

THE LIVING PULPIT,

OR

EIGHTEEN SERMONS

BY EMINENT LIVING DIVINES

OF

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

WITH

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE EDITOR,

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## THE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

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For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?—MARK viii. 36, 37.

THESE questions are not of precisely the same import. They are addressed, indeed, to the same individuals, and relate to the same subject; but the individuals addressed are supposed to be placed in different circumstances, and the form of the question is modified accordingly. The first contemplates the condition of a man who has his chosen portion in this life, and demands of him the profit, "if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul." The second contemplates the condition of a man in the world of despair, whose soul is already lost, and demands what he would be willing to give "in exchange for his soul." Both questions relate to the *comparative* worth of the soul. They affirm, in the most emphatic manner, that it is of *more* value than the whole world; and, upon the ground of its *surpassing* worth, they press the great duty of labouring *first* and *chiefly* after its welfare. I

propose to detach the prominent idea of the text from the specific relations and connections in which it there stands, and to make THE WORTH OF THE SOUL, abstractly and absolutely considered, the subject of my discourse.

Need I here say one word to secure attention to this subject? You are proud of your extensive possessions, and you do not soon grow weary in telling over the sum of your riches. You have one treasure of great price, however, which you may never yet have rated at its full value. I propose, in this discourse, to estimate the worth of this treasure, and thus to show how rich you are. When such is my purpose, may I not hope for an earnest and interested attention?

Two distinct and independent tracks of illustration open up before us. We may enter upon a direct inspection of the soul itself, and from a survey of its nature, its capacities, its powers, and its destination, infer its value; and then we may take a wider range, and gather illustrations from without, and from the deep interest which higher orders of being take in its welfare; and from the high estimate which God places upon it; and from the history of its creation; and from the still more marvellous history of its redemption, demonstrate still further its value.

I. We are to sit in direct inspection upon the soul itself, to see if there be any thing in its nature, or its endowments, or its destination, which may serve our purpose. And

1. As to its Nature. Exhaustless variety is a striking characteristic of the works of God. It was

long ago remarked, that in the whole universe no two things can be found exactly alike. Resemblances we find every where, perfect similitude nowhere. And the remark holds good, not only of the external appearances of objects, but of their intrinsic worth. From the tiniest insect, one rank of being rises above another in excellence, till the whole terminates in that great sum of all excellence, that grand climax of all being—God. High up in this scale of value is found the human soul, standing at the head of all earthly existences, and ranking just a little lower than the angels.

The human body, delicately, curiously, and beautifully framed, is accounted the perfection of material nature—the very master-piece of the great Architect. But the body feels not, thinks not, wills not, acts not. It is but the blind tool of the agent within. Emotion, thought, hope, happiness, have their seat in the soul. The soul is yourself, the body is a mere appendage which you carry about with you, as you do your clothes. Your high prerogatives, as man, are all conferred upon you by the soul, and it alone elevates you above the dust. The body is built of the clay you tread beneath your feet. The eye, wonderful as is its mechanism, multiplied and spirit-like as are its uses, is nothing but painted dust; and the whole fabric is built of what you may see in the “deep damp grave.” The confession so often on our lips, “we are but worms of the dust,” is not the language of excessive humility. It is the plain, unvarnished truth. Whether we look to the origin or the end of these, our tabernacles of clay, we must own their fellowship with the worm.

What material object, then, can be compared, as to its value, with the soul? What utter insignificance does the apostle stamp on the whole material universe, when he tells us, "All these things shall be dissolved!"

Next above material organism comes animal instinct. And what are the instincts of animals but the reason of God? What teaches the bee to construct its cell, and the spider to weave its web, and the stork to build its nest on high? Who warns the birds of the approach of winter, and guides them, unerringly, in their long flights over trackless deserts and wide seas, without map or compass? The instinct of animals is the reason of God, prompting them to provide for their present and sensual wants. But the soul is endowed with an independent reason. Her instincts rise out of her own being, up towards God, and onward towards immortality—and over all, conscience, God's vicegerent, keeps watch and ward.

