long as this blessed assurance is left, that whatever events occur, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne, we may, and we ought to rejoice.

Finally: Since God is a being of infinite rectitude, and governs the world in righteousness, let us look forward to that period, when He will take an account of us, as his servants.

If He *govern* the world in righteousness, He will certainly *judge* the world in righteousness, and we may well anticipate the solemn day, when we ourselves shall stand before Him, and be judged according to the deeds done in the body. Every cloud will then be driven back from before the face of his throne, and He will vindicate his righteousness before the assembled world. He will call to the Heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge his people; He will

make the universe witness of the justice and equity of his proceedings. It will then no longer be doubted whether there be a God, whether he has prescribed a law for his creatures, and sanctioned it by a penalty; whether it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. He will then show who is the only Potentate, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He will make such a distribution of rewards, and punishments, as to put a wide and eternal distinction between those that serve Him, and those that serve Him not. May we, my brethren, be prepared to meet our God in judgment, to stand accepted before Him through the merits of the Saviour, and be admitted to the participation of joys which shall thrill the souls of the redeemed, while the glories of the unfolding Deity, shall pour upon their sight, and increase in brightness as the years of eternity roll on.

## SERMON XIV \*

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### DUTY OF SUBMISSION.

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PSALM XLVI., 10.

*"Be still and know that I am God."*

As Christians, we believe in the existence of an all-wise, almighty, and infinitely merciful God, whose providence extends to the minutest concerns of this lower world. Even a sparrow falls not to the ground without his knowledge and appointment. We believe that the time of our birth and the time of our death, with all the trials and changes which intervene, are distinctly marked out by him, and that nothing can befall us, which he will not overrule for his own glory and the highest good of his everlasting kingdom.

\* Preached at Newark, January 14, 1810, after the death of Mr. Lewis Le Conte Congar, a student of the Andover Theological Seminary, a native of Newark and a member of the church of which Dr. R. was Pastor.

This and the remaining discourses in the volume were published by Dr. Richards in his lifetime; but as most of them have been long out of print, and as they were delivered on various interesting occasions, it has been thought that they would perhaps be more acceptable to the mass of readers, than any thing that could be selected from his unpublished manuscripts.



From these principles, it might be expected that we should always peaceably resign ourselves to God's sovereign will, and be perfectly tranquil under the dealings of his hand. But how seldom, alas, is such an expectation realized! When God rises up in judgment against us and dashes to pieces our fondest hopes, how prone are we to rise up in rebellion against Him, and to feel dissatisfied with his righteous providence. If He send death into our families, and take from us the objects of our tenderest affection, the children of our love, the first-born of our strength, the hope of our declining years, oh how hard is it often for our unwilling hearts to submit and to say *thy will be done*. But the language of God to us on such occasions is, "Be still and know that I am God." Murmur not under the severe and painful stroke. Submit your wills to my will. Know that I am God, a holy, wise, and sovereign God; that I have an absolute right to dispose of the creatures that I have made, to lift up or to cast down, to kill or to make alive. This is the import of the words before us, whether we consider them separately, or in connection with the passage in which they are found.

In view of the destruction which God would bring upon the nations that should oppose the rising glory of his church, the Psalmist proclaims, "Come behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease to the end of the earth. He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder. He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among

the heathen. I will be exalted in the earth." As if he had said, neither murmur nor despond, when you shall see my power displayed in these signal and awful events, but silently adore the hand which sways the sceptre of universal dominion, and remember that I will be exalted before all the people gloriously.

My design on the present mournful occasion is to explain and recommend the duty of resignation to the divine will.

I. Let me call your attention, my dear brethren, in the first place, to the nature of this duty.

To be resigned to the will of God under the afflictive dispensations of his providence, does not imply a stoical insensibility. We are capable of feeling, and God designs we shall feel, when He lays his rod upon us. To remain unaffected by the rebukes of his providence, would be to despise the chastenings of the Lord, against which we are particularly and solemnly cautioned in the scriptures. We may lawfully weep over our departed friends, provided we do not weep, as those who are dissatisfied with the will of God. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, and mingled his tears with those of Martha and Mary on that sorrowful occasion. But though the sensibilities of our nature may be indulged, we should be on our guard, lest they be carried to excess. We should not suffer them to waste our spirits and unfit us for the serious duties of life, and, much less, to stir up in our hearts hard and injurious thoughts of God's government.

The duty of resignation is happily expressed, in the words before us, by being still and knowing that the

Lord is God; expressions which imply, that all the passions of the soul are hushed into a sweet and silent submission before the throne of the King eternal.

In the scriptures resignation to God is often described in this manner. David says, on one occasion, "I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it;" and, on another, "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother, my soul is even as a weaned child." Aaron's submission, at the death of his two sons, who died in their sins before the Lord, is expressed by *holding his peace*.

In conformity with this language, we may be said to be still when our wills correspond with God's will, or when our affections and desires move in unison with his. God moves on in the great purposes of his government with a power, which nothing can resist and nothing retard. We move with Him, when we rejoice in his universal government, and are willing He should do all his pleasure. At the same time, it may be said that we are at rest, with respect to God, when our desires correspond with his, just as the objects upon the surface of the earth are at rest, with respect to the earth itself, when they move with it, or correspond with its motions.

Let me further remark, that true submission to God's will is a cheerful and unreserved submission.

It is, in the first place, a cheerful submission in opposition to force or constraint. We may yield to the dispensations of providence, as a matter of prudence, when we know it is in vain to contend with them. We may feel in a degree resigned to our condition

when we perceive it is wholly out of our power to control or alter it. This, however, is only a forced submission. The heart would still contend, if there were any hope of success. A cheerful submission to God's will is widely different from this. Here the heart resigns itself and all its interests into God's hand, not so much, because it would be vain to contend with Him, as because it would be unreasonable. It regards not necessity but duty. It rejoices in God because He does right, and can do no wrong. This is the leading principle, and the grand characteristic of true submission.

We remarked also, that it is unreserved, in distinction from that selfish spirit which seeks to make terms with God.

A heart truly resigned to the divine will does not say, Lord, I am willing to endure this affliction, provided it may be sanctified to me, and terminate in my salvation; Lord, I am willing thou shouldst remove this dear friend, or that beloved child, provided he may enter into thy rest. In a subordinate view, these things may be allowed to have a place in a mind resigned to the will of God; but they can never be the primary ground of that resignation. It is our duty to submit to God, because we are his creatures, and he has an unqualified right to us and to all which appertains to us. It is our duty, because he is governed by unerring wisdom, as well as by boundless goodness, in all his dispensations, and our duty in this case, will be the same, whether we or our particular friends be made happy or not.

II. Let us in the second place, attend to some of the considerations, by which this duty is recommended.

1. Shall it be said, that God does nothing but what is just and equal in the dispensations of his providence, and that therefore we ought to submit to Him? It is an unquestionable truth that, however He may contradict our wishes, He will never trespass upon our rights. The rights of his creatures are as sacred to Him as his own. He may deprive them of many comforts, He may take from them many dear friends; still He wrongs them not, He takes but what He gave. These are but lent favours, the absolute right to them He reserves in his own power.

This circumstance should prevent our murmuring against his holy providence, however distressing the privations He may bring upon us. The language of our hearts should be, Righteous art thou O Lord when thou speakest and clear when thou judgest. Thou hast smitten and laid us low, but thy justice is not hereby impeached. Thou hast dried up streams very sweet and refreshing to us; but they were streams poured from thine own fountain. It is just they should return to thee again.

2. We should reflect, moreover, that as God has done nothing in our affliction but what He had a right to do, so He has done nothing but what was wisest and best.

He always acts under the direction of infinite wisdom and love, and aims at some high and glorious end. Nothing falls out by chance with Him; nothing which in the eternal counsels of his wisdom He did not pre-ordain. Why then should we not cheerfully submit to

the trials which He has appointed? Do we wish God to be less wise or less good, or that his eternal purposes should be overthrown?

But our unbelieving hearts are ready to reply, where is the wisdom of these dark and trying dispensations? The wheels of his providence move high and dreadful. They astonish, they terrify us.

True, my brethren, but these wheels are full of eyes. Whether they go forward or backward, they move with specific and unerring purpose. It is not necessary that we should know what that purpose is. God in mercy to us often conceals it, and requires us to draw our consolation, not from any knowledge we have of the particular reasons of his dispensations, but from our assurance of his unbounded wisdom and goodness.

What more rational motives can we have for submission to God's will, under the calamities with which He visits us? What greater consolation than to know that He reigns in infinite wisdom and love, and that every event shall be made to contribute to his glory and to the best good of those who trust in Him? How astonishing is it, that with this truth in view, our hearts should ever murmur or despond!

3. I offer another reason for submission to God's will under the bereavements to which his providence subjects us. I mean their merciful tendency and design with respect to ourselves.

The afflictions of the present life are, for the most part, but a wise and fatherly discipline, intended to correct our follies and to recover us to a sense of duty. Like prodigal children, we have gone away from our



Father's house, and the rod and the reproof are necessary to bring us back again. God in tender mercy to us therefore rebukes us, and though his rebukes are often terrible, they are never ill-timed nor out of measure. This circumstance should lead us cheerfully to acquiesce in the chastisements with which He is pleased to exercise us. It is thus the Apostle reasons with the converted Hebrews under their peculiar sufferings. "We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? They verily chastened us a few days after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be made partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present is joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees."

4. Let me say as a farther inducement for submission to God's will under trials, that this is the only way to obtain immediate and effectual consolation and support? When we are satisfied that the Lord has done right, and feel willing that He should dispose of us and every thing dear to us as it seemeth good in his sight; that He should kill and make alive, wound and heal at his pleasure, we have reached a point where no earthly affliction can overwhelm us; we are come too near to God himself, the ocean of felicity, to feel very sensibly the loss of any earthly good. Oh, my weeping and mourning friends, if you can take sanctuary here, at the footstool of a righteous and sove-

reign God, your afflictions will soon become light afflictions, and your sorrow be turned into joy. It is God, we read, who comforteth those that are cast down, and his comforts are like himself, great and wonderful. He can astonish us as much by the tranquility He spreads over our minds, in days of calamity and rebuke, as by the sudden and dreadful changes which take place in the course of his providence. He can make us not only joyful, but exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.

How many of God's people have stood amazed in the time of their affliction, to find the Lord such a refuge, such a present help in time of trouble. "The floods have lifted up their voice, the floods lift up their waves, but the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea."

5. Finally, if the Lord has given us comfortable hopes that our departed friends have exchanged the sins and sorrows of this miserable world for an eternal rest in Heaven, is there nothing here to reconcile us to their death? Embarked with us on a stormy and perilous sea, they have reached their destined port before us, and shall we mourn on this account? Could we wish to see them driven back in their course, and made to conflict with the rough winds and merciless waves again? Has the gracious Redeemer heard their prayers, and given them to overcome and sit down with him upon his throne, even as he has overcome and is sat down with his Father upon his throne, and can we desire to see them again subjected to the weakness, to

the temptations, to the sins and sorrows of the present life? What are all our hopes and expectations for ourselves, but to finish our wearisome pilgrimage and enter into the mansions of eternal rest and glory. But alas, my brethren, we are afraid of being left alone by the way. Like the disciples, who were afflicted at the thought of being separated from their Master, though he was going to Heaven to prepare a place for them, we are often troubled when our beloved relatives advance a few steps before us, and seize the crown of life sooner than we expected.

Let us, however, comfort ourselves with the recollection that they are gone before us, only to make our way to Heaven the more easy, our progress towards it the more rapid, and our entrance into it the more joyful. It is but a little while and we shall follow them. Our dust will soon mingle with their dust, and our spirits join with their spirits. We shall meet them on a deathless shore—meet them refined from the dross of this world; and, oh, enrapturing thought! we shall tread the fields of light and glory together. We shall stand with them on Zion's everlasting hills, to look back on the course we have held across this wilderness, to converse of all the events which have befallen us in our pilgrimage state, and to shout together in one eternal song, the praises of Him, who loved us and washed us in his own blood. What Christian's heart does not burn within him at the prospect? Who that hath a particle of hope in another world but must look forward with joy to the moment, when he shall meet

the departed souls of his pious friends, with all the spirits of just men made perfect?

But what shall be said, my dear brethren, of the distressing event, which has led us to these reflections? Shall we say it has fallen out according to the purposes of Heaven? Shall we say that an infinitely wise God has in this case acted wisely; and an infinitely kind and gracious God fulfilled the designs of his love and mercy? What else can we say? God indeed does not reveal to us the particular reasons of this dispensation; but our duty is not the less plain. It becomes us to bow with holy resignation to his will, and to say, the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.

To us, the life of our dear young friend appeared exceedingly important. Not to say what a treasure he was to his parents and sisters, to whom he was endeared by every circumstance which could make him lovely, he was an object of great hope to the church of God. Few young men of higher promise have appeared in these days. With a sound and vigorous understanding, with a soft and obliging temper, he possessed, as far as human eyes can discern, all the reality and all the lustre of the Christian virtues. His attainments in science, and especially in that best of all sciences, religion, were such as to present the fairest prospect of his being a distinguished luminary in the church of Christ, to whose service he had publicly and solemnly devoted himself. We had hoped that this rising star would long continue to gladden us with its beams. But ah,

how suddenly has it disappeared! disappeared to us only. It is gone to shine in other systems and to burn in brighter skies.

God has affectingly taught us in this instance that his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. He has called this amiable youth away in the morning of his days, and, just at the very moment, when the highest expectations were entertained of his immediate and extensive usefulness.

The Lord's will is done, and why should we mourn? This dear youth did not mourn for himself. He was willing to depart and to be with Christ which is far better. To one of his friends who watched his dying pillow, he said, What a mercy will it be if the Lord thus early shall call me home to himself. Not that he was impatient or wished to dictate concerning his own case, he chose the will of the Lord should be done.

What greater consolation can we have in his death? Fallen asleep in Christ, as we have every reason to believe, his spirit has already joined the general assembly of the church of the first born in Heaven—and can his dearest friends on earth wish him to return? No, I hear them say, Stay there happy spirit, the Lord hath called thee, and the Lord hath need of thee. Who knows but he may be employed as a ministering spirit, or a guardian angel to those whom he loved? Who can tell but he may be present in this assembly, or be looking from the battlements above, to witness the manner in which his departure affects the church and congregation once so dear to him? Could he speak to us, what would be his language? What would he say

to those bereaved relatives? Dry up your tears; for me to live was Christ, but to die is gain. I am safely landed on the immortal shores; I have reached the bosom of Abraham and the paradise of God. Now I see as I am seen; now I know as I am known. I have exchanged the earthly for the heavenly sanctuary; the songs of my fellow saints on earth, for the songs of the redeemed in Heaven. Sin is gone; temptation is gone; fear is gone; sorrow is gone; and all the former things are passed away. Why mourn ye that my warfare is accomplished, and my toils and dangers at an end? Why weep ye that I have reached that better world where weeping and lamentation are heard no more, where all tears are forever wiped away. But this is not his voice; his lips are sealed up in the silent grave, you will hear him no more; you will see him no more, till you have passed these borders of mortality, and are yourselves ushered into the invisible and eternal world.

Call to mind, my dear brethren, what you can recollect of his virtues. Imitate the meekness and the gentleness of his spirit; and especially the simplicity and the fervour of his prayers. God speaks loudly to us all in this providence; he bids us hasten in our preparation for death and eternity, seeing no degree of worth can save us, when once the voice of the Eternal Judge calls.

To you, my dear young friends, this is an unusually solemn providence—and to you, above all others, who have recently made profession of religion. One of the most precious and distinguished of your number is gone, gone to that world from whose sad bourne no traveller



returns. His dust lies mouldering in a land of strangers; his spirit has returned to the God who gave it. Are you prepared to follow him? Will you meet him on the heavenly plains, when your spirits like his shall be separated from their earthly tabernacles? He often wished it, he often prayed for it! May God of his infinite mercy send an answer to his prayers and prepare you to meet him and to rejoice with him in the regions of eternal bliss and glory.

## APPENDIX.

The following extracts from letters written by gentlemen, who were intimately acquainted with the deceased youth, alluded to in the preceeding discourse, and some of whom were near him in his last moments, furnish an honorable testimony to his character, and to the worth of that religion on whose principles and hopes his character was formed.

*Extracts of letters from the Rev. Dr. Griffin, to the parents of Lewis Le Conte Conger.*

BOSTON, January 6, 1810.

The Almighty God support you, my dear friends, under the trial which you must sustain. I wish, with all my heart, that I had any thing agreeable to communicate. And I have, Jesus of Nazareth reigns! And our dear Lewis is happy! Ah, my heart! why this aching and trembling! The will of God is done. Lewis himself wished that the will of God might be done; and am I confident that he does not wish to oppose it now.

It is with the deepest sympathy, my dear friends, that I announce to you an event which has filled our college with tears, and spread a gloom over us all. . . . Professor Woods in a letter which I have just received, says, "At 1 o'clock this morning our very dear and promising friend died. Our hopes of his recovery had, in the course of the week, been several times raised. Many prayers have been offered; but the Saviour loved the dear youth, and chose thus early to call him home." My heart aches and bleeds for you. By my own sorrows I know that yours must be extreme. I never knew how to love him till since he left you; and for a few days past, I have felt that more of my earthly comfort

depended on him than I had been aware of. No young man was ever more beloved. . . . He has not lived in vain. He did not come to Andover in vain. Since he left Newark, he has been the means of spiritual good to some; and by his influence on the College, has probably been indirectly the means of good to thousands. His parents have reason to bless God that they were the means of bringing a son into the world to do so much good as he has done at Andover.

I am sensible of the aggravation of your trial in not being able to see him. I have felt this aggravation myself. During all the time that he has been considered dangerous, I have been confined to my house by indisposition. I am still confined, and cannot attend his funeral to-morrow. It is a comfort to me, however, to know that every thing has been done for him that man could do; and that arrangements are made to bury him with becoming respect. His dust will lie in a strange land; but mind not that. It will not be lost nor overlooked. It will be gathered and restored to him, and to you.

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I know not that I was ever tried so tenderly before. But we must submit. May God support you and comfort you all.

Yours affectionately,

E. D. GRIFFIN.

BOSTON, January 7. Sabbath evening.

This hour they are burying our dear child! and as I can think of nothing else, I set myself down to commune with his afflicted parents and sisters. No creature more dear to me ever left this earth. I am thinking of his pleasant manners, by which he soothed us on our journey, when we had just left at Newark a great proportion of our earthly comforts.

\* \* \* \* \* I am thinking of his attentions to me in sickness;—the affectionate sympathy, and mature judgment, by which he soothed and strengthened me, during all my anxieties since I left you. \* \* \* In following summers how many objects will bring the dear youth fresh

to my thoughts! And if his body be permitted to remain there, I shall often with mournful pleasure visit his grave. It will be a spot to me ever sacred and dear. Perhaps I and my family shall yet sleep with him.

I have had some distressing thoughts about being the means of taking him from Newark, and I suppose that you may be tempted to say, if he had not left Newark, he would not have died. But, my friends, it is all the appointment of Heaven. Eternal wisdom fixed it that he should die at that time and place; and that you and I should weep under this great loss. And great it is. Few parents ever lost more in a single son. But consider, my dear friends, how many comforts you have left. You have two dear children; and they have two dear parents. May you live long to be a mutual comfort to each other. \* \* \* \* \*

Think not, my dear friends, that you have lost your pains in giving your son an education. You have been fitting him, I believe, for more than a pulpit, for a higher throne in Heaven. The expansion of mind which his education has given him, will probably render him a more illustrious instrument of God's glory, and make him a more capacious vessel, to contain happiness, while the kingdom of God endures. You have not lost any of your pains, nor any of your prayers for him. Few parents have been so much honoured, as to raise up, and send such a son to assist the praises of the assembly of the first born. There I trust he is! Think not of him on a bed of sickness, and in a land of strangers,—away from his parents and sisters. Think of him in Mount Zion. There is all that is Lewis. The rest is mere dust. We have not lost him. He has only gone a little before us. Ten thousand worlds I am persuaded, would not tempt him to return. There I hope we shall soon find him, and enjoy him again, and forever,—far better than we ever did in this world. \* \* \*

It was indeed desirable to keep him with us a little longer. But I now perceive that the days of God's power which we have seen, were not so much intended to raise up comforts for

us in this world, or to fit men to preach the gospel, as to fit souls for that eternal society to which we believe our dear Lewis has gone. O! may my thoughts be more unloosed from earth, and be more steadfastly fixed on that glorious assembly of our fathers and brethren, which has been increasing from the days of Adam. There I doubt not is Lewis! There I trust, will soon be his parents and sisters, and there I hope, soon to meet you all to part no more forever. Blessed world! no death, no parting, no sorrow, no sin! Stay there dear child! I would not entice thee if I could, from those regions of bliss, and glory.

