



*Yours truly*

*W. Mackenzie*

# S E R M O N S

BY THE LATE

WILLIAM MACKELVIE, D.D.,

OF BALGEDIE.

WITH MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

BY JOHN MACFARLANE, LL.D.,

LONDON.

EDINBURGH: WILLIAM OLIPHANT & CO.

LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.

MDCCCLXV.

*100. s. 71.*

# CONTENTS.

MEMOIR, . . . . .	PAGE 7
SERMONS—	
I. THE VALLEY OF BACA, . . . . .	65
II. GOD A HABITATION, . . . . .	89
III. RIGHT VIEWS OF THE SAVIOUR'S CHARACTER AND WORK AN ANTIDOTE TO DOUBTS AND FEARS, . . . . .	111
IV. LOST COMFORT SOUGHT AND FOUND, . . . . .	135
V. LIFE THE GIFT OF GOD, . . . . .	156
VI. THE GREAT DAY, . . . . .	182
VII. INTERCOURSE WITH THE SAVIOUR INTERRUPTED AND RENEWED, . . . . .	205
VIII. A COVENANT GOD THE BELIEVER'S GLORY, . . . . .	225
IX. CHRIST PRAYING FOR HIS PEOPLE, . . . . .	248
X. THE ESTIMATE IN WHICH CHRIST IS HELD IN HEAVEN, . . . . .	272

## MEMOIR.

THE author of the following Discourses was born in Edinburgh on the 7th March 1800. His father died when he was only nine months old, and from that time the mother and her child became the peculiar care of Him who 'relieveth the fatherless and the widow.' In conversation with intimate friends, he often referred to it as fixing, if not the day of his gracious birth, the beginning of his gracious providences. His mother very soon thereafter removed to Leith, where he passed the days of childhood and youth. Delicacy forbids more than an allusion to the difficulties she had to surmount in providing for herself and her son. When specifying some of these the tear stole down his cheek, and his manly bosom swelled with emotion. Suffice it to say, he had scarcely got the elements of a common education when it was necessary to apprentice him to a respectable draper in Leith. It is at this point that what is really interesting in his life begins. It was during his apprenticeship that he became the subject of religious impressions, and decided to study for the

Christian ministry. Hitherto he had been a hearer in the Established Church, but within its pale he had remained a stranger to the regenerating grace of God. He had been attending one of the Leith Sabbath schools. Here the importance of earnest piety dawned upon him. He at once left off attending 'the kirk,' and became a worshipper in the Secession church, at that time under the pastorate of the Rev. Mr Aitchison. He refers to this transition in a letter to a friend, written when he was far advanced in life; and it is so far fortunate that we can quote from it. He becomes his own biographer. 'Know then that I am not a born Seceder, and that I had passed sixteen years of my life before becoming one—that I never had a relation connected with the Secession, nor one that could even endure it. The step I took in becoming one was very important; but it was deliberately made, and has never been repented of. It has subjected me to some sacrifices, and not a few inconveniences. What these were and are may probably come out more opportunely some other time. It is with the step itself, in relation to the Kirkgate congregation, that I have now to occupy your time. Till that was taken, I sat in North Leith parish church, under the ministry of the Revs. Drs Johnstone and Ireland, but was not a member of it, nor even personally known to either. Circumstances of a very peculiar kind led to my association with persons who belonged to the Kirkgate congregation, and that association led to my joining with them in church-

fellowship. I had not long done so when I became an object of interest to the minister, by whom I was laid under obligations of a kind I owe to no other. With the renunciation of the business to which I was bred, and my entering upon the study of the ministry, you are already acquainted. That study had been almost completed when Mr Aitchison died. . . . The congregation now meeting in the Kirkgate is not the congregation with which I was connected; still I feel interested in it. The place is associated in my mind with some of the most solemn and exciting incidents in my life; and I confess the feeling sometimes steals across my heart that I would like to spend my last day's ministry there. I have, however, been only once in that church since I left it, and that was with yourself on a week-day, shortly after the passing of the Reform Bill, when Sir Thomas Dick Lauder and John Archibald Murray, the candidate for parliamentary honours, addressed the portion of the Leith constituency met upon the occasion. I thought it a very dull, and a somewhat absurd affair. But my mind was otherwise occupied. I was seeing faces they could not see, and thinking of an affair of no possible interest to them. I confess still further to something like a grudge towards those who have destroyed, or at least seriously injured, that congregation. To them I know you are partial; to me they seem like locusts or the cankerworm.'

How the young Mackelvie managed to get the elementary classical books, and the funds necessary to

his education, is not known. He was rather shy in reference to this portion of his early days. A flickering light, however, is cast upon it in the following extracts from letters which were written after his perusal of the life of the late Mr Jay of Bath :—‘ I turned to it with cordiality and eagerness, continuing the perusal to the exclusion of everything else, till I had reached the end. That perusal has at once gratified and disappointed me ; gratified me in the interesting information it has afforded respecting many of Mr Jay’s contemporaries, and disappointed me in respect of the little information it has afforded of the writer himself. I have now a very accurate knowledge of Mr Jay as a *preacher*, but know no more of him than heretofore as a *man* ; and the one single impression conveyed to my mind by his autobiography is, that he was a preacher and nothing else. True, to excel in this sphere was his sole aim, his one constant endeavour, and he will henceforth stand out as a conspicuous example of what concentration of energies will achieve. But strange it is that, while becoming the eminent preacher, he did not become something more. While scanning others, he never seems to have scanned himself. Individuality is never indicated by anything he says or does. He never lets you into the recesses of his mind or heart, nor makes you aware how he was affected by the most peculiar and striking incidents of his life. How widely he differs in this respect from John Foster, whose incidental letters constitute an autobiography without his

intending it (a remark, by the way, strikingly characteristic of Dr Mackelvie's own correspondence). What he has written about himself is simply the prefaces and dedications of his printed works, cast into another form, and his publisher would do well to reprint it under the title of "Lectures on Homiletics and Pastoral Theology." I would like to have known the influences which operated in the formation of his character, and the talents with which he was naturally endowed. But he seems not to have known them himself, or to have wanted the power to describe them. I have traced many resemblances to William Jay in myself; but there is one point in which we seem to differ most essentially. He is content with describing things as they exist: I must be ever speculating on their hidden causes. Like him I must have facts, but I must also have reasons for the facts, which he does not seem disposed to inquire after. How much his early history resembles my own! Yet I think, were it expedient or necessary, I could give a far more interesting account of mine than he has given of his. But how different the career of William Jay and William Mackelvie! Well, every man in his own order: he, a planet of the first magnitude; I, a diminutive star, descried only by the telescope, and hardly perceptible even by that. Like these orbs, we have both moved in the spheres intended for us. Though our careers are so diverse, our opinions may fully coincide; and some of the few characteristics which develop themselves in the autobiography as distinguishing him,



might serve to describe the minister of Balgedie. Had I met with Letter XII. in manuscript among my papers, I could have supposed it an account I had written of myself in early life, to which some other person had prefixed a wonderful story of preaching before the Duke of Sussex, with a design of adding interest to it. Still, I have had a better training than Jay, so far as preparatory education is concerned; and I have the conceit to think that I have not been one whit behind him in self-culture. . . . You say that you can suppose nothing in my history so interesting as the incident of the 'mason-boy' in the meeting at Tisbury. Well, for the mason-boy substitute the draper-boy, and for the meeting at Tisbury substitute South Leith parish Sabbath school, and for Mrs Turner substitute Mr James Taylor Smith, and for the Rev. Cornelius Winter substitute the Rev. Leigh Richmond, and you have the place and the *propiæ personæ* of a scene in my own life very analagous to one in the life of Jay. There is one little difference, however. The mason-boy attracted the attention of the persons in the Tisbury meeting by his personal appearance and manner of attention, while the draper-boy attracted the attention of the persons in the Sabbath school by the talents he displayed. He had taken a conspicuous position in the school before the visit of Leigh Richmond (who had also been there before); but it was that visit which came to operate upon his destiny, and led to his becoming a minister. True, he did not then become a preacher, nor for many years

afterwards; but he often conducted that school in the absence of Mr Smith, and that school was generally attended by as many adults, in the capacity of hearers, as were likely to attend Mr Jay's youthful ministry. But the draper's boy did not get so easily set afloat as the mason's one. Still there is some little resemblance in reference to support in the one case as well as the other. Instead of Sir Richard Hill, and John Thornton, the philanthropist, substitute Miss Primrose, Hermitage, Leith, and Miss Walker of George Street, Edinburgh—the one an Episcopalian, whose father, Sir ——— Primrose, was beheaded at Carlisle for the support he afforded "Bonnie Prince Charlie," the other a member of the Established Church of Scotland. But while the mason's boy's support extended to his board as well as his education for all the period of his preparatory studies, that of the draper's boy extended only to his education, and even that only to one session at College, at the end of which Miss Primrose died—at least before the return of the second; and with her death the interest of Miss Walker ceased, she being a party prompted by the other, rather than a mover in it. Then the draper's boy found himself adrift upon a lee-shore, without pilot or provisions. How he kept from foundering, and floated into harbour, he is not here called to say.

According to his circumstances, William Mac-kelvie was both a diligent and successful student. After shop hours, he had to ply the hard, but to him the pleasant, tasks of conning his rudiments, prepar-

ing his grammatical exercises, and deciphering his Greek. Not unfrequently, in the cold and dark nights, he had to go to bed when light failed him, there being neither fire nor candle in the house. Sometimes he had to sist the lessons altogether, the school or college books being pawned for bread. Nothing daunted, the 'draper-boy' held to his object. Few of our distinguished men have had to fight their way through more discouraging obstacles. He set a stout heart to difficulties, and ever through life viewed them only as things to be overcome. It was a proud day for him when he matriculated in the Edinburgh University, which he did in November 1809; and still more elating was his becoming a student of theology at Glasgow, under the late distinguished Dr Dick. He was not a general favourite with his fellow-students. His innate modesty, his past life of struggle, and his straitened means, kept him back from society. Never, even in after life, did the reticence thus generated entirely leave him. Alike, however, by the Professor and the Hall, was he respected for his carefully-prepared discourses, and transparent integrity of character. During the five years of his theological career he supported himself by teaching. Towards its close he became a tutor in a private boarding-house at Dollar Academy. Some time before his licence, he became the travelling companion of a young gentleman, moving about with him among the counties and cities of England—an arrangement which greatly gratified his appetite for general

knowledge of men and matters, and which supplied, to some extent, the lack of other means of information, if not of learning. During this peripatetic schooling, he got into some public discussions upon popular questions in certain of the towns he visited, the details of which he was wont to give with genuine glee and humour.

On quitting the Hall, after his fifth year, he returned to Leith, and passed the winter in diligently preparing his 'trials' for licence. In the interval, he became a member of what was called 'The Theological Society,' which met every Saturday afternoon in the old session-house of Bristo Church. While attending its meetings he became somewhat better known to his fellow-students, and 'came out,' as it is termed, alike in character and action. He even led the way into plans and discussions. Sometimes, rather roughly, as might be expected, he put down semblances of guile and obsequiousness; and, with a pardonable self-importance in him, discoursed feelingly upon the superiority of self-reliance in the formative period of life, to the privileges and luxuries of those who mainly depend on the smiles of parentage or patronage. He was so far in the right, only he pushed his views too far, by narrowing the circle of judgment to his own personal experiences. This, indeed, was the one error in judgment which vitiated some of his opinions on men and minds, which inclined him sometimes to dogmatize, and to be wanting in forbearance with others, whose tastes and charac-

- ters had been formed under the amenities of a sunnier training than had been his lot. We naturally overestimate that *regimé* upon which we have made a successful struggle in the world. To this also might be traced his lack of sympathy with some of those gentler but equally real sorrows which accompany, more or less, the progress of all in the battle of en-getting and uprising. When made to listen to the difficulties of others, he was apt to pooh-pooh them as less than nothing beside his *infandum dolorem*, and probably he was sometimes right. It must in justice be added, that this peculiar temperament never interfered with the genuineness or constancy of his friendships. 'You ask me,' he once wrote, 'what I mean by saying that the "gathering-coal is on my heart?"' Alas, for my dull intellect! I thought the figure so obvious, that its meaning would be seen by anybody; but it appears I get among the clouds when I begin to soar. I thought the use of a "gathering-coal" was to keep in a fire, and so might become a metaphor for *constancy*. When I contrasted Mrs M.'s warmth of manner with my seeming coldness, and spoke of the gathering-coal being upon my heart, I meant to contrast impulse with permanency, and to say, that though I did not express myself with great fervour, you would yet find me a steady friend. . . . There is one point of my character which you appear to have properly estimated—my readiness to express my contempt for persons that displease me; but there is another, which you have failed to take into account

in your estimate of me, and which seemed to surprise you when it developed itself a little more in London than ever you had seen it elsewhere—that is, a disposition to make friends, and keep them ; a disposition which I feel naturally powerful in me, but which is much subdued in consequence of bitter experiences. In early life, I gave my whole heart to certain individuals, and expected theirs in return. I thought I had them, till circumstances proved I had been deceived. I have since then often placed implicit confidence in friends, but the supports on which I leaned have generally broken down ; and now, like a snail that has often got a blow on the horns, I am almost afraid to look out of my shell ; or, to speak in language more literal and dignified, I am afraid to venture my regards out of myself, lest I should be wounded by disappointment, or disgusted by deceit. Yet I ought to have mercy on those who displease me, for the act which provokes me is perhaps more frequently the result of thoughtlessness than intention. And I, of all men, should abstain from judging persons I do not know, for I have learned there is often a vast difference between the visible and invisible man—betwixt the apparent and the actual character. I hope I shall improve : I wish to do so. I am no misanthrope—I am no Stoic ; and why should I give the world reason to suppose me either ? But how ever shall I be able to check my indignation against heartlessness and selfishness ?

On his birth-day, 7th March 1827, by the Presby-

tery of Stirling and Falkirk, he was licensed to preach the Gospel. He preached his first sermon in the pulpit of the Rev. Dr Harper of Leith, under whose pastorate he had placed himself after the death of Mr Aitchison. His text was 1 Pet. ii. 25: 'For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.' He delivered the sermon under considerable trepidation, aware, as he was, that he had many in his audience who had known him from boyhood. His utterance was rapid, and a little thickish; his manner natural, though it was nature in distress; his earnestness was unaffected, warm but not effervescent. It was a well-composed discourse; of logical arrangement; as to language, well expressed; in its figures, chaste; and, upon the whole, of telling effect. To the end of his days, there was a certain degree of *flurry* about his style of preaching, traceable to a constitutional sensitiveness he found it difficult to control. He became an acceptable preacher, not a popular one. He desired to be speedily settled, but one year after another still found him on the list of the Church's probationers. He got dispirited, talked of giving up and adopting some other pursuit, but still held on in hope. It was during this probationary career that he went to supply the pulpit of Albion Chapel, London, at that time vacant by the death of Mr Gray. This was quite a place to his liking. He thought London was his sphere, and that in Albion Chapel he could be useful and happy. Oft, in after life, he descanted upon the

foolishness of such an estimate, and blessed God for having chosen for him 'the lot of his inheritance' in a quieter corner of the vineyard. He was, however, much appreciated by the Albion friends, and might have been called by them, had not another, of more winning qualities, stepped in and taken their hearts. While in London at this time, he was for six weeks the guest of the late Sir John Pirie, one of the members of Albion. Mr Gray had died under Sir John's hospitable roof. To Dr Mackelvie, Sir John proposed the publication of some of the sermons which had been preached by the late minister of Albion. The proposal was accepted, and in due course the volume appeared, with a memoir of the author by the young probationer. This was his first essay at authorship, and a most creditable one it is. There was not a little in Gray's character and fortune with which his biographer sympathized. He too had been a man of difficulties, and without patrons; he had conquered the one, and had not been left to London life and work without the other. This pleased Mr Mackelvie's idea of what ought to be. As long as need be, Mr Gray had successfully fought his way up; and now it was but fit and proper that he found his reward in the conciliation and encouragements of no less a man than John Pirie, of whom it may be recorded, that he was a sterling and useful patron of whatsoever things were liberal and benevolent,—that to the United Secession Church in London he accorded, for a long period, substantial support, and never succumbed, as



many of his class do, to the blandishments of the Anglican Church, but died as he had lived—a sound and hearty Presbyterian.

On his return to the north, Mr Mackelvie was appointed to supply the congregation at Balgedie, Kinross-shire. Mr Gibson, the pastor, was dying at the time, so that his helper could scarcely be regarded as a candidate. Mr Mackelvie, however, made such a deep impression, that, without hearing candidates, the congregation, on Mr Gibson's death, gave him a unanimous call upon the 16th April 1829. On the 6th of August following he was ordained the minister of Balgedie by the Presbytery of Dunfermline. He was introduced to his charge on the following Sabbath by his early friend, the late Rev. Mr Lowrie of Lauder. His first sermon was preached from Heb. xiii. 17: 'Obey them that have the rule over you,' etc.

And so life's steep ascent was thus far reached. It was well and bravely done. If all were known, few would refuse to declare that a more thorough bit of terse and inflexible moral endurance could not well be looked for. The Leith draper-boy—the orphan—has done it. In poverty, isolation, and excommunication he formed his purpose: he shall be a minister of the Secession; he stood to it, suffered for it in tears and in hunger, in cold and in solitariness. And now, with a proud sense of 'owing no man anything,' he can complacently and thankfully measure his course from the corduroys of the penniless boy, to the 'customary suit of solemn black' in the Balgedie pulpit. In all this he has had

equals, but not superiors. Our Church's strength and beauty lie in such elevations to the high places of the Christian sanctuary. So long indeed as the Church of our fathers draws upon the stalwart stamina of her native peasantry, impenetrated, sanctified, and guided by the Spirit of her covenant God, she needs not care for the smiles of the rich and the learned, and may, with equanimity, leave to mere pretensiveness such privileges and advantages as are supposed to accompany social and ecclesiastical preferments. The infant Church of Christianity must have died out but for the common people, and must have been without officers but for the fishermen of Galilee. William Mackelvie is the type of a class; and may the day be long that shines upon a Church whose ranks are regularly supplied from it.

Balgedie is a small, straggling hamlet at the foot of one of the Lomond Hills, and upon the north-eastern bank of Loch Leven. It is indeed one of those places which may be called 'Patmos.' Of society, strictly speaking, it cannot boast; of trade there is not even a murmur; and the noise of the far-off world scarcely crosses the bosom of the lovely lake, upon whose shores stand the church and manse of the United Presbyterian Church. There are two or three farm-steadings in the immediate vicinity, where the lairds themselves reside, and here and there besides, the humble cottages of their dependants. No wonder, then, if at the first the young minister felt as if exiled. He liked a little of the world's stir,

and rather courted than refused its innocent excitements. But in Balgedie manse he was in danger of degenerating into the anchorite. In his neighbours, who were almost all members of his congregation, he had a very sober and pious, but at the same time very simple-minded and pastoral companionship. 'It may be affirmed, without flattery,' says Dr Fraser of Kennoway, in his 'Life of Ebenezer Erskine,' 'that to the present day the inhabitants of that parish, generally speaking, are superior to many in respect to their attainments in Christian knowledge, and their marked veneration for godliness, sobriety, and honesty.' Among such a people, and surrounded by the quiet but picturesque scenery of the Lomonds and the loch, did Mr Mackelvie's ministry commence. There were misgivings as to his suitability for the situation. It was not the place of his choice. He would have preferred one in a town or city. He thought himself qualified for such. He had studied men, and considered that he knew them. Having been what he called 'knocked about' from the cradle upwards, the light and not the shade he reckoned ought to have been his lot; and from the depressions and disadvantages of an unpatronized youth-time, he claimed the right to go up to the battle and the breeze of manhood-experiences, in the hope that if he did not 'cut a figure,' he should at least be more useful and influential. Immediately after his ordination, he penned the following letter:—'I have now got one week passed over my head in my new situation; and if it may be

taken as a fair specimen of what sort of a life I am to lead here, it promises to be a pretty comfortable one. But, of course, it would be the height of folly to say anything about the future from the short experience of the past. There have been no sessional or congregational meetings yet, the source frequently of the bitter waters that ministers drink ; but I am not going to mar my present enjoyment by thoughts of what may be. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." We had a favourable day for the ordination, and a very large company. Mr Hay delivered an admirable address, which you will probably see in our "Theological" next month. Thirty-four gentlemen sat down to dinner, who, with the exception of five of my own friends and two elders, were all clerical. Bad as the day was on Sabbath, our audience was three times too numerous for the church, and we were compelled to hold forth from the tent, contenting ourselves with the broad dull surface of umbrellas instead of intelligent faces. Mr Wm. Lowrie gave two most appropriate discourses—in the forenoon and in the evening. In the afternoon I fulfilled the whole apostolic commission, adding baptism to the preaching of the word, naming a little, plump, chubby-cheeked chap, "William Mackelvie." What sort of a gentleman he will turn out to be, it is not easy to augur. But if names have any influence, his friends need hardly expect the early part of his life to be characterized by much stability. I am now left to my own resources, and begin to find that I shall have my hands full enough for a while.

The whole of yesterday I gave to the sick of the congregation, and a considerable portion of to-day has been lost in consequence of having had to go a considerable distance to a funeral. If you wish not to embitter your future life with regrets, give every moment just now to writing sermons. You will find the advantage of it whether you should be long or short time a probationer. The best discourses I have were written when I was a student. This says little for my improvement; but it is the fact, and that is all I can say for it. I only wish that I had written more of them. I should then have begun more speedily and more cheerfully some of the other and not less important duties of my office. Write me soon, and give me the news of the Hall.'

Dr Mackelvie was from the beginning to the close of his ministry perseveringly diligent. He lived in his Master's work. No portion of that work was neglected. His chief labour, however, was in his study and upon his discourses. These were prepared with care, as those of them which are now published will testify and prove, and they are but a fair sample of the stock. He fed his people with the 'finest of the wheat.' He constantly enriched his own mind by reading. It is astonishing, considering his means, what a large and judiciously chosen library he collected; and no man could make a better use of it than he did. Not only did this appear in the varied and sound information for which his public prelections were distinguished, but in those powers of conversation

which made him at all times an intelligent and improving companion. He was an admirable expounder of Scripture ; went at once to the root of the matter, and pointed the moral with a clearness and force that secured for him the love and confidence of his people. But he was busy without as well as within the manse. He regularly visited the flock, and was a son of consolation in the chambers of the afflicted and the dying. To the young he was a most interesting instructor, and never failed to intensify their attention upon the subjects which he handled in the class. His extensive reading qualified him for this important department of pastoral duty. This even tenor of his way he pursued to the end. The consequence was, he brought together a numerous congregation of intelligent and pious people, and he kept them in peace and prosperity so long as he lived. Still, with plenty to do, and a heart to do it, he felt that something should be devised by him to prevent his falling into ennui or sloth from the seclusion of his rural abode. For a time he had his hands filled with improvements of the ground and garden which appertained to the manse. Here there were neither walks nor fences, fruits nor flowers. It was a little wilderness when he came to it ; but under his horticultural taste and care, it soon became as beautiful a spot as could be. He divided his time between that garden and his study. Both were models, and from both came forth good fruit. He studied botany to enrich the one, and theology to empower the other. His garden treasures were for

his hours of ease. They did everything but speak to him, and few could enter more freely than he did into the exquisite lines of Horace Smith :

‘ Your voiceless lips, O flowers, are living preachers,  
Each cup a pulpit, every leaf a book,  
Supplying to my fancy numerous teachers  
From loveliest nook.

‘ Were I, O God, in churchless lands remaining,  
Far from all voice of teachers and divines,  
My soul would find in flowers of Thine ordaining,  
Priests, sermons, shrines.’

But still that manse and garden were unfurnished, while no Eve was there to share with him their peace and felicity. He was too busy during the first years of his ministry to notice the vacuum to which his nature at length awoke. Looking out for a wife was to him no easy matter. He felt that his happiness and usefulness were inseparable from his choice ; and, from what was known of his taste, it was believed that he would not be easily pleased. In June 1833 he thus writes to a friend :—‘ According to my notions, there are very few women in the world qualified to be proper wives for Secession ministers. She would need to be a woman of some means, and yet of plain manners ; to have a well-cultivated mind, with unfeigned piety ; to be a person able to associate familiarly with all ranks, and at the same time never to forget her place ; and a thorough economist, and yet no niggard. To these general qualifications, the woman that would become the wife of the minister of

Balgedie would need to possess others of a peculiar kind. But what these are it does not become him to say. In all my peregrinations through our Church, I have seen only one or two ministers' wives such as I could be happy with. Marry whom I may, I am sure she will not be such a woman as some would prefer. Some prefer a showy person, able perhaps to exhibit a little waggery. Give me a woman with nothing to commend her but common sense; an easily found person, you will be disposed to say, but of such rare occurrence in my wanderings as has never yet crossed my path—at least never so crossed it as to warrant my paying addresses to her.'

Upon the 6th of May 1836 he was married to Miss M'Intosh, daughter of the late Dr John M'Intosh of Long Acre, London; and his prudence and sagacity were never shown to better purpose than in this choice. In her he had all the qualifications specified in the preceding extract, and some others in addition for which he had not bargained, but which he discovered to be better than his fancy had painted. Mrs Mackelvie survives him, else more might be added in her favour. It is now her consolation that she was in every sense of the word a helpmate to her husband; and, after making life's rough path as pleasant as might be, soothed his declining years, and sweetly and gently composed his spirit as he faded away. Two sons were born to him, who now give promise of honouring their parentage. The education of these sons became a rival to the garden. For years it in-



tensely occupied his mind. His devotion to them was beautiful and blissful. Better training and drill could not have been. When their education was finished, he found for them mercantile situations in Liverpool, where, with their widowed mother, they now reside. He felt their departure bitterly. It threw him back again upon the exceeding stillness of his early life in the manse, made all the more depressing from the busy and happy stir of their boyhood glee and up-bringing. There is something very touching in the following extracts from the letters to them after they had left the manse :—‘My dear William,—Four weeks have now passed away since I left you in Liverpool, a stranger among strangers, with many of whom you have no doubt become familiar, and feel the strangeness of your position in other respects passing away. At your age the mind may rapidly adapt itself to circumstances. “*Four weeks!*”—a twelfth part of the first year of your apprenticeship—a sixtieth part of the whole—is gone. How rapidly it has passed away, and how speedily the remainder will follow! . . . John and I have been contriving the destruction of earwigs since you left, and I have been greatly amazed at the numbers of these insects in my little garden. The average destroyed every day for the last two months exceeds 200, which makes an aggregate in that time of more than 12,000. I have often spoken of the teeming population of the insect world, but never till now had any distinct conception of it. Twelve thousand insects of one species, with probably

twenty times as many of other species, in one spot of earth little larger than some gentlemen's dining-halls! What then must there be over the great globe itself? and these but a very small portion of the organized beings sustained in life by their great Creator. What a magnificent idea is thus suggested by the words of the Psalmist, "Thou openest Thy hands liberally, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing;"—yes, does it with entire satisfaction to the creature, and with perfect ease to Himself. What wisdom, too, is displayed in the distribution of them! Had these 12,000 insects been all visible at one time, what a loathsome sight my garden should have been! Yet they were all there, and probably as many more of the same kind, and that without lessening its attractions for me. Yes; there is room in God's world for all God's creatures, whatever theorists may think and say to the contrary. Like the earwigs in my garden, there may sometimes be an inconvenient pressure of them in one place and at one time, but that is merely an accidental circumstance arising from an accumulation of attractions.'

On his sixtieth birth-day he writes:—'Sixty years seem a long time; so they do in prospect to a young man of twenty-one, but short in review to one who has passed through them, especially so when he comes to ask himself what has been their beneficial results. The work that remains to be done has acquired a magnitude now that it never had before; not that it is in reality greater, but looked at in con-

nection with the time left to accomplish it, it seems as if it could not now be overtaken. Blessed be the Lord it is not so, though it is foolish in the extreme to leave the attempt so long unmade. I have got cause for regret that the work has been so feebly executed. This confession is made in the hope of stimulating you to great diligence in the performance of religious duties, and in the cultivation of the divine graces. It is surely desirable that there should be no regrets at all in the future. Surely this is possible; for there is one who had no self-upbraiding, but in the prospect of dissolution could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," and so he could confidently assure himself that a happy futurity awaited him. So far as these thoughts and feelings permit, I enter upon a cheerful old age, thankful for the position in life which has been assigned me, the temporal good things I possess, and the good hope through grace I am warranted to cherish. The hardships in early life through which I had to pass, have been of special use to me. These you have hitherto escaped; but I hope you have obtained benefit otherwise. And now, my earnest wish is, that your remaining life on earth may be as comfortable and joyful as my own, and that we may meet together to join in the same glorious service, and participate in the same heavenly joys for ever.'

Dr Mackelvie was the planner of what was called 'The Dick Club,'—a society formed of those ministers who had studied under Professor Dick at Glasgow.

Its first meeting was held at Edinburgh in 1835. He there read an interesting account of the poet 'Michael Bruce,' whose birth and burial places were in the vicinity of Balgedie. At the suggestion of some of the members, he consented to draw up and publish a new and extended life of the poet. In August 1837 the said work was published. In addition to the poems of Bruce, it contained a careful, elaborate, and successful vindication of his right to the authorship of certain of the 'Paraphrases' and 'Odes' hitherto claimed for Logan, who had been a companion of Bruce in early life. The work is most creditable to him, and brought him golden opinions from other quarters than his own Church. Literary men discerned the act of justice, and complimented the author accordingly. The edition of the work was soon sold off; and with the profits he erected the present chaste monument that rises upon Bruce's grave in the churchyard of Portmoak. He was much gratified with the reception of the volume. Among other tributes, he got the thanks of Principal Baird of the Edinburgh University; of the Lord Chief-Commissioner Adam of Blair-Adam; of Robert Chambers, Esq., the eminent publisher; of Mr Young, W.S., etc., etc. The latter invited him to his country residence, Harburn, near West Calder, and had the generosity to say in his letter, 'I really am at a loss to express to you my approbation of the manner in which you have executed the work, and the justice you have done to the talents and memory of a most extraordinary youth, more espe-

cially by rescuing them from the fangs of a poisonous reptile.' In a letter to the compiler, Dr Mackelvie thus refers to these matters:—'On Saturday I went out to Manuel Mill, the residence of Principal Baird, by whom I was received in the kindest manner possible. In the course of conversation, he informed me that he had addressed a letter to Dr Lee, calling his attention to the Life of Bruce, and requesting him to examine the minutes of Assembly at the time the addition to the Paraphrases was made, to see if any claims could be found there which might be advanced in favour of Logan. Dr Lee replied, that the minutes referred to were lost, and that he was not satisfied with the evidence advanced in favour of Bruce. He is, however, to investigate farther into the question, and communicate the result to Dr Baird. . . . On fulfilling an engagement at Linlithgow, I crossed the country to West Calder, and along with Mr Fleming spent a most delightful day at Harburn, the country residence of Mr Young, W.S., who is so exceedingly pleased with the Life of Bruce, that he recommends it to all his friends. Sir William Hamilton was dining with him the week before I was there, to whom he lent it, with a request to give him his opinion. . . . I dined on Wednesday last with Mr Robert Chambers, who suggested to me that I should send a copy to Mr Disraeli, with a note, calling his attention to the controversy about the 'Ode to the Cuckoo' and other pieces, assigning as a reason the fact, that he has written a book on the plagiarisms and quarrels of

authors, and requesting him as a favour that he would get it noticed in the *Quarterly* and other periodicals. There are nearly 500 copies sold already. There have been eighteen reviews, and I know of three or four others forthcoming. I should have mentioned that I have been at Blair-Adam since I last wrote, and had a confab with the Commissioner, who says I have succeeded in making a most interesting book. He wishes me to call again upon him. The Admiral came to Balgedie, and thanked me in person for the copy I sent him. I gave him a full, true, and particular account of Peter Borthwick, M.P. for Evesham, at which he was greatly amused. O the vanity of authors!—I might have let that pass.'

It was about this time that the honorary degree of D.D. was conferred upon him by the College of Hamilton, Ohio. He highly appreciated the honour, and all the more that it came to him from America.

Upon the 14th of June 1849, died the Rev. Dr Hay of Kinross. He was one of Dr Mackelvie's nearest neighbours. They appreciated greatly each other's excellences, and were ever ready to manifest friendly regards in the interchanges alike of private and public intercourse. Dr Hay was a man of a very sound and judicious mind. He had a large heart, which, while it dropped its love upon all within the sphere of his home and pastorate, took in also the wider range of Christian brotherhood and mundane interests. The Church in all its sects was dear to him; and the politics of the world were duly studied

—and studied keenly in so far as he saw them to be developing the designs of the mediatorial kingdom. After his death, the family entrusted to Dr Mackelvie the writing of his memoir, and the editing of a volume of his writings. Nor was the trust misplaced. The memoir is one of Dr Mackelvie's most careful pieces; worthy alike of the venerable subject, and of the judicious author. •

Dr Mackelvie was not sectarian. He loved his own, and regarded with fraternal love all other Churches. He could not endure the bigotry of sect. 'I love the Secession,' he writes, 'in all probability more than you do. It is my Church by choice—it is yours by chance. I desire from the bottom of my heart her honour and stability; and you cannot refuse to bear me witness that I have done what little lay in my power to promote them. But while I love the Church, I hate with a perfect hatred the narrow minds, the prejudices, the self-complacency, the censoriousness, the intolerance of some of her ministers. With them no sect is pious but their own. Everything is right with them, and wrong with others. They are disposed to misconstrue the motives and impeach the character of any one who speaks in favour of another religious body. They attempt to bear every man down who manifests the disposition to think and act for himself. This is no exaggerated picture. The truth of it is with me matter of bitter experience. If I draw off from those men, it is simply because I have no sympathy with them. If I avow

my contempt for their conduct, it is because I hold it to be really contemptible. . . . Even in the private intercourse of life there is a vast deal of this, and hence I am right glad to escape from it; not, as you suppose, to encase myself in selfishness, and cherish misanthropy in seclusion. No; I retire for peace's sake, for love's sake, for generosity's sake. I wish to cherish regard and esteem for my brethren, and neither wish to see nor know anything that would lessen either. So far from 'slamming my door in the world's face,' I would set it open to the walls, and bid the world enter. I am blamed by some of the churls here for using its hinges too freely, and the number that enter and re-enter it bears ample testimony that the resident within is neither hermit nor misanthrope. You err in estimating my character as unamiable by my strong disapprobation of what is sordid, selfish, unchristian, and ungentlemanly. I confess I have not the knack of concealing my sentiments. I conceive readily, and I speak freely. I may not be always so lenient as I should be, but this arises from my love of truth and sincerity. Less truth and honour would bring me more good will, but I cannot purchase it at such a price. Mine is a character, as I have abundant reason to know, which is not generally popular; but it is one highly appreciated by high-toned minds, and the one to which they turn in the day of adversity and desertion. You would have me alter it, or at least lower its tone. I can do neither. It is the character I have cultivated



and cherished as the one of all others valuable to the world, though not immediately advantageous to its possessor. It is the character which has begotten your confidence, and secretly commands your approbation.'

The catholicity of spirit which he breathes in these sentences, led him at an early period to take an interest in what used to be called 'The Relief Union.' He introduced the first motion upon the subject to the Dunfermline Presbytery in April 1834, and was followed up immediately by a similar motion made in the Relief Presbytery of Dysart by Mr Gorrie of Kettle. During the next thirteen years, amid good and bad report, he stuck gallantly to his union colours, and had the unspeakable satisfaction of seeing that union consummated in Edinburgh upon the 13th of May 1847. The leading and influential part which he took in this matter is his memorial within the pale of the now United Presbyterian Church. The United Synod appreciated his services. He was appointed to draw up 'The Narrative of the Union;' and he did so in a most creditable manner,—one of the beauties of this volume being the almost entire ignoring of himself, and of the part he took in the affair. In further honouring him for this, the Synod elected him its moderator in 1856. After this he retired to the amenities of his peaceful retreat. Having gained the object of his heart, he never again appeared in the public actions of the Church, seemingly quite satisfied that he had done his duty, and done it effectually. It

only remains to be stated that, during the course of the thirteen years' agitation of the Relief Union, he wrote and published in the *United Secession Magazine* a series of seven letters upon the subject, which had a great effect in preparing the minds of both Churches for what was before them. Perhaps these compositions are the most creditable to his head and heart of all the publications of his life. They were no doubt ephemeral in their character and influence; but the object at which they so powerfully and eloquently aimed has been gained, and will ever speak to their praise. The respective subjects of these letters were—'The History of the Overture, and the Synod's procedure in reference to it;' 'The Obstacles to the proposed Union;' 'The Secession Objections;' 'The Alleged Corruptions of the Relief Church;' 'The bearing of the Union on the temporal interests of both Denominations;' 'The bearing of the Union on the practical piety of our people;' and 'The bearing of the Union on the evangelical religion of our country.' He closes the seventh and last letter with a paragraph, which some in these days may read with profit:—'The time has now surely passed away when evangelical dissent is to be left to propagate itself only or chiefly by the very questionable means of division and rivalry, and the period arrived when the great principles it evolves are to be held of such importance as to lessen the value of a few merely accidental concomitants, when men will be anxious to support and spread the truth as it is in Jesus, without

quarrelling about the diversified modes in which it may be administered without offence to its Author, when the Church will exhibit itself as a community of hearts *cemented by attachment to a common object*, and thus rendered one. It is now left to the Secession and Relief Synods to say that such a period has come. And oh, how much honour is to be bestowed, or disgrace inflicted, on our common Christianity, according to the tenor of their reply. Thou Spirit of unity and peace, in whose hands their hearts are, do Thou constrain them speedily to determine, saying, "We are already one in purpose, henceforth we shall also be one in action and affection, and walk together as those who are agreed."