The soul introduces us into the higher walks of existence, giving us fellowship in the world of spirits, and companionship with God, and angels, and "just men made perfect," and partnership in their pleasures—the pleasures of intelligence and of virtue. If by the body we are linked to dust, by the soul we are allied to God. If by the body we say to the worm, "Thou art my sister," by the soul we are made the fellows of seraphim! What strange extremes unite in our being! The connecting link between God and the inferior creation. Our foundation in the dust, we aspire towards Divinity! The soul is of the *highest* order of exist-



ence—for God and angels are spirit. Inmeasurably inferior to these, indeed, in the appendages and expansion of its being; in *nature* it is precisely the same. And across the wide chasm which now separates it from God, his voice is distinctly heard, and hopefully responded to—"Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." What means the strange language—"Transformed from glory to glory into the image of the Lord"—"made partaker of the divine nature?" We can pardon the sublime dream of Plato, that the human soul is a portion of the divine essence—a fragment of Deity imprisoned in dust. It is of most excellent nature. Nothing on earth equals it—nothing in heaven surpasses it. Consider,

2. Its endowments. Activity, power, intelligence, moral agency, infinite progression, are among its higher attributes. Passing these, however, we would remark specially upon the capacity of happiness, perhaps the highest prerogative of spirit—"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever." If these ends of our being are not identical, they are at least inseparable; and the last grand purpose of our being is "to enjoy."

Happiness is a thing of which the visible world can furnish no emblem to those who have never experienced it. To be understood it must be felt. The gold which kindles such joy in the miser's heart, feels not the emotion it imparts. The heavens, which awaken the poet's fancy, and expand, to something of their own dimensions, the astronomer's intellect; which point the devotee upward to God, and scatter gladness, beauty, and life so lav-

ishly over the earth, feel in themselves nothing of the glory or the gladness they impart. The sun is cold amidst his own beams—the stars are dark amidst their own radiance. Though so glorious to us, they are nothing to themselves. The earth is joyless, amidst all the pulses of joy which beat upon her surface. When the great Creator had made all—air, land, and sea, and filled them with exhaustless sources of happiness, he brings man, places him in the new made world, and says, The power to enjoy is yours; look around, above, beneath, all is exquisitely fitted to minister to your pleasure.

Every fountain of happiness in the outward world has some channel opened up, through which it empties itself into the soul. Has nature her harmonies?—the ear conveys them to the soul. The eye ranges over all that is beautiful and sublime in the universe of God, and carries back its discoveries to the soul. And thus, by her organs of sense, the soul ranges at will over the universe, and lays all nature under contribution to her happiness. But she has sources of joy, aye and of sorrow too, within herself; and it is when she shuts up the inlets of the external world, and retires within herself, that she finds the highest rapture or the profoundest despair. Uncover the soul of a saint, see his perfect peace, his high communings, his glorious hopes—there is a heaven there, were there none without! Uncover the soul of a sinner, see his remorse, his despair, his malignant passions, his fearful apprehensions of “wrath to come,” there is a hell there, were there none without!

The soul's capacity to suffer and to enjoy we

cannot fathom. Do you ask, How much can I enjoy? We can but point you to those exhaustless materials of enjoyment provided; to your memories of all you have enjoyed; to your imagination, and your hopes; the many forms of happiness of which you can conceive, for which you hope, and of which you feel yourself capable. Nor can we tell how much you could suffer. Remember your head aches and heart aches; your pains and your sicknesses. Remember your disappointments, your fears, your despair. Have you ever felt remorse? But were the capacity of suffering filled to its full measure, we cannot tell, an angel's tongue cannot tell, how much you could suffer. And the capacity to enjoy and to suffer, stamps the soul with a value passing all calculation.