You will wish to know every thing about him, in the latter part of his life. When I saw him last he was well and happy. He had engaged as one of the preceptors in the Academy; and came to me, (then at Andover,) to apologize for engaging without waiting to consult me. He observed with his usual loveliness, that he had never been out of his mother's lap, and thought he ought to do something to help support the expenses of his education. As he received a liberal compensation, I was not displeased. I left him with a charge to come to Boston on the day of dedicating our new church, which is to take place next Wednesday. We have been looking forward to the pleasure of seeing him then; but alas! —To resume the history,—he continued well till three weeks ago last Thursday. And I know of nothing at Andover that occasioned his sickness. He appeared, at first, to have a slow fever, but felt no alarm. He would not consent to their alarming you: and they did not think proper to alarm me. Indeed, they were not alarmed themselves, until the Thursday or Friday of week before last. Several who rank among the best physicians in the state were called to his assistance as soon as danger was apprehended; and one to whose children Lewis had been, as I trust, the means of spiritual benefit, attended on him from the beginning. He is a pious, careful, and skilful physician. Every thing was done for him that could be done. His mind was very happy and

resigned, until he lost the use of his reason. He then had the ordinary wildness and restlessness of such a state;—and so far as I am informed, died in that condition. Whatever else I can learn that I judge will be interesting to you, you shall hear. All that I can do more is to take care of the books, and clothing, which the dear youth left behind, and settle his accounts. All this God willing, I will do, and give you seasonable information. Mrs. Griffin weeps almost all the time. She says, she feels more for the family, than even for the loss of him. She sends her kindest love and sympathy to you all. I join with her in the tenderest condolence, and in prayers that God may abundantly support you.

Your afflicted and affectionate friend,

E. D. GRIFFIN.

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*Extracts of a letter from the Rev. L. Woods, to the parents of  
Lewis Le Conte Congar.*

ANDOVER, January 21, 1810. Sabbath evening.

*My respected and beloved friends :*

It was my intention to write to you immediately after the decease of your dear son; but sickness in my family prevented. I was the less anxious about writing, because I knew you would receive letters from several here, who have the pleasure of knowing you, and are therefore better qualified to address you than I am. But I cannot, even at this late period, deny myself the mournful satisfaction of writing to you, though I must write in haste. Your dear Lewis was chiefly employed in those studies which belong to my department. I had thus the best opportunity of being intimately acquainted with him. And I cannot help saying that I conceive you highly privileged in being the parents of such a son. He was one in whom you could rejoice while he lived, and when he died. Yes, mourning parents, your joy must rise above your sorrow. I know you could not have been more tenderly afflicted. My heart has been ready to melt when viewing



your bereavement and all the circumstances attending it. But to think of a beloved child, who sleeps in Jesus; who lived long enough to be prepared for a better life; long enough to give the most amiable proof of being born again, and yet not long enough to know many of the troubles of life, or many of the trials and difficulties of religion; separated from sin and sorrow; gone from affectionate earthly parents, to one infinitely more affectionate in Heaven; gone from the darkness and distance of this world, to the light and joy of paradise. To think of this, must kindle raptures in your hearts in the midst of your grief. The early death of your Son, was doubtless a mark of God's peculiar love. Christ desired and prayed, that all his people might be with him. It was, I trust, because he loved your son with a peculiar love, that he chose so soon to call him home. It is a great loss to you, and to me, and to the churches, but it is a greater gain to him, and gain also to the church in Heaven. His usefulness is not diminished, but increased by his removal. He began to do good here. But he is gone to a higher sphere of action and enjoyment. Thoughts like these are not new to you. I doubt not you have had much comfort in such reflections. If so, you will delight to repeat them often.

Your son was an ornament to this Seminary. His genius was distinguished, and his manners uncommonly amiable.

\* \* \* \* \*

But his work was done, and the glorious Redeemer chose to call him home to himself. Sorrowing parents, I mourn with you.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our beloved Lewis is no more. It is our duty to be still, and say with all the heart, "the will of the Lord be done." How wonderful, how mysterious God's ways! He sent your son to this place, that he might be a blessing to this infant seminary, and to this people a little while, and then die. He was useful by his life, and we hope will be useful by his death. \* \*

I trust my dear friends, that you know the grace of God, and have learned the duty and experienced the comforts of

submission. May he teach you to sorrow in a godly manner. Trust in him, cast all your cares on him, and he will sustain you. He will never leave you, never, never forsake you. The Lord cause his face to shine upon you, and upon your surviving children. Accept with them my most tender condolence, and my devout wishes for your support and consolation.

I am your sincere friend and servant,

LEONARD WOODS.

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*The particular state of Mr. Congar's mind during his sickness, is thus detailed by a friend, who was with him till his death.*

A long time did not elapse between the time when he was first considered dangerous, and the time when he began to lose his reason—his words therefore, which I wrote down at the time, were few.—During the first part of his sickness, his principal concern was,—lest he should be impatient—and his principal request, that his friends would pray for his recovery, but especially that God would give him patience and resignation, that he might not cast a reproach on the cause. He would say, “Since I am so unable to pray, you must pray for me, and request my friends also.” His desire God was pleased to grant in a very distinguishing manner. We found it difficult to learn his feelings, because he would not complain. The first thing which indicated that he expected to die, was the following request to me. “You know the sermon I have been writing on trusting in God. Though it is in a very unfinished and imperfect state, I wish you would ask Doctor Griffin to arrange it, and send it home to my parents; it may be some comfort to them.

On Friday night, a week before he died, being asked whether he wished to see company, he replied, I shall be glad to see some whose faces will refresh me, though I can not talk to them. Saturday was his last rational day, and his happiest day. In the morning he said to me, I think it would

be a wonder if I should get well of this fever; don't you think so? I replied, do you think much of dying? He answered, some. How does it appear to you? Very solemn: I have lived a very unprofitable life to die upon; I do not know but God intends to take me away. If so I hope he will prepare me. It is a great thing to change worlds, and go into the immediate presence of God. But a happy thing—happy for those who have an interest in Christ, and who will enter into his eternal—Oh how precious is Christ! I think I should be glad to spend an eternity with him. I think I long for the enjoyments of Heaven—for the purity and holiness of the Heavenly state. I am a poor worthless creature: but I hope that Christ will support me, and take me to himself. If I may sit in the lowest place at his feet and gaze upon the beauties of his face, it is enough for me. When the light of Heaven first broke upon my soul, I think I took Christ for my all in all; and now he must be all in all. I think I do love Christ. (Saturday fore-noon) I said to him, you feel weak, don't you? Yes, but Christ is——and I commit myself to him—this glorious exchange—if it were not for these truths I must sink in despair. About noon he said, I have enjoyed the great truths of the gospel very much to day—I feel happy that I am in the hands of God. One of his friends said to him, can you testify to the preciousness of Christ? Yes I can. In the evening I said to him, how does your mind feel now? I feel composed and happy. I have given myself up to God to carry me through this fever just as He pleases. Late on Saturday evening he asked me which is the sweetest part of the Bible? He answered, there are many sweet parts. There is a grand description of the character of God—the Lord, the Lord God Almighty—no how is it? The passage was then repeated to him. He replied, the character of God is amiable, excellent, all perfection. On Sunday morning, he said, it seems to refresh me to see the morning once more. One of his friends standing by his bed, he said to him, brother, I am a little composed—I have views

of Christ that are affecting. Afterwards in a broken manner, he dictated a note for public prayers, in which he particularly requested prayers for the presence of God and for support through his great trial. After this his reason gradually failed till he was entirely deranged, in which state he continued, except at one small interval, in which he expressed a solicitude about my health, and repeated his request respecting the sermon before mentioned. His death was apparently easy. He appeared to fall into a sleep from which we could not awake him. O my brother, my brother, I could almost say, would to God I had died for thee.

Yours &c.,

A. JUDSON, Jr.

## SERMON XV.\*

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THE SPIRIT OF PAUL THE SPIRIT OF MISSIONS.

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EPHESIANS III., 8.

*“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”*

St. Paul was equally remarkable for the depth of his humility, and for the ardour of his zeal. From the first moment of his conversion to the latest period of his life, he seems never to have forgotten that he had been a persecutor of the name of Jesus. The remembrance of his former character laid him low before God, while it inspired him with an earnest desire to live worthy of the grace by which he had been distinguished. Having himself tasted the riches of God's mercy in the pardon of sin and the hopes of eternal life, he wished to be the joyful minister of the same grace to others, and to carry the glad tidings of peace and salvation to the ends of the earth.

Fitted to this great work by many natural and spiritual qualifications, he engaged in it with an ardour,

\* A sermon preached at New Haven, Conn., before the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, at their annual meeting, Sept. 15, 1814.

which no watchings and fastings, no labours and sufferings could overcome. From Jerusalem he passed into Syria, thence into Arabia—into Asia Minor—into Macedonia and other parts of Greece. Widely extended regions of the globe were traversed by him, sometimes on foot, sometimes alone, while continually exposed to the severest hardships and perils. Wherever he went, he was deemed an enthusiast, or a mad-man, a disturber of the public peace, an enemy to mankind. “But none of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear unto himself, if he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus.” He felt the importance of his mission, and the grandeur of his own destiny. He bore about the dying of the Lord Jesus; he carried with him the treasures of everlasting wisdom and mercy. Despising the gains and the glory of the present world, his heart was strongly fixed on procuring for himself and for others the blessings of eternal life.

God had especially designated him to this work, and declared him a “chosen vessel to bear his name before the Gentiles;” and though his labours were abundant, and his successes unrivalled; though multitudes in various portions of the heathen world were brought to the knowledge of the truth through his instrumentality; still his humility did not forsake him; he could retrace the labours and sufferings of a glorious life, without indulging in the emotions of pride and vanity; he could look upon the hundreds and thousands he had converted from paganism, and yet say, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I



should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

He did not doubt of his being a saint: but he felt himself to be the least of all saints because he had persecuted the church of God, and because he still lived so far beneath his privileges and obligations. That he should be called to preach the Gospel to the heathen, he considered as an instance of amazing condescension and mercy; and to this great and good work he made a cheerful and unreserved consecration of all his powers.

Where, my brethren, can we find an example more worthy of our imitation? Where can we learn so much of that spirit, which ought to breathe in all our hearts, while we are endeavoring to spread the knowledge of Christ in the pagan world? We behold in this man a missionary indeed; one who is borne above those worldly and selfish interests, which too often contract our minds and paralyze our exertions. We see him engaging in a service the most noble, the most arduous, and continuing in it through all difficulties and discouragements, with unabated resolution to the end. How happy would it be for us, could we light our fires at his altar, and feel something of that pure and heavenly flame which burned in his bosom.

It is intended in the following discourse to present to you more distinctly, some of the principles and motives which directed and animated the apostle in carrying the gospel to the heathen world, and which ought no less powerfully to direct and animate us.

I. I begin by observing, that the apostle entered upon this service with a deep impression of the infinite

worth of the gospel. It was to him "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Time was when he was blind to the glory of a crucified Saviour, when Christ appeared to him as to his countrymen generally, "a root out of a dry ground," in which was to be seen neither "form nor comeliness." Nay, he felt a deep hostility to Christ, and persecuted his followers to prison and to death. But the Lord, even Jesus, had met him in the way, and had spoken to him with a voice of power and majesty, which he could no longer resist. A glorious light from Heaven shone round about him, the emblem of a more glorious light, which shone into his soul, and which forever darkened the lustre of all terrestrial things. Now the gospel of Christ appeared to him the "glorious gospel of the blessed God"—full of wisdom—full of mercy—full of power—forming a scheme in which all the divine attributes harmonize and shine forth with unutterable splendour. His soul bows before the mysteries of a God incarnate—before the wonders of a Saviour crucified and raised again from the dead. The cross of Christ, a stumbling block before, is henceforth his boast and his glory. There his own guilty soul has found relief—there his foulest stains have been washed away. Was it surprising that his heart should be absorbed and even transported with such an object, and that he should feel it to be the glory of his life to unfold its riches and its beauty among the Gentiles? Especially when you reflect that he considered the knowledge of Christ and his cross as essential to their salvation. He did not believe that men were thronging the way to Heaven

involved in the ignorance and stained with the crimes of idolatry. He looked upon the whole heathen world, as without God, and without hope; sitting in the region of darkness and shadow of death; and he declares the object of his ministry to be “to turn many from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Here was the spring of his zeal in preaching the gospel, in regions where “Christ was not known.”

If he had regarded the gospel merely in the light of a good religion, and on the whole perhaps the best religion in the world, you would not have seen him braving all dangers, and encountering every hardship, to spread the knowledge of its sacred truths among the nations. He would have left them, as many boasting philanthropists have done, to enjoy their superstitions, in the fond hope that they might find their way to the abodes of future happiness, though undirected by the light of the gospel. But the fact with him was quite otherwise. He considered the gospel as an indispensable mean of eternal life—that they who heard it and believed, would be saved, and that they who heard it not, or did not believe, would inevitably perish.

Such impressions of the gospel prepared him to act as a missionary of the cross, and laid a foundation for his persevering endeavours to spread the knowledge of divine truth in every part of the world.

Our impressions of the gospel must be of the same character, if we would embark in the cause of missions with any hope of success. If we have yet to learn, that the gospel of Christ is the glorious gospel of the blessed God, exhibiting a bright assemblage of all the divine

perfections, and containing in its provisions all that is requisite to make us happy through time and eternity, we know nothing yet as we ought to know, and are not prepared so much as to begin our work. May I not say indeed, that unless we are firmly persuaded that the gospel is the only appointed means of salvation, and that men will perish who die without its light, we shall never do any thing in the cause of missions worthy of its object. It is a question, therefore, which deeply concerns us all, Have we right impressions of the gospel? Does it appear to us, as it did to St. Paul, to be the unsearchable riches of Christ? Has the glory of this world faded away in comparison of its excellence? And can we say with the apostle, that we count all things as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord?" Then shall we compassionate the heathen, who are without this knowledge; and be ready to perform any labours, or to make any sacrifices, which are necessary, to spread the knowledge of Christ among them.

This will lead me to remark,

II. That the apostle entered upon the great work of evangelizing the heathen, with the strongest convictions of duty. He had no doubt that he was called of God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The divine Saviour had "stood by him in a vision at Jerusalem, and bid him depart out of Judea, because they would not receive his testimony, saying, I will send thee far hence among the Gentiles." His conviction was complete, his obedience prompt and exemplary. He waited for no human counsels—for no combination of human

strength. "As soon as it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, that he should preach him among the heathen, immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went he up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before him; but he went into Arabia and returned again to Damascus." The single circumstance, that Jesus Christ had commanded, was enough. This was paramount to every other consideration. Mountains of difficulty were instantly removed, or totally disregarded. Armed only with the word of truth and the power of the Holy Ghost, he sallied forth into the heathen world, prepared to contend with ignorance, with superstition, with the pride of philosophy, the madness of ambition, the hatred and violence of lust: in short, with all that a corrupted world, instigated by the subtlety and malice of Satan, could array against him. We do not propose him as our example, in all these respects, and without any limitation; for as his commission was extraordinary and special, so also was the path in which he was led. But we desire you to bear it distinctly in mind, that it was under a strong conviction of duty, that he commenced his arduous work; and that it was this, which kept him firm and steady in his course, while at all times it supplied him with the testimony of a good conscience, and enabled him cheerfully to commit the event of his labours to God.

There is at least an equal necessity that we should act under a strong sense of duty, in attempting to establish the gospel among the heathen. For if we lack conviction on this point, our exertions will be feeble,



unsteady, and probably of short duration. How, then, let me ask, ought this question to be viewed by us? Is there any room to doubt whether we are called to bear a part in the attempts, which are now making among Christian nations, to send the gospel to the benighted pagans?

We know it was the command of the risen Saviour to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" but from the nature of the case, it is manifest that this command could not be restricted to the disciples to whom it was first given. Here was a work too mighty to be performed by a few persons in one generation. We must consider the command as resting upon the apostles and upon their successors in the ministry of reconciliation, as is farther evident from the promise annexed to it, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world;" a promise reaching to every age of the church, and showing us that the command, which is necessarily coëxtensive with the promise, will never cease to be obligatory, until all men are brought to the knowledge of the truth, or until the ministry of reconciliation ends.

Besides, is it not our duty to pray for the salvation of all men, and that because "God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth?" But what sincerity can there be in our prayers, where there is not a corresponding endeavour to promote the object which they contemplate? Can any man deceive himself with the idea, that he longs for the salvation of the heathen, and prays acceptably for that object, while he is unwilling to put his hands to the



work of missions, and while perhaps he cheapens the labours of those who do?

Where, indeed, is the great law of benevolence, which binds us to regard the interests of our fellow men no less than our own; and their spiritual and immortal interests certainly as well as their temporal. If he is chargeable with the want of Christian charity who "seeth his brother have need of this world's goods, and shutteth up the bowels of his compassion from him," what shall be said of one, who can look upon the perishing heathen, lying under a load of guilt and hastening, without the knowledge or benefit of a Saviour, to the retributions of eternity, and yet feel no generous sentiment glowing in his bosom; no desire to carry the precious light of salvation to their benighted land?

"True, it may be said; but then it must not be forgotten, that though the call for our benevolence is great, yet the field for our active labours is limited. We must not desert our own churches to carry the gospel to heathen lands—we must not neglect our own flesh and blood, the people in our new and scattered settlements, for the sake of transporting missionaries to distant shores; where, before any reasonable hopes of success can be entertained, new languages must be acquired, long and inveterate habits overcome."

We are not backward, my brethren, to admit, that the call for domestic missions is loud and solemn. There are thousands in our frontier settlements, as well as in the more interior parts of our country, whose case demands our sympathy and exertion; not to mention the

unhappy and degraded people of colour in the southern states, amounting to scarcely less than a million of souls, and the numerous and wretched tribes of Indians upon our borders. To all these it is our duty to turn our attention, and to feel towards them that compassion which Jesus felt for the multitudes in Judea, who were as sheep scattered abroad having no shepherd. But is this the whole of our duty? May we not, and ought we not, to engage in foreign missions also, and send the gospel to the benighted regions of Asia and Africa, and to the islands of the Southern ocean? As to our own people, though destitute, they are not absolutely without the word of life, and the means of salvation. They enjoy a kind of twilight, by means of the scattered beams of the Son of righteousness, which still fall upon them. But with the heathen it is total darkness. There is no day spring from on high to visit them; no feeble ray from any distant star to shine upon their dwellings. An awful night of gloom and terrour surrounds them. Satan, the prince of darkness, holds there a wide and dreadful reign. Thousands and tens of thousands are yearly offered up as polluted and bloody victims upon his altars, while millions added to millions are enslaved by the false religions and cruel rites of this destroyer of souls. Behold! from the southern shores of India and Africa to the northern boundaries of Tartary—from the eastern to the western limits of Asia—and what will you see, but one vast assemblage of ignorance and superstition, casting a thick and portentous darkness over these widely extended regions! With the exception of a small por-

tion of Christians, making less perhaps than one fiftieth part of the whole, all, all are without hope and without God in the world. What a vast multitude of souls crowding their way, generation after generation, down to the abodes of despair! What a deep and broad river do they make as they pass along to the ocean of eternity into which they fall—never to return. Where is thy philanthropy, O Christians? Where thy charity, kindled at the cross of a dying Saviour? Canst thou sleep quietly over the destiny of millions thus sunk in darkness and sin, without one effort to rescue them from the horrors of their condition, without so much as visiting their borders with the word of God, the light of life in thy hands?