Dr Mackelvie also took a great interest in the question of 'National Education.' He sent no fewer than five long and elaborate articles upon that essential subject to the *Voluntary Church Magazine*, which at the time excited a good deal of interest, and may still be read with advantage by both sides of the argument. The topics he discusses in these papers are—'National Education—as to Quantity,' 'As to Quality,'—'Claims of the Church Clergy,'—'Legislative Interference,' and 'Legislative Interference continued.' Dr Mackelvie was the pleader for government aid in behalf of schools, though as a Voluntary he denounced such aid on behalf of churches. 'No Voluntary,' he says, 'need fear that he is in any way committing himself when he contends for the one and opposes the other. The inhabitants of the United States are

not dunces, and they have practically shown how broad is the distinction which they understand exists between them; for whilst they have made the most ample state provision for their schools, they have left each sect to support its own places of worship; and let this truth be indelibly impressed upon the mind of every well-wisher of Britain, that till a system of universal education be established, and religious incorporations be abolished, the great proportion of its inhabitants will never be anything else than semi-barbarians and intolerant bigots.'

It was only in the beginning of 1839, that the compiler was informed by Dr Mackelvie that he 'was already far advanced in preparing a complete list of the ministers and students in the Secession for a hundred years.' His design was to publish these 'statistics' as soon as he got the lists completed. The approaching union with the Relief Church, however, caused him to halt; and on its consummation he had entirely to recast them, that the names of the Relief brethren might be incorporated. To execute this work, he underwent a vast deal of labour. If Dr Johnson has earned the title of 'the Lexicographer,' that of 'the Statist' is due to him. He continued to work upon this *magnum opus* till failing health obliged him to desist. In 1843 he thus writes:—'I have done very little to the statistics since winter, and will not be able to return to them with constancy till the long evenings set in. I am done with the Presbytery of Paisley and Greenock; so that by look-

ing at the almanac, you will see how much remains in the history of the congregations. But I am only half through the work when that is finished. I mean to give a summary of all the matters contained in the lists, in the form of narrative; so that I have at least a year's work before me, even though I do nothing besides. It is possible some very important changes may take place in the denomination before I can go to press, and which would undo a great part of my labour.' Again in 1844 he writes:—'I am toiling night and day at my statistics, and do not wish to be taken away one hour from them that has not some imperative demand upon me. They have been so long on hand that I have now got sick of them, and am in great danger of taking a scunner at them, and putting the whole in the fire. I wish them, therefore, off my hand with all possible speed. I am transcribing the part I have written, in order to show it to Fullarton on my way to Glasgow, according to an arrangement made with him when introduced to him; and I am afraid I will not have a complete part ready by the end of October, which I would require to have, in order to give him a right conception of the work.' And again in 1855:—'You urge me to diligence with the statistics. There is no hurry. They will lose nothing by delay, but rather gain by it. A time of war, high income tax, and stagnation of trade, is not a suitable time for publishing books, especially books of limited interest, large in size, necessarily expensive, and adapted for consultation

rather than reading. I am afraid the work will not be a very valuable one at any time, and confess to some hesitation about publishing it at all. Of its utility I have no doubt, but that utility would be chiefly confined to United Presbyterian ministers and students. I do not expect that it will ever reimburse me for the labour bestowed upon it, and the expense incurred by it, much less that it will afford me any profit. I have already injured my health by it, for I ascribe much of a former illness to a fit of intense application to it. I am not disposed to subject myself to a similar ordeal again, if I can avoid it; and therefore the statistics must bide my leisure, inclination, and slow progress, though their continuance in my portfolio till death be the result.' And in his portfolio they did lie, till the diligent hand that had designed and arranged them lay motionless. The work is indeed his legacy to the Synod; and it is much to be desired that it be completed by some competent person, and then, under the Synod's sanction, given to the Churches.

Dr Mackelvie had very few intimate friends. In his intercourse with his neighbours and brethren he was alike frank and obliging. The Presbytery and the county of Kinross alike testify to this. But he had too much of the sensitive-plant in his nature to go out upon society with petitions for its benisons. He was, however, decidedly and most sincerely a friend to those he honoured with his confidence. 'No person,' he thus writes, 'ever yet charged me with ingratitude. I never lost a friend save by death. Those who were

my friends in youth are still my friends in advancing age, and I am as ready to accept kindness at their hand as I ever was. But there are men who do not know how to show kindness; and even when they do, it is from some improper motive—either to gain an ascendancy over you, or serve their purposes by you. From such beings, good Lord deliver me! I believe there would be far more gratitude if there were more genuine benefactors. There is often as much reason for complaint against the bestower as against the receiver of an obligation. He who receives a good turn should never forget it; he who does one should never remember it. . . . So far as I know myself, I never make pretensions; and this want of simulation has led some to think that I am unamiable. I confess I cannot weep when I am not grieved, nor laugh when I am not merry. I leave it to the other sex to discover their passions upon all occasions, to shed tears like summer showers, and as short-lived; but experience tells me that my passions, if not as prompt, are much more strong and lasting. Feeling! why, sir, the intensity of it has often befooled me, and what is worse, made me the dupe of designing wretches. I have seen a dog come fawning to a man, and then bite his heels. I have seen another growl at his approach, and afterwards flee to his defence. In the world's judgment, the first was a kind dog, the other a surly mastiff. In delivering their character, it was not taken into account that the latter had been oft beaten for manifestations of affection, and driven into his

apparent surliness by suffering. It was denied he had a heart ; and so he was chained in his kennel, while the puppy was admitted into the parlour, and caressed as a dog of feeling. So fares it often with men as well as dogs.'

In letter-writing Dr Mackelvie was truly pre-eminent. The short and simple extracts which are given, and which are all that are allowed in the space reserved for this sketch, illustrate and prove this. With ease a whole volume of these could be compiled and published, and might challenge competition with any modern worthy in the same line. He studied his letters ; and elaborated many of them, as he did his literary contributions or pulpit discourses. In such exercises, indeed, he had his *excitement*. Too sensitive for the platform, or indeed for any public exhibition, he surrendered himself to such influences as led him to a systematic demonstration of his feelings and opinions in this quiet and unobtrusive way.

'The bird that soars on highest wing,  
Builds on the ground her lowly nest ;  
And she that doth most sweetly sing,  
Sings in the shade, while all things rest.'

'I cannot, for the life of me,' he thus writes, 'stick to a sermon to-night, so I shall even try if I can stick to a letter, in order to relieve myself for a little from an overpowering depression. The snow is but partially melted from the fields—the heavens are of a leaden hue—a cold wind howls through the casements. I feel as if I were exiled in Siberia, or shut



up in an American prairie. Thanks to the goose that has yielded me a quill, to the chemist who has furnished me with this sooty liquid, and to the mechanic who has provided me with this snow-sheet. Though I never saw them, I love them much ; for by their aid I can speak with my fingers, and forget, in communion with my friend, that I am far from him, or that I am really alone. . . . Knowing as you do the oppressive solitude of this place, you cannot wonder that I should occasionally seek a change of scene. This last winter has been the dullest season of my existence. I have, indeed, both read and written a great deal, and thus diverted my thoughts ; but the perpetual silence that reigns here makes me feel as if I were in some region of the plague. If Loch Leven would only ebb and flow like the tides in the Forth, the change would be interesting ; but the everlasting sameness that pervades it makes me feel as if novelty and progress were at an end, and that, like Lot's wife, I had become a pillar of salt on the banks of the Dead Sea. They lie who say that a monastic life is favourable to the cultivation either of the mind or heart. In this state the man sinks in the animal. Who would not rather wear than rust out ? When inability to do evil constitutes innocence,—when pastime becomes study, and useless speculation becomes wisdom,—then the life of the monk will become virtuous, advantageous, and useful. Real enjoyment is not to be found in abstraction ; friends are as necessary as books, and action as leisure ; and happy is the man

who has these in moderation, and knows how to appreciate them. . . . Were you to read some of the balderdash you have written some twenty years hence, you would be astonished. I make the remark under the consciousness of its applicability to myself ; and I would give no small sum if I could collect all the letters I ever wrote, and commit them to the flames. Why, my friend, should not educated Christian men study to speak and write for the good of edifying? It is our crime that we do not adhere to Bible rules in our most common affairs, and our condemnation will be certain to proceed from the neglect of those things which we could have most easily performed. We are to be judged for every idle word. How foolish, then, to sit down and deliberately write what is nonsensical and trifling. There is neither necessity nor propriety in writing sermons to our friends ; but we should endeavour to render our letters valuable, by filling them, if possible, with what is instructive or useful. A correspondence in which there is nothing of this kind, is unworthy the name. A letter, like everything else which is prompted by love, ought to be the very best we can write. In justifying frivolity, I have too often fallen back upon my constitutional temperament. But I hope I have been led to see that self-control is my duty, and that I am bound to cultivate a temper, and pursue a conduct, in unison with the precepts of Christianity. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt : in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

sound speech, that cannot be condemned ; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.'

Many letters, embodying to the full these fine sentiments, are left behind him ; but we regret that we have space only for the following, which were addressed to the compiler in seasons of domestic sorrow. The reader will find them richly imbued with the consolations that are in Christ :—

BALGEDIE, 30th August 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have just returned from the missionary tour, and been put in possession of the mournful intelligence of your sister's decease, by your letter which was waiting me. The laws of ceremony require that I should address to you an epistle of condolence. It is not, however, from any respect to these laws that I am led to acknowledge the receipt of your letter. If I could say anything that would be of use to you, I should only regard it as imperative duty to do so, whether ceremony required it or not. To attempt to reconcile you to the divine dispensations, I presume is a needless labour. You have surely too just views of Jehovah's administration not to say in reference to this, as to every other event, 'It is well.' Your sister, who now in God's light sees light clearly, is expressing her hearty approbation of her change, and saying, 'The Judge of all the earth has done right ;' and surely you will not dispute her testimony, or deny that such a sentiment becomes creatures

whether in heaven or on earth. I do not say to you, You should not mourn. I might as well say to you, Renounce your nature, and cease to be human. You may water your couch with tears, and be innocent; but beware that you do not *murmur*. One wish breathed to yourself that she had been spared, is to disapprove of the event, and henceforth to be criminal. Whilst you grieve for your loss, rejoice in her gain. You regarded her as an heir of the grace of life, and ought it not to be matter of joy that she has now entered upon the purchased possession? Think what a happy meeting it must have been between your glorified father and the first child of his which has been admitted to share in his felicity. The becoming time for grief is during the illness of a friend, when we are unable to alleviate the pain by which the body is racked, or dissipate the doubt by which the mind is tortured. When death does for our friend what we could not do ourselves, doubtless we should be pleased. ‘And David said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious unto me, that the child may live? But now that he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.’ I am aware that you will be disposed to say to me, ‘You never had a sister, and cannot, therefore, properly sympathize with one who suffers such a loss.’ I admit your objection. But amidst your mourning, think also of your mercies. Do you not pity the writer of this letter, and all such

solitary persons, who throughout life have been strangers to the happiness you have experienced ; who have had no sister's bosom into which to pour their joys and their sorrows ; whose griefs have been the more poignant by the mind preying upon itself ; and whose joys have lost half their relish for want of a partner to share in them ? It may be thought no great consolation to be told that you are sharing the calamities of life along with others. It is a condolence, however, employed by inspired comforters, who deem it proper to apprise the persons whom they address, that ' nothing has happened to them but what is common to men,' and ' that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world.' Such consolations, however, even philosophy can administer. But as a Christian, and a Christian minister, you know of higher comforts ; and I hope that you are making it manifest to the world and to the Church that the religion of Jesus is not a vain thing—that its consolations are neither few nor small—that it is the only system that furnishes joy in tribulation, worketh patience, and inspires a hope that maketh not ashamed—that it is like the true friend that is born for adversity—that it reconciles us to bereavements, and enables us to take cheerfully every adverse circumstance in life, knowing that in heaven we have a more enduring substance. Remember that to you the men of the world look for a proof of these pretensions of Christianity, and be careful that you do not misrepresent it. As Christians we command a much more extended

sphere of observation than this world can afford. The inhabitants of heaven look down ; wonder at the efficacy of divine power, and admire the grace of God in you. ‘We are a spectacle to the world, to *angels*, and to men.’ I say not these things by way of instruction, but only to stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance. The best of us need spurs to duty ; and he is not properly exercised who takes it amiss to have his memory refreshed with the precepts of our holy religion, or his attention directed to its comforts and supports. Would to God that all our souls were more chastened by the trying dispensations of His providence, and more sanctified by the influences of His Word and Spirit ; that the discipline by which He is endeavouring to train us for honour, glory, immortality, and eternal life, might not be lost upon us ; and that, in danger, in difficulty, in poverty, in bereavement, in sickness, in death, we might be able to lift up a testimony for God, and show that the truth as it is in Jesus is the one thing needful. That your soul may prosper, and be in health—that, as you have had sorrow in the world, you may have peace in Christ—and that you may be able to comfort others with the comfort wherewith you are comforted of God, is the earnest prayer of,

MY DEAR SIR,

Your sincere Friend,

W. MACKELVIE.

BALGEDIE, 4th June 1837.

MY DEAR M——,—I have just finished reading the newspapers, my usual occupation on the Monday evenings, and I do not think they ever were so mournfully interesting to me. My mother was engaged with the *Stirling Journal* while I was perusing the *Scotsman*, and called my attention to the paragraph which gives an account of your accident in Clackmannan. Never did I perceive before the vague impressions conveyed by a notice which does not condescend to particulars. I wished the newspaper could speak, and tell me who were of the party, and what was the amount of injury sustained by each individual; but till you or some one else tell me to the contrary, I must remain in the belief, and feel accordingly, that nothing very serious has happened to any of you. I returned to the perusal of the *Scotsman*, and was requested by Mrs M—— to read aloud the births, etc., when we were both delighted to find that a child by Mrs Malcolm Ellis was among them. We paused to speculate upon the joy that would be felt in Kincardine Manse, because of the happy event—the good news from a far country. We read on, and were confounded to find that life and death are often in as close juxtaposition in a family as in the pages of a newspaper. So Marion Kidston is no more; and the smiles with which you bade her adieu were rainbow hues, though you saw not and thought not of the watery cloud on the other side. I think I hear you at this moment reminding your dearest friend on

earth, and she reminding you in return, of the last words and last acts of her that sleepeth in the land of strangers, the many promises and expressions of hope that were interchanged, which words have become indelible by this stroke, and which acts will be often rehearsed, and these promises are now null, and these hopes are not to be realized. I knew not Marion Kidston, but I can weep when I think of her mournful story. Her recent marriage with a long attached friend, her removal from the land of her fathers, her joys, mixed with trembling, in the anticipation of becoming doubly interesting to her husband, by being the wife of his bosom and the mother of his child ; and in the very moment when this bright, and to a woman the most delightful of all anticipations was realizing—she expires. But I do now weep, because through you I have some interest in the subject of this mournful narrative ; and, my dear friend, I foresee the intense anxiety which this circumstance must awaken in you, should it be the will of Heaven that your partner approach a similar crisis. But you are too enlightened to construe events in providence into omens, and imagine that God is telling one relative, by the manner in which He disposes of another, that such also is the procedure He is to adopt in reference to him. You know, without my telling you, that He has warranted no such constructions, for He hath said, ‘Thou knowest not the way that I take.’ I know what it is to wait the event which has proved fatal to your sister-in-law ; and I sympathize most



deeply with Mr Ellis, and were I known to him, I would tell him so. May he know, by sweet experience, that there is a God who can give comfort in trouble. I can imagine the solitariness of his feelings, for I know how I should feel in this place were such a calamity overtaking me, which may God forbid; but I experience the wisdom of His command, 'The time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not.' We have no right to judge what is opportune or inopportune in providence, for it is beyond our ability to decide. But judging only from appearances, and speaking according to the views and feelings of men, this event seems doubly untoward as it respects Dr Kidston; an event which must have affected him deeply at any time, but which must be tremendously severe to him in present circumstances, when disease renders him incapable of bearing it. It is well he knows where his strength lies; and it is somewhat cheering, amidst this gloom, to think that he has been more than ever disposed of late to say unto God, 'Be Thou my strong habitation, to which I ever may resort.' And now, my dear friend, were I less interested in you than I am, I could tell you so much better than I can now do how much I feel for you, and I could then write many fine sentiments by way of consolation; but I love you, and therefore I can only weep with you and for you; and if only I could be persuaded that my prayers would

avail on high, I would pray with you and for you ; and entertaining the hope that they will not be rejected, I shall bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. Mrs Mackelvie desires me to express her sympathies in your behalf, and wishing to be most kindly remembered to Mrs Macfarlane, who, as one with you, I wish to be understood as included in all I have said in this letter as applying to you.—And believe me,

MY DEAR M——,

Yours in very deed,

W. MACKELVIE.

BALGEDIE, *June 12, 1844.*

MY DEAR M——,—I hope you do not need any assurances from me as to my deep sympathy with you in the heavy calamity with which God has been pleased to visit you. I should be unworthy of the name of friend, father, man, if I did not do so ; but nevertheless it is with me a matter of great difficulty to express that sympathy in the manner I should like, and as befitting the occasion. It is very easy to tell you that I am very sorry on your account, but every person who offers you condolence will tell you the same ; and it will be well if, when telling you so, they inflict no pain, by creating the suspicion in your mind that their condolence is mere words of course.

But let us not expect more of man than it is in his power to give. It is not possible for persons little connected with us to feel much interest in our concerns, and it ought to please us that they do not annoy us with the mockery of it. It is not also always possible for those connected with us to declare in words how much they are affected by things that concern us. They are afraid of appearing insincere; they know themselves awkward in matters of feeling, and thinking it impossible that their friends should be ignorant of their feelings, they are less ready than others to express them. Let not such persons be misjudged. They are those who would turn their backs to you to hide their tears; while many of those who look you in the face and address you in tones of sadness, have no tears to hide, or if they have, would not wish them hidden. This vindication of a class is meant for the plea of an individual. I confess to it. I would rather at this moment avoid writing you, and would certainly have **done** so but for the misconstruction to which my **silence** would have been liable. Nature has not given me the power of putting pathos into my speech; and education has not enabled me to acquire the power of showing it in my writings. Judged by the one or the other, in most cases, I will be held as heartless. Need you wonder, then, that I shrink from a duty, by the performance of which I am so apt to suffer, or be surprised that I put in a plea for those who fail to speak much of sympathy, when the calamity of their friends seem to demand it. My utter powerlessness

to tell how I feel, while my own heart tells me how much I feel, compels me to implore being excused saying anything about it.

If you are of the same mind with the royal psalmist, you will consider the time past, now that the child is dead, for tears on your part, and condolence on that of your friends; and your answer to all who express surprise at conduct in their opinion so unnatural, will be that of the parent to whom, in this as well as many other instances, you wish to conform yourself: 'While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now that she is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring her back again? I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me.' The promise was not only to you, but to your seed; and believing that it involves uninterrupted and unending bliss, you cannot surely grieve that your child has been so short time kept from the realization of it, or that she has realized it before you. She is in heaven. You have no doubt of it. Have you as little doubt you will go to her, since she will not return to you? This is a pointed question. But is it not that which God is now putting to you in His providence? If you can answer it to your own conscience in the affirmative, I call you a happy man, and your wife, if she can do the same, a happy woman; and if your child's death has been the means of bringing you to this state of mind, I call it a happy event; and if you and I meet in heaven, and ever ad-

vert to the subject, you will admit in that case that I was right in endeavouring to bring you to look at it as an event admitting of congratulation, and right in expressing a wish that God would give you cause for thinking it such.

‘For us our friends sicken, for us they die.’

O forbid it, God, that they should sicken and die in vain! Twice now has the destroyer come and touched you in the tenderest points. There was a need be; may it not continue, and render a third visitation necessary—may your past loss be your future profit; and what I wish for you I wish for myself, and hope that the event you mourn has already been turned to some spiritual account by me. If this hope be not delusive, I am certainly warranted to call the event which has caused this letter a most interesting one to me, and to conclude it by subscribing myself,

Your deeply sympathizing Friend,

W. MACKELVIE.

BALGEDIE, 10th September 1844.

MY DEAR M——,—I am sorry to hear that Mrs Macfarlane continues so poorly. This circumstance of itself is calculated to depress you, and coming as it does after successive bereavements, is likely to lay you prostrate. I presume that by this time you have learned that affliction is the best school for both exegetical and practical theology. You have not been profiting by it, if you have not by means of it perceived a meaning and a force in many passages of

Scripture that you never saw before. I have read an enormous quantity of books professing to give expositions of the Bible, but not one of them ever enabled me to perceive the real import of the wise man's remark, when, after tendering the counsels: 'In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider,' he adds, '*For God has set the one over against the other;*' but a number of peculiar circumstances in my history have illustrated it in a way I little expected. I have had alternations of prosperity and adversity. I have seen some prosperous while others continued to struggle in poverty, and I have known the same parties in these different conditions at different times, as the wise man, according to his annotators, has given us reason to expect; but experience has led me to believe that prosperity and adversity go hand in hand, and not merely follow each other, and that the one is constantly acting as a counterbalance to the other. Every instance of prosperity that I can recall to memory as having occurred in my history, is associated in my recollection with a like amount of adversity; and so much so is this the case, that I never have any prosperous circumstance occurring to me without wondering what adverse one is to be connected with it, and dreading the one because of its almost certain connection with the other. Once a little incident occurred to me of which you were a spectator, and which I have often thought of since as a type of what is occurring to every man in his particular sphere. You remember a private car-

riage driving up to the Synod door, and a footman letting out a gentleman, who came up and cordially shook hands with me as an old acquaintance, and he had no sooner left me than a broken down tradesman, not quite recovered from a debauch, came up and addressed me in an equally familiar manner, implying also former acquaintanceship. You chose to remark when the latter left me, 'Mac., that's a humbler.' I was not conscious that I needed any humbling upon the occasion, but many an antidote has since been presented me, which was more obviously needed. Now, my dear Mac., your prosperity in Glasgow has been very obvious. Your own heart alone can tell the heavy amount of adversity which has accompanied it. You have had exhibited to you the system of divine providence as a system of counterbalances; and how the joy which we are so prone to indulge to excess, is counteracted by the adversity which we are called to consider. I hope you are not forgetting your prosperity in the consideration of your adversity, and insinuating that you have a great deal more of the one than the other. If providences expound Scripture, they sometimes lead us also to put a force in the meaning of certain passages when applying them personally, which circumstances do not warrant. I can suppose you exclaiming, in your moments of depression, '*All Thy billows are quite gone over me.*' But further consideration will prevent the use of this language, for it is not given us to know what afflictions are within God's power. It is more likely that our

experiences, rightly investigated, would lead us to call those incidents so painful to our feelings, ripples rather than billows, and that they have hardly been allowed to touch us, instead of having gone quite over us. I have heard ministers preach on the text, 'I will sing of mercy and judgment,' and heard them remark, in illustration of it, that we should sing of mercy *before* judgment, and that we should sing of mercy *rather* than judgment, for we have had much more of the one than the other; but, so far as I remember, they all failed to direct attention to the fact that David meant to praise God for the judgment as well as the mercy. 'Wherein we greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.' I am led to these remarks by your last letter; for certain expressions in it do not seem to indicate that you are *singing* of judgment, but that you are in danger of yielding to your manifold temptations. I remember reading somewhere of a gentleman who, visiting a lady a long time after she had been bereaved of a child, and finding her still indulging excessive grief, ventured to remark, 'I see, madam, you have not yet *forgiven* God.' It never struck her till then that her grief was susceptible of such a construction. Now, I must not be understood by these remarks to insinuate that you have ever thought for one moment that God has done you an unkind act, or is capable of doing so; but I wish to impress your mind and my own with the characteristic of God's providence as a system of counter-



balances ; and since you allow the prosperity He has afforded you, allow also the need there is for adversity, that you rightly understand that the one is set over against the other for beneficial purposes, and that being so instructed, you are more disposed to *sing* of judgments than *sigh* over them—a disposition certainly not natural to any of us, and only to be learned in that school where Job learned to say, ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord takes away ; and blessed be the name of the Lord.’ Oh to be so taught ; and oh to be able to make profiting by this instruction appear to all. I know not what it is to have lost ‘a little charmer,’ and therefore cannot know how I should feel under such an afflictive dispensation ; but I desire to read Scripture by the light of the inverted torch which poetic sentiment would sculpture on Jessie’s tomb, and prepare myself for such an event by the discoveries which its bright glare enables me to make. I persuade myself that I have been learning by the incidents in my own history, and I am deceived if I have not also profited by the incidents in yours. ‘For us our friends sicken, for us they die,’ says the poet ; but I, who have no poetry in my composition, would be disposed to amplify the thought, and say, For us our friends prosper, and for us they are visited with adversity ; and I wish to understand that God speaks to me by you as my most intimate friend, and that you are unfolding the roll written without and within that I may read it. . . .—I am, sincerely yours,

WILLIAM MACKELVIE.

BALGEDIE, 10th January 1857.

MY DEAR M——,—I am at this moment in receipt of yours, announcing your loss of another child by death, and readily lay aside the discourse on which I was engaged, Saturday afternoon though it be, to reply to it. The text on which I was meditating with the view of addressing my people to-morrow, is, ‘Sorrow is better than laughter, and by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better,’ taking also in the preceding and subsequent contexts. When in the act of contrasting the influences of mirth and sadness upon the heart, the postman arrived, and the servant handed me from him a copy of *Punch*, sent by the youths in Liverpool to entertain us at this festive season, and *your letter with its brief but sad intelligence*, which two packets were all he had for me. I was strangely affected by this circumstance, and felt in a moment the immense difference between theory and fact, between drawing upon the imagination and reality; and at the same time perceived the vast difference which must necessarily be existing between your state of mind and mine, notwithstanding the gloom which was thus suddenly cast over it, and heightened as it was by the incongruity of the circumstances in which it arose. I had just shown that in the house of mirth we are ever in danger of forgetting God, and failing to perceive our obligations to Him; while in the house of mourning we are taught dependence upon Him, and called to thankfulness for the mercies He has spared to us. I was not thinking then of the state of

my own family, in which there has been no breaches, and personal feeling in reference to it was wanting, when lo, my attention is suddenly called to the family condition of my most familiar friend, and I am told that another blow is struck by Him who has a sovereign right to smite, and that where He has already made breach upon breach. 'Who am I, Lord, that Thou hast made me to differ,' rose immediately as an ejaculation to my lips: and I felt that I have been led into a frame by your communication, which, if sustained till to-morrow, which it must surely be, will give a tone and feeling to the discourse it would not likely have otherwise possessed. Yes, sorrow is better than laughter; and never is the superiority of the one to the other so strikingly seen as when thus brought into juxtaposition. I looked at the jocular journal before me, and said of mirth, with the wise man, 'What doth it?' I tossed it aside, and felt I was more man and more Christian in giving place to sympathy with you. And need I assure you that you have it to all the extent of which I am capable, and I am self-deceived if I am not capable of a large amount of it. I have a strong wish to offer you comfort in the painful circumstances in which you are now placed. But I am deterred from doing so by the recollection that I am addressing myself to the author of 'Why weepest thou?' and it looks like an impertinence in me even to hint at comfort to such an one. But I have seen too much of human nature, and had too much of its experiences, not to know that to give comfort to

others is one thing, and to make a personal appropriation of it another. Now, my dear friend, permit me to suggest that you retire to your study when all other persons are in bed, and read carefully over your own work, and ask yourself in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, if you at that moment feel all the consolations therein tendered to bereaved parents, and what response the heart gives. I care not to know ; for in this suggestion I have only been seeking to make Dr Macfarlane his own comforter, by leading him to the Source to which he has so earnestly, and I hope often successfully, directed others ; persuaded that, in the course of this peculiar exercise, he will discover, in a way he could not otherwise do, the excellences and defects of his book ; and that few words will prove more words in season than his own, or rather those God gave him to make such.

I am, yours in Christian bonds,

WILLIAM MACKELVIE.

For several years before his death, Dr Mackelvie suffered from infirm health ; and, in July 1860, he underwent an operation, from which he never completely rallied. Still, on partial recovery, he set himself again to his loved employ. So lately as in 1861 he seems to have been thinking of his statistics. ‘I have been doing nothing towards finishing my statistics while I have been ill. I resolve, however, on proceeding effectively when better, if God shall spare me, or at least to leave them in a state that

some one else will be able to finish them.' His last appearance in his pulpit was upon the 21st April 1861, when he preached from James iii. 17. For two whole years after this he was entirely laid aside from public duty. In the meantime his congregation had had another pastor ordained over them—the Rev. Mr Duncan—who had the honour and privilege of being his colleague and assistant in his closing days on earth. Dr Mackelvie died on the 10th December 1863. He was so seriously stricken with paralysis that no death-bed sayings remain. His memory does not need them. He lived the life of the righteous. His soul is now with Christ, which is far better; and his dust lies by the side of Michael Bruce's—so near, that with the change of names, the lines of Sir Walter Scott on Fox and Pitt may be applied—

‘Drop on Bruce’s grave the tear,  
”Twill trickle to Mackelvie’s bier.’

On the Sabbath following the interment, his funeral sermons were preached by his colleague and Dr Harper of Leith, in both of which ample justice was done to the character and worth of the deceased, as a powerful and faithful minister of the Gospel, as an affectionate pastor, husband, father, and friend, as one of the philanthropists of his day, and as one of the most useful men in his Church. Let his memory be blessed. Such men, such pastors, and such Christians, are really the ornaments and props of God’s house. May the good Lord multiply their number in these days of rebuke and blasphemy.

# S E R M O N S.

---

## I.

### THE VALLEY OF BACA.

‘Blessed 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. They go from strength to strength ; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.’—Ps. lxxxiv. 5–7.

By the law of Moses, all the Jewish males, and as many females as could conveniently accompany them, were required to appear three times a year at Jerusalem, to observe certain feasts commemorative of important events in their history. But these solemnities subserved other purposes, besides keeping alive the recollection of the past. They helped to maintain the sentiment of brotherhood, so essential to the peace and prosperity of the tribes, to strengthen their confidence in God, who, by constant miracle, preserved the land from invasion while compliance was rendered with these requirements, and to promote devotional feeling ; for under that economy there was only one

place of divine manifestation, and bodily approach to it was the way of securing spiritual nearness to God. The Israelitish Church-life, accordingly, concentrated itself there, and thought and affection were strongly excited by imposing spectacles and a widely-diffused knowledge.

Oh! it must have been a heart-stirring sight to look from some commanding position, and see the whole country studded over with groups of pilgrims, wending their way in all directions to the great centre of union, swelling, by the junction of their bands, like a river at the confluence of its streams, then entering some deep defile of the mountains where they were lost to view, but after a while emerging in the long file, into which they had been drawn out by the narrowness of the pass, and the other impediments presented to their progress. Such was the sight which David now contemplated, and it was exquisitely painful to his devout mind to think that he was prevented from doing more than contemplating it. Exiled from Jerusalem by the rebellion of his son, or some other cause, he envied the happy bands who were going up to the testimony of Israel to give thanks unto the name of the Lord; and since he could not join them, he set himself to the composition of a song, by which he might tell to succeeding ages the feelings excited in him by the occasion, and the enjoyments after which he longed. This beautiful and heart-touching ode has come down to us, and affords us most appropriate language in which to express our devout aspi-

rations after God, and indicate our estimate of those invaluable benefits He has afforded us in the ordinances of His grace.

But the scene contemplated by the devout exile was more significant than he himself was probably aware; for explanations afforded by the New Testament intimate, that Mount Zion, to which the pilgrims journeyed, was emblematic of the Church about to be set up by Jesus Christ, which, unlike the Church founded by Moses, was intended to embrace the whole inhabitants of the globe; and these same pilgrims, coming from distances so great, and directions so diverse, were representatives in symbol of the multitudes of all tongues and nations that should flow into it, according to the prediction of the evangelical prophet: 'It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' This prediction, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares, was receiving its accomplishment even in his day, and accordingly told the Christians to whom he wrote, 'Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the general assembly and Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven.'



But the scene referred to in the text may be considered as symbolizing another truth, and one in which we have, if possible, a still deeper interest. Heaven above is the Jerusalem to which all true worshippers are to be finally congregated. This world is the valley through which they are passing, on their way to the one grand meeting-place with God. A parched and dreary region it often proves; but, like that traversed by the Israelites of old on the occasion in question, it is not without its solaces and comforts, which more than counterbalance the toils and trials endured in it. The pilgrims may sometimes be long detained in it, and often have to grieve over the difficulties and dangers of their journey. But if true to the character they profess, their progress through it is sure, and their arrival at their destination certain. It is in this aspect we propose to contemplate the scene alluded to in the text, and in doing so will follow the order suggested by it. 'Blessed 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. They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.'

I. THE CHARACTER DESCRIBED.—The psalmist, looking at the travellers, and thinking of the journey they had to prosecute—the dangers to be encountered, the difficulties to be overcome—is led to reflect on

the happiness of the man who shall surmount them all, and enter with unabated vigour on the scenes and services of the holy place. A mind judging by sense, and not by the moral perception which guided David in his estimate of happiness, would rather have been disposed to exclaim, 'Blessed is the man of blooming health and youthful vigour, of sinew, muscle, and active limb; he alone will be able to endure the toils and privations awaiting him; he alone will persist in prosecuting a journey so tedious, and be fit for the duties to be performed at the end of it.' But the holy bard looks away from the external man, and thinks of the state of the heart alone.

There are two peculiar features of character essential to every man who would derive any benefit from the ordinances of the sanctuary, and would be admitted into the gracious presence of God, at the end of his earthly pilgrimage. *These are dependence on God, and submission to God.* They are inseparable as well as essential features, uniformly going together; for there can be no dependence on God where there is not submission to Him. They constitute the sum of Christian excellence, by comprehending every feature of character in the least degree praiseworthy. They are accordingly selected by the psalmist as the distinguishing features of a good man, and inclusive of all others that belong to him.

When on one occasion he seeks to describe a bad man, he contents himself by saying, 'This is the man who did not make God his strength'—did not seek

His favour—had no reliance on His providence—whose whole interests centred in the things of time and sense. The opposite of such a man is the one described in the text—one who makes God his strength, who feels that for every purpose of the divine life he is weak in himself, and has abandoned all hope of success from mere personal effort, whose hope is in the Lord his God, both for things bodily and things spiritual—for things temporal and things eternal.

While the experience of such a man teaches him dependence, his sense of obligation also leads him to submission. This is what the psalmist means to intimate when he says, ‘In whose heart are the ways of them.’ Ways are paths that lead to places, by following which implicitly we are sure to arrive at the desired destination. Ways are said to be in the heart, to intimate the saint’s love to God’s requirements; that he yields to them not from a sense of duty alone, but also from a feeling of love; that he delights in the law of the Lord, after the inward man. Having made God’s promises his strength, he now makes God’s word his rule, and walks by it. It is in this way alone he expects to prosecute the journey prescribed to him, and reach the end of his faith—the salvation of his soul; for how can any man hope to arrive at a place who will not go in the only way provided to bring him thither? Many persons prosecuted these journeys to Zion who had no particular liking to the duty, and derived no enjoyment from it, save what was produced by the excitement of the

occasion. Secretly, they considered the commandment grievous, the services involved in it irksome, and the whole ritual a burden which they were not able to bear. But the Israelite indeed, whose heart as well as whose flesh was circumcised, rendered obedience from love; a principle which made the duty pleasant, and all the exercises arising out of it delightful. He cannot be considered a spiritual pilgrim whom love does not influence. 'Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; he that loveth not, knoweth not God.'

The man who sustains this character is held to be a *happy* man, and cannot fail to be so. The almighty God is his strength, and what will he not be able to accomplish—what will he not be able to endure? The omniscient God is his guide, and what needs distress or alarm him? The compassionate God is his friend, and what can he lack that he really needs, and it will be for Jehovah's glory to supply? His fears removed, his confidence strong, his experience sweet, his anticipations bright—can he be otherwise than happy? Oh, 'Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.'