This is but our embryo state, and we cannot, even in imagination, fix any limit to the soul's progression. Give it a more delicately constructed—a *spiritual* body; give it senses more perfect in themselves, and in their adjustment to the objects of the outward world; let its eye have a wider range, a more piercing scrutiny; let its ear be more finely attuned, and its nerves increased in sensibility; give it new senses to discern those hidden elements of nature which now escape its closest scrutiny; remove its pride, its passions, its carnality; and then, when fitted for heaven, place it there. Afar from these earthly sources of pain and sorrow, surrounded with all heaven contains to happify, and who can tell what it shall become where its progress is ever accelerating, where every experience acquired enlarges the basis for future acquisitions,



where every exertion put forth strengthens for a bolder and loftier attainment. Follow its ascending way on, and on, till imagination tires, and then think of it stretching on, and on, beyond that point out through the untold ages of eternity! Consider,

3. Its Destination. And here we might construct an impregnable argument for the immortality of the soul, out of the materials already collected in this discourse. The surpassing excellence of its nature, and its high endowments bespeak its immortality. For it consorts not with the wisdom or the known ways of God, to suppose him to endow it thus highly, and yet give it neither time nor facilities to develop and exercise its powers. Why give it capacities which are never unfolded? capabilities which are never called forth? powers which can go out into no adequate exercise? Its imperfect and undeveloped condition here is irrefragable evidence of its existence hereafter. Here it is the chrysalis—there the winged angel of light. This is its childhood—that its manhood. Did this life bound its being, it were but a gorgeous mockery, a solemn cheat.

The idea of eternity baffles and confounds conception. You are foiled in every attempt to compass it, because you have no measures by which to effect the computation. Take your own life as a measure; lay it along side of eternity, and it dwindles away to utter nothingness in the comparison. Take the six thousand years which have elapsed since the creation of the world; multiply them till numbers fail; still you have not reached a starting point in the computation. Conception is still at fault. Years, ages, cycles of ages, will not serve for measures of

eternity. It absorbs all duration, and then stretches on, undiminished and unimpaired, to infinity beyond. No addition can increase it; no subtraction can lessen it. It has no measure, and it defies all conception.

It seems a long time to the prattling child to look forward to the gray hairs of eighty years. It seemed a long time to the spirits who first entered the land of darkness and despair, to look forward through the many ages of pain, and woe, and wailing which must elapse before the judgment of the great day. It seemed a long time to Abel, when he saw his name written first in heaven's register, to look forward through unnumbered ages till the last name should be written there. But these long periods of time all pass, and when looked back upon, seem but an hand-breadth. But there is no past in eternity; no future, no starting point, no goal, no beginning, no end. Now the existence of the soul merges into eternity; and here our conception of it is lost. It claims half the eternity of God. If not without beginning of days, it is without end of years. If not *from* everlasting, it is *to* everlasting.

How terrible the thought of an eternity of pain, an immortality in hell! The sting of the worm is, that it never dies! The fierceness of the fire is, that it is not quenched! How long eternity must seem when its every moment is lengthened out by misery! Imagine a lost soul ages hence, seated in its dungeon, or rolling in the fiery lake, and this may be its sad soliloquy:

“These limbs are not yet consumed. I feel no symptoms of death. I am stronger to suffer to-day

than when I first felt these flames. And ever, as they burn higher and hotter, I feel my strength to endure, enlarging with them. I have tried to count the long years as they rolled by, but in vain. I cannot tell how many ages are gone; but eternity is still to come. I have wished, I have prayed, O! how earnestly, for death—but it mocks my prayer,

‘I feel my immortality o’ersweep  
All pains, all fears, all time, all years;  
And, like th’ eternal thunders of the deep,  
Proclaim this truth—Thou livest for ever.’”

Brethren, who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? Shall it be yourself, or the neighbour, the friend, the child sitting by your side. Who shall it be *among us*?