Besides, have we not apostolic example for the course we recommend? Did the first ministers of Jesus wait till they had converted all their own countrymen, before they ventured abroad among the heathen? And when they went to one nation, did they confine their labours to them, till all were brought to the obedience of faith? Did they not rather go from city to city, and from one nation and kingdom to another, till they had planted the gospel in every part of the known world? This was St. Paul's plan, most certainly. And why should not this course be thought reasonable. An earnest desire to send the gospel abroad will kindle a purer and more ardent zeal for its propagation at home. "Religion is that kind of commodity, that the more you impart of it to others, the more you have left behind." Nor is this difficult to comprehend. The zeal, awakened by so glowing an object as a fo-

reign mission, cannot fail to diffuse itself through many hearts, and be reproduced in the concern which it excites for the promotion of religion generally. It presents an interest, which is vast: it forms characters in a high degree dignified and engaging.

I appeal to the noble and apostolic spirit of those who have gone from our shores to carry the gospel to India, and whose recent communications sufficiently evince that neither their zeal nor their firmness have been diminished, by the many trials they have endured. I appeal to the memoirs of one who breathed out her life on a distant shore, in the very morning of her days, and upon the threshold of her mission. She did not regret that she had left all for Christ, and that she had testified her love to the heathen rather by what she desired, than by what she was permitted to accomplish. Her life and death, strongly marked as they were by sentiments of the most exalted piety, will excite more Christian feeling, and be productive of more devout and ardent prayer for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, than the lives and deaths of a hundred ordinary Christians. Besides all this, a foreign mission has a powerful tendency to narrow the differences and destroy the little jealousies, which exist among Christians, while it enables them to act with union and vigour in one great cause.

What has been the fact among those Christians, who have embarked in foreign missions, both in Europe and America. Have they not been the friends of domestic missions also? So far as the knowledge of the speaker has extended, the more liberally they have

communicated to the wants of the heathen the more generous have been their contributions, and the more zealous their labours, to promote religion in their own land. The truth is, those men who are for sending the gospel to the miserable inhabitants of Asia and Africa, at almost any hazard and expense, think a great deal of religion. It is to them "the power of God unto salvation." They regard it as the riches of the world, and their own eternal inheritance. They partake of the spirit of the primitive disciples, who sold their worldly possessions, that they might the more effectually communicate to the wants of the necessitous, and help forward the rising cause of Christianity. Can it be a matter of doubt, in these circumstances, whether we ought to cast in our lot with them, and do what in us lies, to spread the knowledge of Christ among the benighted nations? I see not how we can forbear, without being chargeable with the blood of the poor heathen who shall perish through our neglect. They are suffering an awful famine, not of bread nor of water, but of the word of the living God; and if we will neither compassionate nor relieve them, how can we avoid the guilt of their blood? A thorough conviction of this fact would lay hold of the strongest principles of action, and carry us resolutely and steadily forward in the great work which we have begun.

III. I remark further, that the apostle engaged in the design of propagating the gospel among the heathen, not merely from a sense of duty, acting under the command of Jesus Christ his rightful Lord and sove-

reign, but as an unspeakable honour and privilege. "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." He felt himself exalted by the office, which he sustained as a preacher among the heathen, his preëminent talents and gifts notwithstanding. It never entered his heart that his uncommon powers of mind, and his extensive acquaintance with human science, placed him beyond the humble occupation of a missionary to the pagans. This is the more remarkable, when you look at the circumstances under which his ministry was exercised. What was his ministry, brethren! Not like that which falls to many of the ambassadors of peace in later times, where every desire is anticipated—where honour instead of reproach is the reward of talents and virtue. His was a ministry of suffering and want, of shame and dishonour. He was called to go through evil report as well as good report; to be held as a deceiver and impostor while he was honestly labouring for the best interests of mankind. He could tell of journeyings often, of fastings often, of hungering and thirst, of cold and nakedness; of perils in the wilderness, of perils in the sea—of perils by his own countrymen; of perils by the heathen; of perils among false brethren; and yet he never complained that his sacrifices were great or his work humiliating. Amidst all this scene of labour and suffering, he felt himself an unspeakable debtor to divine grace, that he "was allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel," and to preach its saving truths among the heathen.



Such a spirit, my brethren, must we possess, if we would labour successfully in the missionary cause. If it be the impulse of reason, or conscience, only that we feel, we shall lack an essential part of the apostle's temper. If we have not indeed such exalted views of the gospel itself—such a love to the Lord Jesus Christ, its glorious author, and such a tender concern for the salvation of the heathen, as to make us feel it to be an honour and privilege to put our hands to this work, in however humble a manner, we shall do nothing worthy of the cause: we shall only give another proof to the world, how little we believe our own religion, and how little its benevolent spirit has been transfused into our hearts. But where is the man that has himself tasted the love of a dying Saviour, who does not feel it to be a privilege to unite with him in seeking the salvation of a lost world? Where is the man that has found a place of safety for his own soul, who does not burn with a holy zeal to point his perishing fellow mortals to the same refuge?

It is a privilege of no mean character to become the benefactors of others, in things pertaining to this life. All who have made the experiment have found that even here, "it is more blessed to give than to receive." How honourable then the employment, how noble the privilege, to contribute to the eternal happiness of our fellow beings—to become coworkers with God in the matter of their salvation; to be instruments of rearing eternal monuments of praise to him in a future world?

We celebrate the benevolence of a man, who ex-

poses his life to save another from a watery grave; or who visits the dungeon to find the objects of his compassion, and to administer relief to the lonely sufferer, dying of want or disease. But how much more exalted his charity, who forsakes his kindred and his native land forever, to explore distant and inhospitable regions in quest of sinners, immersed in ignorance and superstition, and wallowing in the mire of sensuality: his charity, who is willing to undergo every hardship, and to sustain every trial, in erecting the banners of the cross among the benighted heathen.

To take the least share in this work, whether by our counsels or our prayers, or if it be only by contributing a humble pittance to the support of those who are more immediately and actively engaged, is an honour worth living for, and for which every good man will be thankful through eternity.

IV. Shall I observe in the fourth place, that though St. Paul esteemed it his highest honour to be instrumental in spreading the gospel among the heathen, yet he did not seek his own glory in this work.

It was not for the purpose of approving himself to his best friends, and much less for the sake of transmitting his name with honour to posterity, that he embarked in an undertaking so full of peril, and fraught with interests of such amazing magnitude. "Neither of men sought we glory," says he to the Corinthians, "nor yet of you. We preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus's sake." This was a strong and distinctive feature in his character, as a missionary of the

cross. This imparted to him a firmness and elevation of mind, which rendered him superior to corruption and versatility. His pole star being neither human vanity nor pride, but the glory of God and the salvation of men, he was kept steady to his purpose, through all changes and trials. God approved of his sincerity, and rewarded it with the most striking and visible success.

With the same holy and disinterested spirit, we also may hope to stand approved; and that God will not suffer our labours to be in vain. But if for the humble purpose of treading in the steps of others, and according in our opinions and practice with the fashion of the times; if we seek only to make a figure in our day and generation, unmoved by compassion for the heathen, and a concern for the Divine glory, God will say, "Put your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, I have no delight in them."

Is this remark unseasonable? We cannot doubt that extensive missions among the heathen have been undertaken and many sacrifices made, for the narrow purpose of adding to the number and splendour of a particular church; or perhaps with the more selfish design of adding a wreath to the crown of individual talent and exertion. But God abhors these sordid and earth-born motives. Can we hope that he will bless us, and bring us into the goodly land, unless he delight in us? Will he delight in us, unless we delight in his cause, abstracted from our own private views and interests? He is a God of love, and has made a spirit of disinterested affection the spring of all accep-

table duty. It is this alone which can elevate us to the purity and dignity of the ancient churches, and give us a zeal for the spread of the gospel, sincere and permanent as theirs. A zeal founded upon any other principle, will draw its motives chiefly from this world? and though it may burn high for a season, and astonish many by its brightness and vehemence, it is still like the meteor, which shoots suddenly across the sky, and terminates in darkness. That zeal which shall burn with a clear and lasting flame, must be kindled at the altar of pure and holy love.

V. Finally let us not overlook St. Paul's firm and constant reliance upon God.

He was zealous and laborious—but he did not expect to convert the world by his own power. His endowments indeed were of the highest order, both natural and acquired. To these were superadded such miraculous gifts, as not to leave him “a whit behind the very chief of the apostles.” Yet with all these advantages, he was disposed to say, “He that planteth, and he that watereth is nothing but God that giveth the increase.” His reliance for success was upon the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, in his convincing and sanctifying operations. Why else did he pray so fervently for a blessing upon his labours, and so constantly solicit the prayers of his brethren?

This part of his example is particularly worthy of our regard. The cause of missions is eminently the cause of God. He can only give it success. To the agency of his spirit we must ascribe it, that any are brought to the saving knowledge of the truth in Christ-

ian lands, where the doctrines of the gospel are the creed of men's early years. But among the heathen, where the obstacles to divine truth are multiplied and various, what can we look for without the special agency of the Holy Spirit?

I know indeed there are some, who, even with this agency, so long as it falls short of miraculous gifts, imagine that we have but a discouraging prospect of converting the heathen; and they attribute the want of success among missionaries in modern times to the absence of miraculous powers. We shall certainly not allege that such powers would be of no consequence to the missionary of Christ; but we may safely affirm that they are not necessary. They were all-important in laying the foundations of Christianity; but having once existed, and a faithful record of them been transmitted to our times, it is sufficient now to refer to them, whether for the conviction of those who are born under the light of the gospel, or of those to whom the knowledge of it is now to be imparted.

This is not mere theory, brethren. What is the state of facts? Have no nations been converted to Christianity since the age of miracles ceased? When did the ancient Franks and Germans receive the gospel? When the Swedes and Danes, and other northern nations? These, with the greater part of our own ancestors, were heathens long since miraculous powers were known in the church. What shall we say of the Moravian missionaries in Greenland and Labrador? Of Swartz and his coadjutors among the natives of Indostan? Was it the power of working miracles,

which gave to their labours such visible and triumphant success? Had Vanderkemp this power in converting the wandering and ignorant Hottentots? Or Eliot, or Mayhew, or Brainard, in the success which accompanied their labours among the Indians of our own country? They saw those tawny tribes moved under the preaching of the gospel, as the trees of the wood are moved with a mighty wind. They saw hundreds eagerly embracing the word of life, not because that word was confirmed by mighty signs and wonders and gifts of a miraculous kind, but because the Spirit of God was poured upon them in his enlightening, convincing and sanctifying power. What has been, my brethren, may be again.

Besides, if the heathen are ever to receive the gospel, by what means is their conversion to be effected? We have no reason to expect that the age of miracles will return. The word of God made quick and powerful by the agency of the Holy Spirit will be found abundantly sufficient to accomplish this work. When God's time is fully come for gathering in the heathen, every obstacle to the spread of the gospel will be removed; his word will be preached to all nations; his Spirit will be poured upon all flesh; and "the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea." Then "will be destroyed the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over the nations." Then the "mountain of the Lord's house will be exalted above the hills, and all nations flow unto it."

In the meantime, let us do our duty, if it be only to



prepare the way for this glorious era of the church of God. But whatever we undertake, let our eyes be steadfastly turned to the Lord, and let all our expectations be from him; let us look, and wait and pray for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. There is danger, brethren, that we shall overlook this almighty Agent, so essential both to our fidelity and success; or at least that we shall not give him that place, in our plans and operations, which his high and sacred office demands.

To avoid this danger, and to stir us up to a vigorous discharge of our duty, let us set the apostle's example fully before us, and make it a part of our daily prayer that we may deeply imbibe his spirit. He loved the gospel, and felt extensively its transforming power. He considered it not merely his duty, but his highest honour and privilege, to preach its unsearchable riches among the Gentiles. Yet he did not seek his own honour and advantage in this service, nor rely upon his own wisdom and strength for success. God's glory was his last end; and in the divine power and mercy he confided to make his labours beneficial to the heathen. Could we possess his spirit in all things, how much would it prepare us for the work in which we are engaged; and what happy consequences might we not expect to follow.

There would then be no want of missionaries. Men would rise up in every part of the country like Brainerd—like Vanderkemp—prepared to leave their friends and all that the world holds dear, to carry the gospel to the wandering savages in both hemispheres;

or to plant it among the more civilized, but equally benighted tribes of the earth.

There would be no want of pecuniary means. Men who have consecrated themselves would consecrate their substance to the Lord. If sparing from the luxuries of life would not be found sufficient, they would spare from its ordinary comforts, and sooner endure the severest privations than that the heathen should want for the bread and water of life. The spirit of Paul would make us offer more willingly for this object, than the ancient Israelites did to build their tabernacle, when it became necessary to restrain their liberality by saying, "It is enough." Of all charities this would appear the most noble, the most heavenly; and men would be anxious to lend to the Lord, and to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come.

Had we the spirit of Paul, the spirit of missions would not languish, nor its object fail for want of constant, fervent, and believing prayer. Day and night should we remember the poor heathen, and those who have gone forth to break the bread of life to them. Never could we think of the light and privileges we enjoy, without feeling the tenderest compassion for those who sit in darkness, and sending up strong and fervent cries to Heaven in their behalf. And why, my dear brethren, should we not possess this spirit? Is it not heaven-born? Is it not godlike? Does it not comport with our character and profession as Christians? Will it not impart a sweet and heavenly peace to our own bosoms? Has it not a rich and eternal reward? No

object can be conceived more sublime; none more important: it involves in it the glory of God through his Son, and the eternal salvation of millions—an object which should at all times greatly interest us, but which the events of the present times powerfully press upon our attention. God, we know, has promised to give his Son “the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.” The time appears at hand, when the promise shall be carried into complete effect. What mean these mighty revolutions among the nations these last twenty years—this turning and overturning, in which the hand of God is so visible, as to fill the world with astonishment? Do they not tell us, He is near whose right it is to reign? What mean these movements in the church, both in Europe and America? These missionary societies, and Bible societies, which unite so great a portion of the intelligence and zeal of Christendom? The church has awaked from the sleep of centuries; she is turning her believing eye in every direction, and seems resolved to plant the standard of the cross in every land. I need not tell you, brethren, what has already been done among the heathen; that Christian missionary establishments have recently been formed in India, in Africa, and in the islands of the Southern Ocean, besides several among the natives of our own country; that translations of the holy scriptures have been made and are making, in very many of the Asiatic languages, spoken perhaps, by not less than five hundred millions of people. More than fifty missionaries are now actually

labouring in pagan lands. Others are preparing to join them; men of piety, men of talent. Thousands, who have not seen each others faces in the flesh, and who are of different religious communities, are united in this benevolent and glorious design.

Is this a time to sit still? Do we not already see the dawn of the millennial day? Do we not hear, or seem to hear, the accents of that song, which shall yet resound from every shore, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee?" But we have our discouragements. Besides those which arise from distance of country, unhealthiness of climate, the moral state of the heathen, and, in some cases, their malignant and hostile feelings towards Christians, we have war in our own country, and war too of the most distressing character. Two Christian nations, most forward in spreading the benign religion of Jesus, have drawn their swords against each other. This, we must acknowledge, is a painful state of things: but though painful it ought neither to overwhelm nor discourage us. Jesus Christ, the great head of the church, still holds the sceptre in his hands. He may permit great confusion and distress among the nations; but he will not, for a single moment, lose sight of his own kingdom, nor of those who befriend him.

Let our eyes and hopes be turned to him; and let us doubt neither his power nor his mercy, while we pray that the dark cloud which overshadows us may be withdrawn, and the joyful period arrive, when "Ephraim shall no longer vex Judah, nor Judah vex

Ephraim;" but when wars shall cease to the ends of the earth, and all nations shall be embosomed in the same church, their king one and their name one.

I cannot close this discourse without inviting you all to coöperate with us in sending the gospel to the heathen. We ask your counsel—we ask your prayers—we solicit your liberality. Here is a cause in which all may embark, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned. Here the widow's mite will be accepted; and if given out of love to the poor heathen, will be honourably mentioned in the great and last day. Now you have an opportunity of doing something to spread the glory of Christ's name, and extend the means of salvation to your perishing fellow sinners. Now you have an opportunity of showing your love to Him who died for you, and the regard which you have both to his authority and example. He had compassion upon this lost world—and hesitated not to lay down his life for its redemption. Dwells there a like compassion in your bosoms? His holy and omniscient eye is present to see, and his recording angel to write down the fact. Give, my dear brethren, as God has prospered you; and be not afraid to give bountifully, for God will reward you in proportion to your liberality. But before you give, fix your eyes on those vast multitudes for whom your charity is solicited—those millions who are sitting in the region of darkness and the shadow of death; all made of one blood—all descending with you from the same guilty parent; all by nature children of wrath—all hastening to the bar of judgment. Soon their probationary state will close;—soon

they will sink from your sight—and from beyond the reach of your compassion. But Oh! you will see them again; you will see them at the judgment seat of Christ—you will see them arraigned—tried—and sentenced to eternal rewards or punishments. What joy will it be to you, should you then behold some redeemed sinner rescued by your seasonable and pious liberality from the horrors of everlasting death, and made heir of an inconceivable, and eternal weight of glory? Be it some African—be it some Hindoo—be it some tawny savage from the wilderness—the joy will be equal—it is a soul saved from death, through your instrumentality. How precious will that pittance appear, which was devoted to so glorious a cause, and which has returned to you with so rich a harvest. Ardently will you wish that one half of your estates had been employed in this work of charity. “For now they that are wise will shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness,” however humble the means, “as the stars for ever and ever.”

I leave you, dear brethren, to your own reflections; praying that your charities may be such as God and your own conscience shall approve; and that whatever may be the event of your liberality as to others, it may be a treasure laid up in Heaven for you, which the Divine Saviour shall graciously disclose in the presence of men and angels at his coming.



## SERMON XVI.\*

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### THIS WORLD IS NOT OUR REST.

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MICAH II., 10.

*“Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest.”*

These words were addressed to the inoffensive and pious part of the house of Israel and Judah, who were unjustly and cruelly treated by their brethren. Though they dwelt in the land of Canaan, which God had given unto their fathers for a quiet habitation, they found no rest: though they had laws and ordinances of divine appointment, well calculated to promote the peace and good order of society, yet they found neither safety nor enjoyment. Iniquity, which burneth like a fire, had made awful ravages. Men had risen up in every part of the land, void of justice and charity, as they were of the fear of God; men who devised mischief and wrought evil upon their beds—who were given to covetousness and robbery, and who, by fraud or by violence, spoiled those who fell into their hands.

In the verses preceding the text, the Prophet describes them as plundering the weak, and forcibly dispossessing the women of their pleasant habitations, while from their children, they had taken away “God’s glory forever;” as they had sold them for bonds-men

\* A Sermon delivered at Morristown, N. J., July 14, 1816.

and bonds-women in a land of strangers, where the true God was not known. All these atrocious acts were committed by men calling themselves the people of God, and who had actually entered into covenant with him to walk in his ways.

The anger of the Lord, as might be expected, was kindled against them, and he determined to visit them according to their sins.

As an indication of the judgments which he was about to inflict, he addresses himself to the pious sufferers in the midst of the land, and says—"Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." Here is no quietness, no safety for you; get you into the land of captivity, the land of strangers; for your own land is polluted—and because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.

The same monitory voice is heard by the Lord's people still;—not, indeed, to warn them to change the place of their earthly abode; but to change the current of their expectations and desires; and, instead of looking for any thing like a true and satisfying rest in the things of this life, to look for it in God, and the things which appertain to his everlasting kingdom.