It is *only* the man who sustains this character that can have any real enjoyment in the services of religion when he enters upon them. This is the thought which the psalmist wishes more particularly to press upon our minds in the words under consideration. The three verses which compose our text con-

stitute one stanza in the original. The first and last lines form a Hebrew parallelism, and agree together. The intermediate lines merely describe some accessories to the main circumstance; and the idea therefore is, that the man whose strength God is shall alone know the blessedness of communion with Him—shall alone receive the manifestations of His favour, when he appears in Zion before Him. It is the same idea which is conveyed in the form of question and answer in another psalm: ‘Who shall ascend into the hill of God? who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.’ All this teaches us that character is essential to privilege, and that we ought to be more solicitous about the attainment of the one than the possession of the other: for till we attain to the children’s character, we cannot possibly be put in possession of the children’s privileges; but whenever we have attained the one, the other is sure to follow. ‘For if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.’

II. THE SCENE TRAVERSED.—‘Passing through the valley of Baca.’ Where this valley was situated cannot now be determined. It seems to have been a perilous pass, through which certain of the inhabitants of Judea were required to travel when called to attend the solemnities at Jerusalem. Its name, lite-

rally rendered, is, **THE VALLEY OF WEEPING**, and different reasons have been given for this designation. By some it is supposed to be derived from a shrub of the balsam kind, called Baca—that is, the *tear* shrub, which grows only in dry and stony places. But the name was probably given to the shrub itself, just because it was found there, and then the sole reason for the name of the place will be found in the difficulties and dangers, the privations and sufferings, which travellers had to encounter in it. A valley is a fit emblem of depression, and a valley of weeping suggests depression conjoined with misery—a condition of little consolation, or none at all.

Is not this a true type of the present evil world, proverbially designated ‘the vale of tears,’ through which all spiritual Israelites must pass, on their way to the Zion that is above? Do not all men declare it to be a valley of weeping by their complaints, or feel it to be so in their silent experiences? What cares depress us! What troubles distress us! What perplexities distract us! What dangers alarm us! What sicknesses exhaust us! What bereavements pain us! O how rarely it happens that any man, whatever be his character or condition, passes much time in this world without having cause for shedding tears! To all these sources of grief, which the saint has in common with his fellow-men, he has others of a still more painful kind superadded: the tears called forth by bitter repentance, by the risings of remaining corruption, by the workings of a deceitful heart, by the

hidings of God's countenance, by uncertainty as to his well-being in a future world, with other causes of grief that lie buried deep in the soul, and are never revealed but to God, and even tremblingly to Him. The world is indeed a region full of impediments to the successful prosecution of a spiritual pilgrimage, where many a traveller has fallen never to rise again, and where others have sustained injuries that have made them go halting all their lives long.

Nevertheless, there is no way of reaching the celestial city but by this valley of weeping. It is a path which every man must tread, and no saint ever reached heaven who did not pass that way. The Saviour Himself trode that path, and it is enough that the disciple be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. Not that it is in itself fixed by any fatal necessity; but such is man's nature, and the nature of religion, that the thing is altogether unavoidable. To this we have been called, and of this we have been warned, and we ought accordingly to calculate upon it when we become Christians. 'All who will live godly must suffer persecution.' 'We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.' 'Marvel not that the world hateth you; it hated Me before it hated you.' 'If any man will be My disciple, let him take up his cross, and follow Me.' God might prevent all this if He pleased, and save His people without subjecting them to trials of any kind. But He perfected His Son through suffering, and has ordained that the members of His body shall in this

respect be conformed to their exalted Head. But there is a need-be for it apart from the divine appointment. It is necessary to wean us from the world, to keep the fact incessantly before our minds that this is not our rest, and to enhance the joys and pleasures that are for evermore.

If, then, you have not met with briars and thorns in your way—if your religious course has been wholly strewed with flowers—if you have found no reasons for grief—never at any time been called to fear—you must have mistaken the road, and are in danger of never reaching Zion. What need is there, then, for great searching of heart, in order to ascertain whether we really know anything of piety in the vital power of it—as a power that wounds to heal, that brings us into trying conditions in order that we may know ourselves, and by that knowledge be led to humility, and by humility to dependence upon God—a power that quickens all our susceptibilities, rendering our consciences more tender, our judgment more decided, our actions more prompt, and so makes it more difficult to pursue an undeviating course in a world where there is so much to allure, and so much to deceive. O may all of us be seeking the way to Zion, with our faces thitherward !

III. THE PRIVILEGES ENJOYED.—‘ They make it a well ; the rain also filleth the pools.’ The land of Canaan was a land of hills and valleys, drinking water of the rain of heaven ; nevertheless, there were



districts in it that became completely parched by the droughts of summer, while in the rocky dells, such as Baca seems to have been, water seldom flowed at all. The usual resource in such a place was the water which the travellers brought with them, and when that failed, their condition was wretched in the extreme. And such is the condition of the man whose dependence is on the world through which he is passing. His resources fail him in the hour of greatest need, and he has no other to which he can betake himself. But the pilgrim to Zion, who has made God his strength, is never in this plight; he knows where to seek for comfort, and never seeks it in earnest without finding it. By the rod of his faith he brings water from the flinty rock—from sources to which others would never look for it; and he thus becomes assured that goodness and mercy will follow him all the days of his life. Externally, he may be in a condition more wretched than that of other men—so wretched as even to move their pity or provoke their contempt. Nevertheless, he has ‘meat to eat which the world knoweth not of,’ and ‘joys with which a stranger intermeddleth not.’ ‘The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keepeth his mind and heart through Jesus Christ.’ O what refreshments are afforded to his soul by the persuasion that he ‘has passed from death unto life, and shall no more come into condemnation’—that the promises of God, so exceeding great and precious, are not only made to saints in general, but to him in particular, and that

while the covenant stands he can never want ! Then, connected with this assurance, there is the testimony of a good conscience, that the straits and difficulties into which he has been brought are not of his own procuring, but God's appointing ; and because of this, there is the certainty that He that led him into them will also bring him out of them, and that the trial by which he is exercised will contribute to his present profit and his future happiness. He may, nay, he often does, overlook his resources, and, like other men, folds his hands in despondency or despair. But this is only the momentary triumph of his perverted reason, which yields whenever faith rallies again, and then he finds himself in the position of Hagar in the wilderness, when God opened her eyes, and showed her a well.

But wells were not the only resource of the traveller in the valley of Baca. 'The rain also filled the pools.' Reservoirs were provided by the authorities at convenient places and suitable distances, for the accommodation of the pilgrims. Conduits led into them from various places in the rocks, and the waters afforded by the rains were thus stored up for future use. Supplies of the essential element of life could thus be calculated upon, for these supplies never failed unless something rare and extraordinary had happened. And has not the Lord anticipated all our exigencies ? For what circumstances of trial, of danger, and want, has He not provided ? He knew the mountains we were to climb, the valleys into which we were to

descend, the ravines we should have to cross, and the rocks round which we should have to wend. He appointed every incident in the journey, but not before He had also appointed the supplies which our necessities should demand.

What are all the means of grace with which we are so abundantly favoured, but reservoirs planted in the valley of Baca? At such a reservoir you drank this morning, when, in the exercise of a living faith, you sought to hold communion with God in prayer. Then the dreariness of the desert fled, the heart became reassured. You not only felt you could press on, but probably wondered that the difficulties in your way should ever have appeared so formidable as they did. Another reservoir has been opened to you in the preaching of the Gospel. 'There is a river which maketh glad the city of God, the tabernacles of the Most High,' and this is one of the streams of it. Another is the holy ordinance of the Supper, of which you are about to partake, which often affords the most exhilaration of them all. Thus, ever and anon, the prediction is verifying, 'I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.' 'O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!'

What would the pools in the valley of Baca have been to Zion's travellers if the rains had not filled them? Only sources of bitter disappointment and

extreme mortification! And what would prayer be if God did not answer it, or preaching if God did not bless it, or sacraments if God did not afford His presence in them? What would they all be, in such cases, but clouds without rain, and wells without water; a barren routine of duty, which only added weariness to thirst? Nothing can supply the place of the divine blessing, either in nature or in grace. There is no living principle in water, no inherent powers in the rains of heaven to nourish and sustain. They are, indeed, adapted to the ends for which they are given, but all their virtue is still from God. So ordinances benefit, not from any efficacy in themselves, 'but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them.' Before ever the saint can be roused to action, or cheered in distress, spiritual influences must descend to quicken and sustain him. Before ever he can draw comfort from ordinances, or make them available for any spiritual purpose, the rain must fill the pools.

Blessed be God, 'the valley of weeping' is not all rocks and pitfalls, not all thorny brakes and regions of drought. It has its verdant spots, its bubbling springs, its ample reservoirs. Yes; and these are so numerous as in a great measure to alter the character of the place. They spring up at every turn of the road, waiting our appropriation, and inviting us to the use of them. How plentiful and satisfying their supplies! filling every capacity, and gratifying every spiritual craving. Whosoever drinketh of other water shall

thirst again; but whosoever shall drink of this water shall never thirst: it shall be in him a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life.

‘Are the consolations of God small with thee?’ Why should they be so, when He has made such rich provision for your comfort? You must be overlooking, or undervaluing, or failing to improve them. You are not straitened in Him; you are straitened in yourselves. Oh, make these things your own! They are freely given, and designed for your special benefit. But they can afford you no advantage if you do not improve them. Value them highly, use them constantly; thus will you grow in relish for them, and profit by them. Since God has condescended to think of our exigencies, and make provision for them, gratitude as well as self-interest should be continually drawing us to these resources, and leaving us to say, ‘All my well-springs are in Thee.’

IV. THE PROGRESS MADE.—‘They go from strength to strength,’ that is, as some understand the phrase, they become vigorous by exercise, and so are the more enabled to endure the fatigues of the journey the longer they prosecute it. But the phrase is rendered on the margin, ‘from company to company,’ which shows that our translators understood the allusion to be to the bands formed by friends and neighbours before setting out for these solemnities, and in which, with few exceptions, they continued to travel till they arrived at their destination. To such a com-

pany the youthful Jesus was supposed by His parents to have joined Himself on the occasion when He was missing after His first attendance at the Passover in Jerusalem, and they did not discover their mistake, so large was the company, till the whole band halted for the night, when each individual found his way to the family tent; but Jesus was not forthcoming. The more youthful and vigorous of the travellers would sometimes leave one company and join themselves to another in advance. If the allusion in the text be to this circumstance, it suggests the idea of more rapid advancement on the part of some than others. But no comparison seems intended, though there may be some reference to the enlarged intercourse and increased pleasure which such parties enjoyed.

The phrase, 'from strength to strength,' might perhaps be more freely rendered, 'they go from one halting-place to another.' At such places they rested and were refreshed; their strength was recruited, and they were enabled to progress on their journey. They set out fresh in the morning, but before noon many of them were feeling languor, and by eventide even the young men had begun to faint and fail. At length they reached the halting-place, and after a short repose and renewed supplies, their lassitude departed, and vigour was restored. And all this finds its counterpart in their spiritual pilgrimage. 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.' Whatever has been the previous amount of it, it needs recruiting. No amount of grace ever received in this world is ade-

quate for more than present exigencies. God never intended that we should be independent of Him, even for a day, and He has therefore required us to appear day by day before His throne, asking for daily bread—for the bread that endureth unto eternal life, as well as that which perishes in the using. We are not in a condition to be trusted with grace for the future; for, reckless and careless, we would soon exhaust our resources, and when an emergency arrived, we should be unprepared to meet it. God therefore keeps all grace in His own hands, and deals it out as circumstances demand. And who that knows anything of his own heart, will not be abundantly thankful that his supplies are not in himself, but in Him in whom it hath pleased the Father all fulness should dwell; and that upon that fulness he may ever draw, and so constantly prove the truth of the promise, ‘As thy day is, so shall thy strength also be.’

But pilgrims cannot always remain at their halting-places, however much they may enjoy them. That were to hinder the attainment of their object, and take up with substitutes for God. It might have been a verdant spot where the travellers halted in the valley of Baca. Springs might rise everywhere around them, lofty rocks afford them a cooling shade, and a solemn stillness invite them to repose. ‘What need to go farther?’ they might say. ‘God may be enjoyed here as well as elsewhere, and our hearts are in a proper frame for serving Him; or, if we may not remain altogether, let us at least prolong these enjoyments for

a time.' But that could not be, for they were yet in the valley, and Mount Zion was still in the distance. The time for the solemn assembly was hastening apace, and that time once passed, the benefit to be derived must pass along with it. Reason, as well as faith, therefore, demanded that they should gird up their loins, stedfastly set their faces to go to Jerusalem, and without hesitation or delay, enter upon the duties and trials of another day. So is it with the Christian. His rest is not here. He is forgetting his destination when he proposes to erect tabernacles, even on the spot honoured by heavenly visions. At the very moment of his highest enjoyment, when admiration and delight are rising into rapture, his Commander may address him, saying, 'Arise, let us go hence;' and lead him from the banqueting-hall to the scene of agony, from spiritual manifestation to spiritual desertion, from safety and pleasure to temptation and trial. Nor can it be otherwise while the valley, or any portion of it, has yet to be traversed; and it is therefore a great mistake to suppose that a religious course can be one of uninterrupted enjoyment. It is only through faith and patience we can inherit the kingdom.

But whatever were the vicissitudes to which they were subjected in the valley of Baca, still the travellers to Zion persevered. Some might lag behind, and be later in arriving at their destination than others; but all kept moving on, and every halt was a stage in advance. So all real pilgrims 'follow on to know



the Lord.' Without perseverance in this course, all labour is vain, all hope delusive. 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' Perseverance must ever lead to attainment, for it is impossible to move forward in a right direction and not come nearer to the object sought. Some, indeed, would persuade us that there is no growth in grace; but they may as well attempt to convince us that there can be no progress in learning. Observation and experience both testify to the fact, that a Christian's views of God become fuller and clearer, his dependence on his Saviour more simple and entire, his separation from the world more decided, as he advances in the divine life. The progress may be at one time more rapid, and at another more slow; but whichever way the advancement is made, some profounder lesson is learned, some special mercy experienced, some bright realizing view of glory caught.

What progress have we made, seeing our advantages have been so great—our facilities so numerous? Is Zion yet in view? and are we ready to enter upon its lofty exercises, and ever-enduring services? Or are we yet in the depths of the valley, seeing no way out of it, and fearing that we shall never escape from its intricacies? Whichever of these be our condition, the same duty is still before us, and that is to 'forget the things that are behind, and press forward to those that are before, to the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus.'

V. THE CONSUMMATION GAINED.—‘*Every one of them appeareth before God in Zion,*’ that is, every one of them answering to the character described. Others as well as they would appear in Zion before God ; but not to enjoy His presence, and receive tokens of His favour. Blessedness was now to be enjoyed, but it could only be enjoyed by those who had been previously fitted for it by character and attainment. As certainly as these had been acquired, so certainly would the blessedness be enjoyed by each and by all of them.

‘*Every one of them appeareth in Zion before God.*’ No one has perished by the way—none been devoured by wild beasts—none cut off by the wandering banditti—none become faint-hearted and turned back. The whole bands are assembled—young and old, weak and strong ; all answer to their names, and testify to the goodness of the Lord in bearing them up, and bringing through—in affording them rest, and yielding them pleasure. So shall it ever be with true spiritual pilgrims. The grace of God will always prove sufficient to preserve them, safe and blameless, to His heavenly kingdom and glory—troubles shall not overwhelm them—temptations not wholly overcome them—spiritual enemies shall not destroy them. They are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Their names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, and the Lamb Himself shall see to it that each of them is found in the day of account. Then shall he be able to say, ‘Those whom Thou hast given Me I have

kept, and none of them is lost.' 'They are all here before God.'

Here they all are gathered together, from places the most remote and directions the most diverse, all aiming at one object, all pervaded by one spirit. How strongly they feel that Israel is a united people, and that the bond of union is a covenant God! And such also is the state of things in the New Jerusalem. Every moment the *one* Church of God, redeemed from amongst men, is gathering around the Lamb—the Shekinah of the invisible temple—gathered from distant ages, from distant lands, a multitude which no man can number. What earnest gratulations! what lively joys are reciprocated! All distinctions are absorbed, all minds assimilate, all hearts blend, all voices harmonize, and the grand visible *unity* of the Church is perfected.

When the Israelites entered Zion, their toils, privations, and sufferings ceased. 'They entered into rest.' To many of them the journey had been long, and the hardships great; but arrival in the holy city, and the joys then experienced, made up for them all. The mere anticipation of such a consummation was solacing; and they often cheered themselves with it on their journey, singing as they went, 'Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.' 'There is a rest that remaineth for the people of God.' That rest reached, all their difficulties shall be surmounted, all their wanderings closed. There shall be no more weeping, doubting, fainting—no more thirsting, sor-

rowing, dying—‘the former things have passed away.’ ‘The sun shall not light upon them, nor any heat. The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to fountains of living waters; and God Himself shall wipe all tears from their eyes.’

But it was not merely rest after toil, nor ease after suffering, that made Jerusalem so joyful a place to the Israelites of old. It was the circumstance so emphatically stated in the text: ‘Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.’ God dwelt by visible symbol in His tabernacle and temple. By that symbol He declared His covenant relation to His people, maintained intercourse with them, and made Himself known to them. And the presence of God in heaven is essential to the happiness of the saints. That presence shall be fully afforded. ‘The Lord God shall dwell among them.’ Of that presence we can form no conception, either how it can be afforded, or how we shall be able to perceive it. But of this we are assured, that our perceptions of God shall be clear, our knowledge of Him certain. ‘We shall see Him as He is.’ The consciousness which every one will have of his interest in God, of the relationship which he bears to Him, and of the indissolubleness of that bond which has united him to God, must make him blessed indeed.

The Jew had to depart again from Zion, when the solemn occasion which brought him there was ended; and another season had to pass away before

he could enter again upon such enjoyments, if ever he was permitted to return to them. This circumstance led him to envy the man who was constantly resident in Jerusalem, and especially the man who was engaged in the daily services of the temple. 'Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee.' But such an envy can never arise in the bosom of a saint in heaven, for he has arrived there never to depart. 'He that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem.' 'So shall they be for ever with the Lord.'

Such privileges and prospects ought surely to be motives to obedience and perseverance. What can possibly influence us to a holy life, if present happiness and future glory do not? These are to be found for certain in the path of duty, and the consummation to which it leads. 'Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' 'Wherefore gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and watch to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' 'Be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.'

## II.

### GOD A HABITATION.

‘Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort.’—Ps. lxxi. 3.

SOME statements derive their interest and importance from the persons making them, and occasions on which they are made. Others derive their value from the truths they contain, or the sentiments they express. Of this latter kind is the statement now before us. True, it is important and interesting for us to know that it was David, the anointed of the Lord, who expressed himself thus, and that he did so when threatened with imminent danger. But the statement is interesting and important, irrespective of these circumstances. Every man perceives, the moment it is uttered, that this is a sentiment which he ought to adopt, and under the influence of which he should habitually act. Every man, the meanest as well as the greatest, knows what is comprehended in the idea of a habitation. It requires no cultivation of mind, no grasp of thought, to understand it. It is at once obvious and familiar, and presents itself in all its bearings to every one who has known the comforts of home, and the joys of social intercourse.

But how strange the circumstance, that the eternal God should reveal Himself as the habitation of man, that the thrice holy Jehovah should allow Himself to become the resort of a human, of a fallen soul. 'Will God in very deed dwell with man on the earth?' was the devout exclamation of Israel's wisest king, when he thought of the fact, that even 'the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him.' How much greater should be our surprise to learn, that God will not only dwell with man upon the earth, but allow man, even partially sanctified man, to dwell with Him! Dwell with Him as really, as fully, as constantly—though, of course, only in a spiritual sense—as he dwells in his own home. Such condescension it would never enter the heart of man to conceive, and it can only now be credited upon a divine testimony. The more we contemplate the sentiment contained in our text, the greater reason we will find to admire this condescension, and congratulate man on the high privilege thus afforded him.

Let it not be supposed, however, that it is every man's privilege to be at home in God. It is doubtless in every man's power to avail himself of it. But no man can ever find himself at home in God till he has been reconciled to Him by the blood of His Son,—till he has betaken himself to Christ, as 'the way, and the truth, and the life,'—till he has fully approved, with mind and heart, the wise and merciful arrangement whereby his offended Lawgiver and Judge can approximate Himself to him. It is as his covenant

God that David here addresses Him; the character in which He was universally known in Israël, and in which He uniformly revealed Himself from off the mercy-seat. It is in this character, and in this alone, He can ever be warrantably regarded as a habitation for sinful creatures. Apart from His covenant relations He is an object of dread, and can never be approached with confidence, or even composure of mind. Keeping this fact in view, let us proceed to elicit the thoughts involved in the representation of God as a habitation, and draw from them the comforts which they are calculated to afford. With this view we shall—

I. Contemplate God under the representation in which He is here exhibited to us—‘A habitation.’

II. Consider what is implied in the good man’s resolution continually to resort to Him.

Contemplating God as a habitation to which we may continually resort, the idea that presents itself—

*First*, is that of *Access*. Whether our habitation be grand or mean, conspicuous or obscure, there is no difference in its admissibility by us. If it be ours, access to it is available at all times, and under all circumstances. We regard it as destined for our use, and feel as if it existed for our accommodation only. In like manner, the believer has ever ready access unto God. He can approach Him whenever he thinks fit, and whatever be his condition; he can do this with boldness and confidence, assured that no hindrance will be raised on God’s part, and that none can be



successful that is raised on man's. No prohibition ever issued from this habitation such as once issued from the palace in Shushan, and was found to be very terrifying upon a trying occasion, 'That whosoever, man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death.' Kings, however favourable to their subjects, cannot admit of approaches to their presence at all times, owing to the multitude of claims made upon them, the limitation of their powers, and the necessity of maintaining state. They must therefore be approached only at certain times, and in accordance with prescribed formalities. But access to God was never desired and refused, never sought and delayed.

It will often happen, however, in the providence of God, that we are called from home, and find it impracticable, for a time, to return thither. In this case, we must find accommodation as we best can, and be content with such as circumstances may afford. But herein the figure in our text excels the source whence it is derived. For 'though far from friends, and far from home, we are never far from God.' At no time, and in no place, are we under the necessity of finding a substitute for Him. He is 'a God at hand, as well as a God afar off.' So Jacob found Him, when he left his father's house to reside with friends at a distance. At night-fall he found himself a solitary wanderer in a dreary desert. He laid him down in his loneliness to sleep, and perchance to

dream, and dream, it might be, of his recent home, or his future residence. But he had not long rested till he began to learn, by experience, that there is a sense in which a believer can never be said to be from home, but may enjoy happy days and comfortable nights anywhere and everywhere. Hear his own account of the matter, as he soliloquized upon it on rising from his bed of earth: 'God is in this place, and I knew it not. Surely this is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.'

But it is possible for men to be *driven* from their homes as well as *drawn* from them. Such occurrences have been frequent in our own as well as in other countries, and often for no other reason than that the parties so treated persisted in worshipping God according to their consciences, and in opposition to the forms prescribed to them. But though sent into exile, or forced to wander as fugitives in their native land, they were never banished from God. 'The Lord is nigh to all that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.' We may be placed in situations the most trying, or exposed to dangers the most remote from human aid, but we can never pass into scenes where God is not present to hear, nor be involved in circumstances in which He is not ready to succour us. So Joseph found Him when sold into Egypt, John when he was exiled in Patmos, and Paul when tossed upon the sea. Our Father is in heaven, and heaven is accessible from every place. Prayer can reach Him in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. 'While they

speak,' says He, 'I will answer; and before they speak, I will hear.'

But this readiness of access, this freedom of approach to God, is not matter of right, as is access to our own homes. It is the result of sovereign grace—an act of pure unmerited favour. It was obtained for us by God's own Son, and at the costliest price which even He could pay for it—the price of His own precious blood. 'Now, therefore, we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.' The freedom of access which He thus procured He still maintains. 'For no man can come unto the Father but by Him.'

A *Second* thought suggested by God considered as a habitation, is that of *Privacy*. When a man enters his house, he shuts the doors upon himself, bars out intruders, and is not disposed to tell every one what he is doing within. However much he courts publicity abroad, he seeks privacy at home; and it is this privacy which makes domestic life so much what it is, for, were it continually subject to the public gaze, it would lose much of the comfort it possesses. To this privacy men are every hour recalled by passions that are not to be suppressed. In these domestic scenes they have the rewards of their toil, and to these they at last retire.

So is it with the believer in his intercourse with God. Like other men, he is seen abroad at proper seasons, following his avocation, serving his generation, and performing the work which God has given

him to do. At such times he may have much to occupy his mind, much to constrain his thoughts; and his contemplation of God, and communion with Him, may then be to some extent suspended. But, as certainly as the man whose home is peaceful and happy retreats to its privacy whenever public duties permit him, so the soul of a believer, as soon as relieved from the pressure of contingent circumstances, returns to God, as its proper, its chosen, its only rest. Disengaged from the world, and withdrawn from its bustle, he retires to be alone with the Invisible, with Him 'who seeth in secret;' and who can tell what solemn, sacred matters are then transacted between them! 'What opening of heart to heart, and what blending of spirit with spirit!' What expressions of mutual confidence and delight! What unfoldings of sorrow and of love! Without hesitation or reserve, the saint unbosoms himself to his unchanging, his forgiving Friend; asks His inspection of his conscience, his principles, his actions, his motives; the pardon of what is wrong in them, and the correction of what is amiss. The relief then felt, from sins confessed, from infirmities acknowledged, from backslidings bemoaned, and the happiness enjoyed by the persuasion of pardon, or the belief of approval, O who can describe! Who, save he only who has experienced them; and for him to do it, as it ought to be done, if ever attempted, would be like violating the sanctities of home, and revealing 'what it is not lawful for a man to utter.' It was because he had

thus been before at home in God, and knew what it was so to enjoy Him, that David wished to resist all other attractions, and make Him the habitation to which he would ever resort.

A *Third* idea suggested by God considered as a habitation, is that of *Security*. 'A man's house is his castle,' not only according to common notion, but according even to legal maxim, in this country. There he is held to be safe from all intruders, save when he himself has forfeited the protection of the law, or been suspected of doing so; and no one can annoy him, however humble his condition, without exposing himself to punishment. But the homes we have raised in these peaceful times, however safe under the protection of law, are ill calculated to protect us from a besieging foe, or from the burglar indisposed to respect the law. It was not from habitations such as these that David drew his metaphor, but from one that would not be easily thrown down by violence, nor readily entered by an enemy; one in which the inhabitant would not only be free from danger, but in which he would really feel himself secure. He therefore appends an epithet to his figure, to give it force, and says, 'Be Thou my *strong* habitation, to which I ever may resort.' His allusion is rendered more obvious by an amplification of the metaphor in another of his psalms, where he says, 'Be Thou my strong rock, for an house of defence, to save me.' The idea present to his mind in both cases, is that of an impregnable fortress on a mountain top, such as was to be found in

many places in Judea. The figure is a favourite one with David, and was naturally suggested to his mind by his circumstances as a man of war, and lover of God—as one exposed to imminent dangers, and disposed to draw heavenly thoughts from earthly things.

But earthly strongholds, however aided by nature or fortified by art, afford a very faint shadow of the safety the believer finds in God, and in no case indicate the *degree* of security derived from Him. ‘The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.’ The name of the Lord is a phrase by which the Scripture writers express the perfections of God in a comprehensive form—as His wisdom, power, goodness, faithfulness, and love; and who that believes himself encompassed by these, does not feel that he is in a fortress impregnable indeed? ‘Come,’ says God to His people, ‘Come, enter thy chambers, shut thy doors about thee, and hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.’ These chambers to which God invites them are His engagements with Christ, and His people in Him. Whosoever is found in these must be safe indeed,—safe from the penalties of a broken law, ‘for there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,’—safe from the assaults of Satan, for the life of each ‘is hid with Christ in God,’ and there Satan can never reach it,—safe, in short, from every kind of evil, for ‘the Most High is their habitation, and no evil shall befall them.’ Like Elisha, they are

surrounded by horses of fire and chariots of fire; and assaults upon them will only terminate, as did those upon the prophet, in the confusion and ruin of their enemies. What a sweet picture does David draw of the repose of a soul that trusts in God, when he says, 'I laid me down and slept. I awaked, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about!' And again, 'Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should arise against me, in this will I be confident.' And to this all saints may add, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' 'They that be with us are more than they that be with them.'

A *Fourth* idea suggested by God considered as a habitation, is that of *Comfort*. To be happy at home is the ultimate end of all ambition—the end to which every enterprise and labour tends, and of which every desire prompts the prosecution. If a man fail in finding comfort at home, he will seek for it in vain; for the want of it there will mar the enjoyment of it everywhere else. There are some homes, alas! comfortless enough. Stripped of lover and friend—deprived of the means of hospitality and enjoyment—the possessors of them have to endure at once the world's neglect and their own heart's bitterness. Thus thorns are in their tabernacle, and they are ready to cry, 'O that I had the wings of a dove! for then would I flee away, and be at rest.' For nothing should we be more thankful than for domestic peace and comfort;

and blessed be God there are homes where such attractions and delights abound.

There are thousands, too, who can testify, with hearts gladdened with thankfulness, that there are indeed comforts in God—substantial, satisfying comforts; comforts which can sweeten a world of misery, and make the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. They who speak thus may have little human help, and no outward support to rejoice in; but they can never be the subjects of disappointment, nor the prey of dissatisfaction, for they have God for their portion, and the covenant of grace, in all its fulness and stability, for their charter. Listen to one of them, who had all the resources of the world at his command, when giving testimony upon this point: ‘There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Thou hast put more gladness into my heart than they whose corn and wine increase. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot. The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places: I have a goodly heritage.’ Whence come these comforts of home? Are they not chiefly derived from the reciprocation of confidence and love experienced and enjoyed there? It is there that ‘heart meets heart reciprocally soft,’ and pours into each other the full tide of their joy. And thence also is derived the believer’s happiness in reference to his God; for ‘he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.’ The joy and peace thence resulting, are totally unknown and wholly unappreciable

•



by worldly men, and they therefore doubt or deny their existence. But it does not make God less a home to the saint, that 'his is a joy with which the stranger intermeddleth not.' It is at home, too, that the discreet man speaks of his depressions of mind and sorrows of heart. And the saint has these, too, at times as well as others. But the comfort he enjoys in telling these to God, and meeting with His unreserved, His unmingled sympathy—who shall describe! If, brethren, you have not tasted this comfort, the reason is not that it does not exist, as your experience would lead you to believe, but that you have been seeking your happiness elsewhere than in God.

A *Fifth* idea suggested by God considered as a habitation, is that of *Residence*. A habitation is not a place where a person is only occasionally found, but his abode, his home. He may visit other places, and even continue in them for a time. But he never associates the idea of permanence with them; and unless there be something wrong with him, he does not allow his affections to become engaged by them. There is one spot of earth towards which his heart ever yearns, and from which he never wishes to be detained. Humble it may be, and even dreary in the estimation of many; but it is his, his home, his dwelling-place. There his mind rests, and there his heart finds its enjoyment. With all in it and about it he is most intimately familiar; and excruciatingly painful will be that hour that breaks up his connection with it.

It is this living in God, this continual recourse to Him, that distinguishes the genuine Christian from the mere nominal professor, and makes him so undaunted and so composed. There are occasions on which all men are disposed to seek refuge in God. But we are not making Him our habitation merely because sickness, poverty, or bereavement, has driven us thither for a time. We are not *dwelling* in a house into which we have been forced by a storm, and which we entered to leave as soon as the storm has passed away. True, God is a refuge from the storm, and a covert from the tempest ; and every pilgrim may betake himself to Him with the assurance of a welcome and a blessing. But He is more than a shelter and temporary comfort to those who choose to make Him so. Therefore the saint is not content to flee to Him only in the time of danger, or the hour of trouble ; but he makes the Most High his habitation, whereunto he continually resorts. If ever he wanders from Him, he is desirous to be brought back, and wishes never to be found out of God or far from Him. He dwells in God—dwells in Him in the hour of security, as well as in the season of danger—in the brightest day of prosperity, as well as in the saddest day of adversity—in all his vicissitudes seeks still to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Without this habitual communion with God—this constant dependence upon Him—the Scriptures tell us that we shall be destitute of the safety, peace, and comfort which He vouchsafes to His children. And does not observation tell

us the same? Who are those among us whom the world cannot move, nor temptation overcome—whom disappointment cannot ruffle, nor afflictions depress? Are they the careless? the inconsistent? the lukewarm? No; but those who are in the fear of the Lord all the day long—who are living in His love, and cleaving to Him with purpose of heart. Are we thus living? Is God our dwelling-place, our home? or is He a strange, a foreign place to us, which we never frequent, the comforts of which we have often heard of but never tasted, never sought, never desired? What need is there in such a case for apprehension, for prayer, for instant change of mind and conduct; and, instead of remaining without a home for our spirits, make the Most High our habitation, to which we may continually resort.

II. Let us now consider, as proposed, what is implied in the good man's resolution to resort continually to God as his habitation.

*First,* It is implied *that there is a tendency, even in the good man's mind, to substitute other objects of happiness for God.*—This is the great error of our fallen nature. There was a time in the history of our race when it was otherwise, when every affection and aspiration of the human mind soared toward and centred in God. But a woeful change has taken place—a fearful chasm has succeeded. Sin has perverted the judgment, and estranged the heart. The soul swerved from God, its proper attraction, and has never since

found repose. It still continues to seek it everywhere but in Him, preferring the cistern to the fountain, the creature to the Creator ; and it is meet it should learn, by bitter experience, the fearful consequences of so foolish and so fatal a choice.

The believer is in course of being cured of this folly. He has found out his mistake, and in the strength of grace is labouring to correct his error. 'He approves things that are excellent ;' wishes to love God, to be like God, to live for ever near God. But, alas ! a law in his members wars against the law of his mind. Sensible objects often prove to him, as well as others, more powerful than spiritual influences, and their attractions lead him 'to forget his resting-place.' Adverse circumstances occur, and he then becomes aware that his heart has gone after idols, and that he has made flesh his arm. Alarmed at his danger, knowing now where safety alone is to be found, and calling to remembrance the joys he felt in being at home with God, he looks up to Him again, and says, 'Be Thou my strong habitation, to which I may continually resort.' Brethren, let us never forget that we are in the flesh, and liable to temptation, that nature will often prove stronger than grace, passion than reason, things present than things to come, and that the only way to prevent their gaining the ascendant is, 'with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord.'

*Second,* It is here implied that God, who inclined the heart to Himself at first, must ever keep it so in-

*clined, else it will not continue to resort to Him as its habitation.*—It was God who inclined the heart towards Himself, for none other could do it. And He did it by imparting to it a new bias, attracting it to a new object, and creating in it a new relish. Till then, it could ‘see no beauty in Him wherefore it should admire Him.’ It would not trust, nor love, nor obey Him. And there is still a tendency in the heart even of the holiest man upon earth to this original bias; and to that bias it will most certainly revert, if grace be not continually supplied and kept in constant operation to prevent it. That, indeed, would be by constraint, not willingly. ‘For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that he cannot do the things that he would.’ This, therefore, constitutes the necessity, not only of being inclined and drawn towards God at first, but of applying to Him daily to continue the right bent of our hearts, and to weaken our carnal affections, that we may mind better things, that He may so endear Himself to us that all other resources may lose their attractions, and Himself become the strong habitation to which we may continually resort.

*Third,* It is here implied *that the good man wishes to realize and enjoy God in all the duties and trials of life.*—Every right exercised mind carries about with it the influence of home—in the thoughts which are reverting to it, in the affections which are drawn to it, in the intercourse maintained with it, in the habits formed in it, in the character worthy of it,

in the desire to return to it—all of which it is desirous should be increased rather than diminished. There must be something amiss either with the man or with his residence, who seeks to divest himself of the recollections of home, and resists the influences which they naturally exert. There must also be something at fault with that man who has no wish to create for himself a home, where he may exercise and indulge his affections, and find influences to affect his mind and heart. But God, considered as a habitation, is too attractive an object to the believer to allow him to neglect Him without self-reproach, or to rest satisfied with less intercourse with Him than it is in his power to obtain. When his affections roam he chides them, saying, ‘Return, my soul, into thy quiet rest; for God hath dealt bountifully with thee.’ And he wishes the return not to be a short, but a continued one; for he has felt it to be an evil and a bitter thing to depart from the Lord his God. The world into which he has wandered has done nothing to remove guilt from his conscience, or pollution from his soul, but rather contributed to increase both,—nothing to fill the void in his mind, or satisfy the cravings of his heart; he therefore turns aside from it, saying, ‘Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on all the earth I desire besides Thee.’ He pants after peace and holiness; but how shall he obtain either but from God? He looks at his duties, the opposition he has to encounter, the perseverance he has to maintain, the perfect purity he has to acquire,

and he shrinks from them ; and looking to God, he remembers His promised grace, and exclaims, ‘ I can do all things through Christ Jesus strengthening me.’ He looks at his trials, at the enemies he has to encounter, the difficulties he has to overcome, the sufferings he has to endure, and he is appalled ; but he looks to God, and remembering His all-sufficiency, says, ‘ When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I ; for Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.’ How easy are duties and how light are trials to him who has kind friends and a well-stored home, compared with what they are to him who has neither ! And what are duties and what are trials to him who has the eternal God for his refuge, and underneath him the everlasting arms ! Is it to be wondered at, after the experience he has had of Him, that he should say, ‘ Be Thou my strong habitation, to which I may continually resort ?’