How transporting the thought of an immortality in heaven! Imagine yourself for a moment there. With many of you it will be but anticipating what a few more days shall reveal. Sit down amidst the general assembly and church of the first born above—amidst patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, the greatly good of every age and of every land, who are all contemporaries there. Go with Paul to his glorious mansion—standing near, perhaps next, to the throne; and look on the many mansions in your Father’s house, stretching off on every hand in long perspective! Wander with Baxter along the banks of the river of life, as it comes gushing from the throne of God, and rolls its glad waters afar over the plains of heaven! Sit down with Payson under the shade of that tree, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and gives from

its leaves healing and immortality to the nations! Rejoin the company of those who have gone up from your own fireside, and taken their crown! Among them all "there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain." God himself has wiped away tears from off all faces. In the midst of the innumerable multitude, there is one "as it had been a Lamb slain." To him every eye is turned; before him every knee is bowed; at his feet every crown is cast; and from unnumbered harps, and from unnumbered voices, blended in heaven's loudest, sweetest song, swells high the anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"—"unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." To be ever "with the Lord"—this is the very heaven of heaven.

II. In passing to our second general topic, we notice,

1. The interest manifested for the soul by the higher orders of beings. We are not isolated or companionless in the universe. We are not alone, with God, even in the world. "Millions of spiritual beings walk the earth, both when we wake and when we sleep." Invisible to us, we are well known to them; and sharing a common spirituality, subjected to the same high authority, children of the same great Parent, they can have fellowship and family sympathy with us. The powers of darkness, with all their might and malignity, are leagued against us. Why did Satan tempt our first parents to their fall? Why does he so impiously usurp, and, as a strong man armed, so desperately defend, the empire of the soul? All along the way to heaven, is not every step contested? Are not all who travel



there called to the wrestling "with principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places?" Have you ever thought that the spirits of darkness hold a sleepless watch over you, and brave afresh the threatening thunders of Omnipotence, to maintain their mastery over you? When some subtle suggestion of evil has glided into your mind, or some sudden and lion-like temptation has fiercely sprung upon you, have you ever thought it came from hell—the result of counsel and deliberation there held?

And the holy angels—what wakeful sympathy and intense solicitude do they feel for us! Ministering spirits as they are, they leave heaven on no errand so gladly, as to minister to the heirs of salvation. "There is joy in heaven, among the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." The very first movement of repentance in the sinner's bosom, sends a wave of joy over all their bright and blissful abodes. "This our brother that was dead is alive again, the lost is found."

Were you, reader, while your eye is upon this page, to repent, we can tell you what would take place in heaven. The angels, who are watching around you, would send up some messenger with the glad tidings. As he sped upward with joyful haste, the band who stand at heaven's gate, or bend over its battlements, to receive messengers from distant worlds, would descry his approach, and come forth to meet him; and, as they learned the joyful tidings he bore, they would gather eagerly around him, and conduct him through the gates into the city, and over its golden streets, and amidst its tro-



phied palaces, to the eternal throne. And all the inhabitants of heaven would be gathered, by proclamation, about him there; and your name and your repentance would be proclaimed aloud; for you are well known—known by name, in heaven; and they would call for the Book of life, and write, or rather read, there your name, and they would call for the book of God's remembrance, and blot out the record of your sins; and they would publish and proclaim your right to share with them, thenceforth, in the tree of life and in the holy city. And God, the eternal Father, would be well pleased that another rebel was subdued, another soul saved; and Jesus, the blessed Saviour, would see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; and the Holy Spirit would rejoice over his new and glorious creation; and angels would rejoice, that their brother, their younger brother, whom they had long mourned for as dead, was alive again; and the saints would raise high, and still higher, their anthem, "Worthy the Lamb that was slain." And perchance the mother who watched over your infancy, or the father who counselled your manhood, or the beloved friends who have gone before you to the spirit-world, would press through the throng, and Oh what speechless joy would thrill through their bosoms! And there would be joy in heaven, more joy in heaven over you, than over all those myriad hosts of bright and unransomed spirits who have kept their first estate. "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