To every child of God in this assembly—nay, to every soul, of whatever character, does the word of the Lord say to-day, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." There is nought on earth which can satisfy the desires of your minds;—you will find no place, no condition, in which you can quietly sit down and say, here will I rest—here will I enjoy. Through every step of your journey, you will find something to dis-

quiet you; something to convince you that you have pitched your tent in the wilderness, at a distance from the land which the Lord has promised to make a quiet habitation, a perfect rest forever. Arise ye and depart; lift up your eyes to another country; seek to inherit a portion, which is not liable to be lost by misfortune, or torn from you by violence; and which can in no degree be affected by any of the afflictions or changes of the present world.‡

But to give this exhortation the greater effect, I shall call your attention to three things:

1. The fact, which this exhortation supposes, that we are prone to seek our rest in this world.

2. That here no true and satisfying rest can be found.  
And

3. The duty and the importance of arising and departing from this world, in our affections and desires, and seeking the rest which God has provided for us; a rest which is full, perfect and eternal.

I. Let us for a moment advert to the fact, which is presupposed in this exhortation, that we are prone to seek our rest in this world.

While this fact lies open to the observation of every one, who will take the pains to notice what is passing in his own heart, or in the world, it is notwithstanding connected with many circumstances, which may justly excite our astonishment.

We all know that we are strangers and sojourners upon earth, as all our fathers were; that our days here are only as a shadow; and our enjoyments as transient as our days. We are well convinced, that whatever

prosperity may attend us, the places which now know us, will soon know us no more forever. At the same time, we pretend not to doubt the immortality of our beings. We expect to live through the unwasting ages of eternity, in some unknown portion of God's kingdom, and to be happy or miserable, according to the part which we have acted in this world; and yet, strange to tell, our thoughts turn almost continually upon the present life. We are perpetually devising means of securing the good, or of avoiding the evil, attendant upon our condition here; with comparatively little solicitude what shall befall us hereafter. The great object seems to be, how we shall better our circumstances—and be able to pass the years and months which are to come, with more ease and satisfaction than those which are past;—or which is the same thing, we seem to be looking for something like a rest, here on earth.

If this were true only of men of the world, who are confessedly ignorant of the spirituality and power of religion, the wonder would not be so great: for what can be expected of those, who have never been enlightened from above, but that their affections and desires should be pointed to earth? But the same thing, with few exceptions, is lamentably true of God's children. Who that witnesses their cares and anxieties about this mortal life, their eagerness and bustle while pursuing its transitory objects, would readily believe that they expected another life, perfectly happy and eternal?

Look at them in the hour of prosperity: what cheerfulness does a little sunshine seem to infuse into their

spirits, while every object around them smiles, and flatters them with the augmentation or continuation of earthly bliss? And how soon does their countenance fall, the moment their worldly prospects change? Let foul calumny assault their reputation—the wheels of business be obstructed, or some unforeseen event suddenly involve them in poverty;—let sickness blight their worldly enjoyments, or death, by falling on some dear friend, sweep away their fondest earthly hopes—and you will see at once, by the gloom or agitation which attends them, how much they were building their expectations on this world.

Sanctified but in part, and seeing through a glass darkly, their views of another life are not sufficiently clear and strong, to raise them above an unreasonable dependence on the present. This is evident from the constant struggles which they make, to become dead to the world, and alive unto God—and which constitutes no small part of the warfare to which they are subjected on earth. This is manifest from the repeated exhortations addressed to them in the scriptures, to be less careful for the life that now is, and more solicitous for that which is to come.

Why did Jesus bid his disciples take no thought for the morrow, saying, “what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed,” but because they were in danger of having their thoughts and affections too much engrossed with these earthly objects? Why did he exhort them, on another occasion, “to watch and pray always, lest their hearts should be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness,

and the cares of this life," but because he saw that, with all their attainments, their affections leaned by far too much to this world?

Were it not for this state of mind, we should never have heard the Apostle say, "set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

All these exhortations presuppose the fact that the minds of Christians are too much weighed to earth, and that here, to a criminal and dangerous degree, they are prone to seek their rest. It is not, however, the existence of the fact only, which I wish you to contemplate, but its amazing extent.

Could you make the whole of your lives pass before you, and instantly separate those thoughts that have been employed about your present, from those that have been occupied with your future state, would you not be surprised at the disproportion? How much of this span of life, would you be compelled to say, has been devoted to the concerns of an hour, while the boundless scenes of an unwasting duration have shared comparatively but little of your attention?

You cannot justify this direction of your thoughts, by alledging that you have already made such provision for your immortal existence, as no longer to have any fear or anxiety on that subject; for, with regard to many of you, it is even now a very doubtful matter, in your own minds, if the one thing needful be yet secured. But if it were otherwise—if you had the assurance of



St. Paul, of your justified state, and an assurance equally well grounded, it would not acquit you from the charge of having given so many of your thoughts to the world, and so small a portion of them to God, and the things of his everlasting kingdom.

The true secret of all this is, an earth-born mind—an unreasonable attachment to the world—a disposition to find a rest in something short of God.

But, blessed be the Lord God of Israel, and forever blessed be his name—no such rest can be found. It is not on earth;—it is nowhere in the universe of creatures.

I doubt not but that every true believer cordially assents to the propriety of this remark. It is your experience, Christian, as well as the language of your Bible, that nothing but Jehovah himself can fill the expansive desires of the mind, and bring the soul to rest. This makes it the more wonderful that those, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, should ever think of forsaking him, and finding a resting place among the perishing objects of time. But this folly, I ought to remark, is not an habitual and prevailing characteristic of the people of God. It is an evil, of which they complain, and of which, God, in the course of his providence, as well as by the operations of his spirit, intends ultimately to cure them.

They have a conviction already, though not so deep as it ought to be, that there is no true rest on earth. And others, if they would give themselves time to reflect, or would faithfully consult their own experience, could not fail to receive a like conviction.

II. But let us, in the second place, consider more particularly, wherein it appears that no true and substantial rest can be found in this world.

If it were possible to find rest on earth, how comes it to pass that we never sit down contented with the present, and say here will I enjoy? Why do we perpetually look forward, and think of something yet to be accomplished—some evil to be removed, or some good acquired, before we can be happy?

It is a truth, to which the experience of all ages bears witness, that the more men know of the world, the less confidence they have in it, as a place of rest or of enjoyment.

We may take the testimony of Solomon as conclusive on this subject; and that not only, nor chiefly, because he was placed in circumstances to form a correct judgment, but because he was divinely inspired, and spake by the authority of God: and what is his testimony? Why, that as in the natural, so in the moral world, all things are full of labour, and that there is no true and satisfying rest under the sun; that “all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

But not to content ourselves with general views, let us look a moment at some of the objects in which we are prone to seek our rest.

Can we find it in wealth? To say nothing of its impotence to ward off a thousand evils to which we are exposed in this world, it has no power at all to satisfy the desires of the mind, and thus to give us ease and tranquillity. “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with in-

crease. If goods increase, they increase that eat them; and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?"

They usually bring a heavy weight of care—expose to many temptations, and too often, alas! shut the door of eternal life upon their guilty and unhappy possessors.

Can we find it in honour? Of all the passions perhaps, none is more uneasy, than that which leads us to desire distinction among our fellow men, and none, I will venture to say, which sets the soul farther from the way of peace. When acquired in the path of duty, and in the struggles of a magnanimous and virtuous course, honour is nothing more than a precarious life in another's breath; not unfrequently exchanged for lasting oblivion, or unmerited disgrace. It is no food for the soul; "one self-approving hour," said a poet, who was no incompetent judge of the passions and interests of men,

"One self-approving hour whole years outweighs  
Of stupid stares, and of loud huzzas."

Will pleasure or voluptuous enjoyment afford us rest? It may pall our appetites—it may brutalize our faculties, and harden our hearts—but it can never satisfy the nobler desires of our souls. They who live in pleasure are dead while they live, and, paradoxical as the remark may seem, they are as dead to all true felicity, as they are to the voice of reason and duty.

The same insufficiency may be seen, with respect to every other earthly object.

Go to human friendships, however carefully formed, however studiously cultivated; and can you find rest

here? I will not suppose that your friends prove fickle or faithless—an occurrence by no means unfrequent in this changing world; but let them be all to you that you can wish, so far as fidelity and moral worth are concerned, yet how often will they find you in a condition where your wants are beyond their reach; where an unavailing sympathy is all the relief they can extend? Or perhaps you may be made to feel your own weakness, and your own misery too, by finding them in a state where you can suffer with them, but where you cannot help them.

Go to the walks of science and of taste, where genius has poured its ardent rays for ages, and try, by the expansion of your intellectual powers, or by the gratification of the finer feelings of the mind, to satisfy your desires, and obtain a rest to your soul—and you will find only, what Solomon long since found before you, “that in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.” If you run through the history of past generations—if you visit every country on the globe—if you explore, with microscopic eye, every animal, and every insect—if you traverse the wide field of plants, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall, still you will find that the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, nor the heart with any kind or degree of knowledge, while God himself, in his true moral excellence, is either unseen or unknown. Nay, go to your farms and merchandise; try business in its diversified forms; it may occupy you, and keep you from pausing to think of yourselves;—it

may afford you, at times, the satisfaction of reflecting that you are rationally employed, while you are providing for your own wants, and the wants of your households—but it cannot bring you peace; it cannot soften the pang of guilt; it cannot draw the sting of death: it leaves an aching void in your souls, which, immortal in themselves, thirst for immortality; and cannot, and will not, be satisfied with any provision, which is not commensurate to their own unceasing duration.

But you have religious society, and religious ordinances—perhaps you expect rest in these. No, my dear friends, not even here will you find rest, unless, at the same time, you can find God. No outward privileges, without the presence of God to attend them, can afford us any heart-felt joy: nor ought we to calculate that any manifestations which He will make of himself, through the medium of ordinances on earth, will bring our souls to a satisfying and unchanging rest. The disciples of Jesus did not find it in the presence of their Saviour, with all the advantages and comforts attendant on that privilege. Peter, James, and John did not find it on the mount of transfiguration, glorious and transporting as the scene was; for the messengers from Heaven, and the excellent glory with all its circumstances, soon passed, and left them alone. Again they were compelled to descend from this eminence, and to mingle as before in the labours and conflicts assigned to their earthly state.

So it will be with us, whatever glimpses we gain of the divine glory this side of the grave. Our rest lies

not below the skies. Comfort we may have—joy we may have, and at times a joy unspeakable, and full of glory—but no rest which is adequate to our wants—none which is full and permanent as that which is in reserve for the people of God. What then remains but that we listen to the exhortation before us,

III. To arise, and depart from this world, in our affections and desires, and seek the rest which God has provided for us—a rest which is full, perfect and eternal.

Such a rest, my dear brethren, is to be found in Heaven—a rest free from care and anxiety—a rest from all our labours, from all our sufferings, from all our sins; but not an inactive rest, where the powers of the soul will be locked up in a state of inglorious ease, destitute of sensibility, as they are of exertion; but where every faculty will be employed, and every capacity for enjoyment filled. It will be a rest in God, in his adorable attributes, his wisdom, power, and love: a rest in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the grand medium of divine communications—a rest in the society of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. Here, kindred souls will meet, without the least particle of jealousy or fear; they will embrace each other with unlimited confidence—and rejoice in each other's felicity, as making a part of their own. This will be a rest without alloy, and without end.

Can we need arguments, brethren, to persuade us to seek such a rest; and to seek it in the manner which God has prescribed? Its transcendent glory and excellence, one would think, were enough, not only to



awaken all our powers, but to keep them in a constant stretch, to our latest breath. It is our supreme good—the only thing, which can make our existence a blessing, or save it from being an inconceivable and endless curse.

But, important as this rest is, remember that you cannot have it without seeking. It is purchased by the blood of Christ; it is freely tendered in the gospel; it is taken possession of by the great Redeemer of his people; but it will never become yours, unless you desire it; unless you labour to enter into it.

Yet do not imagine, that your labour for this object, will diminish your present enjoyment: it will make you more happy. Its anticipations will be your sweetest consolation in affliction—your firmest support under trials. It will lighten all your burdens, soften all your cares, and bring down the very dawn of Heaven to your souls.

I exhort you, then, my dear brethren, to look away from this land of your pilgrimage, to the promised rest. Lose sight of these mountains and hills—these rivers and valleys; and fix your eyes on Canaan's unclouded shores. There your divine Redeemer is gone—there the glorious armies of martyrs have ascended—there the millions of pious souls, who have waded through the cares and sufferings of the present life, have found a safe and joyful retreat. Raise your thoughts and desires to this blessed abode, and seek, by every mean in your power, to put yourselves in possession of it.

But how shall you seek? By repentance of your sins; a repentance deep and unfeigned: by faith in

our Lord Jesus Christ; a faith which works by love, and purifies the heart: by a course of self-denial and mortification to the world; by a diligent attendance upon every Christian duty, and especially, upon the duties of holy watchfulness and prayer:—In a word, by seeking God, the author and giver of this rest. Endeavour to become acquainted with him—to live near to him, and, as far as possible, to embosom yourselves in his love. This will give you a blessed earnest of the rest of which we speak, while you remain on earth, and a sure title to it, when your pilgrimage is closed.

Let me only say that the voice of divine providence unites with the voice of God's word, in pressing us to this duty.

We are admonished by every thing around us, that this world is not our rest.

The progress of the seasons—the changes which time is constantly working in ourselves, and in others; and, above all, the mortality which we witness among those who have pursued the journey of life with us, loudly proclaim that we are pilgrims, having here no continuing city. How many have departed life, in this congregation, since I closed my ministry among you. I look round with surprise on the change of seven short years. Where are the hoary headed pilgrims who used to fill these seats, and bend their knees with us, before the King Eternal? Where are multitudes in the morning and midst of life, who were the partakers of our weekly devotion? They come no more to your assemblies: they have done with every thing below the

skies: they have gone to a world of retribution, and such as were prepared to a world of rest. This is a new congregation, in which I feel myself a stranger. How soon, and we too shall have passed to our eternal abode! But, blessed be God, that, with all the changes time and death are making, his church still lives, and is rapidly advancing to greater maturity and glory. I rejoice to hear that the Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon you; and that many of the youth have hopefully listed under the banner of King Jesus, and are directing their footsteps towards the promised rest. Go on, ye dear pilgrims, and be not discouraged with the length or troubles of the way. You follow the standard of one who will not deceive you. You are journeying to the land, of which the Lord your God has spoken. It is the heritage of Israel given by covenant and by oath. You will find it a glorious rest, a quiet and eternal habitation. When you come to count your numbers on the other side of Jordan, may none of you be wanting there.

But, is there no ground to fear, that many in this assembly, will come short of that inheritance? Is there no danger that some who have been recently awakened, will lose their impressions, and return again to the beggarly elements of the world? And that others who have continued unmoved during this season of divine grace, will be given up to hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, while God shall swear in his wrath, that they shall not enter into his rest? Are there not some who begin to tread the evening vale of life, that have not made their peace with God? Some who have resisted the calls of

half a century, and are now trembling on the threshold of eternity, without any provision for that boundless state of existence, on which they must so shortly enter? Will you not hear the voice of a friend, who again addresses you in God's name? of one who never thinks of going to the bar of judgment himself, without remembering that he must meet you there?

Oh! let not this special season of mercy close, without securing a title to the inheritance above. What will it avail you, that success has attended your enterprises in this world, if you are finally shut out of the kingdom of God: that the beam of mercy has long shone upon your path, if your sun must set in everlasting darkness? Behold the day goeth away, and the shadows of the evening are stretched out. "Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest."

## SERMON XVII.\*

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### SLEEPING IN JESUS.

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JOHN XI., 11.

*“ Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.”*

Jesus had his friends in the days of his flesh; persons whom he loved with more than ordinary affection, and to whom, he himself, was preëminently dear. His immediate disciples, whom he chose to be near him, the witnesses of his miracles, and the depositaries of his truth, may well be supposed to have shared largely in his affections, and to have been peculiarly entitled to the endearing appellation of friends. But among these, some were dearer to him than others, and one was known by “the disciple whom Jesus loved;” who was admitted to the most familiar and unrestrained intercourse, and who was found leaning upon the bosom of Jesus at his last supper.

There were others, scattered up and down places of our Lord’s ministry, whom he honoured, not as disciples merely, but as his friends. Among these, were Mary and Martha, and their brother Lazarus, of the town of Bethany. As this place was contiguous to Jerusalem,

\* A Sermon, delivered at the funeral of Deacon Stephen Baldwin, of the First Presbyterian Church, Newark, Feb 4, 1816.

it often happened, that in passing to and from the Jewish capital, our Lord visited this family, and lodged at their house. They were persons of great hospitality, and of no mean standing in society. But what rendered them peculiarly dear to the Saviour was, they were ardently pious; they loved his holy doctrines; they reflected the light of his heavenly example. Mary delighted to sit at the feet of Jesus, to catch the precious words as they fell from his lips; and on one occasion, to testify her love to him, she annointed his feet with ointment of spikenard, and wiped them with the hair of her head.

When Lazarus fell sick, knowing the affection which Jesus had to him, his sisters thought it enough, to send this short and afflictive message, "That he whom thou lovest is sick." Enough, it would have been, had he reasoned as they did. But his love was under the guidance of a higher wisdom. He had something better in view than they were contemplating; something by which his own glory would be more immediately advanced, and their comfort, and growth in piety, more effectually promoted. You know, my dear brethren, the sequel. Jesus did not go, at the call of his pious family, to save him, whom he loved, from death. He abode where he was, till the disease of Lazarus proved fatal, and his sisters had consigned him to the tomb. Our Lord, who knew every thing that passed, was perfectly acquainted with the fact, and said to his disciples, in language softening the event as much as possible, but which, at first, they did not seem to understand, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, and I go that I



may awake him out of sleep." Four days after this melancholy event, and while the grief of Martha and Mary was at its greatest height, Jesus arrives at Bethany—unites his tears with the tears of these pious sisters, and by a miracle of power and mercy, unexpected to them, raises their departed brother from the grave, and turns their mourning into joy. O what astonishment! What mingled emotions! to see Lazarus come forth at the call of Jesus, restored, at once, from the wastes of sickness and the grave, to his former activity and vigor, prepared to mingle in the sweets of retired friendship, and to gladden the circles in which he had formerly moved.

How different the prospect which lies before this mourning assembly! "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," but there is no power on earth to awake him. It is long since the feet of Jesus trod this lower world, and since the miraculous powers, which attended his ministry, and that of his disciples, have ceased. They, who go down to the grave now, go down with the certainty of returning no more to their house; they commence a sleep, from which they shall not awake till these heavens are dissolved; their eyes are closed, at once, and forever, upon these regions of mortality. Whatever of labour, whatever of usefulness, whatever of comfort, they may have participated, all is terminated in death.

But is there nothing to console us in this dark and afflictive scene? Will the gospel shed no light upon the tomb? O Jesus, thou art not here, to prevent our friends from dying, nor to rescue them, when dead, from the dark dominions of the grave. But thy word

is here; thy word, sealed with thy precious blood, attested by a resurrection far more glorious than that of Lazarus—a resurrection of thine own sacred body, offered in sacrifice for this guilty world; a resurrection to a state of immortal blessedness and glory. And has Christ risen? Yes, he has risen, as the mighty conqueror of sin, of death and of hell; he has risen as the first fruits of them that sleep in him; and we have his promise that where he is, there his friends shall be. Their spirits shall ascend to him the moment they leave this house of clay; and at the set time, the time fixed in his eternal counsels, he will raise their wasted bodies from the grave, and fashion them like unto his own most glorious body.

Be not afraid, then, my Christian brethren, to venture down into the grave, at the call of your Saviour; nor tremble to commit the remains of your friends to this mansion of the dead. They shall find it a quiet resting place, from the cares and vicissitudes of this world, till the blessed morning come, when they shall awake to sleep no more, and awake in the glory and strength of immortality.