Now, my Christian friends, since God is a strong habitation to which we may continually resort, suffer the exhortation which calls upon you to improve this invaluable privilege. Strange, that believers should need such an exhortation ! But not more strange than true. Which even of them delight in God as they ought and as they might ? David himself indirectly admits, in our text, that he had not been maintaining that intercourse with God which duty, interest, pleasure, all called upon him to cultivate, and that he

needed to be stirred up to a closer walk with Him. If God be a habitation, every saint should have as much enjoyment in Him as he has in his home upon earth. And how came he to have so much freedom and comfort there? Chiefly through the habits which he has acquired in it. Frequency of intercourse has familiarized him with every object, and freed him from the restraints he feels elsewhere. So, the more frequently we converse with God, the more He will become endeared to us. The oftener we go to Him, the more frequently will we desire to go. Who has not observed that domestic habits strengthen rapidly, and at length become so confirmed, that the subject of them is averse to go from home? And did we cultivate continued intercourse with God, He would become so attractive that we could not bear to be absent from Him; and the more frequent this intercourse, the more frank and unreserved it must become. True, there will always be an infinite distance betwixt us and Him; and no intercourse to which we are admitted should ever lessen the awe and reverence His holiness and majesty are calculated to inspire. But reverence and awe are not incompatible with the comforts of home. The joys of childhood are not lessened by the respect cherished for a father's character, or the reverence yielded to a father's authority. On the contrary, these feelings constitute some of the most hallowed associations of home, and furnish some of the most tender reminiscences it affords. If you wish, then, that God should become



to you a comfortable, a delightful habitation, to which you may ever resort, avail yourselves of Him as such, and that more frequently than you have ever yet done. 'Then shall ye know, if you follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain upon the earth.' Keep His way, and your path shall be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. You shall know more of Him in His word, providence, and grace, and more of Him as the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever.

What shall we now say to those who are without God in the world? And every man is so, whatever he professes to believe, who lives as if there were none. What a state to be in; and yet this is the state of thousands! What destitution is it to be without food, without friends, without shelter! But what is all this to being without God!—without a home for the Spirit, a resource for the immortal soul, when all temporal resources fail. What can suffice instead of Him? What is anything, what are all things worth in His absence? What is a home without an object in it to esteem, to love, to enjoy? And what is a soul without God? without a Being as spiritual and immortal as itself, with whom to reciprocate its sentiments, its feelings, its delights? What a paradox men are every day exhibiting, in procuring with eagerness a home for the body, which itself is tenanted by a homeless soul, about which no concern is felt! True, they are

not persuaded that their souls are in this miserable condition, but believe that they have already found a home in God, or will be most certain to do so at last. Fatal delusion ! which must issue in shame, disappointment, and ruin. There is a time when the spirit of the practical atheist must cease to have connection with earthly abodes and human associations ; and where then shall it find itself ? In the empire of God, for no being can go beyond it ; but there without a home, without a friend, and without the possibility of finding any comfort in itself. Deprived now of the only home it ever cared for, if home it could be called, its only employment must be to deplore its loss, to curse its folly, to upbraid itself, to envy the happy, and to contemplate for ever the joys of a home after which it cannot aspire. Surely this is not a condition for any soul to be content with even for an hour, even for a moment. Content with danger, vanities, and ruin, with a nature full of wants, helplessness, and disorders ; content with this destitution while He is here, the almighty power, the infinite wisdom, the inexhaustible goodness ; and, while we can find Him, who would be thus content ? Then, by the mercies of God, by the worth of your never-dying precious soul, by the ever growing capacity of your never-dying spirit, by the joys proffered you, by the destinies awaiting you, by all that can allure, by all that can alarm, by all that can convince, by all that can persuade, we entreat you to determine the question, and to determine it without loss of time, Where is your

home—the home not of your body, but of your soul? Is it in God? or only in some creature of God? Is it in Him from whom death cannot sever you? or in that which is itself subject to vanity, and therefore doomed to destruction? May God grant to every one of us the satisfactory assurance that we are now, and will henceforth and for ever be, **AT HOME IN GOD.**

### III.

#### RIGHT VIEWS OF THE SAVIOUR'S CHARACTER AND WORK AN ANTIDOTE TO DOUBTS AND FEARS.

‘Fear not ; I am the first and the last : I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death.’—REV. i. 17, 18.

OUR text is part of a description which the blessed Jesus gave of Himself when He appeared in vision to His beloved disciple. To understand it aright, it is necessary to know the peculiar circumstances in which the apostle was then placed. To these circumstances he refers in the preceding verses, where he gives us to understand that he was in exile for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. The Roman Emperor Domitian, soon after his accession to the throne, revived the persecution against the Christians which had been begun by the Emperor Nero, but which had been allowed to slumber during the intermediate reigns of Vespasian and Titus. Among the other sufferers on this occasion, was John, now the only surviving apostle. How he escaped martyrdom, and was merely subjected to banishment, though a

person of the greatest influence amongst the followers of Jesus, whilst so many others were called to seal their testimony with their blood, is a question which cannot now be determined. It seems to have satisfied the tyrant to send him to Patmos, a dreary island in the Ægean Sea, then used as a state prison by the Romans. Here the venerable man of God often wandered among the sterile mountains, bemoaning the calamities which had befallen the Church of God, and pondering the probable issue of his own heavy trials. In such a mood he had wandered forth on a Sabbath-day, when, lo! the deep silence was broken by a voice like a trumpet sounding behind him, and, turning, he seemed as if instantly transported to Jerusalem, and introduced to the holy place of the temple; for there stood the seven golden candlesticks, with the high priest, in his sacred vestments, officiating in the midst of them. But the glory which shone in this Person showed Him at once to be no son of Aaron, but the High Priest of a higher and peculiar order. Through the splendour which invested Him, the apostle recognised the well-known features of his beloved Redeemer, and, overcome by a host of conflicting feelings, he swooned at His feet. The Saviour, in all the warmth of His wonted attachment, laid His right hand upon His prostrate disciple, and, in accents full of the tenderest regard, thus addressed him, 'Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.'

In this address of the blessed Saviour to His beloved disciple, we have a reference to the great source of our mental discomfort, namely, doubts and fears; and a remedy for these evils discovered to us, which consists of right views of the Saviour's nature, character, and work. Our bane and antidote are both before us; let us give a brief consideration to each.

I. THE SOURCE OF OUR MENTAL DISCOMFORT—  
 'Fear not.'—There were many and seemingly cogent reasons why the apostle should at this time give way to fear. The persecution which raged might render him apprehensive of the Church's safety. Already it had been brought very low, and, if the persecution continued, might it not be altogether annihilated? Then, in that desolate place, where there were few or none who felt interest in him, might he not perish for want? Or might not his religion decline, by being cut off from the means of grace? for, though an apostle, he was dependent upon ordinances for the maintenance of spiritual life as well as others. Or he might be tempted to apostatize from faith, in order to obtain restoration to his friends and social life. Or he might have his misgivings as to the truth of a religion which had involved him in so much suffering, or doubts as to his personal interest in it. It has been supposed that the fear which the Saviour sought in this case to allay proceeded wholly from the vision which He Himself afforded, and certainly such a display of glory was calculated to awaken dread. But

the address tendered by the Redeemer to His disciple indicates that, whatever perturbation arose from the vision, there were also other causes producing it; for He tells him of His authority as well as of His nature and character, and seeks to allay his fears by an account of the very greatness which is considered to have overawed and dismayed him.

Slavish fear is the concomitant of guilt. Adam, in innocency, was an entire stranger to such a passion. He never approached his Maker without the deepest reverence; but that reverence was free from all perturbation. As soon, however, as he had become chargeable with offence, he became also the subject of terror, and instead of hailing the appearance of Jehovah as heretofore, he hid himself among the trees of the garden. Grace does much to subdue this passion, but never in this life wholly overcomes it. Whilst the saint continues in the flesh, he continues to sin; and it is impossible for a sinner to be fully divested of evil apprehensions. The consciousness of guilt must ever render the thought of having to do with God appalling. Even Moses could not entertain it without exclaiming, 'I exceedingly fear and quake;' nor John behold the Saviour's glory, though only in vision, without falling at His feet as dead.

The fears of Christians, however, do not always proceed from the knowledge of God, but often from mistaken conceptions of Him. In moments of dejection, they are prone to regard Him altogether such an one as themselves, fretted by the perverseness of His

children, and indignant at the ingratitude of His dependants; and, in despite of all the evidences afforded to the contrary by his past procedure, they distrust Him in time to come. The same saint who once said in all the boldness of holy confidence, 'He who delivered me out of the paws of the lion and of the bear, will also deliver me out of the hand of this uncircumcised Philistine'—said also, and that very shortly after, 'I will one day perish by the hand of Saul.'

Slavish fears, however, more frequently arise from doubts of personal interest in the salvation which Christ has wrought out, than from doubts of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God in His government of the world. That a matter in which such important interests are at stake, and involving consequences that are irretrievable, should command supreme attention, and excite the most intense anxiety, is not only proper, but in the highest degree desirable. Apprehension on this head is sanctioned by inspired authority, and the utmost caution is demanded respecting the views we entertain of our state and character. 'Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.' But while deep concern on this point is not only justifiable but commendable, it becomes highly sinful when it yields to despondency without sufficient reason; and there are among Christians those who seem to take a pleasure in writing bitter things against themselves, who regard nothing as a token for



good, refuse to be comforted, and seem determined to go down to the grave mourning.

And still further, there are those who embitter their whole lives on earth by fear of death, which is to terminate them. They invest the last enemy with innumerable terrors, and always think more of the pain than of the bliss of dying. It is indeed natural to recoil from dissolution ; but grace overcomes nature, and gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Death cannot destroy us, nor separate the saint from the love of Christ. Yet how many good men suffer a thousand deaths in fearing one !

From whatever causes these slavish doubts and fears arise, they are dishonouring to God, prejudicial to the Christian character and comfort of the doubter, represent the religion of Christ to the world in a false aspect, and render the continual entertainers of them highly criminal to the Searcher of hearts. They justly merit punishment because of this ; and were God's thoughts as our thoughts, they would be invariably followed with tokens of His displeasure ; but 'He knoweth our infirmities, He remembers we are dust.' Instead of awarding punishment, which is our just desert, He is pleased to address us in the language of compassion ; and by statements illustrative of His nature and character, inspire us with confidence, and cheer us with hope. Such was His condescending procedure in the case which has given rise to these remarks ; and the address delivered by Him on that occasion we do well to ponder, striving to derive

from it the comfort it is designed and calculated to afford. 'Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.'

II. Let us now turn, then, to the ANTIDOTE which Christ has furnished for all doubts and fears; and it is here intimated—

*First, That an antidote to these may be found in right views of His divine nature.*—'I am,' says He, 'the first and the last: I am He that liveth,' thus intimating that He is an eternal, self-existent, and immutable being. Eternal not in the same sense that angelic spirits and human souls are eternal, whose existence, though stretching into an interminable futurity, commenced at a certain point in the past; but eternal in the same unqualified sense in which God is eternal, whose existence is from everlasting to everlasting.

He is 'the living One,' for such is the proper rendering of the phrase, 'I am He that liveth,' inasmuch as He existed before all other beings. There are men who suppose they exalt Him very high by conceiving of Him as anterior to men and angels, but subsequent to another being whom they call God. But Messiah regards all such conceptions of Himself as derogatory of His honour, and insists upon being regarded, as He was in fact, the first of all beings. Before His omnipotent fiat peopled space, He existed

alone, and had always so existed, for He knew no beginning. As expressive of His antiquity, He assumed an appearance, not such as that to which the beloved apostle had been accustomed when he reclined upon His bosom, blending some remaining traces of youth with the indications of matured manhood, but an appearance expressive of all the venerableness of age. 'His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow,' while the costume which He assumed was that of a priest under the law. But we know that the sons of Aaron retired from office whilst yet in the vigour of life; and therefore His garb and appearance were altogether incongruous, if something was not intended to be expressed by this combination which could not be expressed without it. But this declaration explains this combination of symbols, and intimates that the High Priest of our profession is 'the Ancient of days,' who existed long before either the temple or the tabernacle was raised, and had espoused the cause of sinners, not only before any of the priesthood had burned incense or offered sacrifice, but even before sinners themselves existed. In short, that He was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was; for He who was before all time, must necessarily be eternal.

Jesus is 'the living One,' inasmuch as He will continue to exist through the eternity that is yet future, as He has existed through the eternity that is already past, if past and future be terms that can with any propriety be applied to eternity. 'I am the

last,' says He, 'as well as the first.' As He was indebted to no one for His being, so no one can deprive Him of it. Angelic spirits and human souls are immortal, but merely from the will of the Creator; and although now eternal, they are wholly dependent for their immortality upon Him who conferred it. But the life which dwells in the Saviour cannot possibly be annihilated. He lives of Himself; and He who always was, must of necessity always continue to be.

Jesus is 'the living One,' inasmuch as life is inherent in Him only. Were He annihilated, making the supposition of an impossibility for a moment, all other beings would cease to exist. No other liveth by himself, any more than to himself. All life was at first derived from Him, and from Him all life still continues to flow. 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' From Him proceeds the spiritual as well as the natural life of every believer. By Him it was imparted, by Him it is maintained, and by Him it will be finally consummated. 'For they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.'

Jesus is 'the living One,' inasmuch as He will continue for ever the same. He speaks in the present tense, to intimate that the character He here gives of Himself always has, and always will continue to belong to Him. He is the only being in the universe of whom perpetual sameness can be affirmed. Angels are mutable, as has been lamentably proved by the

transformation of many of them into devils. That men are given to change is verified by every day's experience. Our 'friends, like summer brooks, pass away,' not only by reason of death, but by reason also of their fickleness of temper, their proneness to take offence, and craving for novelty. But no such change need ever be feared in reference to Him who is 'the Ancient of days.' He is at all times, as He is in all places, the same—the same as to His divine perfections when upon earth as He had been in heaven—the same now in heaven as He was upon earth—the same to the apostles as He had been to the patriarchs—the same to the saints of latter ages as to the disciples of primitive times—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Such being the essential attributes of His nature who is the Saviour of men, what can saints have to fear? He who solicits our confidence is not like creatures, a being of yesterday, breathing a communicated life, and indebted for his immortality to grace; but the ever-living and life-giving Saviour, who can be affected in no way by the languors of fatigue, the debilities of sickness, or the infirmities of age. He fainteth not, neither is weary; the power which created the universe will for ever nerve His arm; the breath which quickened the human progenitor will for ever animate Him. He is 'the living One:' this is His name and His memorial to all generations. And if He be immutable, as He is eternal, what can saints have to fear? It cannot be change of affection.

Whom He loves, He loves unto the end. Till God the Father ceases to love God the Son, it will be impossible for the Saviour not to delight in His saints, for He Himself avers, 'As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you.' It cannot be inability to succour and defend them that saints can warrantably dread, for will and power are ever the same. No opposition can ever arise superior to His omnipotence, nor difficulty present itself that will baffle His wisdom. 'He doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth.' It cannot be breach of promise that saints can warrantably fear, for unwavering constancy is the distinguishing feature of His character. No good word which He has spoken has ever fallen to the ground, and His faithfulness stands pledged for the accomplishment of all which remains yet to be performed. '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 upon thee.'

*Second,* An antidote for slavish doubts and fears may be found in *right views of the Saviour's incarnation and death*.—To these He refers, when He says, 'I was dead.' By this phraseology, he intimates *that He was partaker of the human as well as of the divine nature*. As 'the living One,' according to the proper import of that term, He could not die; for that term, we have seen, implies eternity, self-existence, and immutability. Since, then, He was dead, it must have

been in a nature capable of dissolution, and that had been subjected to death. It is the utility, not the necessity, of such a union that is now before us. The Saviour refers to the fact of His death in human nature, in order to administer consolation to distracted minds, and no fact that ever transpired is better calculated to afford them solace and comfort. Had the Mediator of the better covenant approximated no nearer to us than to hold such intercourse as the divine nature could admit, we might then, with some show of reason, have questioned the probability of His feeling any interest in our affairs. The peasant doubts the regard of his prince for him, and his concern in anything he calls his. He knows that it is difficult, if not impossible, for a mind that never felt poverty to sympathize to any great extent with the poor; and that it is not to be expected that a person who is courted and caressed every hour, will often reflect that there is any one in his dominions utterly destitute of friends. If such want of confidence be felt by one man towards another, merely in consequence of the difference of rank between them, what must have been the case if, in addition to that rank, there had been difference of nature too? Men have ever been prone to believe that the Creator is too great to take any notice of, much less to feel any interest in, the affairs of this puny world. But He has disproved the correctness of such a conception, not merely by becoming one with us in nature, but also by participating in our condition. He has not only become bone of our bone,

and flesh of our flesh, but has allied Himself to the meanest and most abject of our race. Whatever infirmities are incidental to uncorrupted humanity, He felt. Whatever pangs an untainted mind can feel, He endured. He was pre-eminently a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. No man can now say that his hardships are peculiar—his sufferings unparalleled. The poverty of the Saviour was the extremity of destitution, for He had not where to lay His head. The trouble of His soul was the ultimate of anguish, for it wrung from Him a bloody sweat when there was none to sympathize with Him.

Such being facts in the history of Him who calls Himself the Friend of sinners, what can believing souls have to fear? It cannot be the want of sympathy, for if without solicitation He allied Himself to such despicable beings as we are—if He was not ashamed to call us brethren, when He possessed no interest in common with us—will He not, now that in spontaneous love He has made our cause His own,—will He not listen to the cry of distress, and to the friendless prove a friend? How does our courage revive, when in the hour of danger we see an acquaintance hastening to our aid! What additional strength that courage receives, when our succour appears not only in the person of an acquaintance, but of a tried friend! But that courage becomes confidence itself, when the person who approaches is none other than our brother, the son of our mother. We know that nature is too strong in him to permit him to see us suffer, if personal



sacrifice on his part can save us. And how can the believer forget the near and dear relationship in which God's Son stands to him—a relationship in which He so glorifies, that in the days of His flesh He seldom styled Himself by any other appellation than that of the Son of man? Is nature different in Him from what it is in His species? Is He not susceptible of the sympathies and affections of the human heart? Has He humbled Himself in vain, and does the alliance which He has formed with us serve no purpose, or can it be turned to no account? It was not thus His apostles reasoned respecting His assumption of humanity. They felt the knowledge of such a fact to be a source of comfort to a burdened conscience, and a ground of assurance to a disconsolate soul. 'We have not a high priest,' say they, 'who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; but was tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us come with boldness and confidence to a throne of grace, to ask mercy to pardon and grace to help in time of need.'

Further, *when He tells us He 'was dead,' He means to intimate that His death was an atonement for sin.* The phrase literally rendered is, 'I was made dead,' and is of the same import with the language of the prophet, when he says, 'It hath pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief. Thou wilt make His soul an offering for sin.' It was only as a substitute He could die; for being perfectly innocent, death, which is declared in Scripture to be the punishment of sin, could not be justly awarded to

Him on His own account. It is tyranny, not justice, which makes the unoffending suffer; and since no one presumes to impute tyranny unto God, while yet His Son suffered at His hand, it follows that His Son was either actually guilty, or was considered such. He was not actually guilty, for His perfect purity of character has been fully substantiated. Guilt must therefore have been imputed to Him, and for that imputed guilt He died. He endured the penalty awarded to sin, not only with full approbation, but with full knowledge of its nature and extent. Gethsemane with its mental agony and bloody sweat,—Calvary with its ignominious spectacle and painful death,—Joseph's tomb with its degradation and loathsomeness,—were all spread out in His omniscience as unavoidable circumstances in the undertaking. But such was His regard for men, and such His determination to save them, that He loved not His life to the death, but paid for them the awful price—'all price beyond'—the price of His own precious blood.

Seeing, then, that our Substitute 'was made dead,' by that Judge we deemed our foe, and made dead, not in vengeance against Him, but in mercy towards us, what can excuse our doubts or justify our fears? The vengeance we deprecate has been turned away from us. The dreaded foe has become the devoted friend; and if God be for us, who can be against us? God reconciled, every enemy ceases to be formidable. The atonement that bespeaks His wrath appeased, divests death also of his terrors.

‘For by death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.’ Instead, therefore, of yielding to despondency, and being overwhelmed with perturbation, the saint ought rather to triumph, and say, ‘We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have received the atonement.’

*Third,* An antidote to slavish doubts and fears may be found in *right views of the Saviour’s resurrection from the dead and glorious life in heaven.*—To these He refers when He says, ‘I am alive for evermore.’

This implies *that the atonement offered by Christ was perfect and accepted.* His was not the only sacrifice that had been offered for sin. With this view victims had often bled on the altar, and incense smoked to heaven. The ritual drawn out by Moses for the Jewish people, is little else than a catalogue of the number and variety of victims to be offered in worship. But that which has fully answered its purpose needs not to be repeated, and therefore the repetition of these sacrifices proved their imperfection. ‘For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect: For then would they not have ceased to be offered, because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices

there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' The fact then of Christ's being raised after He was dead, and being alive for evermore, demonstrates the perfection of His sacrifice; for if His offering had possessed no more virtue than former sacrifices, 'then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world. But now once, in the end of the world, hath He appeared, to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.'

But notwithstanding the perfection of His sacrifice, God was under no obligation to accept it, unless on the ground of an assent formerly given. It was not enough that a perfectly innocent victim was substituted in the room of the guilty. The Judge had a right to demand the life of the actual offender, and this or any other arrangement must of course have first had His concurrence. His assent being given, it was essential to our comfort not only to know that the atonement had been offered, but that it was actually accepted. Of this, abundant proof has been afforded by the resurrection of the Saviour from the dead, and His exaltation to the highest glory in heaven. If His death is to be regarded as payment in full of all the demands the law could make against sinners, His resurrection must be regarded as His legal discharge. If God had not accepted the ransom which Christ

had paid, He would have manifested His refusal of it by leaving Him under the arrest of death. But He has declared not only that he was the Son of God, but that His blood was a full atonement for sin, by His resurrection from the dead.

Since, then, the sinner's Substitute has given full satisfaction to the law, and the righteous Judge has testified His approbation of what He has done, the apprehensions which distress the penitent's mind on this head should be for ever at an end; for the wrath of God, which he so much dreads, has already been poured out upon him in the person of his representative, and it is incompatible with all justice, human or divine, to renew a demand against a debtor which has been already paid by his surety. Because of Christ's perfect sacrifice, Jehovah now sees no iniquity in Jacob, or perverseness in Israel. He is not only well-pleased with His Son, but with us in Him. By delivering His only-begotten for our offences, and raising Him again for our justification, He has shown Himself at once 'the sinner's friend, and sin's eternal foe'—the just One, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

Secondly. 'I am alive for evermore' implies that the Saviour will for ever live in the nature in which He died. This statement is prefaced with an exclamation expressive of the singularity of the truth which it declares: 'Behold, I am alive for evermore.' When man dieth, he lieth down to rise not till the heavens be no more. Some few have obtained a seeming

exemption from this law. Lazarus and some others rose from the dead ; but when they did so, it was in their shrouds, for they were to need them again. But when the Saviour rose, He left His grave-clothes behind Him, for He was to require them no more. The language He appropriates upon this occasion is worthy of our deepest consideration, for as sinners we need not only a dying substitute, but a living friend. We have already reminded you that, in His divine nature, Messiah could not die. It must therefore be of His human nature He thus speaks. As proof of this, He appears in this vision in human form ; altered, indeed, from what He was when John reclined upon His bosom, yet readily recognisable by him. Yes, that very body in which He died and was laid in the grave—that very soul in which He suffered such anguish—that same body and soul are now, and ever will be, in most intimate union with the Godhead. The immortality of the one nature is now as certain as the immortality of the other. Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more—death hath no more dominion over Him—for in that He died, He died unto sin once ; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. There was a propriety in rewarding the nature that had suffered. But reward was not the whole object subserved by the resurrection of Christ. In His glorified humanity He has work to perform, as well as honour to enjoy. Accordingly, He appears in this vision, not only in human form, but as engaged in human employment. He was clothed with a garment down to the foot, and

girt about the paps with a golden girdle, thus representing a high priest doing the work of the temple, and which appearance, taken in connection with His language upon the occasion, amounts to a declaration of the fact, that His existence and His work will be co-extended—that He will ever live to intercede, and will ever intercede while He lives. In other words, the same merit that brought God and sinners into reconciliation, will ever keep them reconciled. The favour God now shows to the human race, He shows for Christ's sake, and for His sake only He will continue to show it. Under the Levitical dispensation there were many priests, because they could not continue by reason of death: "But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." In the priestly capacity He died for His people; in His priestly capacity He still lives for them. He hath entered heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us.

Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. In His resurrection, believers behold a proof and pledge of their own. The grave cannot retain His followers, any more than it could retain Himself. The life that quickened the head will also quicken the members. He that raised up Jesus from the dead will also quicken your mortal bodies, by His Spirit that dwelleth in you. The fact that the Saviour now lives in heaven, secures that that place of unmingled felicity shall also

be the residence of all His people; for He will come again to take them to Himself, that where He is they may be also. Let every penitent sinner remember, that a Redeemer, possessing human nature in heaven, is a brother still; One that has not changed His feelings with His state—who sympathizes with all their sorrows, and who will share with them all His honours. An incarnate Saviour, alive for evermore in heaven, is ample security to the saint that all necessary succour and protection will be afforded him; for He who is exalted to the highest honour, must possess the greatest influence. He has therefore only to ask what is necessary, and it will be granted, for Him the Father heareth always.

These interesting statements are closed with a solemn Amen! But to whom it is to be ascribed, whether to the apostle or to the Redeemer, is matter of question and doubt. If to the former, it is then to be regarded as an evidence that his confidence in his Saviour had become strong, in consequence of the vision with which he had been favoured, and the declarations which had been afforded him. If to the latter, which seems to us the case, then it is intended to give additional weight to what He had said. Not that the Redeemer's affirmations stand in need of strong asseverations to give them force, for they are all in accordance with truth. But since men stand in doubt of one another, and require an oath for confirmation, the blessed Saviour is pleased to swear to His own statements, to afford strong consolation to all who have



fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them in the Gospel. He is not satisfied with merely saying such things as are calculated by their nature to console, and then leaving desponding souls to be comforted by them, as they may happen to be able to appreciate and apply them. But He condescends to swear to the truth of what He affirms, that, in addition to the consolation arising from the truth spoken, they may have the comfort arising from their confidence in the Speaker, not in His word only, but in His oath; for 'Amen,' as employed by Him, is tantamount to an oath amongst men. Thus He has done and said everything that is necessary to dissipate the doubts and quell the fears of penitent souls, and afford them joy and peace in believing. To despond now, and much more to despair, must not only be foolish, but criminal. To act in either way, is not only to call in question the testimony of prophets and apostles, but the declaration of God's own Son, and His declaration confirmed by oath. Lend an ear, then, to the gracious assurances of Him who cannot lie. Come now, without further delay, appreciate and appropriate the consolations he tenders you: 'Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.'

*Fourth,* An antidote may be found to doubts and fears in *right views of the Saviour's office and authority.*—This division of the subject opens up too wide a field to admit of our traversing it, after the full examination

which we have given to what has gone before. Enough, however, may be seen at a glance, to assure us that our doubts are unwarrantable, and our fears reprehensible, seeing the encouragement there is in the Saviour's history and character. The office He sustains, and the authority He exercises as the glorified Redeemer, ought ever to assure our minds of safety. He hath the keys of hell and of death. Keys are the symbols of power and prerogative; and the blessed Jesus will not possess these, without exercising them for the benefit of His people. He will sustain them in the world till the suitable time comes to remove them out of it—conduct them through all the dreary passages that lie in their way in passing out of it—open every door that is closed against them—and bring them to His own abode in triumph as well as safety. He openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth. He will receive them into heaven, and shut out all their enemies; make them ineffably happy, and their enemies inconceivably miserable.

Now, of the things of which we have spoken, this is the sum—that an antidote to doubts and fears may be ever found in right views of the Saviour's nature, character, and work. But in order to these views acting beneficially, they must be present to the mind. To forget them, or fail to reflect upon them, when beset with dangers or difficulties, must in effect be the same as to be ignorant of them, or disbelieve them. It is to the want of reflection that most of our perturbations of mind and misgivings of heart are to be ascribed.

There is abundant consolation furnished in the Word of God; but we persist in seeking it in ourselves, where it is not to be found. This is our infirmity, which we ought not only to confess, but strive to conquer, and in opposition to it resolve with the psalmist, saying, 'I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember Thy wonders of old.'

But right views of the Saviour will be no antidote to doubts and fears, unless at the same time we have right views of ourselves. We must know to what class of character we belong—to the lovers of God, or the despisers of His name. Till this point is settled, it is in vain to expect comfort; for uncertainty as to state and character must ever be accompanied with the anxiety of doubt, and the bondage of fear. The heir of an inheritance can only substantiate his claims by proving his identity; and until the sinner has proved his sonship—and this is done only by manifesting the fruits of regeneration—how can he expect to share in the children's privileges? Let him once really know Christ as his atoning sacrifice, and himself as a genuine believer, and he will not fail to know, in his liveliest experience, what is meant by peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost. And may God grant that this may be the happy experience of all of us, and to His name be everlasting praise. Amen.

## IV.

### LOST COMFORT SOUGHT AND FOUND.

‘By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth : I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth : I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me : to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth ? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth : I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.’—SONG OF SOLOMON iii. 1-4.

It is held by all who admit the authenticity and divine inspiration of the Song of Solomon, that it is to be interpreted only in an allegorical sense. According to this mode of interpretation, the Bridegroom, whose excellences it so much extols, is none other than the blessed Saviour, whose worth can never be fully estimated ; and the Bride, on whom He bestows so much regard, is none other than the Church, which He hath purchased with His blood. But the language applied in Scripture to the Church is also applied to the individual members composing it, thereby implying that what is true of the whole is true of the part. It is therefore allowable for us to view the

text as descriptive of a believer's experience, when, finding himself deprived of spiritual comfort, he sets himself in right earnest to the recovery of it, and on being successful, becomes ineffably happy in the re-possession of it. Such are the ideas which seem veiled under this allegorical drapery; and, by a temperate use of the terms and allusions employed in our text, we hope to impart a still greater beauty and a still deeper interest to these ideas than they would otherwise possess. Great as that beauty and deep as that interest must ever be to all who have had any spiritual experience,—whatever be the language in which they are clothed, or arrangement in which they are set forth,—may that benign Saviour, whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness better than life, afford His gracious presence to every one of us, and may His comforts delight our souls.

I. THE OBJECT SO EAGERLY SOUGHT AND ARDENTLY DESIRED.—‘I sought him whom my soul loveth,’—that is, whom I love intensely, supremely, above all; for to love with the soul, is to love with all the heart, with all the mind, with all the strength. She had never known any one equal to him, any one to compare with him; never knew what love was till she loved him, nor was aware that love for any one could be the source of so much pleasure, and so much pain. She had been rendered unspeakably happy by him, and had become proportionably miserable without him.

This expression of intense feeling is descriptive of a believer's attachment to his Saviour, when he has had any experience of the joys of His salvation. A spiritual discernment was imparted to him in regeneration, by the power of which he discovers the dignity of the Saviour, the amiableness of His character, the excellence of His deeds, the suitableness of His offices, the desirableness of His fellowship; and a feeling springs up in his mind, so transporting at times, that an inspired apostle declares that there are no terms in human language to express it. 'Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

The saint not only loves the Saviour, but is conscious of loving Him, and loving Him even when the Saviour seems to withhold His love from him. The person by whom he is here symbolized, speaks unhesitatingly of the reality and strength of her affection for her beloved, at the very time He seems to treat her with coldness and neglect. And however the saint's love to his Saviour may vary in intensity, it never wholly decays. Like a fire unstirred, it may sometimes smoulder, but, unlike that fire, it will never expire; for, to love Christ once, is to love Him for ever. Feigned love will endure no trial; and, therefore, when mercies, or what it considers mercies, depart, it departs with them. But genuine love is strong as death: many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. It is easy to say we

love the Lord, when He favours us with His smiles, but difficult to do so when He seems to frown upon us. To this difficulty, however, the love of the saint is equal, for it is of divine production, and is sustained by the omnipotence that produced it. It not only lives when the other dies, but becomes more intense in circumstances in which the other languishes and decays. The saint himself becomes more conscious of it the more it is tried ; like a friend who comes to feel his attachment to his friend more intensely when about to lose him, than he ever felt it before. And the saint's love to his Saviour is often called into new life by sorrows and disappointments, and manifests itself, in these circumstances, by earnest inquiries after Him ; like the spouse, when she went about the streets and in the broad ways, asking, 'Saw ye him whom my soul loveth ?'

It is of the essence of love to seek union with its object. Her affection for her beloved would not let the spouse remain in the house, much less rest on her bed, when he was absent. Her chief enjoyment was derived from his presence, and nothing afforded her real satisfaction while it was wanting. The saint, too, depends upon the Saviour for all his spiritual comfort and joy, and therefore cleaves to Him with purpose of heart. He embraces every opportunity of hearing Him speak, and of speaking to Him ; goes to those places where he is certain to meet Him, where he has met Him before, and where He has promised to make Himself known. Some ardent minds are

disappointed of their expected enjoyments even there ; for they will not be assured of His presence with them, and their fellowship with Him, unless their feelings rise to ecstasy, and their communion with Him be one continued rapture. But these are rare delights, and are neither common to all God's children, nor constant in any one of them. The more general feeling is a sense of comfort, arising from a persuasion of being loved by Him, and a consciousness of loving Him in return. And to minds once filled with enmity, and pained with the wretchedness of hating an object entitled to their love,—to minds once filled with a sense of sin, without God and without hope in the world,—such persuasion and consciousness must be comfortable indeed.

II. THE LOSS SUSTAINED, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH IT CAME TO BE FELT.—‘I sought him, but I found him not.’ He was not where he was wont to be, and where she was warranted to expect him. He had not deserted her, but only withdrawn himself, that she might seek and find him. But she did not know whether that absence was to be temporary or enduring, and hence she became the prey of the most painful conjectures and distressing apprehensions. Nothing could supply his place ; nothing else calm or content her. To her, life had now lost its charms, the world its interest, and she was wretched indeed.

Thus, too, though the saint delights to be near his



Lord, there are times when he feels as if deserted by Him. Not that He has forsaken him, for He is close to him as ever; but He does not reveal Himself to his soul, and he thinks Him gone. He has then recourse to the usual means for stirring up his love—betakes himself to reading, meditation, and prayer, frequents the wonted meeting-places, enters the closet, and assembles with those who keep holiday,—but all in vain. How distressing to go from ordinance to ordinance, still exclaiming, ‘O that I knew where I might find Him!’ Perturbation seizes the mind. He writes bitter things against himself, and becomes persuaded that God hath clean cast off for ever, and will be favourable no more. What state of mind can be more painful than this? It is short of perfect misery only because it is not hopeless.

Why should any saint be subjected to such feelings as these? Does the object of his affections act capriciously, and withdraw Himself in sport or fickleness? Does He trifle with the tender regards of the soul, and permit it to be tortured with pain, because, at any time, He can restore its pleasures? Oh, no! He is not so ungracious, not so ungenerous. He never withholds the tokens of His love but with the greatest reluctance, and only then, because the suspension of them subserves some important purpose in the spiritual history of His people. The cause is most frequently with them; rarely, if ever, with Him. The very manner in which the comfort is sometimes sought, justifies His withholding it. This fact is indi-

cated in the conduct of the allegorical person described in the text. How came she to sustain her loss? And how was she acting when she came to feel it?

According to her own showing, *it was by night* that she sought the fellowship she deemed so essential to her happiness. She had suffered her mind to be occupied with other thoughts and feelings throughout the day; and now, when darkness invited to repose, and exhausted nature was incapable of any other occupation, she proposed dedicating this remnant of time to the most important of all duties. Is it wonderful that in such circumstances she should be disappointed? and that this disappointment should continue till she gave the amount of thought and feeling to her beloved, to which he was so fully entitled.