2. Let us take our stand upon another theatre—

amidst the opening scenes of creation. For long unchronicled ages, God dwelt alone, the sole inhabitant of space. From his solitary throne he beheld not an atom, nor a living thing; all was a mighty blank, a vast and empty void. God spake—and, responsive to his voice, planets, and suns, and systems sprang forth out of nothing. He poised the sun on its axis, balanced the planets in his hand, and marked out every star its pathway in the heavens; and the vast solitude of space, which but yesterday was empty, was filled with a universe of mighty, and moving, and peopled worlds. He spake, and the earth came forth out of nothing. It appeared in a hitherto empty place, without foundation, without support; suspended upon nothing—a huge, and formless, and floating chaos; and a thick darkness, a moonless, and rayless, and starless night, brooded over it. God spake—and there was light. And the wild waters flowed together into one place, and the dry land appeared, clothed with greenness and fertility, and order and beauty sprang forth from the very bosom of chaos; and the earth was fitted up as a well appointed mansion for living things; and exhaustless supplies were provided and garnered up for the provision of all their wants. But as yet there were no living things to partake or enjoy. God spake—and air, and land, and sea, were filled with a crowded population; the waters were stored with fishes, the fowls ascended on outspread wings towards heaven, and the dry land was covered with myriads upon myriads of living things, from the little insect which sports in a drop, or peoples a leaf, to the giant Behemoth

which shakes the solid world with his tread. All these fed upon the bounty, and shared in the goodness, of the great Creator; and the hum of activity, and the voice of joy were heard over all the peopled earth. And the great Creator looked down upon the world which he had made, and filled with life, and sensation, and happiness, and said, "It is good!"

And shall the work of creation terminate here? Shall nature be furnished with no anointed priest? Shall God have no worshippers? Among all the myriad tribes of his creatures, shall there be none like himself? none to love, to reverence, and to adore him for all his goodness and his wonderful works? And was it for soulless creatures of dust, who are incapable of progression here, and whose existence must terminate for ever at death, that God reared up the mighty fabric of the universe? No. The work is not yet complete; the last and crowning product of creative power is yet to appear. "And God said, Let us make man." There was no consultation when the sun was made—none when the heavens were spread abroad as a curtain, and embroidered with stars. He just spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. But now, when the lord and governor of earth is to be created, there is a pause, a preparation, a consultation. *Let us make man.* So, as the result of this counsel, so God created man. A simple word sufficed for the creation of all things else. A word called the earth out of nothing, and evoked order out of chaos, and the body of man out of dust. But a far higher instrumentality is employed in the creation of the

soul. "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." A word is a thing foreign and external to the individual uttering it; a breath is an emanation of himself. And if all that God created by a word was alien from himself, the soul is the very "inspiration of the Almighty." And it is like God, modelled after him; a miniature likeness of him, as finite may be of infinite. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." If God had minded his power, his wisdom, and his goodness, in the other works of his hand, he would mirror himself entire in the human soul. For nothing but a spiritual and immortal nature could bear the full image and superscription of the Most High. His own image and representative, the soul, was invested with God's prerogatives—knowledge and dominion. Every where else the dominion of blind physical force was established, but the power of knowledge was conferred upon man. By this he was to disarm physical force; curb and direct the fury of the mightiest elements; subject the lower tribes of creation to his bidding; and have the dominion, not of the strong arm, but of the intelligent will over all the earth. Let them, (thus runs the great charter,) "let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth." And when God had thus made man he said, "It is very good." And he blessed them, and "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." With such high endowments, and in the midst of such august preparations, was man ushered into being, and proclaimed the



lord and governor of earth—"a king and a priest unto God for ever and ever." Every circumstance connected with his creation, from the pause and the consultation which preceded, to the emphatic "very good" which crowned it, shows the high estimate which God placed upon the spiritual and immortal nature of man.