But what is the temper, to be indulged under the loss of Christian friends? Are we to dry up our tears, in the hope, that since they sleep in Jesus, they shall do well? This would be an act of violence to our nature, while it resists the call of Christian duty. A stoical insensibility is not inculcated by the gospel, nor recommended by the example of its great author. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, and tenderly sympathised with his sorrowful sisters, though he knew, he

would shortly turn their mourning into joy. It is fit that we should weep also. We are united to our friends by a thousand ties. Our happiness depends, in no small degree, upon the relation they bear to us, and upon the endearing intercourse which we hold with them. They can not be torn from us in death, without sundering the tenderest cords of our hearts. How many recollections press upon us in the moment of their departure, to enhance the value of their society, and to make us the more deeply sensible of our loss. Not to be smitten with sorrow, on such an occasion, would betray a criminal insensibility, and be denying to our friends, a proper testimony of their worth.

Besides, the mournful circumstances, in which death makes his approach; the weakness and pains of dissolving nature; the change which passes upon all that is mortal; the opening grave—its darkness, silence and corruption, connected with the recollection, that all this is but the certain prelude of our own dissolution, can not but add to the gloom of the melancholy scene, and make the departure of our friends a subject of deeper sorrow. Nor is it to be expected, that any pleasing hope, which we entertain of their happiness, will immediately extinguish our grief, or dry up our tears. Did they tread in the footsteps of their blessed Master? We need their example. Were they possessed of wisdom and knowledge? We need their counsels and instructions. Were their bosoms warmed with the fire of divine love, and enriched with other attendant graces? We need their presence to animate us, and their conversation to aid in beginning, or in

strengthening the divine life in our souls. The more excellent they were, the greater is our loss, and so far as our present comfort is concerned, the greater cause have we for sorrow. At the same time, if it be well with them, this is an important reason why our sorrow should not be excessive.

This was the Apostle's argument with his Christian brethren, for moderating their grief, under the loss of their pious friends. He would not have them sorrow, as the heathen did, who had no hope; or none which was well defined and satisfactory. They looked at the grave as the place of eternal silence, as the tomb of all that is dear in human existence. Or, if through the glimmerings of tradition, they could spell out a futurity—still they were ignorant of the character of that futurity, and of its connection with the present life. At the very best, all was vague and uncertain conjecture with them. But as it is otherwise with the Christian; as he both knows that there is another world, and that joy and felicity await the righteous there, it becomes a sacred duty to moderate his grief for those who die in the Lord.

That we may feel the full force of this argument, let us advert a moment to the happy state of those who have fallen asleep in Christ.

It is plain, my dear brethren, that they are not lost to us, though they cease to reside in our families, to move in our circles, and to mingle in our devotions. Death is not annihilation. It breaks down this earthly tabernacle, to which we are so much attached, and over which we watch with such constant solicitude; but it

touches not the invisible and immortal tenant. This lies not within the reach of the last enemy, but escapes unhurt to brighter worlds, the moment this lower building falls.

Governed as we are by sense, we are apt to look into the tomb for our departed friends; our imaginations linger about the spot where we have deposited their remains, as if all that we loved was buried there. But the eye of faith looks to another world, and beholds those conscious beings, who were the real objects of our affection, mingling with the spirits of just men made perfect around the throne of God.

We do not consider a man on a journey lost, because he has reached the end of his course a few days sooner than his companions. We do not say that a ship is lost, because she has entered her port a little before the fleet, who commenced their voyage with her. Nor are our dear friends lost, who have crossed the tempestuous sea of life, and entered the haven of rest before us. They are landed on a peaceful shore, where no tempest shall reach them, no gaping wave threaten them through eternity.

Behold then the happy change in their condition. They have left a world of care and anxiety, and are gone to a world of rest.

The most fortunate pilgrim on earth has many things to disturb his repose. If surrounded with friends; if a competency of this world's goods, or even an abundance, is secured to him, by the surest earthly titles; if placed in the most favourable situations for moral and intellectual improvement, and nothing is withheld,

which human wisdom can devise to prevent, or to soothe the ills of life; still he will find the curse on every spot of earth which he treads, in every portion of air which he breathes. A secret inquietude follows him in all his pursuits, and in the midst of his very enjoyments, tells him this is not your rest. It would require a volume to lay open the sources of this uneasiness. He finds it in all his relations, in all his interests, in all his duties; he finds it in things temporal, and things spiritual, in all that appertains to his present or future welfare. But in Heaven it will be otherwise. They who have reached that world, have found a full, soul-satisfying and eternal rest. Those devouring cares which wasted their spirits and disturbed their repose on earth, will never more reach them. Their minds will remain smooth and unruffled as the summer's sea, throughout their interminable existence. This should reconcile us to their being absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

They have left a world too, of sin, and temptation to sin, and gone to a world of perfect holiness, where nothing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie shall enter.

In the days of their pilgrimage, they often groaned out with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Now they are delivered; they see the power of indwelling sin not only broken, but completely destroyed, and the moral image of God, but faintly drawn before, now perfected, and struck deep in every part. What joy must this yield them, after years of panting and struggling for conformity to God; especially, when they



know, that they shall neither sin, nor be tempted to sin any more.

They have left a world of darkness and sorrow, for a world of eternal light and joy. At best while on earth, they could only see through a glass darkly. They found many things which confounded their understandings, and cast a veil of mystery over the works of God; things in his word and things in his providence, which appeared dark and inscrutable. But now this darkness is past, and the true light shines;—shines with a splendour, which altogether transcends the conceptions of mortals. The clouds are driven back from before the face of God's throne, and a flood of light is poured upon all the paths of his providence. What enlargement of their faculties; what pure delight in beholding the truth without a veil; what extatic joy, in seeing the harmony which runs through all God's works, the great and the minute, the simple and the complicated, all conspiring to show forth his own glory, and to promote the happiness of the vast kingdom, which He governs. Now the former things are passed away, with all the sorrows which attended them. Whatever could be called an evil in this world, they have left, with their dying flesh, behind. They look from their hills of light, and see us struggling with our calamities and sufferings; but they have no longer any share in them. They have taken up their abode in a world where no curse is to be found. God has wiped away all their tears—and sorrow and sighing, will forever flee away. They shall hunger no more, and thirst no more, and die no more. Neither disease, nor pain, nor

want shall ever enter their blest abodes. Their joys are unmixed, exalted and eternal.

Think of the change in their society. From dwelling with us, with all our sins and imperfections, they have gone to be the companions of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, with all the prophets, apostles and martyrs, in the kingdom of God; they have gone to enjoy the innumerable company of saints and angels, which has been increasing in the family of Heaven from the death of Abel to the present hour. What high converse must they hold with these pure and exalted beings; what wonders must they recount to each other, of the condescending grace, of the eternal power and wisdom of God. Now they behold the face of their Redeemer without a cloud; they see him not only as the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, but as the lamb in the midst of the throne, receiving the adoration of surrounding millions, cherubim and seraphim, worshipping with the church of the first born in those higher courts. How transporting must their views of Christ be. What joy must thrill their hearts, while they reflect, that this is he who assumed their nature and died upon the cross for their sakes; he in whom they had so often hoped and trusted in the days of their pilgrimage, and whom they had so earnestly desired to see. Now they stand in the midst of his temple, and worship at the foot of his throne: now they behold him with unobscured eyes, and with the joyful assurance, that they shall never, never be separated from him more.

But their employment is no less exalted than their

society. They have done with all the grovelling cares and pursuits of this world; henceforth they are kings and priests unto God, serving him day and night in the upper sanctuary.

What then is their bliss? Eye hath not seen; ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. One hour of their felicity, far outweighs the enjoyment of the longest and happiest life on earth. Why then should we mourn, that our Christian friends have gone to the land of promise—to their Father's house in Heaven? They do not mourn for themselves. The things which grieve us, do not grieve them. We feel, perhaps, as if their expectations were cut off, and death had come too soon. But they regard it as the hour of their release,—a kind of jubilee, which forever sets them free. We think of the friends which they have left—of the pursuits and enjoyments, from which they are separated;—but their felicity is, that they have joined a company of more excellent friends—and have exchanged the occupations and enjoyments of a dungeon for those of a palace—knowing, at the same time, that they who are worthy on earth, will soon follow them. We think of the time and circumstances of their departure, both of which are often distressing; but they regret neither: they see, and with grateful and adoring thoughts, acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of God in every thing.

Such is the state of those who have fallen asleep in Christ. Yet this is not all: for, as we have already intimated, their flesh itself rests in hope: at the time appointed their sleeping dust shall hear the voice of the

archangel and the trump of God; and shall come forth from the grave, in new and glorious forms, prepared as meet habitations for their immortal spirits.

Who can conceive the brightness of that morning when the millions of the redeemed, from every part of the habitable earth, and from the distant islands of the sea, shall hear the sound of the last trumpet, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, burst the bars of death, and spring to an immortal existence? Where now the weakness and dishonour in which the body was sown? Where now, corruption, earth, and worms? All is changed. Their newly organized bodies are bright, spiritual and immortal, pure as the flame, and swift as the wind. Behold these joyful beings gathering in one vast assembly at the right hand of their Redeemer! Hear them singing as they come, ten thousand, thousand voices join in the strain: "Lo! this is he who vanquished death for you, who vanquished death for me:—this is he who spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross. He hath redeemed us from the grave; he hath delivered us from the curse; he hath washed us in his own blood. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Is this our hope for those who die in the Lord? Yes! and for ourselves too, so far as we dare to hope that we are the friends of Jesus. But alas! our faith is weak; we feel the pressure of to-day, and hardly know how to weigh the afflictions of the present time, against the glory which is hereafter to be revealed. Our senses govern where reason and faith should lead the way.

But let us endeavour to rise above the powers of sense; let us renew our application to the word of God, and receive those consolations which this precious word was intended to bestow.

We mourn the loss of a father in Israel to-day; but we do not mourn as those who mourn without hope. We have every reason to believe, that he who now sleeps before us, was the friend of Jesus, as well as our friend. He had long sustained the character of exemplary piety. Descended of parents who were pious, he was the subject of early instructions and early impressions, on the great article of religion. He did not obtain a hope, however, of his conversion, till he was about 27 years of age; and so great was his diffidence in his own case, that he was not admitted to the full communion of the church till many years after. For more than twenty years, he has sustained the office of deacon in this church, and for a much longer period that of ruling elder, in both of which he was eminently useful.

Seldom has a man passed through life with a more unblemished character. The law of love, appeared to rule his heart, and the law of kindness his tongue. He was far removed from a bitter and unquiet spirit. His habitual cheerfulness, and his known integrity, made him a welcome visitant in every family, and often as profitable as he was welcome. He was not afraid to speak of the things of the kingdom,—and yet his conversation assumed such an air of meekness and benevolence, as seldom to give offence. Men could bear a reproof from him, though faithfully administered, which they could not receive from others. They knew his



motives; they knew that their own good, was the great object at which he aimed. What a record must he have in the bosoms of many, who will never see his face but from afar. He was a kind and sympathizing friend—and, to the extent of his means, he was liberal and hospitable. There is one at least who can bear witness, “that he knew the heart of a stranger.” He was eminent as a peace maker, and the first among his brethren to visit the house of sorrow, and to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit. The widow and the fatherless can not soon forget him. In all his domestic relations, as a husband, as a father, as a relative, he was tender, interesting and amiable. No man could reproach him with the intentional neglect of any social duty. As to his piety, it wore the character of consistency and uniformity. He was strict and conscientious in the performance of all its outward duties, while it did not appear to be a mere outward work with him. Seldom was his seat empty in the house of the Lord, and never without a valid reason. He was frequent in his attendance upon meetings for special prayer, where he often led the devotions of the Lord’s people, much to their comfort and edification. In visiting the sick, in caring for the poor, he used the office of a deacon well, and procured for himself the approbation of his brethren, and, we trust, the approbation of his God.

Though never remarkably confident of his own piety, there were seasons in which it shone with too much strength, not to secure the confidence of his Christian friends.



Towards the last, it plainly appeared that the Lord was preparing him for his great change. He was much excited, and felt a special delight in the exercises of religion. The very evening before the shock, which proved fatal, he attended a little praying assembly, and expressed unusual pleasure in the devotions of that evening. The closing hymn was like a new song, which touched every fibre of his heart.\* During his illness, which was short, and which he apprehended might be his last, he stated to his friends, that the dread of death was in a great measure removed, and by no means such, as he had felt on former occasions. When the last moment came, he was like one who drops to sleep without fear or perturbation. Thus closed the life of this pious and useful member of society. And where is the man, in this great assembly, who does not say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

What greater consolation, ye immediate mourners, can we offer you? What greater consolation do you need? Your friend has been spared to you to a good old age,† and has closed his labours only because the Lord has nothing farther for him to do. His whole life was filled up with usefulness and duty; and his very last act, employed about the interests of the church. The Lord has removed him almost without sickness or pain. His body, be believe, sleeps in Jesus, while his spirit lives and reigns with the just.

\* The hymn referred to. is the 77th, 2d Book, Watts.

† He died in his 74th year.

Desire not his return to these regions of sin and mortality: but rise in your affections to those heavenly mansions where he is gone. Think of his employment, think of his felicity; and prepare to meet him refined from the dross of this evil world, and to stand with him upon Mount Zion, where you may sing together the song of Moses and the Lamb. You have sustained a great loss, and the tear of sorrow is not forbidden to flow: but murmur not against the will of God.

To the elders of this church, the partners of his official duty, what shall I say? Is not his death a solemn warning to you,—a solemn warning to me? We have laboured together in the same field; we have been overseers of the same flock; we shall meet as part of our charge, the same souls, at the day of judgment, and give up our account to the same Lord. How solemn will that account be, and how constantly should we bear in mind, that the hour is at hand, in which our work will be done, and our account sealed against the day of retribution.

Did our brother feel for the sheep who had wandered from the fold, and earnestly seek their return? Did he warn and entreat with all long suffering and patience, and never give over, but with the greatest reluctance? How little must his zeal and labours appear to him now; now that his eyes are opened upon eternity, and he beholds without a vail, the value of those interests which engaged his attention on earth. Could he speak to us from Heaven, would he not exhort and charge us to renew our diligence, and to execute our trust, with

unshaken fidelity, "On some having compassion, making a difference; and others saving with fear, pulling them out of the fire?" But I must forbear.

Let every Christian in this assembly, be excited by this mournful scene, to prepare for his own dissolution. One of your brethren, to whom you were tenderly united, has finished his warfare, and closed his labours among you. He will never visit your houses, or counsel you in private any more. He will never again distribute to you the holy symbols of Christ's broken body and shed blood. He has gone to minister in a higher sanctuary, where these symbols are not needed; where the crucified Saviour is forever unveiled to adoring saints. You will see him no more at your praying assemblies,—nor join with him in confessing your sins, and imploring God's mercy. You will finish the solemnities of this day, by committing his remains to the tomb, in the hope of a joyful resurrection. Long may you remember his example, and cherish the virtues which shone so conspicuously in him. "Help, Lord!" should you cry, "for the godly man ceaseth, and the faithful fail from among men." Ardently beseech Him, with whom is the residue of the spirit, that He would shed down his influence upon us, and raise up many, who shall bear the ark of the Lord, when our fathers are fallen asleep.

But is nothing to be said to the sinner, who, though hasting to the bar of judgment, is manifestly unprepared to die? You feel a respect for this man of God, whose funeral service has brought so many within the walls of this sacred house. You have no doubt that he took

a deep interest in your welfare, and often sent up his prayers to Heaven in your behalf. You are willing to mingle your sorrows with his friends, and to drop a tear upon his grave. But why not follow his example? Why not lead his life? Can you die with safety without this? Can you enter into the rest promised to the righteous? An impenitent and unbelieving heart will forever disqualify you for the kingdom of God. If death find you in this state, it will find you under the curse; and, as the minister of God's justice, cut you off in your sins. Deplorable end! Where Jesus and his departed saints are gone, you can never come.

## SERMON XVIII.\*

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### THANKSGIVING.

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PSALM LXV., 11.

*“Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.”*

The goodness of God is one of the most conspicuous attributes of his nature,—and, when comprehensively viewed, may be considered as embracing the whole of his moral perfections. His very justice in punishing the finally obdurate, is but an expression of his goodness towards his kingdom at large, as every one can perceive, who admits that order among his creatures is essential to their happiness. Even his truth, his unchangeable truth, is only another form of that benevolence which He exercises towards his holy and everlasting kingdom: or, to say the least, his boundless goodness necessarily draws after it his infallible truth; for if we could suppose it possible that he should prove unfaithful or untrue, the happiness of his friends would instantly be overthrown, and their brightest hopes swept away.

The living oracles teach that “God is love,” and

\* A Sermon, delivered December 12, 1822, recommended by the Governor of the State to be observed as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer.

love of the most disinterested and diffusive character. They represent Him as an infinite fountain of love, continually pouring out streams of kindness and beneficence to his creatures. What else but a benevolence communicative and boundless, could have induced Him to give birth to the numerous orders of beings which people the vast universe, and to make so liberal a provision for their wants? If the self-existent Creator had not delighted in their happiness, creation would never have begun; all would have been blank, from the tallest seraph that burns and adores before his throne, to the insect that flutters in the summer's sun and dies. That He should create beings to make them miserable, is impossible,—seeing He could have no motive to this, unless you suppose Him disinterestedly malevolent,—an idea at once blasphemous of the Creator, and contradicted by all the operations of his hand. That He should create them with an indifference to their happiness or misery, is to suppose Him to act without an end; a sentiment equally incompatible with his wisdom and his goodness, and alike contrary to every man's experience and observation.

The truth is, that independent of the scriptures, God has not left himself without witness that He is good and does good continually. Every where do we behold the proofs of his kind and wonder-working hand. In all the forms of sensitive existence which crowd the world we inhabit,—the earth,—the air,—the sea, what a train of causes do we notice, all subordinated to the great purpose of benevolence,—all leading to safety or enjoyment in the end. Take up any single



class of beings, and these classes are almost innumerable,—observe the circumstances in which they commence their existence, the provision which is made for their support, the numerous sources of their enjoyment, and the multiplied means of their defence, and you will be alike astonished at the depths of the Divine wisdom and of the Divine goodness. Take a still wider view, and contemplate the almost infinitely diversified orders of creatures in this lower world; mark how closely one order is linked to another, and by what various means they contribute to each other's welfare,—while the beneficent care of the Creator is extended to them all—a care as minute as comprehensive, as if each were the only object of his attention,—and you can hardly fail to exclaim with the Psalmist—“O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.” But if in wisdom,—then in goodness;—for nothing is wise in the Psalmist's sense of the expression, which is not also good; and therefore he adds, “The earth is full of thy riches, and so is the great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping and innumerable, both small and great beasts.” It was natural to his devout and contemplative mind to give this excursive range to his thoughts; and it was useful as it was natural; for the more he considered God's works, the more he saw of his greatness and goodness, and the more exalted were his thanksgiving and praise. While however God's goodness to his creatures at large, was often the subject of his attention—more frequently, and in tones of deeper feeling, do we find him dwelling upon the goodness of God towards man, his poor

rebellious creature man. This was the subject which strung his sacred lyre, and tuned his voice to melody in the psalm before us.

It was not simply the universal Creator and Preserver, that called forth his praise,—but the God of mercy,—the God that heareth prayer,—and purgeth away the transgression of his people—“the God of our salvation” and “the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea.” This glorious Being who “by his strength setteth fast the mountains”—“who stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people”—this glorious Being exercising a government over men gracious and benignant, powerful and wise, is the immediate object of the Psalmist’s devout and grateful adoration. But he adores and praises God chiefly for his goodness,—goodness which returns to us with every morning and evening, and holds its joyful course through the various seasons to the close of the year.

“Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice,—thou visitest the earth and waterest it,—thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God which is full of water,—thou preparest them corn when thou hast so provided for it,—thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly,—thou settlest the furrows thereof,—thou makest it soft with showers,—thou blestest the springing thereof,—thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness; they drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with

corn; they shout for joy; they also sing." And shall not man sing, for whom all these mercies are wrought, and on whom this unwearied goodness is bestowed? Shall he not recount the loving kindness of the Lord, and praise him with joyful lips? This is a duty in which the Psalmist greatly delighted, and in which we ought to delight. The church in all ages has made it a conspicuous part of her public service; and the redeemed in Heaven, united with the angelic choir, will never cease to be engaged in a solemn recognition of the Divine goodness, and in pouring forth correspondent songs of gratitude and praise.

Assembled in the house of God this morning at the call of the chief magistrate of this state, for the purpose of performing this most reasonable duty, let us advert in the first place to some of those indications of Divine goodness which justify the call.

We can none of us deny that we have been the subjects of great and special mercies, which involve us in a debt of gratitude to that Almighty Being on whom we all depend. But how to bring these before the mind so as most deeply to affect us, is a point of the greatest difficulty. Many of our blessings are so common, and have returned upon us with such uniformity from our early years, that they are in danger of losing much of their value in our estimation. Many of them, though of unspeakable importance, and especially those of a spiritual kind, are likely to be little regarded through the blindness of our hearts. Nay, the very multitude of our mercies, instead of awakening in us an increased sensibility, too often has the effect of

blunting the sense of obligation, by leading us to consider what we receive as a matter of right, rather than as a matter of favour. Putting ourselves upon our guard therefore against the influence of these seductive causes, let us glance a moment, at the more prominent instances of the Divine goodness which this day call for gratitude and acknowledgment.

1. To a great extent, God has given us health throughout our borders. Rarely have the citizens of this state enjoyed a greater portion of this blessing than has been measured out to them the last year. Individuals indeed, and here and there a neighbourhood, have been visited with sickness; but Providence has been gracious to us, in limiting and restraining this calamity—and has no where permitted any sweeping epidemic or destroying pestilence to prevail. In some of our sister states, it has been otherwise,—and hundreds and thousands have been hurried into an untimely grave. While we sympathize with them under this painful visitation, it would be highly criminal on our part, not to notice the kindness of the Lord in spreading the wings of his protection over us.

Health is one of those favours on which all our other blessings in no small degree depend. Without it, what is wealth? What is honour? And the richest supply of our temporal wants? In vain are our barns filled with plenty, and our presses made to burst out with new wine; in vain are our tables loaded with all the delicacies of domestic and foreign climes, if pale disease confine us to the walls of a sick room, and we are compelled to wear out wearisome days and nights in pain and languish-

ment. Nothing satisfies,—nothing exhilarates. Every object in nature loses its charms, while our enfeebled spirits depress us, and our debilitated bodies incapacitate for all the useful occupations and tender offices of life. They alone who have felt the power of disease can fully estimate its privations and sufferings, or can duly appreciate the blessing of health. I ask such of you as God has recently raised from a sick bed and restored again to your wonted vigour; to your places at your table and at your fire side; to your endearing intercourse with your families; and to your various and useful employments in society: I ask you, if the blessing of health be not enhanced by its loss? and if you do not esteem it one of the precious gifts of life; a favour which should claim a tribute of humble and thankful acknowledgment? Ungrateful indeed shall we be, if this blessing, enjoyed by so great a portion of the community, do not awaken in our bosoms some suitable sense of the Divine goodness, and excite us to pour forth our hearts in thankfulness and praise.

2. God has blessed us also in the seasons of the year. If the products of the earth have not been so universally abundant as in some former years, yet there has been no considerable failure. Seed time and harvest have been continued according to the Divine promise, and the husbandman has been permitted to sow in hope, and reap in mercy,—and in some cases with joy. By a propitious interchange of sunshine and rain, the successive fruits of the seasons have been brought to perfection—and both the former and latter harvest have been gathered without loss. If all have not gathered



according to their expectations, still there is an abundance, and no want is feared either to man, or the creatures which God has given for the service of man. This is a felicity common indeed to our country—but ought not therefore to be passed over in ungrateful silence. It is owing to the good hand of God upon us,—the smiles of his gracious providence, that our seasons have been so favourable, and particularly that the closing part of them has been so mild and benignant, and calculated to supply any deficiencies which might have been apprehended from those which preceded. Herein we remark the super-abounding goodness of our Creator and Preserver,—how constant and tender his care,—and how true it is that his mercy is above our thoughts, and better than our fears. Let us not refuse to give thanks unto Him, and to bless his glorious name—saying with the Psalmist, “Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness.” Were it necessary on this subject to make a farther appeal, I might desire you to contrast your situation with suffering Ireland, and some parts of British India, in the course of the past year, where thousands of our fellow beings have been reduced to all the horrors of famine—and to the pestilence which usually follows in its train. Who is it that hath caused us to differ? And why has our cup been made to run over with goodness, while those more ignorant, and far less guilty than we, have been subjected to the keenest distresses? Great God! it is owing to thine eternal mercy, which is rich and discriminating as it is free. “Bless the Lord” then “O my soul, and all that is within me bless his



holy name. Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." He "redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." He "satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles."

3. But there is another blessing which distinguishes us from the great mass of the human family, and which calls for our devout and grateful acknowledgment—I mean the blessing of a free and enlightened government.

Civil government is an ordinance of God, and there are various forms of it, which, when wisely administered, may become instrumental both of much security and happiness. But of all the forms which it has assumed, there is none which is so honourable to our nature, so grateful to our feelings, and as I apprehend, so compatible with our rights, as that which has been generally denominated a republican form of government,—a government which knows no privileged orders,—but which offers to every man equal security, and according to his talents and means, an equal prospect of honour and success. Such a government we have—a government of our own choice—where the rulers and the ruled sustain a relation to each other, calculated to produce a high sense of responsibility in the one—and a peaceful submission to law and good rule in the other.

I know that the stability of this government has often been questioned, and that the advocates of royalty have predicted its early dissolution. Grounding their reasonings upon the state of society in ancient and

modern Europe, and upon the turbulence known to exist under certain popular governments, they have imagined that no nation on earth possessed knowledge and virtue sufficient to govern itself, independent of imperial and hereditary power. But happily for us, the experiment has shewn that their conclusions were false. Our government, after a trial of thirty years, is found to be unspeakably more firm than at the beginning. It has a far deeper hold of the hearts of the people, and is sustained, both in its principles and administration, by the manly voice of millions of freemen, heard from one extremity of the land to the other. Beloved at home and respected abroad, it stands forth with proud and enviable distinction, among the first political institutions of the world.

It is not to my present purpose to delineate the peculiar features of our government, or to shew its happy adaptation to the wants of the people; but when I reflect upon the broad and equitable principles on which it is based—the many wise and salutary provisions it embraces—and more than all, when I remember the severe trials through which it has passed, acquiring confidence as it has proceeded, I can have no doubt for myself, either of its strength or its permanency. But suppose it were to dissolve to-morrow, where is the man who can say it has not been a great and inestimable blessing while it lasted? Under its fostering hand, how rapid has been our improvement in science and in the arts; how steadily has every great national interest been pursued and promoted, while every man has been securely protected in his own rights, and the

most important facilities afforded of gradually increasing in the means of personal and social enjoyment.

If we are not contented and happy as a people, it is not the fault of government; for though I ascribe neither unerring wisdom, nor sinless fidelity to our rulers, I have no hesitation in saying, that both the principles of our government, and the general character of its administration, are entitled to the grateful notice of a rising and prosperous people. In what portion of the habitable world can there be found, at this moment, a nation in all respects as free and happy as ours? Many are still groaning under the wrongs and oppressions of ages, with little more of liberty than the cattle in their fields: many are pressed down with public burdens, and doomed to yield their earnings to the support of men in their civil and ecclesiastical establishments, whom they neither love nor venerate, and whom no agency of theirs can exert the smallest influence in displacing or correcting: many are struggling for liberty, under accumulating difficulties, with scarcely enough of political science or physical strength, to attain the object of their wishes;—while some in our southern hemisphere, are just emerging from a sea of blood, shed in the defence of their natural rights—with good hope indeed of better times, and a brighter day—but who have not yet reached that perfect organization, which will ensure them a quiet and peaceful order of things. O! while we pray for the prosperity of all nations, let us not forget those who are struggling for civil and religious liberty, in whatever part of the globe they may be found; and above all, let us not for-

get our Christian brethren the Greeks, who are making a mighty effort to throw off the yoke of the followers of Mahomed,—a yoke of the most cruel despotism, worn for ages by these hapless sufferers. If ever a nation deserved the sympathy of the world, they are that nation: and that Christian nations should look on and do nothing, except it be to impede their exertions, is a matter of just surprise, at least to those who are unacquainted with the selfish policy of European cabinets. But why do I advert to the condition of other nations? It is to make us grateful for the blessings which distinguish our own. We are a free and independent people, enjoying all the benefits of good and wholesome laws—unmolested without, and blessed be God, undisturbed within. And to whom are we indebted for all this? Ultimately, to Him who holds the destinies of all nations in his hand, who lifts them up and casts them down,—who enlargeth, and straiteneth them again at his pleasure. “O let us then give thanks unto the Lord, for his goodness;” let us say in the language of David, “Great is the Lord, and of great power—his understanding is infinite. Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God, for He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; He hath blessed thy children within thee; He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat—He hath not dealt so with any nation: Praise ye the Lord.”

4. But we have other cause to praise Him,—and cause of much higher import. To Him we are indebted for our spiritual privileges and hopes. We have been

born and educated under the light of the gospel,—a light of the most cheering and purifying character. God sent his Son from Heaven to expiate our sins, and open the way for our salvation. He sent him as a prophet, as well as a priest, to disperse our moral darkness, and teach us the way of God truly. The gospel discloses his character, his doctrines, and his works,—and taken in connection with Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, presents a copious and all-sufficient revelation of the Divine will. This revelation constitutes the Bible,—a book which we have all had in our hands from our very infancy,—and whose infinitely important truths have been expounded to us, by one means or another, from our childhood to the present hour. This blessed book gives form to our religion,—is the chief foundation of our morality,—and may be assigned as the principal cause, that our morality is both more pure and extensive than the morality of Greece or Rome, or any of the nations composing the heathen world. To this in like manner are we indebted, in no small degree, for the wisdom and equity of our laws, and for the mild and benignant character of all our civil institutions.

Looking no farther then than the present life, we are bound to give thanks unto God for the pure and sacred light of the gospel. It has shed a propitious influence upon all our earthly interests. It has taught us the value of our social relations—marked out with precision their appropriate duties,—and furnished the most powerful motives to a faithful discharge of them. We are better fathers and sons,—better mothers and daughters,—better husbands and wives,—better and happier

in all our relations, than if the light of the blessed gospel had never dawned upon our shores. But this is the least part of the blessing. The gospel contemplates us in the light of immortal beings, and makes provision for, while it discloses our immortality. It points out the true and only path to Heaven. It tells us that God will forgive sin, and the conditions on which He will forgive it. It calls us all to repentance, and bids us believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God; and to the performance of these duties it annexes the gracious promise of pardon and life everlasting. It pours a full and consoling light upon the character of God, and the paths of his providence; it teaches us plainly what we are by nature, and what we must be by grace. In a word, it furnishes abundant matter of instruction on all that pertains to our spiritual and immortal concerns, and may properly be designated "The Word of Life."

In all this, we say nothing of the use which we make of it, or of the consequences which may follow upon its abuse. Like all our other mercies, it may be the means of raising us to honour and felicity, or sinking us to greater depths of woe. It is sufficient for our present purpose, to consider it as an appropriate and indispensable mean of salvation, which should call forth the loudest notes of thanksgiving and praise.

I add to this, that it is not only the means of grace so abundantly enjoyed that ought to awaken our gratitude, but the blessing of God upon these means. Several of our towns and villages, to the number of fifteen or twenty, have been visited by the special out-pouring of



the Spirit the last year, and large accessions have been made to the number of the faithful. Seldom has this state witnessed a more gracious visitation. And though, as to this town and vicinity, it has been a year of spiritual drought and barrenness, a circumstance which calls for humiliation, it need not—and it ought not to repress our joy and thanksgiving for the mercies vouchsafed to others. Let us exalt and praise the King of Zion for what He hath done; and the wider our circle of vision extends, the greater be our rapture, and the more exalted our song. Every fresh conversion among sinners, gives new inspiration to the joy of angels. Why should it not move the hearts of God's people on earth?

But how shall we testify our thankfulness to God, for this and all his other mercies? I have said, that we should praise Him,—and praise Him with joyful lips; and I add, that this should be done both publicly and privately,—in our religious assemblies and around our family altars,—in our prayers and songs of melody. But in exercising and expressing our gratitude to God, various things are requisite. It is necessary to preserve in our minds, a particular and affectionate recollection of his mercies. Without this, we shall neither be thankful, nor show forth our thankfulness in a manner acceptable to our great Benefactor. It is necessary to maintain upon our hearts, a deep and powerful sense of the obligations, under which his mercies have laid us. They bind us to a grateful remembrance of Him,—to high and adoring thoughts of his goodness,—and to a ready and cheerful consecration of all our powers and

means to his service. This is what we owe indeed from our creation,—from our natural and necessary dependence upon Him as the physical and moral Governor of the world; but the obligation is deepened by his unceasing care over us, and his merciful attention to our wants. Our sense of obligation ought therefore to keep pace with his goodness,—and this goodness should strike us the more, because bestowed on creatures the most ill-deserving. This is the very essence of gratitude; and I know of no better way of expressing it, than by yielding a cheerful obedience to God's commands,—praising Him in the manner before mentioned,—and carefully imitating his goodness. This last, the Apostle has assured us, is among the sacrifices with which God is well pleased, and it is a sacrifice in the highest degree reasonable. Do we subsist upon his bounty? And should we speedily fall into suffering and want were He to withhold the kindness of his hand? How just and suitable is it, that we should look with compassion upon others, and extend to them our charitable regards? Have we the poor among us? They are God's receivers; nor can we neglect them without insulting his authority, and despising the riches of his goodness. "Who hath made thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou hast not received?" And wherefore hast thou received it? Is it not that, as a faithful steward of God's bounty, thou mayest kindly and promptly administer to those that stand in need? Hear then the cry of the widow and the orphan,—and turn not away from the poor that are within thy gates. To-day the Father of mercies invites us to imitate his

goodness,—to cast an eye round upon the habitations of poverty,—and by our charities, to make glad the hearts of the children of want and of sorrow. The season of the year, as well as the solemn service of the day, renders this duty peculiarly appropriate. “Freely we have received—freely let us give.” And may He who loves and rewards the cheerful giver, remember us in mercy, in the day when the rich and the poor shall meet together, before his spotless and eternal throne.

## SERMON XIX.\*

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### DUTY OF SUSTAINING AN EDUCATED MINISTRY.

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ROMANS X., 14.

*“And how shall they hear without a preacher?”*

We are assembled this evening to contemplate an interesting object of charity, that of training up indigent and pious youth for the gospel ministry; an object not new indeed to the Christian world, but which perhaps has never been embraced with the zeal which its importance requires.

It is gratifying to believe that the friends of Zion are beginning to awake to this subject, and that the day is not far distant when ceasing to look with an eye of indifference over the vast fields already white to the harvest, they will feel as if the time had fully come not only to pray for an increase of labourers, but to put forth all their strength in preparing men for this service.

The efforts which have been made within the last ten years, may be considered as a joyful pledge of what is yet to be done in this benevolent enterprise. But

\*A Sermon, preached May 12, 1819, in the Cedar Street Church, New York, before the Education Society of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

the object must be seen by us in all its magnitude before it will be taken up with sufficient energy. We must be brought to believe that the gospel ministry is the grand instrument of carrying into effect the purpose of salvation—that there is an alarming deficiency of men in this sacred office—and that it is our duty, to the utmost of our power, to increase their number.

These topics, suggested by the text and by the passage with which it stands connected, it will be the object of the present discourse to set a little more distinctly before you.

I. That the gospel ministry is the grand instrument of carrying into effect the purpose of salvation.

The Apostle asserts, that under the dispensation of the gospel there is between Jew and Greek no difference; “For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him,” of whatever nation. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how shall they call on Him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” That the living teacher is here meant, in distinction from the revelation which God has made of himself, is too obvious to require distinct proof. The Apostle’s argument is plainly this: Men must call upon the name of the Lord, that is, the Lord Jesus, and thus recognize the truth of his mission and the glory of his divine character, in order to be saved;

they must believe in Jesus that they may call upon him; they must hear of him to believe; and he must be preached to them, and preached by those who are sent, that they may hear. And hence the conclusion, "That faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." But does faith never come but where the word of God is heard from the living teacher? There is no necessity of pressing the inference to this length. It will be enough if we adopt what appears to be the sense of the Apostle, that the preaching of the gospel by men duly authorized is the principal means appointed by God for salvation; and that ordinarily, we are not to expect men to believe unto life eternal where this institution is either grossly perverted or entirely wanting.

This is a point of too much consequence not to command our attention. Ever since the revelation of mercy to this lost world, God has had some to make known his will and to inculcate a scrupulous regard to it. It was so in the patriarchal ages, before and after the flood. It was so preëminently under the Jewish dispensation, when, besides prophets who were raised up to perform special services, one whole tribe, and nearly every twelfth man in the nation, was devoted to the work of the sanctuary, which included the offices of religious instruction. When the Lord Jesus appeared in the flesh, he himself became a preacher of righteousness; and as soon as he had prepared his disciples, he sent them out clothed with authority to dispense the word of life. After he had risen from the dead, he enlarged their commission, and charged them to go



forth among the nations and preach the gospel to every creature, adding "Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world;" a promise which not only sanctions the ministry of the word till his second coming, but declares his supreme importance as a mean of salvation. In accordance with this, we are assured, that "When he ascended up on high, he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

The mere fact, that the ministry of reconciliation is established as a perpetual ordinance in the church, is no slender indication of its high instrumentality in the business of our salvation. But when we read, that it was expressly designed "To turn men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God;" and that it is "By the foolishness of preaching, it pleases God to save them that believe," we cannot hesitate to place it first among the means which divine wisdom has selected for bringing men to the knowledge of the truth.

Nor let us suppose that the great Head of the church will ordinarily dispense with this mean. While it does not become us to limit the Holy One of Israel; and while we admit that nothing would be easier than for Him to enlighten and sanctify the soul without the agency of men, yet it is not derogatory to Him to say that this is not to be looked for. He is a God of means, and often uses them when it is manifest they have no other tendency than to show the dependence of the creature, and the

glory of his power. Thus it was when He bid Moses stretch out his rod over the sea and divide it, and make a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over; and when by means of the same rod he brought water out of the rock to satisfy his thirsty people in the wilderness. We have an example of the same kind in the use which our Lord made of the clay to open the eyes of the man born blind. In neither case was there any tendency in the means to accomplish their end, except so far that they were of divine appointment. And we naturally conclude that if in cases of such an extraordinary character, God has chosen means to bring about his purpose, He will not readily depart from those which He has formally established in the more ordinary dispensations of his providence. Where these are settled and known, it is presumption to expect the end without them. Who ever thinks of reaping without sowing? Or gathering his harvest without labourers? Scarcely less irrational would it be to expect the gospel to spread and take effect, without the agency of those whom Christ has called to minister in his name. Surely God will not work a miracle to set aside his own institutions, and to encourage his people in sloth.

We derive an argument for the necessity of the gospel ministry from the very condition of our fallen race, ignorant of God and of themselves, slaves to their guilty passions, and secure in an evil course.

To accomplish their salvation you must awaken their attention—penetrate them with a sense of their sins, and through the knowledge of a Saviour, lead them back to God whom they have forsaken. What means

will you employ? Will you send them the Bible? They are so deeply immersed in their cares and pleasures, so entirely alienated from every thing which the Bible either reveals or inculcates, that they will not go to this sacred book for instruction—and if they should, it would seldom be with that interest or intelligence which could promise any important result. Its sublime and glorious doctrines would not readily be understood, either separately considered, or in the important relation which they bear to each other. Much ignorance pervades the minds of many to whom the gospel is constantly, ably, and faithfully preached, which is no doubtful proof of what the result would be if this important privilege was denied.