It will be found upon investigation, we think, that when saints begin to complain of loss of comfort, it is generally after engaging in some worldly pursuit with more than wonted eagerness, or when they have been allowing the things that concern their peace to occupy only a secondary place in their minds. It requires the mind to be at leisure to enter upon the high and holy enjoyment of fellowship with Jesus. Whilst we are in the world, we must have to do with the world. A soul encompassed with a body can never be independent of material things. But if we needlessly multiply our temporal interests, we must expect to suffer loss. When the soul seeks to compromise matters between God and mammon, what alternative is there left for the Saviour, but to frown upon the com-

promise, and leave the saint to confess his disappointment, saying, 'I sought Him whom my soul loveth : I sought Him, but I found Him not ?'

*Further*, according to her own showing, the spouse not only sought comfort at a time which indicated the preference she had been giving to other things, but even then she sought it *in a manner the most listless*. It was not only by night, but upon her bed, when supineness had come upon her, when her mind wandered in reveries, and she could not well distinguish between dreams and realities. Need it be matter of surprise that she failed in finding an important object, which she was not earnestly seeking, but expected to find as a mere matter of course ?

Spiritual discomfort may be generally traced to a similar frame of mind. Supineness has stolen over the complainant, and he is failing to put forth effort for the maintenance of his enjoyment. But that enjoyment cannot be maintained but by the most vigorous exercise. There is not a more difficult work on earth than to keep up fellowship with Christ. How can it be otherwise with a heart highly susceptible of depressing tendencies, and constantly liable to these, in a world of sin ? The soul must follow hard after God, and though faint be still pursuing. How little of this has been manifested by the saint when he loses his spiritual comfort, and begins to complain of it ! It will generally be found, we apprehend, that he has previously been remiss in duty and listless in frame, that formality had been substituted for devotion,

inoperative wishes for importunate prayer, that action had given place to slothfulness, and ardent attachment to coldness of feeling. How should a loving Saviour act towards one who has yielded to these lethargizing influences, and sunk into this slumbering state of heart? Is it not meet that such a soul should be made to feel that, till it throws off this slothfulness, there can be no intercourse with Him whose affections are ever lively, ever ardent? What propriety can there be in responding energy to feebleness, ecstasy to lukewarmness? Estrangement in one heart must produce estrangement in another; but if ever the gracious Saviour manifests alienation, it is only for the sake of the benefit that will accrue to the saint from it. 'I will go and return to My place till they acknowledge their offence; in their affliction they will seek Me early.'

III. THE RESTLESSNESS TO WHICH THIS LOSS GAVE RISE, AND THE CONDUCT TO WHICH THAT RESTLESSNESS LED.—'I will arise now, and go about the city, in the streets and broad ways.' Some losses may be easily sustained, because they can be readily retrieved. Others cause little uneasiness, for they lead to no serious consequences. But for a soul to lose its sense of pardon, and persuasion of divine approbation—to feel the terrors of a conscious guilt let loose upon it—to become the subject of dread that there is now no hope for it in God—is a state of things appalling to thought, and in which no mind that has ever known

the joys of salvation will be content to rest. Let us see how these statements are verified by the case of the spouse described in the text.

*First, Her restlessness was such, that it would admit of no delay in seeking to retrieve her loss.*—The thought of even a brief separation from her beloved was too distressing to allow of her reposing upon her bed, much less of taking indulgence in sleep. The moment she perceives his absence, that moment she addresses herself to regain his presence. What though prudence dictated postponement till the dawn, as more suitable for her purpose, and more becoming her character? Mere prudential motives had no weight in a case so important, and fraught with such consequences. By break of day he might have reached a distance which it would be impossible for her to overtake, and thus be lost to her for ever. There was no time to lose; and therefore she at once resolves, and carries her resolution into execution.

Similar promptitude will characterize every saint who has known spiritual comfort, and becomes conscious of its loss. To such an one nothing on earth is valuable, nothing desirable, if Christ be not found in it. One thing alone he desires, and that he seeks after: that God would lift the light of His countenance upon him, and give him peace.

*Secondly, This restlessness was such, that she deemed no time unseasonable to enter upon the pursuit of her object.*—What though it was night, and the worst construction would be put upon her conduct, when she

appeared in the streets? All that rendered life valuable to her was in danger of being lost, and lost for ever. In such circumstances, she could give herself no concern about the obstacles that lay in her way, nor the misrepresentations of those who could neither understand nor appreciate her object.

So thinks, and so feels, the soul that has once known the joy and peace of believing, but has, in some way or other, lost the delightful experience. In proof of this affirmation, we pass from allegory to real history. There was in the last days of divine visitation to Judea, a female who had known the misery of conscious guilt, and the bliss of a mind assured of pardon, who, as a matter of course, had come to esteem with high veneration, and love with intense regard, the Being who had conferred this ineffable happiness upon her. This object of affection and source of delight had been put to death as a malefactor, and privately buried in a well-secured place beyond the city. Nevertheless, 'on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre.' She sought no company, thought not what account she would give of herself to the watchmen of the city, or how she would be treated by the sentinels at the tomb. Her only anxiety was to get to the spot, and accomplish her object. What would be said about the unseasonableness of her visit, or the singularity of her deportment, were thoughts that never occurred to her mind, and though they had, would neither have disturbed her peace nor altered

her purpose. She was bent on finding her Saviour, and to this one aim every other consideration was for the time subordinated. Oh, speak not of prudential motives, as mere matters of expediency, to a soul pining under the loss of its greatest happiness. It can give no heed to such suggestions, and will only respond to them with the inquiry, 'Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?'

*Thirdly*, Her restlessness was such, that it would not allow her to consider *any labour too great for the accomplishment of her object*.—She explores every street of a widely-extended city, urges her inquiries on all she meets, wearies not in her pursuit, nor desists from its prosecution till that object has been secured. So is it with the saint when seeking the recovery of his lost comfort. 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?' But the hart does not stand wasting its strength in panting; it climbs every mountain, bounds over every valley, till it finds a pool in which it may cool its fevered blood, and slake its burning thirst. Nor can a saint rest while spiritual wants are pressing him, and these wants continue unsupplied.

But though the spouse was prompt in action, and eager in pursuit, she did not immediately find her object. 'She sought him, but she found him not.' Like her, too, the saint is sometimes disappointed of spiritual comfort, even in the path of duty, and even

when assiduous in the performance of it. 'Behold, I go forward,' says one, 'but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him.' Nevertheless, this suspension of comfort by the Saviour is kindly meant; and unless there be some failure on his own part, it will prove beneficial to the saint. It is designed to stimulate his languishing desires, and set him about strengthening the things which are ready to die. Even the best of men are strongly disposed to indulgence, and would never make self-denying efforts for the most important blessings, if they could be obtained without them. 'Soul, take thine ease,' is an address which others besides the sensualist described in the Gospel are in danger of making, and which, when regarded, is certain to be followed with mischievous consequences in their case as well as his.

But this seeming estrangement of the Saviour is designed not more to quicken the saint, than to endear Himself. We frequently fail to appreciate our comforts while possessing them, and only attach importance to them when lost or withdrawn. The Saviour accordingly withholds His comforts at times, till the saint shows, by the bitterness of his regrets and the eagerness of his desires, that he sets full value upon them.

#### IV. THE ULTIMATE SUCCESS ATTENDING THIS



PURSUIT, AND THE WAY IN WHICH IT WAS ATTAINED.—‘It was but a little that I passed by from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth.’ Her search had not been in vain; and when her object was gained, she thought the time she had spent in it short, and the toils she had endured in it well bestowed. She forgot all her anxieties and pains, thought nothing of her exhaustion, for joy that once more she was in the presence of him whose smile was the sunshine of her soul. Her beloved, too, was as delighted to restore happiness to her, as she was to recover it, and even more ready to reward her search after him than she was to make it. ‘God never said to any of the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain;’ but, on the contrary, assures every one—‘Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.’ ‘For a moment,’ says He, ‘have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.’ But these mercies return not of themselves, nor are bestowed merely as an act of sovereignty. It was not in these ways the spouse obtained them; and the allegory under which her conduct and experience are portrayed, is designed to teach us:

*First, That lost comfort is recovered only by the use of means.*—Had the spouse rested on her bed, and spent the night in merely shedding tears, she had risen as she lay down—a stranger to comfort. So long as she abstained from seeking her beloved, so

long was she left to bemoan his absence ; but when she accompanied her sorrow with action, and proved her sincerity by persevering inquiries after Him—then, and only then, her mourning was turned into joy. The Saviour does indeed sometimes come to the slothful, and seeks to rouse him from his lethargy, saying, ‘Open unto Me.’ But this is more frequently done before departure than after it. Once gone, He generally waits to be sought for, before He returns ; and because of the oversight of this fact, many dejected saints wear out their lives in unavailing regrets. Instead of putting forth effort, they sink into inaction, thereby neglecting duty and losing privilege. The Scriptures are not so carefully studied ; prayer is not so regularly maintained ; ordinances are not so constantly attended ; the company of good men is not so carefully sought as aforesaid ; sighs are heaved, and groans are uttered ; desires cherished, and longings expressed, but no action follows, no determinations are formed, and the distress of mind, as might be expected, continues. This is seeking to enjoy spiritual comfort and spiritual sloth together—incompatible things, which the Saviour will never allow to be conjoined. He requires that grief for lost comfort be indulged ; but He also requires that attachment to Him be proved, and proved by the most strenuous exertions to maintain and increase it. Having prescribed a course, He cannot be considered unkind in refusing to deviate from it ; and that course has been explicitly stated : ‘I know the thoughts that I think

toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.'

*Second, Lost comfort is recovered only by the use of the most persevering endeavours.*—The spouse not only tried some means, but many; and not only tried these, but persevered in the use of them. She searched every street, examined every watchman, resisted sleep, and overcame fatigue. And it was only when she had done all this, that she 'found him whom her soul loved.' Such perseverance must characterize the saint, if ever he would acquire comfort, retain it when secured, or recover it when lost. 'Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' To simple petition add diligent search; and to diligent search, importunity. Never despond; never despair. 'The vision is for an appointed time; wait for it.' 'Ye ought always to pray, and not to faint.' Be stimulated to duty, and encouraged to hope, by the example of a poor widow, who lived in a city with an unjust judge, to whom, nevertheless, she went, insisting to be avenged of her enemy, and ultimately obtained redress through her importunity. She was in earnest; and when the saint fully proves that he is so too, he will not fail of success. Proof of this has been afforded by the case of the woman of Canaan, who

came to Jesus imploring Him to take interest in her daughter. At first, He did not deign to give her a reply; and when He did answer her, it was only to tell her that she was not included among the objects of His mission, and it was 'not meet to take the children's bread and give it to dogs.' But nothing disheartened, she persisted still, and by her perseverance gained at once His admiration and the object of her desire. 'O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee as thou wilt!' It was for the very purpose of drawing out these persevering entreaties that the Saviour declined complying with her request at once; and He chides all those who desist before obtaining their object, saying, 'Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.'

#### V. THE USES THE SAINT MAKES OF HIS RECOVERED COMFORT.

*First, He cherishes it.*—'I held him, I would not

let him go.' The wretchedness the spouse had experienced in the absence of her beloved, and the toils she had undergone to regain his presence, put her in as much fear of losing him now, as love had before rendered her solicitous to find him. She clung to him, under the apprehension that he might again depart; and lest he should do so, she resolved never again to let him out of her sight, or conduct herself coldly towards him. She would never more delay seeking communion with him till night, nor indicate listlessness in the expression of her desires. Her longings were now accompanied with energetic action; and her beloved, delighted with this proof of sincerity and earnestness, willingly suffered himself to be detained by her.

Conduct like this is natural to such occasions. When Jesus discovered Himself to the women who came to weep at the sepulchre, they held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. When a mother has merely dreamt that her child is dead, she will cherish it many days after with a thousand-fold more fondness than before, under the dread of losing it in reality. And the saint who has recovered that which is vastly dearer to him than even wife or children, namely, the assurance of an interest in Christ, will cherish it with all the intensity of which he is capable. Under the dread of losing it, he will be studious to avoid everything offensive to the Saviour. He will be careful not to let the world occupy so much of his affections, or even of his attention, as it had been previously

doing. Sin in all its forms will become more hateful to him, and, in the strength of promised grace, he will avoid committing it. Like the offender who has been reconciled to his friend, he will not only be careful to avoid giving offence in future, but be more than ever studious to please. He will be assiduous in doing what he can to delight his Saviour, and make His stay pleasant. He will seek to demolish every idol, mortify every corruption, and banish every rival to Him from his soul. He will labour to transcribe the character of Jesus into his heart and life, magnifying His grace and aiming at His glory, taking fresh hold and further hold of Him every day ; for no man can expect Christ to abide with him unless he abide with Christ.

*Second, The saint seeks to share his recovered comfort with others, as well as cherish it himself.—* ‘I brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chambers of her that conceived me.’ The spouse did not seek to enjoy him alone. There were others that might be deploring his absence as well as herself ; but whether there were or not, she was certain that every one related to him would delight in his presence, and rejoice in her joy. She knew, by a blessed experience, the happiness he was capable of diffusing, and was desirous that all who had any regard for him might participate in it.

It is impossible for any man to be conscious of his obligation to redeeming love, or restoring grace, without becoming anxious to advance the glory of

his benefactor, by the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints. So Paul tells of the grace bestowed upon him ; and John, in his own name, and in that of his fellow-apostles, says, ‘The things which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that *ye also may have fellowship with us* : and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.’ David desired the recovery of his spiritual comfort, not more for his own sake than for the sake of others : ‘Cast me not away from Thy presence ; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation ; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit : *then will I teach transgressors Thy ways ; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.*’ And the blessed Saviour required of Peter that he should employ the happy experience derived from his gracious recovery after his fearful fall, for the benefit of others as well as his own : ‘After thou art converted,’ that is, restored, ‘strengthen thy brethren.’ And how anxious he was to act up to this requirement, is fully evinced by the epistles he wrote to them, wherein he tells of the distinguishing grace bestowed upon him, and calls for their stedfast adherence to that Saviour who is not more ready to forgive sinners than to recover saints. Who that has ever known anything of this grace will not be disposed to magnify it, and call upon all participants in it to magnify it with him ! ‘I will bless the Lord at all times : His praise shall be continually in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord : the humble shall hear thereof,

and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto Him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. O fear the Lord, ye His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him.'



## V.

### LIFE THE GIFT OF GOD.<sup>1</sup>

‘Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.’—JOB x. 12.

THE words of our text, seeing they express great obligations to God, on the part of the speaker, for life, and preservation in it, must appear strange and incongruous, when it is remembered that they were spoken by one who, upon other occasions, wished he had never been born, that he had died from the womb, and that the day might be obliterated from the calendar in which it was said, a man-child was born into the world,—one who complained of the load of sorrows he was called to bear, confessed he was weary of life, and importuned God to let him die, and be hidden in the grave. But before we pass judgment on him, we should know experimentally how we would feel and act under the pressure of heavy calamities, and when irritated to the highest pitch by vile insinuations of misguided comforters. When the patriarch spoke unadvisedly with

<sup>1</sup> A sermon preached immediately after recovery from a long and severe illness.—15th May 1853.

his lips, he was borne down by a weight of woes such as probably never fell to the lot of any other mere man, and was provoked beyond measure by the taunts of professed friends; yet he clung to right principles, so far as he knew them, and these prevented him from yielding to the partial bias of his own judgment, and from adopting the false views of divine providence which his would-be counsellors sought to press upon him. It is a palliating circumstance both for him and them, that the age in which they lived was only the dim dawn of revelation, when the operations of providence could not be well understood; seeing they are often perplexing even to good men still, notwithstanding God has poured a flood of light upon them in His word. Job felt the difficulty of reconciling the real importance of his life with the seeming uselessness of his existence, and the dignity of his nature with the deep degradation to which he was then reduced. He was desirous to think and feel aright, but he frequently did not know how to do either. In the midst of this perplexity, it is pleasing to find him tracing his origin as a creature, surveying the lengthened course of life which had been afforded him, and marking with special notice the hand that formed, the power that sustained, and the mercies that comforted him. That survey brought him back to the oft-felt conviction, that life was a blessing for which he ought to be greatly thankful to God, notwithstanding the grievous calamities with which He was sometimes pleased to accompany it.

Feelings similar to these rise in the minds of all good men when placed in trying circumstances, and distinguish them from the multitudes around them. While others persist in cherishing the false views of life they have adopted, and vindicate themselves in defiance of the testimonies of conscience against them, the people of God revert to the principles taught in His word, and justify His ways towards them, though they cannot always explain, and often suffer severely from them.

But the text is more than a grateful acknowledgment to God for life, and preservation in it. It is one of several statements from which the patriarch justly argues, that his constitution and history afford clear indications of his being made and governed by a wise and benevolent Being, to whom, as such, suffering in itself can afford no gratification; and since it is permitted in His administration, it must subserve a wise and benevolent end. Hence, addressing himself to God by way of solemn appeal to His character, he asks, 'Is it good unto Thee that Thou shouldst oppress? that Thou shouldst despise the work of Thine own hands?' No; it cannot be. Suffering never afforded pleasure to a benevolent mind, and wisdom never made anything merely to destroy it. Since God has conferred life, He will never cease to take interest in it; and since it is His gift, valuable and important also in itself, we should esteem and cherish it. Let us examine our text a little more closely, and we shall find that this high appreciation of life is justly demanded of

us, and that our ardent love of it is fully justified.

I. LIFE IS A GIFT OF GOD, AND CAN BE CONFERRED BY NO OTHER.—He it was who breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and constituted him a living soul. But for that divine impulse, the body so beautifully formed had lain for ever an inert mass, distinguishable from the other matter around it only by its own peculiar shape and loveliness. No angel, however exalted, can impart sensation and consciousness to being, though that being be organized in the highest possible degree. That is the prerogative of Omnipotence only. But God not only gave life to the first man, but to every other. He is giving it every moment, and will continue to do so, so long and so often as creatures continue to come into existence. All things are through Him, as well as of Him; through Him not merely by plan and purpose, but by immediate cause. 'He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.' Yet some men would persuade us that there is no direct divine agency in the matter, and that life results wholly from the operation of a natural law, as if any law of nature could operate without God's sustaining power and continued presence. Those who speak thus cannot even tell us what life is, much less how it is derived, and are continually differing among themselves in their explanations of both.

Even the ancient heathen, notwithstanding their

power of invention and tendency to materialism, could not conceive of human life having any other than a divine origin. Hence they represent fabled Prometheus as having made a man of clay, but as being unable to animate him till he stole the vital spark from heaven. In despite of all speculation on the subject, however plausible, every sober-thinking mind will regard life as one of the good and perfect gifts which 'come down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, or shadow of turning.'

Life being a gift, cannot belong to us as matter of right. We could have no claim to it, for it was bestowed in order to our being; and it is as much an act of sovereign grace to continue it, as it was to bestow it. Since, then, life is derived from above, a gift conferred by Him who is above all, as well as in and through all, 'the King immortal, eternal, invisible, the only wise God,' how highly should we esteem and cherish it! Every disinterested person values a gift more on account of the donor than for any inherent worth the gift itself may possess; and there must be something essentially wrong with that mind that fails to trace the glorious Source whence life has been derived, and to express the liveliest gratitude for the grandeur thus implied in it. It is because men forget the Giver, that they abuse His gift. It would be impossible, with the recollection of Him present to their minds, to pervert this distinguishing boon to the base purposes many of them do. Yet God sees the deep degradation to which they

have sunk His blessed favour, and bears long with the insult. Ay, and if they will only now begin to improve his gift, He will forgive the affront, and give them to feel that they have received a boon indeed. Let us see that we are employing life in a manner worthy of the majesty and holiness of Him who bestowed it, and that we are answering the great end of life, by glorifying our Father who is in heaven.

II. HUMAN LIFE IS A PRE-EMINENT GIFT OF GOD, WHEREBY MAN IS DISTINGUISHED FROM ALL THE CREATURES AROUND HIM.—‘Thou hast not only given me life,’ says the patriarch in our text, ‘but also granted me favour;’ which may mean, that he had not only received existence from God, but till then had also been rendered prosperous by Him. But he seems rather to be referring to the kind of life bestowed upon him as a man, than to any worldly success which had attended him in providence. In conferring that life, he considers that God had bestowed upon him a special favour, as He had done to all the race to which he belonged. His friend Elihu, in the course of the controversy with him, expresses a similar sentiment; for, when complaining of man’s neglect of God, he says, ‘None saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night; who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?’ These lower creatures do not understand whence they came, nor for what end they have been brought into existence. They

possess unerring instincts, but they grow no wiser by them. Through all their tribes and families, they are the same now as at the beginning, and are incapable of becoming anything else. They fulfil their destiny, and their life and being cease together. We can assign no reason, save the good pleasure of the Almighty, why we have been made to differ from them. In the exercise of that pleasure, He has thought fit to constitute a gradation of being; but there was no necessity laid upon him to rise in that gradation to an elevation as high as man. Think what an elevation this is, compared with that occupied by the creatures around us! Among them all, our race alone is capable of thought and reflection, of tracing the Creator in His works, of serving Him intelligently, of growing in capacity, and rising to a still higher position in creation than we at present occupy. In the exercise of these capabilities, we enjoy pleasures of which these creatures cannot be susceptible; for they have no perceptions of beauty, nor ideas of the relations of things. With us, they share the pleasures of sense, and may probably do so in a higher degree than we ever experience; but in the nobler and more exquisite pleasures of intellect, they have no share. Animal life is akin to no other, but intellectual being is not only a characteristic of the life of man, but of angels—of God Himself. Our race is the only race on earth which God can love, the only one with which He can hold intercourse, because the only one with which He can reciprocate thought and affection. It is the only

race, accordingly, which He has thus honoured; and every member of it may, if he will, hold fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Ours, too, exclusively, are the pleasures of hope as well as reflection. Man only, of all the creatures on earth, looks beyond the present; and oh, how much his power of doing so contributes to the enjoyment of life! It cheers him in affliction, animates him in conflict, and braces him for exertion. It gilds the clouds which spread over his horizon, and creates a rainbow over his tomb. It is his to aspire to a spiritual, an immortal, an angelic, a divine life; and it has been given him to continue in existence not only while sun and moon endure, but while God Himself exists—to be as immortal as the Eternal; for when the body returns to the dust whence it came, the soul shall return to the God who gave it.

Human life, then, has an intrinsic value, an inconceivable worth for what it is in itself, as well as an adventitious one, because of the glorious Being from whom it is derived. Contemplated in this aspect, it calls for increased gratitude and higher praise. It is no poor, perishable thing of earth God bestows when He gives us life, but a heaven-originated, heaven-sustained, and heaven-destined gift. Can we think lightly of it, or act in any way unworthy of its dignity and importance? Alas, how meanly it is estimated, and how lightly it is treated, by many of its possessors! To what vile uses they debase it, and for what mere trifles they throw it away! Be it ours to



respect ourselves for what we are, and still more for what we may become; and in the exercise of that respect, show that we know ourselves possessed of a divine gift, of which we are fully appreciating the value, and which we are endeavouring, in the strength of grace, to turn to good account.

III. THE CONTINUANCE OF LIFE IS THE GIFT OF GOD, AS WELL AS THE COMMUNICATION OF IT.—‘Thy visitation,’ says the patriarch in our text, ‘Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.’ ‘Visitation’ being a comprehensive term, expressing the constant agency of God; and ‘spirit,’ in this case, as is common in the Old Testament, being used as a synonym for life. Donors generally cease to have any interest in their gifts when once they have imparted them; and these gifts may continue to exist in all their original integrity, though the givers may be ignorant as to what has become of them. But life is a gift which cannot subsist apart from the Giver. It must be divinely sustained, as well as divinely communicated. That sustentation is constantly and freely afforded. The fact that men die, forms no exception to this remark; for death is only the divine power taking a different direction from that in which it had been previously operating. It is God who wounds and heals. It is God who kills and makes alive. ‘In His hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.’

No argument is necessary to prove that man needs

preservation. It is a matter alike of observation and experience. Every mind that reflects upon it comes at once to the conclusion, that as man did not make himself, so he can have no sufficiency to sustain himself. In God he lives, in God he moves, in God he has his being. Where is the man who has not had reason to thank God for his preservation? When he thinks of the numerous avenues that lead to death, and the thousands of his fellow-men whom he has already known to enter them—thousands younger and stronger than he—can he fail to wonder that he still inhabits the land of the living, and has been so long exempted from the common lot? When he thinks how delicate is the human frame, to how many accidents it is continually liable, how many seeds of corruption it contains—all of them ready, when circumstances favour them, to bring forth death—has he not reason to exclaim in surprise, Why died I not from the womb? How happens it that I fell not a prey to the perils of infancy, of childhood, of youth? How came I to reach so far into life as threescore years, or have been allowed to reckon even half that number.

‘Strange that a harp of thousand strings  
Should keep in tune so long.’

How often has every man had reason to say, ‘There is but a step between me and death!’ But it was not he who prevented that step being taken; and no one of his fellow-men was powerful enough, or constantly near enough, to watch over and secure him. But God was his all-sufficient and ever-present help and shield.

Well does it become him to say, 'I have sinned; what shall I do unto Thee, thou Preserver of men?' and give the glory of all his escapes, deliverances, and recoveries to God, to whom alone that glory is due. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.'

Such should be the sentiments of our minds and feelings of our hearts at all times, but specially so when new and striking benefits are conferred upon us—when we are delivered from straits, escape dangers, and are restored to health after long or severe indisposition. Then is there a special call in providence to raise a stone of memorial, and inscribe upon it, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.' The man who fails to do so must be proud as well as ungrateful, seeing that though his constant dependence upon God has been strikingly demonstrated to him, and his obligations to his Maker and Preserver thereby rendered conspicuously obvious, yet he refuses to recognise the one or acknowledge the other. Far from our hearts be such feelings! Instead of these, may they be filled with the deepest humility, and the most ardent love. In language similar to that employed by the sweet singer of Israel when recording his deliverance, led us readily and cheerfully celebrate the kind interpositions of Providence in our behalf: 'Gracious is

the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple. I was brought low, and He helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.'

IV. HUMAN LIFE IS A GIFT BESTOWED BY GOD, FOR GREAT AND IMPORTANT PURPOSES.—He has a definite aim in all He does, and that aim is regulated by infinite wisdom. He does nothing at random, leaves nothing to chance; and, in giving life to man, He must have had a specific object in view. That that object is great and important, is evinced by the noble faculties He has given him, and the numerous and highly-favourable opportunities He has afforded for their exercise and improvement. The all-wise God would never have made us wiser than the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven, had He not intended that we should subserve more important purposes in His creation than they. What these purposes are, human nature, viewed in its constitution and social relations, makes known to some extent even by itself; and they are seen at once, in their full development, when the light of revelation is brought to bear upon it. By the one, we see that our faculties are susceptible of very great improvement, and ought to be exercised with that end constantly in view. By the other, we see that there is

a higher sphere of existence to which we may rise, and that it should be our constant aim to become fitted for the occupation of it. The purposes of God in bestowing the gift of human life then are,

*First*, That we should so employ it as to *acquire* all the good of which it is capable. The good to be acquired must be suited to its nature, and consistent with its destiny, else its acquisitions will prove injurious rather than beneficial, and the glorious consummation provided for it fail to be realized. 'Be not deceived,' says the voice of inspiration; 'God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.' Human life, then, is a preparatory state, bearing the same relation to eternity that seed-time bears to harvest. Every husbandman warrantably expects that his crop will bear a proportion to the quality and quantity of the seed he sows, to the pains he bestows in preparing the ground for its reception, and he labours accordingly. What is true with respect to the avocation of the husbandman, is true, in another and higher sense, in reference to the vocation of man as an intelligent and immortal being. The design of the great Donor who has given him life, and the means of its improvement, is, that he sow to the Spirit. 'Now the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' As is to be the fruit, so must be the seed; and therefore

we are apprized, that they only who sow this seed, shall reap life everlasting. We are not born into our fallen state with a meetness for heaven. We must acquire it. The present life is the only period during which we can make this invaluable acquisition; for opportunity is limited to time, and will cease to every individual with the termination of his mortal existence. Whatever is his character then, will be his character for ever. The reign of immutability, both in bad and good, will then begin, and be ushered in with a proclamation, awfully alarming to the perverter of God's purposes, but highly consoling to the improver of them: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.'

*Second,* It is the purpose of God in giving us life, that we should employ it for the good of others, as well as for our own. We cannot consider our nature without perceiving, that we were not made to live for ourselves, but to live to each other. This is clearly indicated by the feelings of sympathy and benevolence implanted in it, together with the influence and activity conferred upon it. It is still further shown by the fact, that we have been placed in a theatre which affords the most abundant scope and occasion for the exercise of these feelings and powers. Our calls to this exercise are innumerable,—in the wants of others, in their equitable claims upon us, and the

mutual services we are able to render. This mutual dependence is an intimation of God's will concerning us, that 'every man is to look not only at the things which are his own, but also at the things of others.' We came into the world in a state of utter helplessness, and our first cry was a cry for aid. We grew up by assistance afforded us; and even now our lives can only be preserved by the help of others. If we depend on them, they also depend on us. The demands made upon us must therefore be just. 'According as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men.' 'To do good and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.'

Thus, our nature, our circumstances, the will of God revealed in His word—all proclaim that life is a gift, conferred by the Giver for great and important purposes. These purposes are not subserved by merely sleeping and waking, buying and selling, toiling and taking ease, marrying and giving in marriage, living and dying; no, nor in merely cultivating knowledge, and acquiring refinement. They involve in them something higher, nobler, more enduring, than any, than all of these—even the life of God in the soul of man; a divine quickening, whereby he shall live a life such as God Himself lives—glorious, immortal, eternal—acquire a holiness resembling that of God's, and be fitted for the full enjoyment of Him. It is only when making these acquisitions that man is answering the ends of his being, and can with propriety be said to live a human life at all.

These purposes are not subserved by the man who lives only to self, any more than by him whose life is wholly devoted to the prosecution of inferior aims. Such an existence is not in harmony with the will of God, either as that will is declared in His acts, or revealed in His word. God lives not to Himself, and cannot permit His creatures to live to themselves. By His manifestations of benevolence, and displays of disinterested and unmerited beneficence, He is constantly condemning selfishness. The foreshadowings of the final judgment, traceable in His word, show that this is a crime He holds as comprehending all others, and which He will severely punish. 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these My brethren, ye did it not to Me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.'

Are we, my friends, living in accordance with the purposes of God respecting us? aiming constantly, in dependence on His promised grace, to answer the great ends He had in view in conferring upon us the gift of life? If we are not carrying out these purposes to all the extent demanded, and according to the opportunity afforded us, it had been better for us that we had never lived at all. Having failed in these respects, what other important purpose can we subserve in creation? None that we can conceive, save that of illustrating the wisdom and justice of God in treating us as worthless,—thus demonstrating that He has never been deceived and will not be mocked; that, as was meet, He has separated the precious from the



vile, hindering those who would not live to God from living with God, and compelling those who lived *to* themselves to live *by* themselves. What must be the misery of such a society! May God in His infinite mercy prevent any of us from ever being joined to it, and, in the infinite riches of His grace, gather our souls to the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.

V. HUMAN LIFE IS A GIFT CONFERRED BY GOD, IN ORDER TO BE ENJOYED AS WELL AS IMPROVED. —He gave it to contribute to the happiness of man as well as to distinguish and dignify him. He has accordingly surrounded him with the means of enjoyment. All things in nature are capable of contributing to it. None of them are corrupt in themselves; they become so only by the improper use we make of them. They are set before us for a right use, and are designed exclusively for our good. Along with these elements of enjoyment, the Author of our being has given us capabilities of deriving pleasure from them, and implanted the desire in us to seek after them. He would not have surrounded us with these sources of pleasure, and endowed them with a power of affording enjoyment, if He had not intended that we should draw largely upon them. This intention, indicated in His works, is still more plainly declared in His word. ‘I know,’ says the inspired wise man, ‘that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and

drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.' Paul, in his charge to Timothy respecting the manner in which that young minister should preach to the rich, says virtually the same thing: 'Charge them, that they trust in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.' True, the Scriptures set forth life under a variety of very gloomy images; as, that it is 'a vapour which appeareth a little time, and then vanisheth away,'—'a flower of the field, that flourisheth in the morning and is cut down at even.' They tell us literally 'that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,' and that 'even at his best estate, he is altogether vanity.' Such views of our mortal state must, it is supposed, wholly mar the enjoyment of life. But a cheerful frame of mind, rejoicing in the gifts of God, is perfectly compatible with solemn views of the physical evils of life: for every candid mind must acknowledge, that our reasons for joy are far greater than our reasons for regret; so much so, indeed, that we are in constant danger of forgetting that pain and death have any place in our world—that we were formed not merely to enjoy the present, but also to prepare for another and a better life. Hence the necessity of keeping fully and constantly before our minds the brevity of life, and the afflictive operations of providence, by which it must be disciplined. If we really believe the truth of God concerning us, we will rejoice in death as well as in life, for the one is the gift of God as well as the other, and is essential to the perfecting of life. 'All things

are yours,' says the apostle—'Life, *death*, things present, and things to come; all are yours.'

It follows from these considerations, that life, in order to be properly enjoyed, must be under the guidance of sound reason. This is the controlling power which the Author of life has given to regulate the passions and appetites implanted in our nature; and he who will not allow himself to be governed by it, will ultimately find that he has been serving tyrants who promised him pleasure, but left him to be the prey of excruciating pain.

But reason itself, however much respected, will not afford full enjoyment to life, unless at the same time the heart be well persuaded of being at peace with God. It is impossible for any man, really believing himself a sinner, to be happy, while he has no well-grounded hope of divine forgiveness, no assurance of participation in the divine favour. The knowledge of having received a gift for important purposes, and the consciousness of having abused it, or, which is much the same thing, failed to employ it for the ends for which it was given, must ever be a source of pain, unless a conviction accompany that consciousness, that no evil consequences will follow—a conviction which can be warrantably arrived at only by a mind that has exercised repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, for by these alone can it obtain reconciliation to God, and come to enjoy the sense of it. It is possible to banish such thoughts from the mind, and affect to be happy by repelling them. But

this is mere affectation. For while the gift of life remains, thoughts of the Giver must recur; and their recurrence will never be pleasant, unless the persuasion accompany them that the Omniscient Donor has forgiven the misimprovement of His gift, and accepted us for the sake of His Son, notwithstanding our shortcomings. Joy and peace come to a sinner only through believing.

If, then, human life be a gift of God, alike capable of improvement and enjoyment, we are called upon to cherish it till God recalls it, and then to resign it cheerfully into His hands. Every man feels himself bound in honour and fidelity to retain a gift while retention is in his power; and in order to secure its retention, to guard it with all possible vigilance, hindering others from injuring it, and abstaining from injuring it himself. Such also is the dictate of nature in reference to life, and no amount of misery can justify the violation of it. Since we did not confer life, we have no right to take it away. They who throw back this gift to God, not only violate a law of nature, but insult the Giver, by practically telling Him that His gift is not worth retaining, and that they care not for His wrath. It can hardly be regarded as a stretch of imagination when the poet says of such, that

‘The common damned shun their society,  
And look upon themselves as fiends less foul.’

It no more becomes the saint to be impatient of life because of his glorious prospects, than it becomes the sinner to part with it because of his gloomy anticipa-

tions. It is certainly far better to be with Christ than to continue in the flesh. But Christ may be enjoyed even here ; and whoever loves Him sincerely will be willing to serve Him in any place He may be pleased to appoint, and remain there so long as He is pleased to continue him in it. ' For whether he lives, he lives unto the Lord ; or whether he dies, he dies unto the Lord : living or dying, he is the Lord's.' He is willing to stay while the Lord has need of him, and equally willing to go when the Lord requires him. He does not part with God's gift by dying, nor is he thereby deprived of it. He departs, only because God calls him ; and he goes at that call, to have his gift perfected. To him who, ' by patient continuance in well-doing,' seeks for glory, honour, immortality, God will give eternal life. The saint, therefore, cheerfully and confidently resigns his life to its Giver, saying, in the language taught of inspiration, ' Into Thy hands I commend my spirit, Lord God of truth ; for Thou hast redeemed it.'