3. Let us take our stand upon another and a higher theatre; amidst the surpassing wonders of redemption. In creation the goodness of God operated freely without restraint or hindrance. No attribute of his own nature, and nothing without himself, interposed the slightest obstacle in the way of his breaking up the eternal silence and solitude of space, and peopling it with worlds. A simple volition, a naked putting forth of Omnipotence, was all it required to create. He spake to dust, and there rose up a human body. He breathed into that body, and man became a living soul; that is all man's creation cost him. But in redemption there were hindrances in the way; hindrances which Omnipotence alone could not remove. There was a compensation to be made, a satisfaction to be rendered, a harmony to be adjusted among the divine attributes, and a security to be obtained for the highest interests of all God's intelligent creation, before Omnipotence could stretch forth its arm to redeem. The very term *redemption* has a relation to price; and from the cost of the soul we may determine its real value. For it is a known law of divine action, that means are always accurately adjusted to ends—that more, or more costly means, are never employed than those which are necessary to effect



the end; and the price paid for the soul is thus a fair and an infallible index to its value.

Now, we know the cost of the soul's redemption. "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood," is the song of the redeemed in heaven. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." Where shall we find terms or illustrations wherewith to set forth the greatness of this price? Does not the apostle plainly intimate that we have no ideas at all adequate to this subject, when he tells us that we were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold. It is by these "corruptible things" our ideas of value are represented. But "they that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches"—the Barings and the Rostchilds of the earth—"none of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him." Let the princes of the earth heap their gold, and their silver, and their precious stones together; let the earth disembowel herself of her treasures, and the ocean give up her gems—and they cannot redeem a soul, for "the redemption of the soul is precious," too costly to be bought at such a price. It was himself the great Redeemer gave for us! Not a single act of obedience, or of suffering; not a treasure from his coffers, or a limb from his body, or a single pang of his Immanuel-mind—but *himself*. "He loved us, and gave *himself* for us."

Come, then, and view this "unspeakable gift." Come with angels, and see the great Redeemer stooping down from the throne of Godhead, laying aside his kingly crown, emptying himself of the

worship and the blessedness of heaven. We know something of what he stooped *to*, but how little we know of what he stooped *from*; how little we know of what he *forsook*! Come with the shepherds to the manger of Bethlehem. And has the Lord of life and glory stooped so low? If an angel should voluntarily become a man, or a man a worm, it were for a wonder. But for Christ to descend so low—to cross the infinite chasm which separates him from the loftiest angel—to pass below angels—to descend the chain of being so far—to stoop from the majesty and blessedness of Deity down to the weakness and the infirmities of humanity—this passes wonder! God became man—a stable, a manger—not even a palace or a tapestried chamber. No wonder the shepherds said one to another, “Let us now go even to Bethlehem, and see this thing which has there come to pass.” Come with the chosen disciples to Gethsemane. See the God-man stretched all night long in agony upon the ground! See the sweat, as it were great drops of blood, gushing forth and bathing his body. Listen to his cries of anguish, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” “O! my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!” “Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow?” Come with the disciples to Calvary. See the victim, whom they have scourged and condemned to death, approach. A crown of thorns is pressed upon his bleeding brow—a heavy cross is laid upon his lacerated shoulders—and the rabble of Jerusalem are following him, with cruel mockings, as he is dragged along through the streets. “It is their hour, and the power of darkness!” They

drive the nails into his hands, and feet, and then thrust the spear into his side. For six hours he hangs upon the accursed tree—bleeding, dying. There was not a friend to be near, or to comfort him then. Pharisees, and Sadducees, and Jewish priests, and Roman soldiers gathered, in stern array, around his cross, and wagged their heads upon him. He complains not of the friends who had forsaken him, nor of the enemies who so cruelly entreat him; nor of the nails or the spear, the vinegar or the gall. But one cry of anguish escapes him, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!” To be forsaken of God—that was the cup he trembled to drink—yet he did drink it to its very dregs.