I venerate the zeal which is now awake to spread the Bible through the earth. I feel confident that the hand of the Lord is in this movement; and that the issue will be the advancement of the cause of truth and righteousness in the world. But the Christian ministry must rise and be carried forward with it, or the effort will in a great measure prove abortive. There must be men skilled in the word of life, to lay open its doctrines and inculcate its precepts,—men of holy and apostolic zeal to proclaim its sanctions and rewards,—men who expostulate and intreat in Christ's name,—living depositaries of the truth, whose example no less than their doctrines, shall preach loudly to a sinful world. Without a provision of this kind, little will be accomplished in the great work of salvation, though you should translate the Bible into every language

under Heaven, and diffuse it as widely as the habitations of men.

What would become of the arts and sciences, notwithstanding their present foothold in society, and the volumes in which their principles are ably discussed, were we at once to shut up every place of instruction, and to banish from the earth those whose business it is to teach them? How soon would the lights of science be put out, and men return again to a state of barbarism? Why should it not be so with respect to religion, the most profound as well as most important of all sciences? And the rather, because there is in the human heart a deep aversion to its sacred truths.

If any still doubt on the subject, let the history of the church be appealed to. Where has the gospel prevailed without the instrumentality of its ministers? Where has it been planted, or where taken root, but through the assiduous labours of men, commissioned by its author and devoted to his cause?

Individuals indeed may have been brought to the knowledge of the truth without such aid; but the instances are so rare, and so entirely aside from the ordinary course of events, as in no degree to justify the expectation that much good will ever be accomplished in this way. Such cases, when they have occurred, have generally attracted great attention; and a single case of this kind has sometimes been thought sufficiently wonderful to be proclaimed throughout the Christian world. But let us not be deceived: whatever opinions may have been broached, or expectations indulged, God has appointed the ministry of the word as the grand

instrument of salvation, and He will not dishonour his own institutions by working without them. He has committed the treasure of the gospel to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of Him; still these vessels, by the laws of his house and the order of his providence, are made necessary. And they are necessary not only for the instruction of the ignorant and the conversion of the wicked, but for the establishment, the sanctification, and comfort of believers. This is strongly and distinctly asserted in a passage already quoted, where Christ, upon his ascension, is said to have given apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

We cannot dwell upon this article, or it might be shown from the deplorable effects which usually follow a mere suspension of the gospel ministry in places where it was once established, that little can be expected in the cause of truth and virtue without it. Where there is no living teacher to lift up his voice, how soon do men lose their reverence for the sabbath and for every institution of revealed religion, while they sink into habits of profligacy and vice which require the labour of years to remove. Many such examples could easily be pointed out in our own country. But I hasten,

II. To call your attention to the alarming deficiency of men duly qualified to preach the gospel.

God has never left his church without a valid ministry, nor is there any reason to fear that He will. But seasons have occurred, when men employed in this sacred office, have either been so few in number, or so corrupt in point of doctrine, or so manifestly incompetent to the duties of their vocation, as to make a famine of the word of life the inevitable consequence. Such was the fact in many periods of the Jewish history, as the prophets themselves have borne witness. Such to an extensive degree was the case during our Lord's abode in the flesh; and hence his compassion towards the multitudes, who at great expense and fatigue, flocked from distant parts of the country to hear him. He regarded them as sheep without a shepherd, because the shepherds which they had, though sufficiently numerous, did little else but scatter and devour the flock. This was a state of things which powerfully touched the heart of the Lord Jesus, and led him to say to his disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust forth labourers into his harvest."

From that period to the present the same affecting truth has been exhibited to the eye of the church; but alas! too often without exciting those emotions which so solemn and portentous a fact ought to create. And what can we hope even now, by making a statement, which perhaps is familiar to you all? But in the name of the Lord I desire you to lift up your eyes to the heathen world, and behold the innumerable multitudes who are sitting in the region of darkness and shadow



of death—hastening with the certainty and rapidity of time down to the abodes of everlasting sorrow. On them no light of salvation shines. There Satan, the god of this world, holds his cruel reign, receiving with the light of every returning day his thousands of victims offered upon the altar of pollution and blood.

According to calculations recently made, Asia and Africa alone contain six hundred millions, five millions only of whom have embraced Christianity under any form. All the rest, comprehending six parts out of eight of the whole human family, are still under the dominion of the most fatal delusions. But have they no missionaries? Are none gone to them to point out the way of life? Not one, my dear brethren, to a million! The benevolence of the whole Christian world has not yet furnished them with four hundred preachers. What a spectacle is this for those that love our Lord Jesus Christ, and believe that one human soul is of more value than the temporal interests of a world! How forcibly does it bring home the truth, that the harvest is plenteous and the labourers few.

But if we turn our attention to that portion of the world denominated Christian, what a deficiency shall we find of qualified teachers? What multitudes, wrapt in the night of ignorance, almost as far from the way of salvation as the very heathen? Look at the present state of the Greek and Roman churches. How few comparatively among them, who preach that gospel which God has ordained as the means of eternal life! Without going into a history of their peculiar doctrines, it will not be denied that they have fallen into the

grossest errors, so that while they retain the name they have little left of the purity and excellence of Christianity. The same remark might be extended to not a few of the Protestant churches who have strangely departed from the principles of the reformation, and imbibed the most destructive heresies. Wherever this is the case, the people are as sheep without a shepherd, whatever may be the number of their religious teachers, and however such teachers may claim to be the lights of science and religion. If they do not preach Christ in the glory of his divine nature, and in the offices he sustains in the work of our redemption, they are not his ministers—they bring not his doctrine, that which distinguishes his religion from every other system.

My design, however, is to fix your attention chiefly on the deplorable deficiency of religious teachers in our own country. Those who have investigated this subject, pronounce with confidence, that with a population exceeding nine millions we have not more than three thousand educated ministers of all denominations.\* Allowing then one minister to two hundred families or one thousand souls, and we have a supply only for three millions, leaving six millions or two thirds of our population unprovided for.

This fact, alarming in the gross, is still more so in detail. For while some parts of the country have a supply nearly equal to their demand, large districts are to be found of fifty and of a hundred thousand souls, where the sound of the pastor's voice is never heard,

\* See Appendix A.

and where the inhabitants daily sinking into deeper shades of moral darkness, are fast verging to a state of the most pernicious and degrading heathenism.\*

I can not descend to the particulars on which this remark is founded, nor stay to fill up the gloomy picture which will suggest itself to every reflecting mind in this assembly; yet, I must be permitted to add, what is known to many of you, that this melancholy state of things, is so far from assuming a more encouraging appearance as time advances, that it is every day increasing with the rapid progress of our population; and to the eye that looks forward only to few generations, presents a scene truly appalling to the pious heart. In less than half a century, if our numbers continue to advance in the ratio of former years, we shall have forty millions of people, while the ministers of the gospel increasing only as they have done for fifty years past, will not reach twice their present number. What a painful anticipation of the future! More than thirty millions of our countrymen abandoned, “not to a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water; but of hearing the words of the Lord.”†

Be assured my brethren, this statement is not overdrawn. It rests upon facts of unquestionable authority, and is but the recognition of causes long since at work, and whose results, without the special interposition of Providence, will be in time to come, as they have been in times past. But leaving futurity in the hands of Him who sees the end from the beginning, and who in

\* See Appendix B.

† Amos viii., 11.

his government of the world often disappoints the hopes and fears of mortals, the present aspect of our own country, is that of a field already white to the harvest, while the labourers that go forth into it are few compared with the mighty work to be performed. Yes, there are hundreds and thousands anxious to hear the gospel, and continually lifting up their cry for teachers, who after all their solicitations, cannot be supplied. This is a fact which ought in a peculiar manner to interest us. I do not say that we are to be indifferent to the wants of the human family generally; I admit that our benevolence should be large enough to embrace every darkened corner of the earth, and that our zeal to spread the gospel ought to be of such strength as to send the heralds of salvation to the utmost bounds of either continent, and to the islands of the sea. But surely it is a paramount duty to feel for the destitute at home; to look with an eye of peculiar tenderness on those who are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; and whom the providence of God has placed within the sphere of our action. To drive these children of want from our door, or with an heart of indifference to allow them to famish in our sight, would mark a species of insensibility, in a peculiar manner offensive to the Father of mercies, and reproachful to the Christian name.

But what can be done? Wherewith shall we find bread to feed so great a multitude? If the Lord would open the windows of Heaven there might indeed be hope! But, Christians, is not this the whispering of unbelief? Contemplate the subject in the light of your

responsibility; dwell upon it with hearts of tender and growing compassion; let the cry of perishing millions vibrate in your ears, till the hum of business and the song of pleasure are lost in the sound,—and then say if something cannot be done. The truth is, the path of duty lies plain before us; nor are there any difficulties which the patient energy of enlightened zeal will not overcome. Be it so, that we want some thousands of ministers, to supply the deficiency in our own country, and even a larger number to send abroad among the heathen; let us not be dismayed at the prospect, but commence the work of preparing them in the name of the Lord, leaving it to those who come after us to complete what we have begun.

III. This is the duty which I proposed in the third and last place to set before you.

But here a question of deep importance arises. What sort of men do we want? Some in their zeal to supply the necessities of the church, appear to have lost sight of this enquiry, and have literally thrust men into the ministry who were wholly incompetent to its duties; men who besides being led away by error, have lowered the standard of the sacred office and brought it into contempt. Such labourers do but impede the operations of others, and render the harvest even more difficult to collect than if they had never entered into it.

Two things are requisite in those who preach the gospel; they must have piety, and they must have ability. They must have piety: without this they would be only like the blind leading the blind, while

they would lack that pure and ardent zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of men, which is so needful to their fidelity and success. I do not say that a man may not preach to the salvation of others while he himself is a stranger to vital piety. Doubtless there are multitudes, who have preached an unknown Saviour, and yet have been instrumental in the conversion of others. The efficacy of the word depends not on the holiness or will of him who ministers it, but on the energy of the divine Spirit. Still however, God will honour those that honour Him, and other things being equal, He is more likely to crown with success the labours of ministers who seek to do good and to promote his glory, than of those who merely sacrifice to their own net and burn incense to their own drag. Without a renovated heart indeed, no man can have a call to preach the gospel, whatever his other qualifications; and woe be to him if he enter upon this holy service without this deep and essential requisite.

But piety alone, however sincere or even ardent, is far from being sufficient. He must be able to teach, as well as willing. Ignorance in any profession is a calamity; but here it is truly deplorable. Here men deal with subjects of the greatest possible moment,—with interests vast and immeasurable as eternity. Men will not trust an advocate with the defence of their rights if they know him to be ignorant of the law, or the facts involved in their case. They will not employ a physician who is confessedly unacquainted with the healing art; and shall the soul, the never dying soul, be entrusted to hands where there is no wisdom to



counsel, no capacity to instruct, and where mere ignorance as well as mistake may prove fatal to all that is dear in its future existence? Reason dictates a different course, and the great Head of the church has solemnly prescribed it.

He has ordained that men who preach the gospel, should be deeply acquainted with the truths of the gospel. "The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." And again, "Not a novice, lest he be lifted up with pride and fall into the snare of the devil."

They who are admitted to the work of the ministry, should possess a sound understanding well cultivated by study; they should have an acquaintance with the general subjects of literature, and particularly with such as stand more immediately connected with their sacred employment. This, at all times necessary, is perhaps peculiarly important at the present day, when not a few who profess to be lovers of the sciences, despise the humbling doctrines of the cross. But above all should they be thoroughly versed in the word of life, that they may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers; to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; and as wise scribes well instructed in the kingdom, to bring out of their treasure things new and old. No attainments in mere human science, will make up for this. Be men ever so learned or eloquent, if the gospel be not understood, its glorious truths cannot be clearly exhibited and made to bear upon the conscience; and where this is not done, the chief object for which the gospel ministry was insti-

tuted is lost. Give us ministers then who both understand and love the truth, and who are willing to make any sacrifice in its cause. There are the teachers whom God's word approves,—men who are capable of serving the church, and whose labours she now calls for, to build up her wastes and to extend her promised empire over the earth. Shall we hear her call, and set about the good work of increasing the number of such teachers?

That this is our duty is just as certain as that our agency is at all demanded to promote the great work of salvation and the glory of God's name. But what does this duty imply? Most certainly, that we offer up daily and ardent prayer for the spirit to be poured out upon our schools and colleges, and upon our young men generally, that those who have the requisite natural gifts, may be furnished with spiritual qualifications for the gospel ministry; that we carefully seek out the youth thus designated, and encourage them to look forward to this sacred office; and where it is necessary, (and that it will be necessary to a great extent, there can be no question,) that we afford them pecuniary aid. This is what the great Head of the church demands of us, and what by his word and providence He has long pressed upon our attention. Shall we now hear his voice, and engage in this charity with a zeal which is steady and enlightened, and which knows no relaxation or intermission till the object be accomplished?

It is an undertaking which is peculiarly expressive of our love to Him who shed his blood in our behalf, and but a just acknowledgment of the high born privi-

leges we possess. Nay it associates us with him who is the great lord of the harvest, the first born from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. It was a part of his work while he tabernacled in the flesh to provide pastors and teachers for the destitute—and though now exalted to his throne in the Heavens, he still makes this an object of his care. Will it be no honour to be found active in the same cause? I know of no charity more elevated in its design, or more important in its result. It is vital to all the best interests of man. Do you love your country? Can you promote her prosperity more effectually than by increasing the number of those, who shall essentially contribute to diffuse the lights of science and religion—men who shall foster your schools, and take an active part in the instruction of the rising generation? Without a measure of this kind, what security can you have for your civil institutions? Can these be supported without the aid of moral virtue? Can you hope for the existence of this without the preaching of the gospel and the regular administration of its ordinances? Politicians may contrive, legislators make laws, and philosophers dream, but where Jesus Christ is not preached, the great principles of morality will neither be understood nor regarded.

If the history of the world can throw any light upon the character of man, it teaches this truth if no more, that without revelation, and this faithfully expounded, he will not attain to the knowledge of God, and that without this knowledge, he can not be restrained from the most odious vices. We hold it a position clearly

demonstrable, that without religion there can be no morality,—and without morality, no well ordered and peaceful society. The alternative then lies before us, either to maintain and promote religion, by providing a competent and faithful ministry, or to sink into moral degradation and ruin.

Nor is the time distant, unless we can be roused to a sense of our danger, when the consequences of our supineness will be deeply felt. The facts have been stated, which tell you how far already population has gained upon the means of moral culture; what wide spread regions have become wastes, and what the inevitable result in a few years will be, if the Christian and philanthropist do not awake, and put forth all their energy to check the mighty evil.

But why do I speak of the temporal interests of men? What will become of their souls? We have been told of the vast multitudes who are as sheep without a shepherd, having none to heal them when diseased, to bind them up when broken, and to bring them back when driven away. We are assured that the shades of moral darkness are thickening upon them, and that the hour hastens when if no relief be afforded, the last beam of light will be extinguished. Were we ignorant of their state, we might slumber over their destiny with comparative innocence, and they might find their way to the pit, without drawing down the guilt of their blood upon our heads. But we know their condition; we know that they have none to break to them the bread of life; and that if eternal mercy does not step aside from its ordinary course to save men without the min-

istry of the word, they must go down to the chambers of death. Why, let me ask, has the providence of God disclosed this fact, but to touch our hearts and stimulate our exertions? To us they look with an imploring eye; and God will make us answerable if through our want of effort they shall implore in vain. But think, my dear brethren, of the vast amount of good which this scheme of benevolence proposes.

When you have fed the hungry and clothed the naked, you have performed an act of charity which is grateful to your feelings, and which if done out of love to your Saviour will not be forgotten by Him when the universe shall be assembled at his bar. When you have instructed the ignorant or reclaimed the vicious you have done an important service to individuals, and are entitled to the thanks of society; and if you have ever converted a soul to the living God, you have been instrumental of a good which far outweighs the mere deliverance of a nation from the greatest earthly calamities. But what is this compared with having given to the church one able and faithful minister of the New Testament, who, in the ordinary course of providence, may be instrumental of saving hundreds from the gates of perdition and making them heirs of immortal life. Who knows in this case if you do not begin a work of mercy which shall go on with progressive energy till the last day? Such a minister may be the means not only of saving many by his personal labours, but of raising up others in this blessed work—and these, others who shall convey their spirit to a new genera-

tion, till all the earth shall hear and all the ends of the world be turned unto the Lord.

I press this subject with the greater confidence, from the interest it has awakened in other parts of the church, and from the fact that there are many young men of hopeful piety and promising talent, now waiting to be drawn from their less important spheres into the ministry of the gospel.

In the eastern section of our country, a single society organized two years since, have already two hundred youth in different stages of their education destined to the gospel ministry. Our brethren to the west, have also gone before us in this work and labour of love; and besides collecting considerable funds for the object, have taken up about thirty young men, who are fitting to enter the Lord's vineyard. They tell us that two hundred more from their own district could be added to their present list, had they the means of support. Shall we not rise up to the same work, under the influence of such noble examples? There is no want of men for this operation. God has prepared them by the requisite natural gifts, and by the sanctifying power of his grace. It is ours to search them out, and furnish them with the means of education. If we will not embark in this enterprise, where is our love to the Saviour,—where our love to the souls of men? Can we be Christ's friends, if we do not possess his spirit? Can his spirit dwell in us, if we feel not for the uneducated multitudes as he did? Or can we with sincerity pray to him as the great Lord of the harvest to send



forth labourers into his harvest, while we do not cheerfully put our own hands to the work, and endeavour to increase their number?

The society, in whose name I address you, is organized for the express purpose of raising up ministers for the Presbyterian church. They will select none for this object but those who in the judgment of charity are the real friends of Christ, and who in the spirit of self-denial are willing to devote their lives to the promotion of his cause; men whose talents are such as to give a reasonable pledge of their usefulness. And they intend not to send them forth, till they have made those attainments in human and divine knowledge which the rules of our church have wisely prescribed.

We know indeed that this is an undertaking of great responsibility,—that in the selection of the youth and the application of the funds the soundest discretion will be called for, and that no human wisdom will be sufficient always to prevent mistake. But the object is one of the highest moment, involving in it the dearest hopes of man; nor can we think of relinquishing it on account of the difficulties which it presents. The work is of the Lord, and He will make it prosper, if we take counsel of Him. We come to you, brethren, to ask your aid in this important design—to give, as God has prospered you, and to send up your prayers to Heaven for a blessing to rest upon your bounty. Who knows but the salvation of hundreds is suspended on the charities of this evening?

Twenty young men of promising talents have already been selected and placed upon the funds of our infant

institution. With hearts burning with love to the Saviour, they long to be prepared to preach to the destitute the everlasting gospel in his name. Shall they be encouraged in this desire? Or must we say to them, there is no hope—the bosom of piety does not feel—the hands of beneficence are not open—return to your former occupations, and sigh in secret over the woes which you cannot relieve?

I will not anticipate such a result. I trust that a institution, founded in benevolence, and aiming at a good so immense, will find a patronage in every heart that loves our Lord Jesus,—in every friend of man. The cry of perishing millions in heathen lands, unites with the voice of thousands in our own country, to increase the number of those who publish the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things. Let us with cheerful hearts cast our offering into the treasury of the Lord,—and seek to become partakers with them who are instrumental in turning many to righteousness, and who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.