VI.—HUMAN LIFE IS A GIFT FOR WHICH GOD HOLDS THE POSSESSOR RESPONSIBLE.—Since He has given it for important purposes, He must see that these purposes are carried out ; and, as a matter of course, He expresses His approbation or disapprobation, according as these purposes have been respected or contemned. No one needs to be told that the expression of God's approbation will be followed with glorious, and the expression of His disapprobation

with fearful, consequences. If any man has improved God's gift, that is a reason for increasing it: 'For to him that hath shall be given.' If any man has failed to improve his gift, that is a good reason not only for his not receiving any other, but for being deprived of that which he has: 'For from him that hath not, shall be taken away that which he hath.' And if any man has abused God's gift, that is a good reason why the perversion, and the contempt implied in it, should be disapproved of, and the disapprobation indicated by condign punishment. All this supposes an inquiry made, and an account rendered, as to the uses to which the gift has been turned. The moral sense with which the gift is accompanied, intimates that this account is awaiting us. Of what use is a sense of right and wrong, if not to hint at a tribunal? or a sense of good or evil, if not to intimate, that in each man's case the difference between them is to be fully sifted? These probabilities, suggested by our nature as moral beings, are fully borne out and rendered certainties by divine revelation. Indeed, the mere fact of a revelation implies accountability; for why give man a rule for his conduct, if the character of that conduct be a matter of indifference? And if it be not a matter of indifference, there must be a time to inquire, and a judge to decide, whether or not the conduct has been according to rule. But revelation does not leave us to arrive at this conclusion merely by inference. It expressly declares, that 'every one of us must give account of himself unto God,' and

warns us to be careful to make a right use of God's gift, in the prospect of this solemn issue: 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.'

These intimations of human accountability greatly enhance the value of life; for they not only show that the improvement of the gift is demanded, and that it is susceptible of improvement, but also, that every one who improves this gift, according to the opportunities afforded him, shall have the Donor's approbation publicly awarded him. As a result of that approbation, he shall be put in possession of gifts, such as in this world he was incapable of receiving, much less enjoying. The trial will 'be found unto praise, and honour, and glory,' for 'his Lord shall say unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' 'And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.'

Permit me to remind you, that human life, though important in itself, and noble in its end, is not the only life which God is willing to bestow upon man. There is another and a better, which He has reserved for those who feel their need of it, who appreciate its

value, and who importunately seek it as essential to their present happiness and future glory. Such a life was possessed by the human progenitor in his state of innocence, when he reflected the image of God, not only in knowledge, but also in righteousness and true holiness;—a life which man forfeited, but was recovered by God's Son, and is reproduced by God's Spirit;—a life consisting of the divine image restored to the soul, and manifesting itself in dedication to God, delight in God, and desire to be with God;—a life, without which we cannot, in the full and proper sense of the term, be said to live; for, till the perfection of our nature in all its parts be attained, we must continue in a mere rudimental state of being, out of which we cannot pass, save by this acquisition;—a life indissolubly linked with eternity and glory, and which was never conferred without issuing in both. With this life, in all its satisfying concomitants and enduring consequences, within our reach, can we be content with that which puts us upon a level with the beasts of the field, and angels that kept not their first estate—a life which retains only a few faint traces of its pristine dignity, and original divine similitude?—content with such a life, while one vastly superior, both in exercises and enjoyments, is in our power, and, at the same time, call ourselves rational, foresighted, and wise? It is not thus we act in matters that bear upon our temporal welfare. In reference to these, we are ever on the alert to seize what we think for our advantage, and are willing to spend our



lives in attempts to improve our condition. And shall we be solicitous about things of sense, and indifferent about the things of the spirit—wise in reference to things of time, and foolish in respect of those of eternity? When God conferred natural life, it was without the will or consent of the subject. But He does not act thus in bestowing spiritual life. In affording it, He has to do with beings on whom He has conferred the powers of reflection and anticipation, whom He has rendered capable of estimating good, and filled with a desire for the attainment of it. He justly asks, then, that these powers be exercised, and that before He confers His higher life, He be asked by men to do it for them. How condescending in Him to give it for the asking! How many the proofs and encouragements He has afforded, that from those who do ask it, in a manner worthy of its value, it will not be withheld! Whenever He gives one gift, He thereby furnishes an argument for our asking another. By giving a life requiring nourishment, He taught us to ask for food; by giving us a body requiring clothing, He taught us to ask for raiment; and by giving us souls full of aspirations for that which natural life cannot afford, He has taught us to seek after an existence which will yield us real satisfaction and permanent enjoyment. He cannot permit a sense of want to pervade our souls, and not to gratify it. In affording that gratification, He will be certain to give that which is adapted to the necessity. This is what every kind and considerate father does. ‘If ye then,

being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?' May all of us be partakers of His quickening, sanctifying, and comforting influences, and find at last that we have been brought by this good Spirit to the land of uprightness.

## VI.

### THE GREAT DAY.

‘And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.’—JUDE 6.

EVERY day may be said to be a great day, inasmuch as it proves the being and faithfulness of Him who appointed it, and brought it to pass. Were all its events and all their issues fully known, we would be astonished at its grandeur, and be deeply impressed with its importance. But there are certain days in the world’s history which peculiarly merit this designation. Such was that day when God rested from His work of creation, and, in conscious wisdom, pronounced it good. That day has been considered so pre-eminently great, as to be spoken of emphatically as ‘the day which the Lord hath made,’ and in which saints should rejoice and be glad. That was a great day, when the Lord of glory became incarnate, and commenced His career of mercy by appearing in our world as a child of humble birth. So much so, that when the heavenly messenger made the announcement, He called it ‘glad tidings of great joy to all

people,' and the shepherds to whom it was made, immediately proposed to one another to go and 'see the great thing which had come to pass.' That was a still greater day, when the crucified Jesus burst the barriers of His tomb, and by His resurrection was declared to be the Son of God with power. That was a period distinguished from all others in the past, for the solution of mystery, the development of design, and the illustration of Divine character. All who believe in this event, look upon that day as the most important which has yet occurred in the revolutions of time, and most worthy to be held in everlasting remembrance. They therefore substitute it for the seventh day Sabbath, and by divine authority style it 'The Lord's Day.' But Scripture points to a day greater still than any of these, in the light of which the importance of all other days is yet to be seen, which stands out from all other periods of time as the Sabbath stands out from all other days of the week, and which, on account of its peculiar grandeur, interest, and importance, is spoken of, in phraseology the most varied and striking, as 'The day of judgment,' 'The day of the Lord,' 'The last day,' 'The day,' 'The great day.' These references render it unnecessary to specify more particularly what day is intended. It must be already apparent that it is the closing period of time, the consummation of the world's history, the proper commencement of eternity to the race of man, when circumstances will occur, affecting that race,

which never occurred before, which will never occur again, and the consequences of which, whether good or bad, will remain for ever unaltered. Let it not be supposed that because this eventful period is denominated a day, that it will therefore occupy a portion of time equal to one of the divisions of our week. A day in Scripture is used indefinitely to mark a longer or a shorter period, and signifies a certain number of hours, a period occupied by an event, or an amount of labour which has been prescribed and agreed upon. For ought we can tell, the whole matters to be embraced in the final judgment—the resurrection of the dead, the transformation of the living, the separation of the righteous from the wicked, and the removal of both classes to their respective destinations—may all be effected in a moment. But, on the other hand, to us whose ideas flow on in a train, a natural day seems far too short for the disclosure of so many secrets, the correction of so many seeming irregularities, the solution of so many perplexities, the determination of so many causes, as will be effected at that eventful period. God has not told us what mode He will adopt. He has, indeed, spoken of investigations, declarations, and manifestations, which He will make on that important occasion, and we are ready to suppose that time must be protracted for the purpose. But we think without knowledge on the subject, and by speculating on it, are likely to err, not knowing the power of God. We therefore leave the idea of duration out of view, and proceed

to consider those circumstances which will constitute the greatness of the occasion, and on account of which it is called, 'The great day.'

I. This is the day when the dead shall be raised, the living changed, and both constituted for immortality. Death has reigned from the days of Adam onwards, and will yet continue for a time to reign. But he will not always be allowed to triumph. A limit has been set to his sway, and the period is approaching when he will be forced to resign his sceptre, and yield back his captives. Will not that be a great day, when the conqueror of all other conquerors shall himself be conquered? Conquered, not to rally again, or to be succeeded by some other invader, whose ravages may be as extensive, and his victories as appalling, but conquered to the complete destruction of his being and of his kind; for it is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' Then shall every spot of his wide-spread dominion be invaded by a power greater than his own, and every spoil he ever took, be recovered. The cities which the earthquake has swallowed up, or the volcanic lava covered over, will remain buried in their hidden sites,—the immense mass of treasures which the tempests have strewed in the unfathomed caves of ocean, will be left to share the common fate of earthly things,—but every essential element of human being, which now lies in either, will be demanded back, and be given up without delay. The same authority,

which has announced the earth's restoration of her once animated dust, has assured us, that 'the sea also shall give up the dead that are in it.'

Will not that be a great day, when a satisfactory solution shall be afforded to the ever-reiterated questions, How are the dead raised up? and with what bodies do they come? When they will be answered, not by a verbal reply admitting of dispute or ambiguity, but by an existing fact, palpable to every man's senses, and not only demonstrated to general observation, but to individual experience, the scoffer as well as the believer, feeling in himself that he possesses a body essentially the same with that he inhabited in his mortal state, and yet in many of its characteristics entirely different—that, without a paradox, he is changed and still the same.

Will not that be a great day, when all who are alive and remain upon the earth shall be transformed in an instant, as thoroughly transformed as those who have lain in their graves thousands of years, and been reanimated after this lengthened process of decay? 'Behold, I show you a mystery,' says the inspired apostle: 'we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall sound); and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.' Loud were the sound of the trumpet and the voice of words at the giving of the law, but they were heard only within the precincts of Sinai. The sounds of which we now speak, the trump of

the archangel, and the voice of the Son of man, shall not only reverberate from pole to pole, but penetrate the deepest recesses of our globe—not only arrest the attention of the living, but awaken the dead, producing a double effect, in the transformation of the one, and the resurrection of the other.

We are told of vast gatherings of human beings which have sometimes taken place upon our earth; and in proof, are reminded of the multitudes convened on the plains of Shinar, to build a city that would cover the land, and a tower whose top would reach to heaven; of the army of Xerxes, whose rear lay slumbering in night, while the van was doing battle in the dawn; of the mighty levies from all Europe, that met in Belgium under Wellington and Napoleon; of the myriads that crowded the British metropolis, when the Great Exhibition became the source of attraction. But these all dwindle into insignificance, compared with the congregation of the last day. All that then met, will reassemble; but only to be lost in the crowd, as a billow in the ocean.

Will not that be a great day, when this immense throng will be animated in a moment with the power of an endless life; when wrinkles shall vanish from the brow of age, and seniority cease to be distinguishable from youth; when debility shall give place to enduring strength, and deformity to the most perfect symmetry; when the gross shall become etherealized, and the material spiritual; when the once mortal nature shall become like the angelic, on which duration



makes no impression, and which bids defiance to all change ; when unregenerated mind shall be rendered capable of enduring eternally the quailings of an awakened conscience, and the frowns of an angry God ; when all who ever lived, shall live to die no more ?

II. This is the day when the present system of providence shall be wound up, and its wonderful apparatus laid aside as no longer necessary. It has pleased God to carry out His purposes in this world by a system of means, employing instruments not only numerous and various, but seemingly inadequate to secure the results contemplated, and in the use of them pursuing a course which, to us, appears directly opposed to the end in view. The results produced by these instruments are manifold, but none of them are final. They are all subservient to one great object, and combine to bring about one great issue. The ultimate aim for which they all operate, is the salvation of a lost world. That object attained, the instrumentality which accomplished it will no longer be required ; and there being no other object worthy of such agency, its employment will cease.

Must not that be a great day which shall obliterate for ever all distinctions save those that exist in the moral world ; which will destroy the influence of wealth, and the authority of learning ; terminate the traffic of the merchant, and the labour of the husbandman—the revolutions of Government—the machina-

tions of Cabinets—the plots of the people; which will set aside the laws of nature as well as the ordinances of men, arresting alike the heat that produces plenty, and the cold which leads to famine—the favouring winds which facilitate commerce, and the raging tempests which strew the ocean with wrecks; which will break up all the relations of life by which order has been maintained, affection engendered, and influence exerted; which will put an end to the magistrate's rule, the parental authority, the family circle, and whatever else has affected character, or contributed to condition?

That must be a great day which will bring all other days to a conclusion, and be succeeded by none; which will open, never to close; which to some will usher in eternal day, and to others never-ending night; which will arrest Time in his flight, and put an end to all his operations, bring all his plans to their consummation, and make all his changes yield to the reign of immutability.

That must be a great day which is to introduce a system without variation and without end. What the system itself will be, we presume not to say. An instrumentality, in many respects similar to the present, may again be put in operation; but it is much more probable, that means will be dispensed with altogether. To us who are dependent on them, this seems impossible. But the necessity lying on us, exists not with God. His will is efficiency. He says, and it is done. He commands, and it stands fast. Meanwhile, a veil

rests upon the matter, which will then be lifted up, and the day shall declare it.

That must be a great day which will bring with it the completion of the Church of God; when 'He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.' 'And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other.' Of all that has been given to the Son of Man, not one will be lost—not one be amissing. Every one included in the purpose of grace will then have been called, justified, sanctified, and the whole together stand forth, a multitude which no man can number, shining conspicuously in the midst of the still greater multitude of which they form a part, and from which they are to be henceforth separated by an insurmountable barrier, to remain for ever perfect in character, as well as complete in number.

III. This is the day when God's moral government shall be vindicated, and its mysteries explained. God now hideth Himself. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, His path is in the sea, His judgments are a great deep, His ways past finding out. Even to the earnest inquirer, God's moral government seems as intricate and perplexed as was the scene in Ezekiel's vision, where there was a wheel within a wheel; while

to the more cursory observer it seems, like ancient chaos, all confusion and disorder. 'All things come alike to all : there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked ; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean ; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not : as is the good, so is the sinner.' When we see piety pining in poverty, and impiety prospering—saints persecuted, and their oppressors triumphing—nations sunk in ignorance, barbarism, and bondage, while others are progressing in knowledge, civilisation, and freedom,—we are led to ask, Is there a God that judgeth in the earth ? And if there be, can He be infinite in wisdom, power, rectitude, and benevolence ? For how are these perfections compatible with the inequalities that abound among His subjects, and the partiality that seems to characterize His administration ?

There is reason to believe these questions are satisfactorily answered to every man at death. Complete retribution then takes place, which commands the entire approbation of all intelligent agents to whom it is known. But God will not only vindicate His character to every human being in succession, but to the whole assembled universe. With this view, He has determined that His moral government of this world shall terminate in a general judgment. He will then come forth, as if out of His place, displaying His character as the Holy One and the Just, who approves the righteous, but turns the way of the wicked upside down. Every human being will be

summoned into His presence, and no one, however desirous, will be able to disobey. In the solemn process that shall then take place, no thought or deed that ever occurred in the life of any individual shall be overlooked, or falsely estimated. A law will be found for every sin, the guilt of each ascertained according to its peculiar modifications, and the measure of punishment accurately adjusted to its degree. Hypocrisy shall be detected, formality exposed, and all contumely wiped from the good man's name—oppressed innocence will be redressed, and haughty insolence put down—pride debased, and humility exalted. The clouds which enveloped the divine administration will be dissipated, and order and harmony appear where all before was seeming confusion. Reasons for all that ever transpired will become obvious, the unbeliever will be convinced, the scoffer silenced, and both be ready and willing to join the universal chorus which will then be raised: 'Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.'

IV. This is the day *when moral discipline shall cease, and righteous rewards begin*. We are at present under a system of training, and our education is designed to fit us for a higher sphere. With this view, God has sent His Holy Spirit to become our teacher, taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us—operating upon our consciences, to convince, convert, and sanctify them. With this view, He has

given a revelation of His will, and called us to hearken unto His commandments, and do them. With this view, He employs chastisements to awaken and rebuke us, to break the bondage of sin, and loosen the ties of earth. He has afforded time for this discipline to take effect, and allow the fruits of it to appear. At the termination of that period, all further opportunity of improvement shall cease, and the fate of the subject be unalterably sealed. As regards the individual, this opportunity shall terminate with life; for there is neither work, nor device, nor knowledge, in the grave, whither we are all hastening. But with respect to the whole human race, this discipline will continue till the judgment of the great day. Meanwhile, the full punishment of sin is suspended, and salvation offered to all. The regenerate are still liable to temptations, involved in difficulties, and overtaken by afflictions. The wicked are supplied with the goods of this life, and urged by a sense of gratitude to repentance. Entreaties, threatenings, and remonstrances, are addressed to them, that they may flee from wrath to come, and failing to do so, that they may be left without excuse.

That, then, must be a great day, when the trump of the archangel shall proclaim the termination of all moral discipline, the finish of all preparatory labours, the end of time, and the ceasing of opportunity. The designs of grace shall then be completed. Virtue has been exhibited in its endless diversities of beauty, vice permitted in every form in which it can exist without

ultimate injury to the divine government, and thus a proper foundation laid for the rewards and punishments that are to follow. Divine patience has been exhausted, and infinite justice is now left to its unconstrained exercise. For the wicked there remains no more sacrifice for sin, no more offers of pardon ; the pages of revelation are for ever closed, the lips of Heaven's ambassadors sealed. The final decision of the Judge has gone forth : ' Let him that is filthy, be filthy still ; and let him that is righteous, be righteous still.' The wickedness of the wicked shall then be confirmed, beyond the possibility of change. These despisers of grace will be the same obdurate creatures amidst vengeance as amidst mercy. Ages of torment will not produce in them a hatred of sin, or a love of purity. Their own choice, as well as divine sovereignty, has fixed their doom. If they are vessels of wrath, they have fitted themselves for destruction, and the time when it shall overtake them is emphatically denominated in Scripture, ' The day of wrath and perdition of ungodly men.' The solemn moment which ushers in the unalterable state of the wicked, introduces also the unchangeable condition of the righteous. All their fears are at an end, all their dangers overcome, all their pollutions taken away. They are now perfect in their whole nature of soul and body, and full of enjoyment to the highest degree of which both parts admit—possessing an entire and warrantable self-satisfaction, conjoined with the approbation of the Judge ; a combination of circumstances

affording the highest bliss of which a creature is capable, when permanency is added to its fulness, and the transition in that moment to the righteous is a transition from change to perpetuity. 'They shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they be for ever with the Lord.'

V. This is the day when our adorable Redeemer shall complete His triumphs, and realize His highest honours. From the hour when He passed out of this world, He has been going on conquering and to conquer. On the cross, He spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them, making a show of them openly in it. By death, He destroyed death, and him that had the power of death; and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. He traversed the enemy's dominions, and came forth from them leading captivity captive. He ascended up on high, entered the metropolis of the universe, welcomed thither by the Great King, and sat down at His right hand, crowned with glory and honour, there to reign till His enemies be made His footstool. Thence He rides forth in the chariot of the Gospel, and the triumphs He is thus achieving are hourly celebrating in heaven. In anticipation of their universality, His heralds are averring, that already the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and that He shall reign for ever and ever.

But higher honours yet await Him. A public



acknowledgment of His conquests is yet in reserve ; a period is determined on when, by one simultaneous impulse, every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue confess that He is Lord ; when His friends shall hail Him with a shout—Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest! while His enemies fear because of Him, and cry ‘to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.’ It will not then need to be asked, Who is this King of Glory ? His royal state will proclaim His greatness, and intimate the honour which is His due,—when He shall be seen, clad in the robe of essential light, surrounded with all the lustre of Godhead, seated on a great white throne ; heaven and earth fleeing from His august presence, as unable to endure it ; spirits in myriads constituting His retinue, and united in celebrating His praises ; the whole artillery of nature proclaiming His approach, the trumpet of the archangel summoning quick and dead to His bar ; kings, captains, and mighty men, free and bond, small and great, without distinction, appearing before it, the secrets of all hearts laid open, and decisions awarded, from which there is no appeal. Say, must not that be a great day when all this grandeur becomes visible, and all these mighty results transpire ? Yet a tithe of either has not been told. The scene is incapable of description, for nothing has ever existed with which to compare it. It baffles imagination, and no language is rich enough to portray it, even though it fell

within the range of conception. It is the grandeur of a special occasion, which will be without parallel in the future as well as in the past, designed and brought about for His sake whom God delighteth to honour. The veil in which He was once shrouded is now withdrawn. The demand now is not, 'Behold the Man,' but, Behold the God. Every attribute of divinity is being displayed by Him. No room is left for doubt, that He who was David's son, was always David's Lord,—that He who was Pilate's prisoner, is now Pilate's judge,—that He who was 'the man of sorrows,' was always 'The Lord of glory.' His character is vindicated, His claims established. Scepticism looks on in dumb amazement, while belief shouts in ecstasy: 'This is our God; we have waited for Him, we will rejoice and be glad in His salvation.'

VI. This is the day when the present world shall give place to new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. This earth was intended as the theatre of man's life, and the scene of his glory; and when the end for which it was created has been accomplished, it is meet that the arena itself should pass away. Infidels question the probability of such an event, and, pointing to the seeming freshness and stability of nature, ask, with an air of triumph, Where is the promise of His coming? and aver that, since the fathers fell asleep, all things remain as they were from the beginning of the creation. But it is not true that all things have thus continued since the

days of the fathers. Countries have been submerged by the ocean, which in their day presented beautiful and varied landscapes, and mountains blaze and roar which then lay hushed in deepest silence. But these, they say, are only partial changes, and give no indication of such a catastrophe as the destruction of the world. 'This they willingly are ignorant of, that, by the word of God, the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.' And what has happened once may happen again. That such a calamity has not overtaken our world a second time, is only because God is faithful to His covenant. The bow yet remains in the cloud, the sure pledge that all flesh shall not be cut off any more by the waters of a flood. 'But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.' The earth carries in itself the instruments of its destruction. Subterraneous fires, earthquakes, volcanoes, show that the means of its overthrow are in readiness, that it needs only the Almighty's commission to the destroying angel to set the combustible materials on fire, and in a moment the great globe is in flames. Men may affect ignorance of the past, in order to avoid certain anticipations of the future. But the day of the Lord will come. He is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness. With Him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The solemn period will not arrive without bringing all its predicted events along with it. Then shall this earth, for small portions of which contending armies bled and died, which furnished the philosopher with speculations, and pleased him with fancied discoveries, on which the sceptic dreamt he saw engraven the stamp of eternity,—this earth shall pass away. Its variegated scenes, its embattled towers, its lofty pyramids, its emblazoned mausoleums, all the traces of genius, all the decorations of art, shall perish in one common flame. ‘Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.’

This is the statement of Scripture in which we announced the proposition we are now illustrating; but what is precisely meant by the terms employed in it, is matter of discussion among expositors of the Scriptures: one class of them holding that they intimate a renovation only of the present earth, and not its annihilation; another, that they declare the complete destruction of our globe, and the creation of another, to be the dwelling-place of saints; a third, that they are merely figurative, and, as such, express the materiality of the future state, and the nature of its enjoyments. Which of these opinions are right, it is not easy to determine. We know that the Scriptures speak of the world being destroyed by a flood, while its great component parts were still preserved. So the action of fire, through which it is still to pass, may transform without effecting its ruin. But it is

asked, How the heavens and earth thence arising can be called *new*, seeing they are only changed and beautified? But a greater difficulty arises from the dimensions of the earth, as too straitened for the multitude of beings who are to inhabit it as their heaven, if it is to be renovated and remain. But the Scriptures speak of it as then having ‘fled away,’ and ‘no place being found for it.’ Then suppose another world created to come in room of the old, the question presents itself, How does that creation comport with the fact revealed, that the Saviour will then call His people to inherit a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world? If a heaven be already prepared for God’s people, why should it be displaced by another yet to be called into being? But, on the other hand, if the present glorious dwelling-place of God is to be the eternal abode of ‘the nations of the saved,’ why speak of it as made up of heavens and earth—that is, a material globe and a surrounding atmosphere? These are questions which cannot at present be satisfactorily solved, but which need in no way distress us. The knowledge involved in them is in no degree necessary to our present happiness or future joy. It is abundantly manifest that the blessedness on which God’s people shall enter will be distinct from all that ever preceded it. The revolution then to take place, implies the introduction of a state of things previously inadmissible; while the sacred oracle has announced, that it will be a state of perfect and enduring righteousness. It will be what neither

heaven nor earth has been before ; for, though perfect righteousness once characterized all the inhabitants of heaven, it did not continue to do so, for certain angels kept not their first estate, and were cast down, to be reserved unto the judgment of the great day ; and though the human pair in paradise were perfect in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, yet, alas ! they abode not such—their gold became dim, and their most fine gold was changed. But the world of which we speak, is a world into which sin will never enter. It will be for ever free from all moral, as well as from all physical evil. That which is perfect shall have come, and that which is in part shall be done away. Knowledge, glory, and happiness shall become absolute and eternal. ‘Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath ; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment : but My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished.’ ‘The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them ; and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things have passed away.’

There are many great and grand occasions transpiring in our world in which we have little or no personal concern. Of some, we only hear ; of others, we can at best be only spectators. They are

great to others, but not to us ; and even to them, they are often empty pageants, without influence and without consequence. But the occasion of which we speak concerns all, concerns each. The inconceivably numerous throng then assembled shall be individualized, not only in the omniscience of Him that sits upon the throne, but in the consciousness of their own minds. Every one will stand out conspicuous as if he were alone, without pretension and without disguise, known and read of all men—the subject of satisfaction and approval, or of remorse and condemnation. The spectacle before him, though overwhelmingly grand, will pass unobserved ; for what interest can a flaming world have to him who is about to pass into the lake that ever burneth ? or what attractions will even the stupendous magnificence of the glorious Judge have for him whose ear has just drunk in the sentence of divine approval, and whose eye is fast filling with the beatific visions of eternal life ? So, brethren, must every one of you think, and every one of you feel. You will be there—there as if alone—there not as spectators, but as participators, ‘the observed of all observers’—there, with the full consciousness that your destiny is pending, and that in another moment it will begin, never to end, never to change. Say, should not such a consideration have a present effect upon you ? You prepare for other and less important occasions—for entrance upon active life, for meeting superiors, for appearance in public, for changes in life you are called to make ; and shall

the most solemn and important occasion in which you will ever be called to take part, fail to affect you, and be allowed to overtake you without preparation, and without concern? Say not, 'It is distant.' For 'the coming of the Lord draweth nigh;' not only so, 'Behold, the Judge standeth before the door.' The summons to appear is always ready, and may be immediately put into execution. It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment. The one will follow the other as closely as the thunder follows the lightning. It does so to every individual, and will in due time do so to all. 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.' An interest in Christ is the only thing that will abide in that great and terrible day. That interest can only be obtained now, and obtained by diligence. We may sit still and perish, but we cannot sit still and be saved. Heaven is not the reward of labour, but without labour there will be no reward. It is no light matter to prepare for the judgment-seat. The command is given, 'Occupy till I come,' and strict inquiry will be made how it has been respected. Shall our first earnest prayer for deliverance be only uttered then? our first endeavour after holiness be put forth, when preparation has ceased, and character, good or bad, is being eternally confirmed? Be this the immediate, constant, earnest cry of every one of us: 'O Power Supreme! fit me for appearing acceptably in the scene of Thy glory,



and passing through the ordeal of that tremendous hour. Benignant Saviour! grant me a well-grounded persuasion of this favourable issue; and then, when the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat,—when the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up,—I shall lift up my head and sing, knowing that my redemption draweth nigh.'

## VII.

### INTERCOURSE WITH THE SAVIOUR INTERRUPTED AND RENEWED.<sup>1</sup>

‘But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’—**MATT. xxvi. 29.**

THE highest enjoyment of which human beings are capable, is derived from the intercourse of congenial minds. The greater the intelligence and purity of these minds, the higher must this enjoyment rise. Unlike that which is derived from sense, it never palls ; but the more it is indulged, the more exquisite it becomes. In proportion, however, to the pleasure this intercourse affords, so must be the pain which its cessation or long interruption inflicts. Hence the anguish which ever attends the parting of long-tried and much-loved friends. Many expedients have been adopted to alleviate this anguish, but only with very partial success. Love tokens have been exchanged, and assurances given, that no length of time or distance of place will lessen in the least degree the esteem and love which have been engendered in the mind and heart. Objects associated with interesting incidents in the histories of

<sup>1</sup> A Sacramental Discourse.

the parties, have been fixed upon as memorials of their pleasure in meeting and pain in parting ; and the expectation has been entertained, that these would be constantly recalling them to each other's minds, and awakening pleasing recollections. But a wound is inflicted in the heart which time does not heal, and a void created which nothing on earth seems to fill. A persuasion, however, that the separation is only for a time, and that intercourse is not only to be renewed but increased, will go far to mitigate the immediate anguish, and modify the succeeding grief. On this ground the Scriptures tender consolation to bereaved saints, assuring them that their pious friends are not dead, but gone before ; that there is a land into which they will hereafter be gathered with them—a land where separation is unknown, and farewell is never heard.

These remarks, suggested by the narrative in which the text occurs, are also confirmed and illustrated by it. No enjoyment experienced by intelligent beings in a mortal state, ever surpassed that derived by the apostles from intercourse with the blessed Saviour. True, there was great disparity between Him and them, both in respect of intellect and character. But the Holy Spirit had already so far renovated them, that they could relish keenly the thoughts He communicated, and reciprocate to some extent the feelings He expressed. With this Being, so surpassingly great, yet so condescendingly humble—so intelligent, and yet so affable—so holy, and yet so forbearing—they

had associated on the most intimate terms for several years. But the time had come that they must part, and part in a manner fearfully trying to both. The Saviour well knew the pain this intimation was certain to inflict; and in the kindness which ever ruled His heart, He endeavours to alleviate it, by showing them the necessity of removal—explaining the causes which led to it—intimating His concurrence in it—pointing out certain advantages which would flow from it—and crowning all, by assuring them that the separation would not be interminable, but, on the contrary, be followed at a fixed period by still closer intercourse and higher enjoyment: ‘I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’

I. HE INTIMATES THAT HE IS ABOUT TO BE SEPARATED FROM THEM, BUT WAS DESIROUS OF BEING REMEMBERED BY THEM.—He was no longer to drink wine with them in a mortal state, because in a few hours His continuance in that state would be forcibly brought to a close. He had hinted at this fact repeatedly before, saying, that ‘He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed;’ that in a little while the world would see Him no more; that whither He was going they could not follow Him then, but would follow Him afterwards; that He would be no longer in the world, but they would still be in the world. But now He lays aside all vagueness in His

intimations respecting both the time and manner of His departure, telling them pointedly that one of them would betray Him; that all of them would be offended because of Him that very night; that the Scripture was then to be fulfilled: 'I will smite the Shepherd, and the flock of the sheep shall be scattered abroad;' and that all this was to take place so speedily, that He was then to be considered as bidding them farewell.

But though He was not again to join personally with them in the outward manifestations of religious fellowship upon earth, He wished them still to join in them, and while doing so, to let all their thoughts and feelings be associated with Him. 'This cup,' said He, 'is the New Testament in My blood,'—that is, henceforth regard the contents of this cup as representing My blood—the blood of a perfectly innocent Being, standing in the most intimate relation to Deity while partaking of humanity—'My blood,' shed in ratification of a covenant entered into with the Father before all time, in which He agreed to grant salvation to believers in Me, and in which I undertook to do all that would be required of Me, as their surety. The condition is now virtually, and in a few hours more will be actually, fulfilled. The blissful consequences thence resulting to you, and all yet to be joined to you, are inconceivably great and incalculably numerous. They are, however, summed up in this comprehensive formula, 'The remission of sin'—for to whomsoever sin is forgiven, righteousness will also be imputed; and whoever is justified, will also be glorified.

The Person who had conferred such blessings on them was surely worthy of being remembered by them. It is, however, doubtful whether they would themselves have taken steps to secure this object ; for there was a disposition in them, as in other men, to forget their benefactor, and to regard the advantages they had received as their own of right. But though inclined to act otherwise, it is certain that the means they would have devised for keeping alive the recollection of the Saviour, and their obligation to Him, would not have suited the purpose ; for it required universal prescience and unerring wisdom to select materials, and fix upon actions—fully significant of the facts—everywhere available, and easily practicable, which they did not possess. Besides, though all this had been within the compass of their own will and power, the result had been still in vain ; for it was a religious service they were to render, and nothing is acceptable to Christ save that which He Himself appoints. But He did not leave them to their oblivious tendencies or ineffectual devices ; He at once informed them what to do, and how to do it ; and the symbols which He instituted now stand forth, evidences of His condescension and monuments of His skill, as well as manifestations of His sovereignty and memorials of His love.

True, He was about to become invisible to His people for a time. But that was no reason why He should be forgotten by them. There was still present to their senses, that by which faith could see, and love

enjoy Him. Not that the perceptions in this case would be the same with those of the men who could speak literally of what their eyes had seen, and their ears had heard, and their hands had handled of the Word of life. An image would rise to their minds which would not present itself to those who had not been like situated ; and hence they would be more able than these to fix their thoughts and feelings on the object claiming them. When using the sensible signs He had called them to employ, they would seem to be looking again upon His benignant countenance, with its indications of indwelling glory ; to be hearing His heavenly truths, in tones of mingled majesty and tenderness ; to be witnessing the stupendous miracles by which He attested the divinity of His mission ; to be listening to His dying groans and last bequests. But these, after all, were only the recollections of the outer man ; not those of the real nature and actual being. On these, in their peculiar mode of existence, the senses had never been exercised, and they could not therefore be the subjects of remembrance. It is rather an advantage, then, to be free from such a recollection than to be subject to it. To think of Him as He deserves to be esteemed, and feel towards Him as He ought to be regarded, He must be conceived of as He is—Incarnate Deity, inheriting glory which He once veiled but never relinquished, loving still with burning intensity, sympathizing with consummate susceptibility, and regarding with undiminished interest all that concerns His people. It is this conception, in its

continual capability of expansion, that the Saviour wishes His followers to have present to their minds, when He becomes the subject of their spiritual exercises; and the Apostle Peter congratulates them accordingly on thus being able to act towards Him, 'whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.'

II. THOUGH SEPARATED FROM THEM, THEY WOULD STILL SHARE IN THE BENEFITS HE HAD PROCURED FOR THEM.—They were in danger of thinking otherwise when told that His personal intercourse with them was to be interrupted for a time. But He had taken care to prevent this conclusion, by intimating that He wished them to drink of this cup, though He was not to drink it with them. Relationship would not cease with intercourse, nor benefit with the removal of their friend. Both were secured by the divinity of His nature and the perfection of His work, and would be lasting as His being. The union subsisting between them was a vital union, which time could not affect, nor death destroy. His blood could never lose its efficacy, nor the blessings it produced be withheld or withdrawn. They would be indebted to its efficacy still for all the purity, peace, confidence, and joy they should ever experience; and as they were common partakers of the thing signified, it was proper they should meet and employ a sign indicative of the fact.



But they could participate in the benefits of His death only by continued application to the source whence they flowed. It was not enough that they had been introduced to the Saviour, and become connected with Him. The relation must be maintained on their part as well as on His; and this could only be done by a constant personal appropriation of Him. Without this appropriation they could derive no virtue from Him. He was indeed a fountain, full, free, inexhaustible, and ever available; but they were only vessels, ever in course of emptying, and consequently ever in need of filling. Their application to Him, therefore, must be as frequent as their necessities; and what a comfort was it for them to know that nothing about to transpire would prevent their success! Grace would still abound to them; and as they continued to receive, so should they continue to avow the fact.

But the privileges thus secured were not to be theirs alone, but to be shared by all His people, in every age throughout the world. It was not a Jewish, but a Christian ordinance He was calling them to observe. The passover which they had met to celebrate, was a festival commemorative of events which concerned one nation only. True, it had a typical as well as an historical bearing. But that was an additional reason why it should be set aside, for there was no propriety in retaining the shadow when the substance had come. While engaged in eating the paschal supper, the Saviour took the bread and cup, already sanctified by prayer and thanksgiving, and in

a similar manner sanctified them anew, thereby setting them apart to a different use from that in which they had been previously employed, namely, to intimate that His blood was an atonement for the whole world, and as such, would be available for Gentiles as well as Jews. Because of this, the apostle transfers the name of the grand ordinance of the Old Testament to Christ Himself, and calls upon the Corinthian converts to observe the great festival of the new economy under this aspect :—‘ Christ, our *Passover*, is sacrificed for us : therefore let us keep the feast.’

The reasons for this ordinance being extended, required also that it should be *perpetuated*. The blood which it symbolizes is efficacious through all time as well as for all people. It needs to be applied to every sinner born into the world, in order to his being saved from the consequences of his sin ; and every sinner who will yet derive benefit from it, will feel himself constrained to avow his obligations to it. It is the appointed means for keeping alive the recollections of an absent Saviour, and as such will never fail to be respected by all who desire His return. That return is pledged by the appointment. His followers were to drink of the cup in the assurance, that their doing so without Him would only be of temporary duration. There was a time specified by Him when He would rejoin them, never more to be absent from them ; but till then, the arrangement made must continue, for nothing would transpire to supersede it. He, then, who abstains from drinking of this cup,

must either not believe himself interested in the blessings it represents, or sets but little value on them, or has renounced his sense of obligation to the Saviour, or abandoned hope of ever seeing Him in person, or cares not that the world should know what he remembers or what he anticipates—none of which things are possible with genuine believers in Christ; for sooner will they deny their being than deny their obligations to Him, sooner forget every friend than forget Him, and rather part with all else than part with the blessed hope of His re-appearance, and their eternal participation with Him of all the joys His actual presence will afford.