But why all this? “God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son” for its redemption. Not that he needed the world, for the word which created could destroy. His breath could have blotted it out of the universe, and called into being ten thousand other worlds, unblighted by the curse, and peopled by beings higher and holier than we. What was that world which God so loved? Not this material world, for it is but dust, and soon will be burned with fire. Not these bodies, for they too are dust, and soon will be nothing but food for grave-worms. What was that world which God so loved? That miniature world in your own bosom. In his estimation it was too precious to be lost—too precious to be annihilated; and he gave the most hoarded and priceless treasure in his whole empire to purchase it; and Christ from the throne of heaven stooped down to the pain and the ignominy of the cross to redeem your soul.

But the payment of the purchase-price alone cannot redeem the captive. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to embellish and beautify. He is at once the beautifying spirit of the material, and the sanctifying spirit of the moral, universe. Where he comes not, all is darkness and chaos; where he comes, all is light, and order, and beauty. In the first creation the earth "was without form and void," and "darkness was upon the face of the deep," until the Spirit came and brooded over the chaotic waters. In the new creation, he fits up a world of moral light and beauty out of darkness and chaos. The soul is in ruins; her jarring and discordant powers at war with each other, and with God; and the darkness of ignorance, of error, and of sin, broods gloomily over her. The Spirit descends, and moves upon this spiritual chaos; rebuilds and embellishes; and, though active voluntary resistance is put forth against him, though often grieved, and often quenched, never tires in his work, until the soul is crowned with more than its pristine honour and glory, and fitted for the "inheritance of the saints in light." Even in her deepest degradation the whole Godhead gather around the soul, to raise it up again to heavenly places; and in the mystery of its redemption we find the grand crowning evidence of the worth of the soul.

Allow me, in conclusion, to gather up this whole subject, and throw its entire weight, as an emphasis upon the question of our text — "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" It is but a small portion of the world any one individual can hope to possess. You,



however, are supposed to obtain the whole. The dream of universal dominion is realized by you. You are crowned a monarch; the broad earth is your empire, and you reign without a rival or a foe. Every land pours its treasures into your coffers. Gold and silver and precious stones glitter around you. The luxuries of every climate are spread profusely upon your table. Crowds of obsequious servants anticipate your slightest wish. When you appear, in your gilded equipage, among the multitude, they say, "It is a God." And to the remotest corner of your empire—in the snow huts of the pole, and under the spreading palms of the south—your praises are sung, and all delight to "do you reverence." They watch your slightest look, and chronicle your every word, and obey your every nod. Pleasure waits evermore in your train, and holds her enchanted cup continually to your lips; and you have no wish ungratified, no hope unfulfilled—for you have gained the whole world. And what will all this profit you, if you lose your own soul? Will it fill the aching void within? Will it ease you of a single pang? Will it rob death of his sting? Will it pour the light of life and immortality into the darkness of the grave? Will it buy you a single drop of water, when you are tormented in the quenchless flames? Will it bribe you an entrance, through the gates, into the city? And where will be your empire, when the world and all things therein shall be burned with fire? You may now feel but little solicitude about your salvation. Amidst the pressure of your business, and the hurry of your pursuits, and the tumult of your passions, heaven and hell may seem



too far off to demand much attention. Amidst the clamourings of the appetites, and the distractions of the outward world, the soul may seem too impalpable—its wants and its aspirations too ethereal—its rewards and its punishments too spiritual, to share largely in your thoughts. There is a strange madness in the human heart. While all heaven and all hell are bending over you with unutterable solicitude, and enlisting their sympathies and their mighty activities in your cause, shall you alone be thoughtless and indifferent amidst all the movements which are circling around you? Have you alone no interest at stake? Why stand you here all the day idle? Just starving for the bread of life, wherefore “spend your money for that which is not bread?” Your eternal salvation to work out, wherefore “spend your labour for that which satisfieth not?” Can you sleep under the uplifted thunderbolts of angry Omnipotence? Can you go smiling and sportive onward, when “your way is dark and leads to hell?” “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”