## APPENDIX.

## A.

*Table, showing the number of Alumni, and the whole number of Ministers educated at the principal Colleges in the United States, and the number of Alumni living, and the number of Ministers living according to the latest information.*

	Date of the Catalogue examined.	Number of Alumni.	Number of Ministers.	Alumni living	Ministers living.
Harvard, . . . . .	1818	4442	1198	1708	205
Yale, . . . . .	1817	3300	847	1658	357
Princeton, . . . . .	1815	1425	297	1028	147
Columbia, . . . . .	1814	608	67		
Brown, . . . . .	1817	829	149	715	130
Dartmouth, . . . . .	1816	1190	263	992	228
Carlisle, . . . . .	1813	272	62	243	58
Williams, . . . . .	1817	473	112	434	107
Union, . . . . .	1813	291	33	280	32
Bowdoin, . . . . .	1816	85	2	80	2
Middlebury, . . . . .	1817	260	55	250	55
South Carolina, ..	1816	275	5	260	5
Total,				7,643	1,406

The above is an extract from the Appendix to the third annual report of the American Society for the education of pious youth for the gospel ministry. That it is entirely accurate we need not suppose; and from the nature of the case, the calculation could not be brought up to the present time. Still it is an important document, to show the present want of a competently educated ministry. For want of sufficient data, the Universities of North Carolina, Georgia, and Ken-

tucky, the several Colleges of Virginia and Pennsylvania, and the College of New Brunswick, N. J., with some other institutions of recent establishment, are not brought into the account. It is known that most of these seminaries have furnished the church with a number of respectable ministers; though with regard to several, the number has been very small. If we should suppose the whole number from these various institutions to be now two hundred, it would probably be thought a large estimate. And if to these should be added one hundred and fifty for such as have been educated in foreign countries, and now resident among us, it would swell the sum total to seventeen hundred and fifty-six. How many there are who have not received the advantages of a public education, but who, nevertheless, have been well instructed, it is not easy to say. But all would probably agree that they can not be more than half as numerous as those who have been educated in our Colleges. Put them, however, at a thousand, or even twelve hundred, and the whole number falls short of three thousand; a moderate supply for three millions, or one third of our population.

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### B.

Many deceive themselves as to the deplorable state of our country, by fixing their eyes solely on their own immediate vicinity. But it becomes Christian benevolence and philanthropy to look abroad. The directors of the American Education Society make the following statement.

“In North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, containing according to the last census, a population of 1,223,048, there are about 110 competent ministers,—leaving 1,113,048 destitute of proper religious instruction. A respectable gentleman, who is a native citizen of South Carolina, informs us that in an ancient district of the state, embracing an extent of 9,000 square miles contiguous to the sea coast, there is but

one place of worship, and that not used; and not one Christian church or minister of any denomination."

The states of Indiana, Mississippi, and Louisiana, with the territories of Alabama, Illinois, Michigan and Missouri, contain a population of about 350,000, and nearly the same number of square miles as the whole of Europe, with the exception of the Russian Empire. Yet in this vast region, which is becoming populous and wealthy with unexampled rapidity, we cannot ascertain after much enquiry, that there are more than seventeen competent and stated preachers of the gospel; that is, less than one to 20,000 souls."

In East Tennessee, which contained in 1810, 17 counties, and 901,367 inhabitants, an intelligent gentleman on the spot says, "There are 14 counties, in which there is not a single regular or educated minister of the gospel."

From the same document it appears, by a letter from a respectable gentleman in Virginia, that in eight counties of that state, west of the Great Ridge, containing 48,587 inhabitants, only about one thousand are connected with the Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists, leaving more than 47,000 not connected with any religious institutions whatever; that in another district 53,000 people are in the same dreadful state; in another 20,000, except a very few Baptists and Methodists; and in another 60,000, who are connected with no religious denomination of any kind.

It would be easy to swell this note with particular statements of the destitute condition of many other large districts of our country. Suffice it to say, that there are more than four hundred congregations connected with the Presbyterian Church destitute of the stated ministration of the word and ordinances, many of whom are able to support pastors. Christians of this communion! can you contemplate this fact, and still hesitate whether you shall contribute a portion of your worldly substance to raise up teachers for the destitute?

ADDRESS,  
ON THE DEATH OF MRS. CUMMING.\*

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Mournful day! The sympathies, and anguish of a thousand hearts proclaim it to be a mournful day. When have we seen such an assembly as this? Every bosom swells with a sigh, every eye runs down with

\* This address was occasioned by the melancholy death of Mrs. Sarah Cumming, consort of the Reverend Hooper Cumming, Pastor of the second Presbyterian church in Newark. She died by a fall from the rocks at Patterson, on the morning of the 22d of June, 1812, in the 23d year of her age.

She had gone with Mr. Cumming to spend the sabbath at Patterson, where he was appointed to preach, by the Presbytery. On Monday morning, they took a walk to the falls of the Passaic, which lie in the neighbourhood. When they had finished their view of the wonderful scenery, which this place affords, Mrs. Cumming fell from a high part of the western rock, an elevation of about seventy feet, into the basin below.

She had just before complained of dizziness, and sat down with Mr. Cumming at a little distance from the edge of the precipice, until she was composed. Wishing to take another view of a scene so sublime, and to her so novel and interesting, she ventured again, with her husband, to the margin of the rock. When they had stood a few minutes, he said, "It is time to return," and requested her to accompany him. The path being narrow, he stepped back a pace or two, supposing she would follow. Alas! only a cry is heard.



tears. Who could have expected the awful event we now deplore? We know that we are mortal. We know that death may assail us, at any moment, and in numberless forms; but how unlooked for, and in what distressing circumstances, has this dread messenger approached in the case before us!

Did our young friend languish on her bed, and after leaving her dying counsels to those around her, pass away into eternity? Did she apprehend the stroke, which severed her from earth and all that earth holds dear? Did she give the parting look, or parting hand? Did she say but once, I die—I go to Jesus—I bid farewell? Alas! none of all these circumstances were

He turns—but she is gone from his sight for ever! In the dreadful agitation of his mind, he runs backward and forward along the awful brink, crying, “she is fallen! she is fallen!”

At this perilous moment, a lad of about sixteen years of age, who was providentially but a few rods distant, flew to his assistance, and once actually held him by the skirt, when he seemed in the act of throwing himself down the precipice. They both descended by the usual passage to the foot of the rock; and again the agonizing husband would have plunged into the abyss, but for the firm resistance of the youth, destined in providence to preserve him, during this paroxysm of unutterable grief. In a few minutes Mr. Cumming became composed, and manifested a spirit of devout resignation.

Hundreds crowded to the mournful place, and the deepest sympathy was seen working in every bosom. Great apprehensions were entertained for a time that the body could not be found. The water deep, the current rapid, and a huge bed of rocks lying at different depths, it was believed that the chance was very small. A search was immediately commenced, and continued till late at night, but in vain. At seven o'clock the next morning, when only a few persons were present, and these chiefly of Mr. Cumming's congregation, the body was taken up by one of the elders of his

permitted. In the walk of pleasure she meets with death. While admiring the works of her Creator; while her heart was beating with innocent and new delight; she slides, in an instant, from the awful precipice into the troubled wave beneath. Who can describe the anguish of her surviving husband? Who shall prevent him from rushing down the dreadful steep, in this moment of unutterable distress? That merciful Providence, only, which planned the whole from eternity, and which ordered every circumstance of this painful event, by counsels as efficient as they were wise.

God saves the distracted sufferer, when he had no church. It was conveyed to Newark; and at ten o'clock the next day the funeral was attended in the Second Presbyterian Church, by a great concourse of people from Newark and the neighbouring towns. Tears flowed from a thousand eyes. Never was greater sympathy excited on any occasion. The profoundest silence reigned through the assembly; and the procession, formed in conveying this lamented female to the tomb, amounted to more than sixteen hundred persons of both sexes.

Mrs. Cumming was born of reputable parents in Portland, Maine, and received her education, in that town\*. She was married and removed to Newark a few weeks only before her death. Her person was agreeable, her manners simple, and her mind strong and ingenuous. Torn from her husband in all the loveliness of youth, she has left him, with her widowed mother, and only sister, to mourn her loss.

The author of the Address has given this detail, not only to satisfy the curiosity of the public, but to mark more distinctly the footsteps of Providence in an occurrence so wonderful and painful in all its circumstances.

*Newark, July 11th, 1812.*

\* Her family name was EMMONS

power to save himself. A fellow youth, as an angel from Heaven, is sent to pluck him from the brink, and to restrain him for a moment, till reason resume her throne. But why do I attempt a picture which no mortal can ever draw? Why do I recall a scene which plants a dagger in the soul?

Let me rather present the consolations which are afforded on this occasion, and point you to the lesson of divine instruction, which the occasion was designed to give.

We mourn the loss of an amiable woman, torn from her husband in the bloom of youth, and torn from him under circumstances which excite the liveliest sympathy in every heart. But we have, for our comfort, the blessed assurance, that this dark and trying event has taken place by the appointment of an infinitely wise and righteous God.

His providence extends to the falling of a sparrow; and his providence is always just, always wise. He does nothing, and suffers nothing to be done, which He will not overrule for his own glory and the highest good of his great kingdom. His immediate designs are often out of sight. We cannot tell wherefore it is, that He deals thus with us. The wheels of his government move high and dreadful. His path is in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known. Of this, however, we may be certain, that He has some great and glorious purpose to answer by every event which befalls.

This is unquestionably the case in the distressing providence before us. To feeble and short-sighted

man it presents a cloud of impenetrable darkness. But, as sure as God is upon the throne, and controls the events of the universe, this cloud has a bright side, and one day its brightness will appear.

Yes, ye mourning friends, this thick cloud, this cloud of astonishment and terrour, shall be turned into the light of the morning. Into the light of the morning? Nay, into the blaze of yonder sun. Your weeping eyes shall see that Infinite Wisdom and Goodness planned this dispensation, and that not a circumstance could be altered for the better. Is not this a strong ground of consolation? To all the friends of God's government, to all who are willing that God should be on the throne, it cannot be otherwise.

I have to add, surprising as it may appear, that the present affliction is not only sure to serve the purposes of God's glory and the interests of his great kingdom; it will promote the personal happiness of those whom it immediately affects, provided they love God and submit themselves to his righteous providence.

It is one of the most comprehensive and consoling promises of the scriptures, that all things "shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Nothing can fall out amiss to them. Whether it be trouble or joy, their highest, their eternal welfare goes on. The severest afflictions do but humble them and bring them nearer to God. They are a fire to take away their dross: they detach them from the world, and ripen them for the purity and blessedness of Heaven.

Whence the Apostle thus addresses the afflicted He-

brews: "We have had fathers of our flesh, who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits, and live? For they verily, for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure, but He for our profit, that we might be made partakers of his holiness. Wherefore lift up the hands, which hang down, and the feeble knees."

Blessed be God, important and consoling as this consideration is, it is not the last, nor the chief, which we have to offer on this occasion.

Our young friend, whose death we now lament, was a professor of religion, and one of its brightest ornaments. She was not merely an intelligent and amiable member of society, who easily and strongly attached to herself those who had the pleasure of her acquaintance—she was a Christian. She early imbibed sentiments favourable to religion, through the medium of a pious mother and sister, and about two years since, made an open and explicit avowal of her friendship to the Redeemer. From that period, she has been considered by those who knew her best, as unusually devoted to the duties and interests of religion. She was constant and fervent in prayer. It is known that, on the last night of her life, she was particularly and solemnly engaged in this duty; as if, excited by the omniscient Spirit, to prepare for the great event so near at hand. She loved the distinguishing truths of the gospel, and took a special interest in the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Christ and his cross were to her living and precious themes. The friends of Jesus,

whether rich or poor, were the friends of her heart. Her benevolence was ardent. As an angel of mercy, she was often seen at the beds of the sick and the dying. The tears of the aged and helpless widow can bear witness to the tender sympathies of her soul. Such was her humility, such her discreet and amiable deportment, that she was affectionately and universally beloved by the Christian society from which she came, and, as far as time and circumstances permitted, no less beloved by her acquaintance in this place.

We have reason to believe that she has exchanged a world of sin and sorrow for a world of light and glory. Her departure was sudden and unexpected, but not the less safe. The covenant mercy of God never forsakes those whom it once embraces. She falls in an instant out of time into eternity, but underneath her are the everlasting arms. Quick as a beam of light, her soul bursts the darkness which shrouded it, and makes its way to the throne of God; but it does not go unaccompanied by angels, nor unwashed in the Redeemer's blood.

Why then should we mourn? Not because she has flown so soon to the bosom of her Saviour. Hear what a voice from Heaven proclaims: "Blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." There they are before the throne of God, day and night. They rejoice without intermission, and without end. They have none of the darkness and sorrow which encompass us. They have done with sinning and repenting, with doubting



and fearing. They wrestle no more, they strive no more. Their warfare is accomplished, their dangers are past; God has for ever wiped away their tears. Let us lift up our souls to those shining and tranquil regions, whither they are gone, and, instead of repining at their departure, let us prepare to follow them.

Turn your thoughts to these things, my dear brother, and let your heart repose itself on the besom of eternal love and mercy. Great as your loss is, God is good, God is wise. His promises are rich, his truth is unchangeable, his power is almighty. He loves those whom He afflicts, and He afflicts them because He loves them.

Think it not strange, that this trial has overtaken you. God will bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, joy out of sorrow. If you know not what the Lord does now, you shall know hereafter. This is the world of faith; the next, the world of vision. Soon the dark cloud shall be scattered and a light poured upon this path of providence, which shall be full and satisfactory. In the mean time, rejoice that your beloved friend is not lost; though she is gone from you. A happier world receives her, and she waits to be joined by those that loved her here, in the song of praise which with angels she has begun, but which shall never, never, have an end.

Bear then with Christian resignation the trial which Heaven hath appointed; and while you assure yourself of the sympathy of many thousand hearts, let your eye be steadily fixed on Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. Let his example encourage you, and his

almighty power and grace be your refuge. May that God, who comfort those that are cast down, comfort you under all your sorrows, and thus teach you to comfort others with the comfort with which you are comforted of God. Who can tell but one end of this sore bereavement is to enlarge your sympathies, and deepen your knowledge of divine grace, that you may be better able to condole with others, and extend the balm of consolation to their wounded spirits!

Shall we direct our minds, a moment, to some of those lessons of divine instruction, which this affecting providence seems intended to give?

God speaks loudly and solemnly to us on this occasion; and what is the language which he holds? Does he not say, ‘think not to measure my proceedings by the short line of your understandings. Expect not fully to explore the paths of my providence in this world.’ “My ways are not as your ways, nor my thoughts as your thoughts. For as the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Had the destiny of our young friends been lodged in the hands of men, how different would have been the result. Who that thinks of the union recently formed, of the tender friendship which glowed in their faithful bosoms, of the bright prospect which was opening before them, but must stand astonished at what has happened? This astonishment, however, only proves how wide God’s counsels are from ours, and how far his wisdom lies above our sight. What could teach us more effectually, that God is great, and we are little?

We are compelled to cry, O the depths of his providence! "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Does not God proclaim in our ears also the uncertainty of all earthly joys?

When the heart was full of expectation; when the fond imagination was dreaming of years of increasing felicity, how instantaneous and awful the change! In one sad moment the bright vision vanishes, and all is darkness and anguish. Who can trust to the world after this?

"Lean not on earth,"—is the voice of this Providence,  
 "It will pierce thee to the heart:  
 A broken reed at best, but oft a spear,  
 On whose sharp point peace bleeds and hope expires."

Are we not warned here, moreover, of the danger of living a moment unprepared for death?

By how many avenues may this last enemy approach us! He may overtake us in the midst of business, in the midst of pleasure. He may come without the slightest notice. We walk over the graves of departed generations. Every step may land us in the tomb. Why then should we procrastinate in the great work of our salvation? Why should we risk our immortal destiny, on the chances of a life so frail? Why should we do this, for a single moment, against the voice of reason, and the most solemn admonitions of God's word and providence? What if our dear young friend had delayed her preparation for death? Where now had been her departed spirit? Where now the most precious consolation of her surviving friends?

Presume not, O sinner, upon to-morrow. Trust not to a sick bed. To-morrow may never come. A sick bed may be denied you. From the midst of health, you may be called to the judgment-seat of Christ, and your eternal state unalterably decided.

Christians, is there not here a peculiar and solemn voice to you? The Lord, you see, comes suddenly to his people, as well as to others. Our young sister had not time to trim her lamp. To her the coming of Christ was as the lightning, which shineth out of the east unto the west. Thus it may be to you. Are "your loins girded about, and your lights burning;" and ye yourselves like men that wait for the return of their Lord? Is your house in order? Are you doing the very things which Christ commands you and doing them with the zeal and activity of faithful servants? I beseech you, brethren, by the mourning which covers these altars, not to sleep as do others. Time is short, eternity is at hand. Soon its boundless scenes will open upon us, and we shall find ourselves in Heaven or Hell. Let us live for that eternity, which is approaching. Let our eye be single to the glory of our Master. By patient continuance in well-doing, let us commit the keeping of our souls to him, as unto a faithful Creator. Death will then neither injure, nor surprise us. Come when or how he may, he will only put a period to our service on earth, and introduce us into the joy of our Lord.

Husbands and wives, can you forbear to reflect upon the special interest which you have in this mournful scene?

Does life glide smoothly away with you? Are the cares of each day beguiled by your growing attachments, and by the cheerful discharge of reciprocal duties?

God grant that your happiness may be prolonged. But remember the hour approaches, which dissolves the tenderest earthly ties. The time will come, when you must say, " Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." Look forward to that eternity to which you are going, and dwell together, as the heirs of the grace of life. Seek to have your friendship sanctified. Let it be at once the joyful instrument and the undoubted earnest of a more exalted friendship in the kingdom of God. This will soften the pangs of separation. This will dry up the tears of the survivor. Grief will pass away in the hope of meeting those you love, never more to part, refined from the imperfections, and delivered from the sorrows of the present life.

People of this congregation! you are deep mourners on this occasion. God has not bereaved your beloved pastor only; he has bereaved you. He has snatched from you one, to whom you were already strongly united, and whose virtues could not have failed to attach you still more, had she been permitted to continue longer with you. Would she not have strengthened the bonds of Christian love? Would she not have softened the anguish of sickness, and plucked the thorn from the dying pillow, by her sympathies and her prayers? Why has this amiable youth been sent among you to die; why, to die in such a manner? Was it merely to fill your minds with grief? Was it

not to constrain you to look at her example, to carry your minds forward to eternity, to think of that Heaven to which she is gone, and of that Saviour, through whose blood and righteousness she has made her entrance there?

Brethren, I do not exhort you to weep with your afflicted pastor. I know your hearts bleed for him. Let your sympathies carry you to the throne of divine mercy. It is not long since, in this sacred place, you publicly promised to pray for him. Now he peculiarly needs your prayers. Bear him affectionately and constantly before the throne of grace, and God will sustain him.

Can I close this address without dropping a word to the youth in this assembly?

You are full of hope. You leap forward with eager expectation to the enjoyments of the world. But what security can you have against the bold demands of death? Does the pulse of health beat high in your veins? Have you a thousand charms to endear you to others; a thousand ties to bind you to the world? Look at yonder solemn spectacle. Could any of these availed, that sable covering had not been there. The loveliness of youth, the vigour of health, the charms of virtue, are nothing, when the time which God appoints is fully come.

Are you ready for so solemn a change? Have the first of your days been consecrated to the Author of your beings? Do you know the God of your fathers; and are you treading in the steps of the pious youth, whose remains we are now to commit to the tomb? I



exhort and conjure you not to let this affecting providence address you in vain.

God in awful majesty is passing by. Will you not bow to him? He is proclaiming in your ears, "All flesh is grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of grass; the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away." Will you let this truth sink down into your hearts? Will you henceforth set death and judgment before you? Will you make a business of religion? Now is your time. The tears which you shed on this occasion will be a witness against you, if, from this moment, you make not the concerns of your souls the concerns of eternity, the object of your chief regard. A louder call you can not look for; and if this be rejected, may not God, in righteous judgment, give you to walk in your own ways, and seal you over to a state of awful retribution? Our prayer is, that this wonderful dispensation of providence may issue in the conversion of sinners, and in the greater watchfulness and fidelity of the Lord's people.

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