III. THE INTERCOURSE ABOUT TO BE SO SUD-  
DENLY AND VIOLENTLY INTERRUPTED, WOULD BE  
RENEWED IN CIRCUMSTANCES FAR MORE FAVOUR-  
ABLE TO ENJOYMENT THAN THOSE IN WHICH IT  
HAD HITHERTO BEEN MAINTAINED.—He would, at a  
future fixed time, drink wine new with them in His  
Father's kingdom.

What state of things the Saviour intends by this phraseology, has been made a question by expositors of the Scripture. Some regard it as referring to the interviews He was to have with the disciples during the time He remained on earth after His resurrection. But He did not then drink wine with them literally, or do anything of which the action spoken of can justly be considered a figurative representation. By others, 'His Father's kingdom' is considered as another name

for the Gospel dispensation, which was to be more fully introduced by the outpouring of His Spirit after His ascension to heaven ; and drinking wine with them as a figurative description of the spiritual communion He would then maintain with them through the intervention of the ordinance now instituted, and which they would continue to observe. But the Gospel dispensation is uniformly spoken of in the New Testament as the kingdom of the Son, which kingdom is to be succeeded by another, emphatically denominated the kingdom of the Father, and for whose introduction it is represented as preparing the way : ‘ Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. Then shall the Son also Himself be subject to Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.’ Whatever be the general import of these words, no one doubts that they refer to the final state of things, which state will commence at the general judgment, and continue through the succeeding eternity. When the awfully grand and solemn occasion arrives, which is to usher in this exalted and ever-enduring state, the Saviour, from the throne He will then occupy as Judge, shall address His ransomed people, saying, ‘ Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. And these shall go away into life eternal.’ ‘ Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.’

The state, then, to which He taught them to look

forward as that in which they were to meet again, was one essentially different from that in which they were then placed, and from every other in which they would ever find themselves on earth. They might, indeed, overlook or forget the meanness of the chamber in which they were then met, and the paucity of the company assembled upon the occasion, in the thrilling emotions they then experienced ; but these were not to endure, and when they subsided, these circumstances could hardly fail to impress themselves upon their observation. How little is there, even in the most imposing scenes of earth, calculated to spiritualize the thoughts, purify the feelings, and impart satisfaction to the heart ! How seldom do they arrest attention, and upon how few do they produce any effect ! The most gorgeous spectacles created by wealth and power, are generally empty pageants, least enjoyed by those who are most prominent in them, at best affording gratification only to a few, while multitudes can have no participation in them. But when Christ renews His personal intercourse with His people, their condition will be one of reality and satisfaction, in which all will share. They will possess a kingdom—a region of wide extent, social order, gradation of rank, and unity of interest ; pervaded by surpassing grandeur, for the meanest persons there will be kings and priests unto God. Everything pertaining to it will stimulate the mind, refine the nature, and cheer the heart. Its glory will not only be seen, it will also be felt ; and not only felt, but enjoyed.

.

The place of renewed intercourse with the Saviour, is to be a home as well as a kingdom ; a place where a father presides, where affection expands, where confidence abides, where sympathy attracts, where concord dwells, and where sounds of affection greet the ear ; a place where all that is external will be in perfect harmony with all that is internal, and both act and react favourably upon each other ; a place where glory is collected into its brightest focus, and happiness is concentrated into its purest essence.

Into this place of surpassing grandeur and unmingled felicity, the whole redeemed Church is to be gathered. Not one member shall be wanting, not one kept apart from the Saviour. ‘I will drink wine with you,’ says He to their representatives, ‘with every one of you, in My Father’s kingdom.’ No doubt mingles itself with this statement, and we are persuaded there was just as little in the tones in which it was delivered. With men, a hope of meeting again is all that can be expressed at parting. Even that is often very faint, and generally suspected at the time to be delusive. But the Saviour speaks with absolute certainty, not only of the time and place of meeting, but of the company with which He would renew his intercourse—ay, and of every individual who should compose it. When He uttered the words now guiding our meditations, He was not merely contemplating the persons immediately addressed, but all who had already believed on Him through His own, and all who would hereafter believe on Him through their

word. With none of them was He any longer to hold personal intercourse on earth ; but with one and all of them He would renew it in heaven. When gathered together they would no doubt constitute an innumerable throng, sufficient to occupy a kingdom, and that the kingdom of Jehovah ; but no length of time, no contingencies in providence, no greatness of number, could in any way shake His confidence that He would meet them again, and meet them never more to be separated from them. His assurance was based on the covenant engagement of the immutable God, who stood pledged not only to reserve heaven for His followers, but to keep them by His power through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time ;—based upon the power with which He knew He was Himself to be invested, and of which He had already given them intimation, saying, ‘ All power in heaven and earth is given unto Me, to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Me ;’—based upon the prevailing intercession He would carry on in their behalf, which would embrace all and each of them, and which He said was to run in such terms as these : ‘ Father, I will that those whom Thou hast give Me be with Me where I am ; that they may behold My glory.’

Human imagination staggers when it attempts to conceive of a being, however great and glorious, holding personal intercourse with a company, the members of which cannot be numbered for multitude, and that intercourse at once close, intimate, and long-continued.

But what imagination cannot now conceive, consciousness shall hereafter experience and enjoy. In the meantime, let us endeavour to conceive of it as we best can. The Saviour intimates that it is to differ from all intercourse previously afforded, as well as to be enjoyed in circumstances altogether diverse from those in which it has hitherto been maintained. 'I will drink wine *new* with you in My Father's kingdom.'

No one, we presume, understands this language literally. There are those, indeed, who conceive of a material heaven, and whose imaginations may be led by the Saviour's phraseology to picture the wide-spreading vine, adorning a landscape with its clustering grapes. But even they, surely, do not associate the idea of celestial bliss with treading the wine-press, and immortal natures regaling themselves with material stimulants. The language is evidently figurative, and is designed, we apprehend, to suggest the thought, that the pleasure derived from intercourse with the Saviour will be so transporting beyond any elsewhere enjoyed, that with perfect propriety it may be said to be new, notwithstanding its continued and unending iteration.

This will appear, we think, when we consider that intercourse with the Saviour in the final state will be *direct and immediate*. It was so, indeed, to a certain extent when He made the declaration on which we are commenting. He then stood before His apostles in person, visible to their sight, and rendering Himself still further perceptible to them by addressing



them in sounds which not only entered their ears, but thrilled their hearts. They interchanged thought and feeling with Him ; but still, on the part of both, all this was done through the dull medium of sense, which necessarily hinders complete contact of mind and full flow of soul. But in the state to which He taught them to look forward, such imperfect mediums will be removed, and thought pass from mind to mind, and feeling from heart to heart, in all their pristine distinctiveness and freshness. Since the time when He ceased to be visible on earth, the Saviour has held intercourse with His people only through the intervention of ordinances. These have stimulated and aided their conception of their absent Lord, and enabled them to realize His gracious presence. But it was only a glimpse of His shadow they thus obtained, not a sight of His person. It was like seeing the reflection of the sun in the lake, instead of the orb itself in an unclouded heaven. In the final state which believers have been taught to anticipate, symbols and semblances will have no place; for where the original is continuously present, no representation is necessary. The directness of the intercourse maintained in it is accordingly marked out as one of its most distinguishing characteristics, and chief sources of enjoyment. 'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then *face to face*: now I know in part; but then I shall know, even as also I am known.'

This intercourse will be *perfect and unmixed*. How greatly their fellowship was marred by the doubts,

prejudices, misapprehensions, and misconduct of His disciples while He was personally present with them on earth, is evident from the complaints He often makes respecting them; and though the enjoyment they derived from it was very high, it was often mingled with solicitude and sadness. At the very time that He was distributing among them the tokens of His love, and telling them of higher and more lasting joys they were yet to share with Him, 'sorrow filled their hearts.' Nor will it ever be otherwise, while His friends continue in a mortal state. Here sin and infirmity will cleave to them, provoking His disapprobation, and interrupting the happy experiences they would otherwise enjoy. Till they have attained complete resemblance to Him, He cannot feel full complacency in them; nor without this resemblance will they be able to derive entire satisfaction from themselves. But this similarity is secured to them, as well as their introduction to the state where it is essential even to a moment's happiness. They are found accordingly exulting in this assurance: 'I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.' 'We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' The sight itself will stamp an impress upon the character; for to see will be to admire, and to admire will be to love Him. The heart will move at once with rapidity and rapture to the infinite object of its esteem and regard, and the mind rest in it with full satisfaction and complacency for ever. His soul will now be knit with their souls at every possible point of junc-

tion, and similar thought and feeling pervade them all as if they were but one.

This intercourse will be *uninterrupted and unending*. Alas! when could this be affirmed of any other intercourse His people ever enjoyed with Him before? ‘Arise, let us go hence,’ were the sad words with which He concluded His discourse, and broke up the fellowship He was then affording His apostles. And words akin to them will still continue to be heard breaking in upon all communion, however delightful, on this side the gate of heaven: ‘Arise, and depart, for this is not your rest.’ Those enjoying it may propose to build tabernacles to detain Him, and even constrain Him to abide with them. But while they think their object gained, the sounds which ravished their ears have ceased, a thick cloud obscures their vision, or He Himself has vanished out of their sight. Nor is it meet it should be otherwise, while His people are in the body. That earthly frame could not sustain any intercourse at once continuous and transporting. But when immortal and glorious, as it shall be in the ‘Father’s kingdom,’ it will not only endure but enjoy, and that with the keenest relish, the most exalted bliss that can enrapture a finite being. As the capacity, so also will be the happiness that is to fill it. ‘In His presence is fulness of joy; at His right hand are pleasures for evermore.’ Having been received to be with Him where He is, they will no more go out: having been received to be near Him as well as with Him, ‘so will they be for ever with the Lord.’

The intercourse thus renewed will always be maintained, on the same ground on which it originally began, and that was the atonement He effected by the shedding of His blood. It was this He recognised as the bond of their fellowship, when He put the sacramental cup into the disciples' hands, and the language He used upon the occasion indicates that upon this ground alone will their intercourse with Him be resumed and continued in heaven. All His own pleasure as Mediator, will be derived from the contemplation of its results; and all their pleasure, as the ransomed of the Lord, will flow from a sense of obligation to it. In other words, and more pointedly and briefly, the bliss of heaven springs from, and has unceasing connection with, the death of Christ. The memorials of that event are ever visible there, not in the form of a symbolical cup, but in the actual wounds of the actual body which bled upon the cross. No one will ever see Him without being reminded of the death He accomplished at Jerusalem, nor hold converse with Him without being constrained to refer to that event, as did the glorified spirits who talked with Him when He was glorified on Tabor. It will be the abiding spring of all their joy, and the unceasing subject of all their praise. 'I looked,' says the apostle, to whom adumbrations of this state were given, 'and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps :

and they sung as it were a new song before the throne; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.' 'And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him. And they shall *see His face*; and His name shall be in their foreheads.'

Our text has called us to the contemplation of the blessed Saviour under two very different and seemingly very diverse aspects. We have had to view Him as Christ the crucified and Christ the glorified. There are two feelings corresponding to these aspects, which ought frequently to pervade our hearts. The one is, gratitude in the review of the past; and the other, joy in the anticipation of the future.

What a mercy is it that the Son of God has ever condescended to hold intercourse of any kind with men!—ever deigned to own, ever deigned to think upon them! It was not what they desired, much less what they deserved. How much it cost Him before this intercourse could become practicable in any form, and how much more before it could become possible in immortality and glory! In order to approximate Himself to men, He must enshroud His divinity in human form, and tabernacle in flesh. Before they could be admitted to dwell for ever with Him, He must die as their substitute, and appear in the presence of God for them. All this He has done; and how deep then should be our sense of obligation to Him!

## VIII.

### A COVENANT GOD THE BELIEVER'S GLORY.

‘Thy God thy glory.’—ISA. lx. 19.

IN one of those visions afforded to Isaiah, by which the future became as if already present, the Church was represented as a disconsolate female, seated on a heap of ruins, bemoaning her misery, and affording indications of deep despair. The prophet was at no loss to understand the cause of her grief. He saw it everywhere in the desolation around her—her temple laid waste, her palaces spoiled, her people led away captive, her land become the haunt of reptiles and beasts of prey. He needed not to be told what was the duty that now devolved upon him. He felt it in the moving of his sympathies, in the revivings of his experiences, and specially in the impellings of that inspiration of which he was the subject. He proceeds, accordingly, to speak comfortably unto her: telling her that her warfare was accomplished; that God would yet have mercy upon Zion; that her mourning should cease; and that, instead of sitting idly bemoaning her state, she should arise and shine,

for the glory of the Lord had arisen upon her. To assure her of this happiness, and stimulate her to this duty, he bids her lift up her eyes, and he would make clear to her perceptions what a supernatural Power had made plain to his own. 'See,' says he,—See the mighty *increase* thou art yet to attain, by conversions to thee, and offspring by thee: 'Thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.' See the *wealth* that is yet to flow unto thee: 'The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord.' See the *honour* thou are yet to acquire: 'They that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.' See the *tranquillity* thou art yet to enjoy: 'Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders: but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.' Know, too, for thy consolation, that all this greatness, grandeur, and happiness shall remain undisturbed, undiminished, and without end. Thy dependence shall never again be upon inferior guides or failing resources. 'The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and **THY GOD THY GLORY.**'

God stood in a relation to the tribes of Israel, in

which he stood to no other nation or people. He had covenanted with them to be their God in a special manner, and to acknowledge them as His people. He called Himself by their name, revealed to them His mind and will, afforded them great and precious promises, conferred upon them invaluable privileges, and spoke of them as His 'crown,' His 'jewels,' His 'portion,' His 'treasure.' Never had His engagements with them failed; never had He given them reason to think they would. On the contrary, He had afforded them the strongest grounds of encouragement to trust in Him, and the most valid reasons to make their continual boast of Him. Yet they withdrew their allegiance from Him, worshipped idols in whom heathen nations trusted, and gloried in themselves instead of glorying only in the Lord. For these things, He withdrew the tokens of His favour from them, suffered their enemies to triumph over them, and otherwise made them feel how evil and how bitter a thing it was to depart from the Lord their God. Nevertheless, His loving-kindness He did not take from them, nor suffered His faithfulness to fail. In wrath He remembered mercy. Hence the prophet was inspired to predict punishment upon them in the first instance, but deliverance afterwards. When the season of adversity foretold should have passed away, and the season of prosperity predicted have returned, then God would again appear, fulfilling all His covenant engagements to them, justifying the unwavering confidence they would then repose in



Him; while they, on the other hand, would never again ascribe their greatness or happiness to any other, but universally and uniformly acknowledge that all that distinguished them, all that assured them, all that consoled them, was derived from Him, and Him alone.

Thus, by the divine dispensations towards her, the Church would be brought into a state very different from that into which she had fallen. This state would continue so long as she maintained the right exercise of mind and heart, and while it lasted God should have all the praise.

Now, what is here ascribed to the Church as a whole, holds true with respect to each individual composing it. Every genuine believer, acting in proper character, is willing and ready to acknowledge the celestial source whence his honour and happiness have been derived, and is ever desirous that the praise should be ascribed to Him alone to whom the praise is due. It is for this reason that the prophet addresses the Church as an individual rather than as a society; and in selecting his words as subject of meditation, we are warranted to refer them to every believer, and say of the gracious Being to whom he stands in a new and endeared relation, and the sentiments and feelings thence arising in his mind and heart towards Him—  
'Thy God thy glory.'

I. The relationship thus indicated—*Thy God*.

In one sense, God is the God of all flesh. Has not one God created us? On this ground, all men

are permitted to claim a common relationship to Him, saying, 'Are we not all His offspring?' But a common relation to all does not hinder a special and distinguishing relation to some. Góð accordingly speaks of Himself at one time as 'the God of all living;' at another as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as if He were the God of no other. Because of this distinction which it hath pleased Him to institute, He calls upon all who would be partakers of saving blessings to withdraw from those who care not to stand towards Him in any other relation than that of a creature to a Creator, a subject to a king, a responsible agent to a judge, saying, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate; and I will be unto you a God, and ye shall be unto Me a people.' To the one, He is a God by necessary connection; to the other, by spontaneous choice: to the one, by unavoidable circumstances; to the other, by covenant engagement. It is this engagement which gives rise to the peculiar phraseology in the text. That phraseology implies, that He has bound Himself in the most solemn manner to be to a believer what He will be to no one else, a Father—a Father in a way similar to that which He is to His only-begotten, well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, for whose sake He has entered into the relation; a Friend, a never-failing Friend, as He was to Abraham, with whom He first entered into covenant engagement, as the father of the faithful; a forgiving Judge, as He was to David, who, though conscious of most aggravated offences against Him,

was able to die in peace, because He had made a covenant with Him, well ordered in all things and sure, and which had become all his salvation and all his desire. By this engagement, He binds Himself to direct all the operations of His providence for the special benefit of His people; so that, while all men shall be served by general laws to all the extent to which they can operate, these laws shall more especially work together for good to them who love God, and are the called according to His purpose. To be their God in the sense intended, is to give them an investment in all that belongs to Him *essentially*, to use and enjoy: His mercy to pardon them, His bounty to supply them, His wisdom to counsel them, His omniscience to guide them, His omnipresence to cheer them, His omnipotence to protect them, His compassion to solace them, His faithfulness to reward them, His all-sufficiency to be their inheritance, and His eternity to be the duration of their happiness. To be their God in the way implied, is to give over to them all that appertains to Him *personally*: Himself, as God the Father, to love them, and devise redemption for them; as God the Son, to assume their nature, and purchase them with His blood; and as God the Holy Ghost, to enlighten and sanctify, to comfort and save them. This donation includes in it all the gifts and graces at His disposal: the faith which unites the soul unto the Saviour, the love which qualifies for the enjoyment of Him, the hope which becomes the anchor of the soul, the joy unspeakable

and full of glory. It still further includes all things in the world that severally subserve their use and promote their profit—all things in the Church, as distinguished from the world: its ordinances, and the ministers who dispense them, holy influences communicated through them, and blessed fellowship brought about by them—all are theirs, for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. All are theirs, not for rare occasions or pressing emergencies only, but for all time—ay, for all eternity. '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 upon thee.'

The relation indicated is owned by believers, as well as avowed by God. Faith warrants such an appropriation, for the promise of the covenant is addressed to faith, and speaketh on this wise, 'He that believeth in Me, hath everlasting life.' To every one who thus acts, God gives such tokens of acceptance as in effect to say, 'Thou art Mine, and I am thine.' He sheds abroad His love in his heart, seals him with the Holy Spirit of promise, and affords him such manifestations of favour as emboldens him to claim Him as his God.

We are not to be understood as affirming that every saint is able conscientiously to say that God is his, in possession and enjoyment; or that having been once able to say it, he will always be able to do so with truth. That would be contrary to the testi-

mony and experience of many saints now in heaven. 'Zion hath said, My God hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me.' Yes, even Zion, the spiritually living in Jerusalem, hath said this; said it once and again; said it, it may be, whenever circumstances happened to obscure their evidence, or mar their comfort. While the believer is in the flesh, such circumstances will frequently occur; for in this mortal state, a law in his members will be still warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members. The storms of temptation, and stirrings of corruption, will engender an atmosphere through which it will be impossible to see distinctly; and while the haze continues, it will be impracticable for the Zionward traveller to determine his position with accuracy. But the faith of *adherence* is retained by him, even when the faith of evidence is lost. He never renounces God, though God may seem to have renounced him. Like Jacob, he clings to Him, even when seeming to fight against Him, and resolves not to let Him go till he has obtained the much-wished and long sought-for blessing. Nay, even when complaining of desertion, and feeling the bitterness of such a state, real or supposed, like his divine Master he will approximate Him, saying, 'My God, my God,' though so solicitously asking, it may be, at the same time, 'Why hast Thou forsaken me?'

The relationship thus avowed by God, and owned by believers, is wholly founded on, and wholly war-

ranted by, the covenant made by God with Christ and with believers in Him. It is admissible only because of a ransom found, a satisfaction rendered, an honour done. There was another covenant in which God and man had been parties; and so long as it was respected, so long did an endeared relationship subsist between them. But man failed in his engagement; and by his failure alienated himself from God, and lost all genuine happiness with Him. Since then, while unregenerate, he has been 'without God and without hope in the world.' True, his Maker never ceased to be his Sovereign Lord. Such a relationship could never be dissolved. But at best it was a relationship involving nothing more than support, control, and responsibility. But when the creature became also a rebel, his Maker ceased to be the covenanted friend, the frequent visitant, the benign associate. The breach thus made could only be healed by a Mediator—by a Mediator sufficiently dignified to negotiate with God, and sufficiently humble to represent man. Such a Mediator is exhibited in the Messiah of the prophets, and the Christ of the apostles. He is Immanuel, God with us. Whoso cometh unto the Father, can come only by Him; and acceptance can be afforded only because of what He is, and what He hath done. Believers are bound up in the bundle of life with Him, and the whole good pleasure of God towards them 'is wrapt up in the promises made to Him. God, accordingly, is represented as standing in the same relationship to

both—at once the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our God and Father in Him.

II. We now pass to consider the sentiments and feelings to which on the believer's part this relationship gives rise—Thy God, *thy glory*.—The idea is, that when the believer rightly understands this relation, and gives himself fully up to the influence it is sure to exert, God becomes at once the cause, the object, and subject of all his joy and exultation, of all his praise and boast. In confirmation of this statement, we observe :—

*First*, That a covenant God is the believer's glory, as He is *the source of all his merit and moral worth*.—Men are prone to boast, but their boasting in their natural state is ever of themselves, never of God. Unregenerate human nature cannot brook the thought of dependence, and, accordingly, insists upon being fully competent to execute every purpose it may ever form, and on being entitled to the credit of every attainment it can ever acquire. Rather than not be crowned, it will crown itself ; and having unwarrantably appropriated the symbol, it rests assured that it possesses the thing signified. The wise man, the rich man, the strong man, or he who ever fancies himself such, glories in his wisdom, his riches, his strength ; but the good man glories only in this, that he knows the Lord, knows Him as the source of all that is excellent in character, all that is desirable in attainment, all that is durable in being—knows that, apart

from Him, he possesses nothing really commendable, acquires nothing really serviceable, and enjoys nothing really and permanently satisfying. Genuine believers, accordingly, are ever heard speaking thus : ‘ All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee’ — ‘ Thou also hast wrought all our works in us’ — ‘ God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ’ — ‘ It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of His own good pleasure’ — ‘ What have we that we have not received ?’ Our repentance is but the working of a heart made contrite by Him ; our faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God ; our holiness is only the reflection of His own image ; our love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, are but fruits of His Spirit. ‘ We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.’ Not only the works themselves, but the dispositions, the motives, the desires from which they issue, are of Him. ‘ The preparations of the heart, as well as the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord.’ Whatever sentiment the experience of others prompts, ours unequivocally prompts this : ‘ Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name, be all the glory.’ It is God that made us what we are, but it is not for what we are that we have found grace in His sight. That grace was bestowed when we were guilty and impure, and we are righteous



only because of a perfect righteousness imputed to us, comely only because of a comeliness He hath put upon us. In the Lord alone have we righteousness and strength. We know no merit save that which results from the character and work of Christ; we cherish no confidence save that which rests on Him alone.' 'We count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord: that we may win Him, and be found of Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' In that righteousness shall we rejoice all the day, in that righteousness shall we be exalted. In heaven itself, where our excellence shall be complete, we shall disown all merit, and overlook all virtue, in the contemplation of His merit and worth who brought us thither. We will cast our crowns at His feet, testifying thereby from whom we have received them, and confessing ourselves unworthy to wear them in the presence of Him who alone is worthy to receive honour, dominion, and power, world without end. For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever.

*Second,* A covenant God is the believer's glory, as He is *the source of all his honour and dignity*.—Men boast of their rank, their pedigree, their titled connections. And these circumstances are honourable so long as the persons affected by them act worthy of them. But how often does it happen that a good man

has reason to be ashamed of such relations, and how frequently, alas, without reason, are such relations ashamed of him ! His poverty, it may be, leads them to disown, or his piety to shun him. But God, whose name be ever praised, never acts in a manner unworthy the relation in which He has condescended to stand towards His people. Though it seem a thing infinitely beneath His glorious majesty, He is not ashamed to be called their God ; nay, He glories in the title, and wishes it to be fully understood and believed that He will be all that the title implies. Even when slaves in Egypt, and groaning under oppression, He wished Israel to be apprized of the fact, that He regarded them as His people still—that He had neither forgotten nor disowned them. ‘Go,’ says He to Moses, ‘Go, say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you : this is My name, and this is My memorial unto all generations.’ And a blessed memorial it is ; for it tells of honour of which believers can never be deprived, of dignity which, in the most abject condition into which it is possible for them to sink, still belongs to them, of an honoured and honouring friend who abides with them in poverty, in distress, in danger, in death—visits their hovels, their dungeons, appears with them at the tribunal, and stands by them at the stake. Stephen the martyr fell under missiles showered upon him by an infuriated mob ; but through that death-storm he saw the glorified Saviour standing

with outstretched arms ready to receive him, and cried exultingly in the hearing of his persecutors, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' David thought it a high honour to be son-in-law to an earthly sovereign, but there was another relation into which he had been introduced with which he had better reason to be pleased : that was his covenant relation to the Most High ; and his soul did accordingly make its boast of God. Whatever warrants boasting is afforded here, and here only it becomes admissible without vanity. Believers can say what the princes, nobles, grandees, and great men of our earth, while unregenerate, cannot say, 'The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords ; who alone hath immortality, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto : He is our beloved, and He is our friend !' He that framed this fair world, and all worlds besides,—who upholdeth all things by the word of His power,—who doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth,—who abaseth the proud and exalteth the humble,—whose our life is, and whose are all our ways,—'this God is our God for ever and ever, and He will be our guide even unto death.' The God whose goings forth have been of old, even from everlasting,—whose counsels shall stand, and who will do all His pleasure,—whose dignity is supreme, and whose prerogatives are sovereign,—who will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth,—even He hath called us sons of God. True, such an honour is neither

discerned nor appreciated by men of the world ; but that does not make the honour less great, nor the enjoyment of it less satisfactory. The possessors of it do not expect it to be perceived or desired by these. They knew not Christ, God's own Son by nature, and how should they know those who are His sons only by adoption ? Besides, it doth not yet appear what they shall be. But their concealment shall not last for ever ; for, 'when He who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with Him in glory.' Yes ! honour awaits them which will surpass all that ever dazzled the eyes of mortals, or can be created by any combination of earthly greatness, grandeur, and brilliancy,—an honour which shall survive the titles and pageantry of all earth's princes, and all time's glory,—an honour which shall never be transferred by descent, nor cease for want of persons to enjoy it. The Fountain whence this honour flows never becomes exhausted, and souls thus honoured never die. Believers have become kings and priests unto God by their union with the one King and one great High Priest of the Church—Christ Jesus ; and because He lives, they shall live also. How can they fail, then, to be joyful in their King, and make their boast of Him ? 'He is a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of His people.' It would be to their discredit, not His, if they did not glory in Him, and glory in Him alone. But glory in Him they will. Tell them of men who have received one patent of nobility after another, till they have become entitled

to take precedence of all their fellow-subjects,—tell them of those whose territories have reached from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth, or of those whose wealth has increased till coffers cannot be found sufficient to contain it,—and you have told them nothing approaching even in the least degree to their own greatness and their own grandeur. Overlooking these material, perishable things as unimportant and trivial, the saint felicitates himself on the amplitude, the riches, the durability of his possessions,—saying, ‘The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup. The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places. I have a goodly heritage.’

*Third,* A covenant God is the believer’s glory, as He is the *source of all his strength and confidence*.—Men in general are unwilling to admit their weakness, and when they do, rarely doubt their ability to recover themselves from it. But when the trial really comes, they find that strength has departed from them, or rather, that they never possessed it. Even Christians themselves arrive at this perception very slowly. It is only by falls and failings they discover that by nature they are altogether without strength, and that they are strong only in the Lord, and in the power of His might. It is by experience only they learn that all their sufficiency is of God. They are indeed mighty to labour, strong to resist, and patient to endure. There is no achievement in spiritual life to which they are not equal, and sooner or later they conquer, and more than conquer, but only through

Him who loved them. If ever they boast, and boast they do, even more than others, it is with this difference, that others boast wholly of themselves, while they disclaim all credit, and ascribe the glory of all they have and are to God alone. Hear how one of them speaks of his prowess, and you would think him the vainest of men : 'I can do all things,' says he. But hear him out, and it becomes apparent that his vanity is the truest modesty, for he immediately adds, 'through Christ Jesus strengthening me.' Again, speaking of the things which he had done, and which were immensely great and highly important,—such, indeed, as most men would have considered just ground for glorying,—he adds to the enumeration the qualifying statement, 'Not I, but the grace of God, which was with me.' Now, the apostle was not more distinguished for abasement of self and exaltation of God, than many other saints. For we hear most of them in effect speaking thus: 'The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation. It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms. Thou also hast given me the shield of Thy salvation, and Thy right hand hath holden me up, and Thy gentleness hath made me great. Thou hast girded me with strength for the battle; Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear ; though war should arise against me, in this will I be confident. In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion : in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me ; He shall set me upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me. Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name ; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Fear before Him all the earth.'

*Fourth,* A covenant God is the believer's glory, as He is the *source and centre of all his happiness here and hereafter*.—All men eagerly desire happiness, and God intended they should enjoy it. Nevertheless, there is something in their condition as sinners that militates against it. Until that condition be altered, they can have no real experience of the thing, though fancy may deceive them by its semblance or its shadow. But believers are reconciled to God, and by reconciliation have attained to godliness ; and godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. They have tasted that the Lord is gracious, that His favour is life, His loving-kindness better than life ; and are constrained to utter the memory of His goodness, saying, 'Come, all ye that fear the Lord, and we will tell you what He hath done for our souls.' He hath pardoned our sins, quieted our fears, attracted our love, inspired our hope, filled us with

peace, beautified us with His image, honoured us with fellowship, strengthened us with might, promised us life, afforded us its foretastes, and fired us with joy. With such persuasions, with such experiences, can we fail to be happy ; and being happy, can we abstain from exulting in our bliss ? No ! We will bless the Lord at all times : His praise shall be continually in our mouths. In God we boast, and praise His name for ever. What though a toilsome journey be yet before us, and the wilderness through which we pass be full of snares, pitfalls, and dangers ! What though sickness or destitution come upon us by the way, and our fellow-travellers drop off, and leave us to journey alone ! What though Jordan swells its waters when we approach its banks, and the night be starless when we enter the flood ! No reason will have presented itself for doubt, hesitation, or disquietude. God liveth, and blessed be our rock ; and let the God of our salvation be exalted. We are persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Separate us ! No. So far from separating, some of these will be the very things that will bring us nearer to him ; others of them, the very things which will introduce us immediately to Him. Oh ! the felicity—the unspeakable, inconceivable felicity—our souls shall feel when, freed from sin and all its stains, from flesh and all its infirmities,



we shall stand in the audience-chamber of the great King—our minds intensely, unweariedly fixed upon Him, our affections wholly engrossed by Him, our wills in full subjection to Him, our capacities, in their wide and ever expanding growth, ‘filled with all the fulness of God.’ The very thought is ecstatic! what then must the enjoyment itself be! If with such experiences, if with such prospects, we did not glory, the very stones would cry out. Every star that twinkles in the firmament, every flower that blooms in the garden, every dewdrop that sparkles in the sunbeam, would upbraid us. But upbraided we will not, shall not, cannot be. Come what may, we will rejoice in the Lord; we will joy in the God of our salvation. While we live we will praise the Lord; we will sing praises unto our God, while we have any being. Our mouth shall speak the praises of the Lord; and let all flesh bless His holy name for ever and ever.

In what relation do you stand to God? Is it that merely of creatures, the workmanship of His hands, now become pensioners on His bounty? or that also of friends, reconciled by the blood of His Son, and in course of being sanctified through the influence of His Spirit? Say not it is beyond your power to tell. You may stand in doubt of the matter; or you may hesitate to appropriate the comfort to be derived from it, but the fact itself may be *ascertained*. Christ hath furnished criteria in His word by which to determine the question: ‘If God were your Father,’ says

He, 'ye would love Me.' It is an unavoidable conclusion in every case. 'He that says He loves Him that begat, loves Him also that is begotten of Him.' So, then, whosoever loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth, thereby both gives and receives evidence that he hath been chosen of God—is a child of God, and joint heir with Jesus Christ. This relation may be still further determined by its influence upon character. The blessed Saviour, describing those who are given to Him by covenant engagement, says, 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.' There can be no covenant relation without the consent of the parties concerned in it. God, as was His right in sovereignty, has prescribed the terms of the covenant; and while doing so, has undertaken to secure the will and power of His people to comply. Nevertheless He requires assent, and till this is given we have no warrant to claim spiritual relationship to Him. But whenever we have the clear perception that with mind and heart we have made deliberate choice of Him as our God and Redeemer, and are resolved in the strength of His grace to keep all His commandments, then, assuredly, are we warranted to appropriate all the comfort which the blessed Saviour meant to afford, when He commanded Mary to go and tell His disciples, 'I ascend unto My Father and your Father, unto My God and your God.' 'Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.'

This relationship is *attainable*. God, in the dis-

pensation of the Gospel, is declaring His readiness and making offer to bring every sinner into it. 'Incline your ear,' says He, 'and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.' Such are the proposals of the God of all grace. The fact of such proposals being made, involves a fearful amount of responsibility. There can now be no safety out of this relation. God out of Christ is a consuming fire. But no man needs be out of Christ unless he wills it. No man need continue apart from God, while a Saviour lives to effect and maintain a relationship between them. 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.'

Believers, since God is your glory, you should be the glory of God. It is the highest honour you can attain, to be allowed to glory in Him. It is the lowest condescension which He can reach, to glory in you. Give Him, then, occasion to do so in your behalf. This you may do by the strength of your faith, the liveliness of your hope, the ardour of your love, the purity of your lives, the cheerfulness of your obedience, the boldness of your profession, the patience of your submission, your diligence in His cause, your readiness to suffer and die for His sake. 'Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord.' 'This people have I

formed for Myself, that they should show forth My praise.' See that you do so according to the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

## IX.

### CHRIST PRAYING FOR HIS PEOPLE.

‘I pray for them.’—JOHN xvii. 9.

THESE words form part of that memorable prayer presented by our Lord on the night preceding His crucifixion. A more appropriate address was never offered at God’s throne, nor one more consolatory to the persons on whose behalf it was chiefly made. The person praying, the circumstances in which He prayed, and the objects for which He made such special request, were all calculated to excite the mind and affect the heart. It is always solemn and impressive to hear a devout mind and loving heart pouring out its thoughts and feelings unto God, whatever be the plea, the place, or the occasion. How, then, must the apostles have felt when favoured to hear the holy and fervent aspirations of God’s only-begotten Son, and to hear them, as they then did, with the notification that it was the last time they were to be thus privileged! The words of dying persons usually sink deep into the listening ear, and affect even the most callous heart. O that the impressions thus made were as lasting as they are lively! How

would it affect the assembled members of a congregation, if apprized that the prayer in which they were joining would be the last their minister would ever present in their hearing, and before another opportunity would be afforded him of leading their devotions, his voice would be silent in the grave! Such were the circumstances of the little flock met in an upper chamber in the holy city, when the prayer on which we are about to discourse was presented. If ever the apostles experienced the alternations of pleasurable and painful emotions, it must have been then, when the fervent supplications of a perfectly pure mind brought heaven to earth, and, at the same time, the apprehensions which they excited mingled earth with heaven,—when bliss in attainment repelled woe in anticipation, and the perception of loss about to be sustained, was rendered peculiarly distressing by the consciousness of more than wonted enjoyment.

The interest and solemnity of this prayer were enhanced by circumstances preceding, as well as attending, and about to follow it. It was prayer after sacrament, the ordinance of all others in our holy religion most calculated to impress our minds with a sense of helplessness and hopelessness as sinners, God's sovereignty and grace in rescuing us from this miserable condition, the amazing condescension of the Saviour in dying for us, and the near and dear relationship into which we are brought to the Redeemer and one another. What interest must necessarily invest objects solicited by such a Being, in such circum-

stances ! Who that believes in the omniscience of the Saviour's mind, the wisdom of His understanding, the affections of His heart, the importance of His interposition, and the prevalence of His intercession, would not desire to know what those petitions were which he presented on such an occasion, and what were the weighty considerations with which He urged His suit ! In these inquiries we have a personal and permanent interest : professing to be disciples of Jesus, we claim rank among those for whom a portion of this prayer was made ; for, though a prominent place was assigned in it to the trials and supports of the apostles after He had withdrawn from them, yet their benefit was not exclusively contemplated by the Petitioner. Against such a conclusion He was careful to guard them, saying in the midst of His supplications, ' Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe upon Me through their word ; ' thus apprizing His people in all ages and countries, through the record of the statement, that so long as He maintains the office of Great High Priest to the Israel of God, so long shall they have a place in His intercessions.

It is allowed by all expositors of this prayer, that the petitions and arguments contained in it, are to be regarded as specimens of those petitions and arguments which are pressed by our Advocate in His state of exaltation and glory, only modified by the circumstances of His militant people.

Whether Christ intercedes vocally, or by virtue of

His atonement only, is a question of which the Scriptures afford no solution, and which need not therefore engage our attention, seeing we can advance nothing satisfactory in reference to it. It must ever be of more importance for us to know for what Christ prays, than how He prays ; and what arguments He employs, than in what manner He urges them. Points so interesting and important have not been left to speculation, but have been clearly indicated by the condescending Redeemer in the petitions He presented, and the reasons He assigned for them, in that prayer which we are now to make the theme of our discourse. We propose then to consider,

I. Some of those petitions which Christ here presents in behalf of His people ; and

II. Some of those arguments with which He urges them.

Before proceeding to the illustration of these statements, it may be expedient to observe, that the all-wise Intercessor does not advert to such things as our carnal minds would be disposed to ask as immediately necessary and pressingly important, but to those things which we are apt to overlook and undervalue, which nevertheless are essential to our real enjoyment here, and our well-being hereafter. Notwithstanding He had called men from the pursuits on which their own support and that of their families depended, He asks no earthly recompense for the loss they had thus sustained ; and though aware



that they would have to encounter persecutions for His sake, He does not ask that these persecutions be prevented or mitigated. There is a significance in this omission which we do well to ponder and improve. It is evidently intended to teach us, that our temporal interests need give us comparatively little concern, while engaged in our great Master's work ; that He will attend to these interests while we attend to His ; that spiritual supplies are the best compensations for worldly losses, and grace in the heart the only true counterbalance to evil in the world. He accordingly keeps life, property, health, and everything else that appertains only to the body and time, out of view, and confines Himself wholly to grace and glory, the paramount interests of immortal souls.

When teaching His disciples to pray for themselves, He did indeed teach them to ask every day their daily bread ; but He also taught them, that even then their temporal interests should be subordinate in their minds to the glory of God and their own spiritual welfare ; for, while He suggested one petition for bread, He suggested several for the promotion of God's cause in the world, and the advancement of their own soul's prosperity. We are not, however, to infer, from all want of reference to temporal interests in Christ's intercessory prayer upon earth, that He never adverts to such things as the poverty, sickness, bereavements, persecutions of His people, in His advocacy in heaven ; but rather presume, that when such circumstances press hard upon them, so as to

depress their spirituality or endanger their purity, they become the objects of His special attention, and the subjects of His most earnest requests. Even in this general prayer, He avails Himself of the argument that His people are still in the world ; that is, in circumstances hostile to their faith and holiness. Hence we are led to infer, that when any special exigency occurs, it will be made the subject of special petition ; that if His people are in danger, He will pray for their deliverance ; if in trouble, He will pray for their support ; if bereaved, for their consolation ; if in declension, for their restoration ; if in temptation, that their faith fail not ; if dying, that their departing souls may be received into glory. But there are other matters which the condition of believers and the state of the Church are always rendering pertinent—matters in which the whole household of faith have a common interest, and which, because of their vast importance, must ever constitute the leading topics of Christ's intercession. Now, we have announced, as the first division of our subject, our design to consider what some of those petitions are ; and remark accordingly—

*First*, Christ prays for His people's *preservation in grace, and increase in holiness*.—‘Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy word is truth.’ These petitions referred

originally to the apostles, but also embraced Christians of every age, in so far as their circumstances were analogous to theirs. The will of God concerning them is, that for a time they should be in the world, notwithstanding they are heirs according to the hope of eternal life. They have yet many corruptions to subdue, and many graces yet to acquire, in order to become meet for a participation in the inheritance of the saints in light. God could perfect at once that which concerns them. But this is not the course which He has prescribed to Himself, though at times He may see meet to depart from it. It is expedient that they be in the world, for the sake of others as well as for their own—that they may serve their day and generation, according to the will of God, before they fall asleep, and are gathered to their fathers. They possess an influence which may operate beneficially, and therefore they are called to shine as lights in a dark place, holding forth the Word of life.

But there are dangers in the world to them as well as to others. They are men—men only partially renovated, and, in common with others, liable to temptation. Danger besets them in the world from its *inhabitants*, the great proportion of whom are enemies to God in their minds, and by their wicked works. How ensnaring their smiles!—how intimidating their frowns! How difficult to think and act in a manner different from the multitude, and yet how awfully ruinous to think and act along with it! The

.

*things* of the world are as morally dangerous as the men of it. Every station, every condition in it, hides innumerable temptations. Affluence flatters pride, and nourishes many of the baser passions. Poverty provokes discontent, and induces callousness of heart. A Christian may have too keen a relish even for the allowed indulgences of life. He may load himself with thick clay, and move on heavily. He may touch the unclean thing, soil the fine linen which is the righteousness of saints, and wear a garment spotted with the flesh. The consequences in such a case will be, a depressed spirituality, marred enjoyment in drawing near to God, a disturbed mind, a dread of affliction, and a thorny dying pillow.

From such evils it is impossible they can keep themselves; for 'it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' Even Adam in innocence could not keep himself, but fell, notwithstanding his superior advantages. Even angels are incompetent to such a work, for multitudes of them kept not their first estate, though that estate was in a world where evil cannot dwell; and those of them who did retain their position, retained it not by any superior strength which they themselves possessed, but by the divine grace administered to them. This impossibility was well known to Him who had undertaken to bring many sons unto glory, and who, to meet it, commends them unto Him to whom power belongeth—a power not only to bestow grace, but to maintain it in exercise; not only to keep saints from falling, but

to present them faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy. To be in His keeping is to be safe indeed, for 'He is greater than all, and none can pluck them out of His hand.'

But the all-wise and immaculate Intercessor is not content that His people be merely kept from the evil that is in the world. He will also have them become meet for that world upon which He has entered, by advancement in holiness. He not only wished that His apostles might be set apart to office by the qualifying influences of the Holy Spirit, enlightening them in the knowledge of revelation, and empowering them by His inspiration to make additions to it, which is doubtless the primary import of the petition; but also that His disciples, in every age, might be delivered through the same divine agency from the power and pollution of sin, and grow in grace as well as in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 'This is the will of God, even our sanctification.' And what is the will of the Father, is also the will of the Son. The Ineffable Holy Jehovah, who has been pleased to form a people for Himself, demands that they be holy as He is holy; and for the attainment of this conformity, He has provided an agency and instrumentality competent to bring it about. The Saviour would be ashamed to call them brethren, did they not in some degree bear a resemblance to His Father. He therefore prays, that God would render the instrumentality He has appointed, effectual to the restoration of the divine image in the souls of

all His genuine followers. And how consoling for us to know, that a matter which so much concerns us is pressed by our prevailing Advocate with all the earnestness which the importance of the case demands! How faint the endeavours after holiness we would make, if not stimulated to them by a Being more in love with it than we are; and how small would be the assistance afforded by that Being, if the amount of it depended wholly upon our asking! But our quickening and progress are not left to such contingencies. There is One mindful of our interests, who thoroughly understands them, and is ever prosecuting them where no plea of His ever failed of success. But the extent to which we are indebted to this advocacy for restraining, persevering, and advancing grace, will never be known by us, till we ourselves are introduced within the vail, where our great High Priest is performing His official functions. Then only, if even then, will be laid open to us the springs of our spiritual well-being, the real sources of our strength and support, our consolations and achievements, our changes from glory to glory, and arrival at entire assimilation to Him who is the standard of all perfection; and whether we ever come to know the depths of these springs or not, we shall know at least that to Christ's intercession, in connection with His atonement, we have been indebted for grace in time and glory in eternity.

*Second, Christ prays for His people's moral harmony and visible unity.—‘That they all may be one,’*

says He ; ‘ as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.’ The great object of Christ’s mediation is to incorporate believers into one great company, and His intercession will continue till that object be accomplished ; for He has been lifted up to heaven, as well as upon the cross, to draw all men unto Him. Those thus attracted become one with Him, as the members of the body become one with the head ; and they also become united among themselves. But though joined in the same body, there would be no actual union if they did not co-operate readily and spontaneously with one another. In order to their being one body in reality, and not in name only, they must, like every natural body, be animated by one spirit, be one in judgment and one in sentiment, so far as it is possible for persons of different constitutions, education, habits, and attainments to be one,—one in disposition and inclination ; for one body can have only one heart,—one in love and affection ; for one body can have only one soul. There is a glorious pattern of unity afforded to the universe by the persons of the Godhead ; and Christ desires that the harmony and union of His people be modelled after that pattern : ‘ That they may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee.’ Not one in divine nature and essence as they are, for that is impossible, and consequently not contemplated ; but one in purpose, one in motive, one in aim, and one in action. If these absolutely independent beings have

shown the most perfect agreement respecting the scheme of salvation, and the carrying of it out into ultimate completion, can it be a matter of indifference to them whether the subjects of it are agreed about it or not? The God of all flesh desired to become the God and Father of a spiritual family, which should be distinguished from his rebellious and contentious offspring, by obedience, unanimity, and love; and it is meet that they should yield Him delight, by manifesting the features of character desired. The Son of God, cognizant of His Father's counsels, condescended to become Mediator in this immensely important affair, and so be a centre of union to parties who would otherwise remain for ever at variance. Must it not then be His desire that that union embrace as many objects, and be drawn as close as possible, that through Him believers may draw near unto God, and be characterized by oneness among themselves? . How different the state of the Church from that which it is the aim of its great Head to introduce, as that aim is indicated in His intercessory prayer, now under consideration! While He is praying that His people may be blessed with greater enlargement of mind, more fervent charity, increasing singleness of heart, and growing harmony of action, they themselves are constantly striving to find out points of dissimilarity that subsist between them, and adduce reasons for keeping aloof from one another. There is, indeed, more co-operation among Christians of different denominations in our day than there ever



was in times past ; but there is not so much, either in amount or kind, as to justify us in saying that we have arrived at the state contemplated by our Intercessor within the vail, when He addresses His Father, saying, 'That they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they all may be one in us.' It must be something more real and more visible, for it is to serve as evidence of the divine mission of Jesus Christ, and the subduing power of His Gospel, and be a leavening influence in a corrupt world. But so far from accomplishing these ends, the present divided state of the Church presents a hindrance, rather than a means of bringing them about. Till there be more visible unity among its friends, Christianity is not likely to commend itself to its enemies. Let it not be supposed that this is a matter of trivial importance—one that should be left wholly to the mellowing influence of time, and the growing expansion of national or universal mind. A glance at the prayer in which our text occurs, will convince any reflecting mind of the contrary ; for, while the importunate Intercessor contents Himself with stating His desire respecting every other matter only once, He reiterates His petition for Christian harmony and union again and again. Indeed it is the great burden of this lengthened address ; and surely that which is so important in the estimation of our blessed Redeemer, should be equally important in ours. May His renovating Spirit incline us thus to feel and act, so that henceforth we may show all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering ;

forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

*Third*, Christ prays for His people's *admission to glory, and perpetual continuance in happiness*.—‘Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me.’ The apostles were with Him then, with Him where He was, so far as His human nature was concerned. Introduction to its presence, and the happiness thence to be derived, could not therefore be the ideas designed to be expressed in this petition; for that which was already afforded, could not reasonably be matter of request. But while Christ was on earth, He was also in heaven; for though He had one nature that was finite, and as such confined to space, He had another which was infinite, and as such everywhere present. In respect of the one, He was about to withdraw from those then around Him; but in respect of the other, He always had been, and even then was, in heaven. And so short was the interval that was now to intervene till He would be there in the one nature as well as in the other, that He overlooks it altogether, and speaks as if already passed into heaven.

These men were indeed honoured in being admitted to daily intercourse with Him on earth—walking with Him in His journeys, sitting with Him at His meals, receiving from Him marks of condescension, and reciprocating with Him feelings of regard. But that honour and happiness could only be enjoyed

by a few, and even by them only for a brief space of time. But what He now asked was honour and happiness for all His followers, in whatever age and country they might live, and honour and happiness for them for ever. But these could not be afforded them if He remained on earth, in the form and appearance He then wore. It was expedient, therefore, He should go away, but not expedient that His disciples should immediately follow Him then. They had many works to perform, and many responsibilities to discharge, before they could be glorified with Him. But though about to leave, He was not about to abandon them. Their happiness was as dear to Him as ever, as dear to Him as His own. He had made provision for it to a certain extent, while they continued on the earth, in the comforts of His Spirit and the promises of His Word. These are highly pleasant and greatly exhilarating; but, after all, they are merely substitutes for the joys of personal intercourse, and substitutes far inferior to the blessings in room of which they stand. Even with these, earth is a land of distance, and mortal life, in some measure, a time of separation from the Saviour. It is one of the declarations of His own inspired Word, that while we are 'at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.' His own perfect happiness, as well as that of His followers, is involved in their admission to His presence, and their never-ending residence with Himself in heaven. He can only be fully satisfied when He has seen the whole results of the travail of His soul, and these He cannot see till

His redeemed come to a full participation of its final rewards.

The apostles were witnesses of His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. But God the Father designed, and Christ as Mediator desires, that they should see greater things than these. They esteemed Him for His amiableness, admired Him for His wisdom, and loved Him for His kindness; and now He prays, that they may in due time be admitted to a scene where these excellences shine out in unmodified and ever-enduring splendour. They were witnesses of the divine love and approbation afforded Him during their sojourn with Him on earth—in the visits of angels, the subjection of nature's elements to His will, the favourable attestation of His enemies, the mystery of His transfiguration, the miracle of His resurrection, and the glory of His ascension; and now He prays, that they may be still further favoured, and others favoured with them, in becoming witnesses of the ineffable endearments that subsist between Him and the Father, the grandeur of His court, and the beatitudes of His subjects. They cannot become onlookers of this glory without becoming partakers of it, and being by the participation transformed into the same image—shining as Christ shines—but with borrowed, and not, as He shines, with inherent splendour. Great must be the felicity, and surpassingly grand the glory, for which Christ thus so earnestly prays in behalf of His people—so great and grand, that it is utterly impossible for us at present to

form any conception of them. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be.' If the Queen of Sheba was so enrapt with the glory of Solomon as to exclaim, 'Happy are thy men! happy are thy servants, who stand before thee, and hear thy wisdom!' how must they feel who behold the Lamb upon His throne, and enjoy the beatific vision of the glory given Him by the Father, without intermission, and without end! May we all be led to seek after this blessedness, and may none of us ever come short of it.

II. Some of the pleas with which Christ enforces His petitions.

*First, The peculiar claims of His people.*—'I pray not for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given Me out of the world; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them.' This argument, when originally employed, had special reference to the apostles, but it applies with equal force to the genuine followers of Christ at every time and everywhere. They belong to God in a way and manner none else belong to Him; for while He is the God of all being, by creation and preservation, He is their God by adoption and covenant engagement. 'The Lord's portion is His people'—'Jacob is the lot of His inheritance'—'The Lord hath set apart the godly man for Himself.' The fact that they are God's, in this distinguishing sense, is certainly a powerful reason why He should care for them; and this reason Christ presses with earnestness as an argument

of admitted weight. Every one cares for his own ; and Thou, God, canst not be less feeling than human parents are, nor less interested in that which belongs to Thee than earthly proprietors are. Thou wilt surely vindicate Thy right against those who wish to rob Thee of it, deliver Thy people from those who seek to destroy them, and put all to shame who tauntingly say to them, ' Where is Thy God ? '

Such an argument all believers who have the witness in themselves can plead at the throne of grace, and plead not only on their own account, but on behalf of all those whom, upon good grounds, they have reason to think are, with them, heirs of the grace of life. But our Divine Advocate adds a consideration which none but Himself can advance, namely, that they are His property, and as such He feels a double interest in them : ' All Thine are Mine,' says He, ' and all Mine are Thine.' Whence this mutual interest was derived is hinted at, but not explained : ' Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me.' They were God's absolute property. No one else could lay the least possible claim to them, and He had a right to do with His own as He willed. He gave them to His Son, but did not thereby relinquish His property in them, nor cease to feel interested about them. He gave them to the Son, because that Son had condescended to stand in a new and peculiar relationship to both. Considered in Godhead, the gift was inadmissible : the Father and Son are one in essence and perfection. But considered economically, the Son was

also the Father's servant, and, as such, all included in the election of grace were given Him, for specified purposes, and with definite aims. He gave them to Him as captives, whom the spoiler had seized, to ransom them by His blood. He gave them to Him as patients, dying of a moral disease, to restore them to moral health and vigour. He gave them to Him as exiles, far from home, to lead them by a right way to a city of habitation. He gave them to Him as sons, who had degraded themselves by vice, to restore them to honour, and conduct them to glory. Will, then, the Father permit the Son to be deprived of His property, and lose the purchase of His pain? It cannot be; and therefore the Son argues, with a plea of double force, that His people are dear to Him, and what is dear to Him must also be dear to His Father, and that He, as well as His Father, is glorified in them.

*Second, The peculiar circumstances of His people.*—  
'And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world.' To say that they are in the world, is tantamount to saying that they are as sheep in the midst of wolves, as soldiers in an enemy's country, as frail barks in a tempestuous ocean, as travellers in a pathless desert. To say that they are in the world, is virtually to say that they are in a place of enchantment, and that it requires a supernatural power to break the spell. To say that they are in the world, is to say that they are in the midst of a moral pestilence, by which they have already been infected, and that it

---

requires the exercise of infallible skill to prevent their death. To say that they are in the world, is to say that they are in danger the most alarming, and that no power short of Omnipotence can secure their safety. Had He said they were drowning in the ocean, or hanging from a precipice, or in the hands of an assassin, or in the hottest of the battle, He would not have described a condition in any degree so perilous as that which He did describe when He said, 'They are in the world.' If strong temptation, deep corruption, powerful opposition, and exhausting effort, be circumstances that pressingly require the interposition of efficacious grace, they are all implied in the brief but comprehensive statement: 'They are in the world.'

Though the apostles were in the midst of these perils while Christ was thus speaking, they enjoyed a privilege which they did not afterwards possess, and with which no believer in Jesus has ever since been favoured. That privilege was, immediate personal intercourse with their Lord—a power of obtaining from Him, by direct oral communication, a solution of all their difficulties, and guidance in all their actions. That this was a very special advantage is indicated by our Lord when He says, 'While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name.' He had warned them of their dangers, comforted them in their trials, apprized them of their errors, guided them out of them into truth, hindered their falling, and prevented their desertion. But a few hours, and, so far as His



bodily presence was concerned, He would be no longer in the world. Then it would be necessary to provide another and more spiritual mode of keeping them one, independent of time, place, and circumstance, and one available by all. To argue His personal absence from them was to argue indirectly, but not less forcibly, the necessity for the presence and protection of some other. But no presence or protection short of those of Omnipresence and Omnipotence would meet the exigencies of the case; and the exercise of these, in a special manner, was now asked by the Mediator in behalf of those who would feel themselves so peculiarly placed, and whose interests He was now pleading. The argument, 'I am no more in the world, but these are in the world,' was an appeal from extremity to opportunity, and such an appeal can never be made to a benevolent heart in vain. If such an appeal be powerful in itself, what must it be when urged upon the Father of mercies by His own loving and well-beloved Son? Who that can weigh considerations, and draw comfort from reflection, will not feel himself safe in such hands, and happy in the knowledge of having such an Intercessor? David thought himself peculiarly favoured in having such a friend as Jonathan at the court of Saul. But Jonathan, with all the power pertaining to him as the king's son, and all the attachment he entertained for his friend, could never exert an influence in his behalf in any degree so efficacious as that which God's Son exerts in behalf of His followers. Joseph's brethren thought themselves safe in

Egypt, because one of the family stood by the throne, and ministered in the court of its potent king; but they had no such warrant for their confidence as we have for ours, seeing that in their case their brother must die, and a new king arise that knew not Joseph. But our Brother ever liveth to make intercession for us; and He with whom He pleads is the King, immortal and eternal, as well as invisible. It is Jesus who pleads, the great High Priest of God's anointing, and who as such can never be allowed to plead in vain. It is Jesus who pleads,—that Jesus who, even while in a mortal state, had only to ask twelve legions of angels, and they would have been given Him; who did ask back the soul of Lazarus from the world of spirits, into which it had been some time entered, and it was restored to its clay tenement. If compliance with such a request has been afforded Him, what will be denied Him? If Jacob the supplanter had power with God, and prevailed, shall not the Angel of presence succeed? He must, unless He has misapprehended His own character, and sought to deceive His people. But such a thought be far from us, for we have His own unhesitating assertion to assure us that 'Him the Father heareth always.'

If Christ prays for us, we should assuredly pray for Him. Not indeed *personally*, for in this respect He needs not our prayers. He knows no want, for He is possessed of an infinite fulness. He can never be the subject of pain, for He is now in a state in which it can have no place. He is for ever removed

beyond the possibility of danger and death. But though prayer cannot be made for Him personally, it can be made for Him relatively. He has great interests at stake in this world, and what is done for them He esteems as done for Himself. If our interests are dear to Him, His interests should be dear to us. Who that feels any obligation to Him, and any love to souls for His sake,—who that believes that the interests of the eternal God are bound up with those of His eternal Son,—but would ardently wish and earnestly pray that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in His hand! He asks it of us. ‘The harvest truly is great,’ says He, ‘but the labourers are few: *pray* ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest.’ As His prayers for us are continuous, so should ours be for Him. Let us, then, be ever respecting the prophetic injunction: ‘Ye that make mention of the Lord, give Him no rest till He make Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth.’

If Christ prays for us, it is necessary, in order to our being benefited by the act, that we should avoid everything opposed to the object of His requests. Who would long continue the advocate of one who was thwarting all endeavours in his behalf by a course the diverse of that which he himself allowed he ought to pursue? We have been apprized what are the specific objects of Christ’s intercession; and while He is praying for them, it is our incumbent duty to be aiming after them. If Christ is ever praying for His people’s preservation in grace and increase in holiness,

how can they unnecessarily expose themselves to temptation, without becoming chargeable with recklessness and presumption? If Christ is praying for the harmony and visible unity of His people, how can they expect Him to continue importunate in the petition, while they are stirring up strife and delighting in discord? If Christ prays for His people's admission to glory and continuance in happiness, how shall they possibly enter upon the one or enjoy the other, if they are not acquiring meetness and relish for such exalted privileges? As we value the objects for which the Saviour intercedes,—as we hope for mercy from the Judge before whom He presses our suit,—as we desire to be like Him, and be with Him where He is, to behold His glory,—as we wish for any measure of comfort in our spiritual services even now,—let us look diligently lest any of us fail of the grace of God. And having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near in the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water; and so coming, we shall most certainly be accepted, for our Intercessor's sake.

## X.

### THE ESTIMATE IN WHICH CHRIST IS HELD IN HEAVEN.

‘Thou art worthy : for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.’—*REV. v. 9, 10.*

THE scene to which our text refers, is one of those visions with which the Apostle John was favoured while an exile in Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. According to his own account of the matter, he was enrapt in spirit, and heard a voice from heaven, ‘as it were a trumpet talking with him ; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.’ Immediately on this invitation being tendered him, he either really was, or seemed to himself to be, in heaven, where he beheld God seated on the throne of universal dominion, surrounded and adored by multitudes of glorious beings, ever ready to do His pleasure. In His hand there appeared a book, intimating that His government is conducted in accordance with a pre-concerted plan—that all that has happened, or ever

shall happen to individuals, families, nations, or worlds, is mapped out in its wondrous pages. And the events of providence, and incidents of human life, are simply the practical development of the design thus shown to have been for ever formed and entertained. The volume is represented as sealed, to intimate that, until revealed, its contents are involved in mystery, and transcend all finite intelligence. As seen by John, the book is to be regarded as a record of the scenes and events with which he was about to be made acquainted—especially as these bore upon the great lines of divine administration in the Church between his own times and the end of the world. An intense desire instantly seizes his mind to know the contents of this book, and comprehend their import and bearing. Before this could be done, the book must be opened—an act signifying disclosure of its contents; and in addition to this, its seals must be loosed, importing that the plans therein recorded must begin to be carried into execution. While burning with this desire, he hears a herald angel crying with loud voice, saying, ‘Who is worthy to open the book, and loose the seals thereof?’—an inquiry implying that no being save one of exalted dignity and high moral excellence, was qualified to disclose the divine counsels, and carry them into execution when disclosed. To this inquiry, notwithstanding its interest and importance, no response is given. There was silence in heaven; and conscious inability on the part of all created beings for the work required, was

expressed by that silence. At this important juncture, a Lamb, as it had been slain, comes and takes the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne, implying that God was willing the book should pass into His hands, and that He who received it willingly undertook to be the expounder of its mysteries. That Lamb is God's own Son, said to be slain in purpose from the foundation of the world, and known to be slain in fact in the fulness of time. Not that any knowledge was then communicated to Him which He did not before possess, or any authority bestowed upon Him which did not belong to Him of right. But a symbolical representation was thus afforded in time of an arrangement which had existed from eternity; and this was done with the view of impressing the mind of the apostle more deeply with the official character of Christ, from whom, as the great Prophet of the Church, he was to receive all his revelations.

Christ, viewed in this official character, unfolding the divine mind and executing the divine plans, is an object of intense interest and ineffable delight to all holy minds throughout the universe. So soon, therefore, as those around the throne saw Him take the book, they sung a new song, prompted by feelings more intense than were ever awakened in their hearts before, while the theme acquired a novelty by the discoveries which now demanded celebration. These discoveries, as already stated, had special reference to the events predicted in this book, some of which

were at hand, and others at a greater distance from the times of John. But the discoveries herein afforded were also designed to unveil in part the glory to which Christ had been exalted; and from this book, accordingly, we learn more of heaven, and the glory of its Lord, than from any other portion of the sacred canon. And, indeed, it is natural to suppose that the last book inspired by the Spirit of God, should give us the fullest disclosures of the future world that could be anywhere obtained. Thus viewed, the topics to which our text invites attention are, *The estimate in which Christ is held in heaven; and, The reasons which its inhabitants assign for the honours they award Him.*

I. THE ESTIMATE IN WHICH CHRIST IS HELD IN HEAVEN.—‘Thou art worthy,’ exclaim these admiring hosts, as they look towards the centre object of the scene now presented to them. ‘Thou art worthy’—language which implies not only pre-eminence, but also *exclusiveness*. The honours ascribed to Him are His, and His alone, admitting of participation by no other, even in the lowest degree. Thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, seraphim and cherubim, are there: there, too, are patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs—men who through faith obtained a good report, and of whom the world was not worthy; but not one of them is recognised as entitled to notice, when merit, as estimated in the light of heaven, is in question; nor in that vast assembly of spiritual



nobility is such a thought entertained for a moment. No ! Thoughts of self have all ceased in their minds, and in many of them they never had any place. Precedence they leave to be contended for by the ambitious sons of men on earth, thinking themselves sufficiently honoured in being admitted to the presence of Zion's King, whether it be given them to stand upon His right hand or upon His left. They have crowns, but they deem it unbecoming to hold them in their hands, much less wear them on their heads, when He is present who conferred them. They therefore cast them at His feet, exclaiming, 'Thou art worthy to receive honour and dominion. Thine, Thine alone, is the power, and the kingdom, and the glory.' Heaven is a world of profound humility and ardent gratitude. Since the angels who kept not their first estate were banished from it, self-seeking has never been known in it, nor self-gratification ever felt. All beings there are perfect in the degree which their nature admits of ; and the nearer any creature approximates to perfection, the more humble he will become. Inferiority is never felt so strongly as in the presence of superiority, and no superiority ever equalled that of the God-man Mediator in His exalted state. Angels and arch-angels stand high in the scale of being, so high that God Himself declares it to be ample reward for all privations in Christ's cause for the sufferer to be ultimately made equal to them. And yet these same angels prostrate themselves before the enthroned Lamb ; and instead of feeling themselves degraded

by the act, consider that He honours them in receiving such homage from them, and hence join with intense ardour in the ascription of praise summed up in this pregnant expression, 'Thou art worthy.'

But while the inhabitants of heaven see no reason for glorying in themselves, they see abundant reason for extolling the glory of Christ Jesus. They place the diadem on the right head, or, what amounts to the same thing, they express their great delight at His being preferred. The more they contemplate the matchless excellences of His person, and the vast importance and extent of His undertaking, the more are they inclined to give Him the glory that is due unto His name. How highly they estimate Him, may be seen in the names which they ascribe to Him—names never applied to any but to God Himself, and which, unless He were of the same nature, and co-equal in glory, it were blasphemy to ascribe to Him; and not only names, but attributes, implying divinity—as creating, governing, and redeeming power. And all this they do in the presence of the throne on which Jehovah, as sustaining divine majesty, is seated,—styling that throne alike the throne of God and of the Lamb; while no voice disapproving of these ascriptions proceeds from it, implying that, in the estimation of Him who is seated upon it, and who admits no rival near His throne, such ascriptions are rightly applied; while the Lamb himself, at the same time, receives the homage with complacency, as an act proper to Him and becoming in them. How

different was it with the angel before whom John fell, and to whom he was about to offer divine honours! That celestial hierarch felt horrified at such a proposal, and entreated him to abstain from it, saying, 'See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God;' while, on the contrary, he and all his compeers do to Jesus what they will not allow to be done to themselves. If, then, Jesus be nothing more than a creature, John has misled the Church by his representation; and, according to the view he has given of their conduct, angels become chargeable with idolatry. We can suppose it possible for the redeemed from amongst men falling into such a mistake; for personal obligation often warps the judgment, and imparts a glow to utterances which the subject may not warrant. But here we find not only the ransomed of the human race, but angels, who regard heaven as their birthright, almost exhausting language to find words in which to speak the praises of the Revealer of truth and Redeemer of souls. Surely we are safe in following their example, for they are competent judges of what is both lawful and expedient in such a case, and in joining with them when addressing the ever adorable Saviour, saying, 'Thou art worthy to receive honour, and glory, and blessing, for ever and ever.'

How different the state of opinion in heaven respecting Christ, from what it is on earth! Here, many will barely allow Him equality with themselves,

while others hold His character beneath contempt. Some there are who admit that He was a person of superior intelligence, who conferred considerable benefit upon the human race, but not more than many others have done, both before and after Him. Some assign Him a rank superior to angels, but still subordinate to that of Divinity; while among those who give Him the first place in the universe, how few cherish towards Him a corresponding feeling! In heaven, on the contrary, all think of Him as with one mind, and feel towards Him as with one heart. Though the worshippers there be constantly passing from one song to another in their praises, the theme is still the same, and that theme the Lamb that was slain; for the aspects in which His nature, character, and claims may be contemplated, are infinitely various, and the thoughts and feelings prompted by them consequently inexhaustible. So far from thinking they can be in any mistake in the matter, or too ardent in reference to the manner of their song, they are ever calling upon all God's creatures to join them in it, as if they felt themselves unable to do justice to the theme, and that even after all minds and all hearts have united in it, honour enough will not be done to it.

How proper, then, the question once put by the Saviour to certain of His followers in the days of His flesh, and which He doubtless intended should often be pressed home upon those who have assumed His name, 'What think ye of Christ?' Right thoughts of Him are essential to right feelings towards Him.

If we have wrong views of His person, we must also be in error respecting the way of salvation through Him, for His divine nature is the foundation on which that salvation is based ; nor is it enough, that others have right opinions of Him, which from passiveness in ourselves, and respect towards them, we have been led to adopt. We must have opinions of our own—opinions deliberately formed, and carefully maintained ; for it is only when we have thus thought and acted, that we offer Him the real esteem of our minds, and the genuine affections of our hearts. We would fain persuade ourselves, brethren, that you are no strangers to the real glory of God's well-beloved Son ; that you have a suitable sense of His claims upon your homage and submission, and are properly influenced by it. To excite you still more fully to the exercise of such feeling and conduct, we proceed to examine the claims urged by the worshippers in heaven, as reasons for the high estimate in which they hold the Redeemer, and the peculiar conduct they pursue towards Him ; believing that, since you are influenced by the opinions and procedure of men on earth, you will be still more so by those of the glorified throng in heaven, who in God's light see light clearly.

## II. THE REASONS ASSIGNED BY THE WORSHIPERS IN HEAVEN FOR THE HOMAGE THEY RENDER TO THE SAVIOUR.

It is expedient here to premise, that the scene referred to in the text is borrowed from the temple

worship of Old Testament times, and particularly from the occasion when the high priest entered the holy of holies with the sacrificial blood on the day of atonement, and offered it on the altar unto Jehovah, while a multitude of worshippers stood without, praising the Holy One of Israel, and trusting for their acceptance with Him on the ground of the atonement thus made. True, John saw no temple in heaven, but he saw there all the accessories of one; and these accessories purified from all the defects which appertained to them in the earthly state, and now constituting the realities of which in that state they were only the foreshadowings. Here was the sacrifice, with this peculiarity, which never belonged to sacrifice before, that though once dead, it was now alive again. Here were kings and priests, with assembled worshippers of Jewish descent and Gentile origin. But how superlatively grand was this scene compared with the other, and how much more delightful the occasion compared with any enjoyed in the Church below! And to whom were the beings thus assembled indebted for their ineffable bliss and unparalleled honour? To themselves? or any one among themselves? No! There is only One to whom they can look as owing obligation in the case. That One is the Lamb in the midst of the throne, conspicuous beyond all others visible there; and the peculiar aspect in which He appears is instantly suggestive of valid reasons why those admitted to His presence should be ardent and constant in His praise.

The *First* reason they assign, as declared in the text, is, THE DIGNITY OF THE VICTIM.—‘*Thou* wast slain,’ say they; meaning the person to whom their eyes were turned, who was shining in dazzling splendour, even above the brightness of the sun when he shineth in his strength, and above all other brilliancy, where all is lustrous. There is no difficulty in perceiving His greatness now, whatever obstacle prevented their doing so, either in His or in their mortal state. It is at once visible, striking, and unmistakeable. No one of them could doubt for a moment that the person on whom they looked with such intensity and interest, is the Lord of life and glory, ‘the blessed and only Potentate, who alone hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto;’ the True God and Eternal Life, supremely blessed in Himself, and without the least possibility of change; and yet it was He who had become incarnate, who had tabernacled in flesh, who had wandered a homeless, friendless being in a fallen, unpitying world, and terminated His career there, by yielding to a painful, lingering, ignominious death. Yes, it was He! For even through that excessive brightness is still seen the prints of the nails and of the spear by which He had been pierced when dying for a rebel race, and which eternity will never wear faint, much less efface. The incarnation, with the suffering connected with it, which they memorialize, was an event, considered merely in itself, infinitely more wonderful than it would have been for the highest angel to have been transformed

into the meanest reptile. Can any creature in the universe humble himself as the Lord of all creatures humbled Himself? No! No one but the highest can humble himself to the lowest; for all depression is in proportion to previous elevation. God, who is above all, only can show Himself a pattern of utter abjection, and subject Himself, without thought or feeling of resentment, to the base usage of His creatures. Such humiliation is worthy of God, and indeed nothing can be conceived more worthy of Him. If it was only a creature that humbled himself to become the friend of the needy and the saviour of the lost, then that creature, of course, would become entitled, through all eternity, to more glory and love than the Creator; for a soul that has been lost and recovered must ever feel an immensely greater amount of obligation to the Being who redeemed, than to the Being who created it, and consequently be ever disposed to ascribe greater praise to the one than to the other. But the Creator can allow no act to rival His deeds, and win honour to any one greater than that to which, as God, He is entitled. But no such rivalry ever discovers itself in heaven. It is because He who appears there as a Lamb that had been slain, is a being of infinite majesty, that His abasement became so profound; and the clear perception of this fact, by those on whose account the abasement was made, constrains them to address Him personally and directly, saying, 'Thou art worthy: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.'

*Second, THE MODE OF HIS OBLATION.*—'Thou



wast slain.' Death is no uncommon incident in this world's history. With two exceptions, it has terminated the earthly existence of every individual of our race, from the first-born of Eve to her latest descendant. And though it is a less frequent occurrence for men to be slain, it is not at all remarkably rare. Human life, alas ! has been the victim of violence, times without number. The wicked have not only slain the wicked, but the righteous too. There is nothing in the character of Christ, notwithstanding its purity, to render it surprising that He should be slain. That has happened to many men of whom the world was not worthy. But numerous as such martyrdoms have been, and blessed as such martyrs are before God, there is only one of them whose honours are celebrated in heaven, or of whom it is said there, in terms of praise, 'Thou wast slain.' He of whom that is said, and said in the manner described, is Jesus Christ. There must therefore be something in His martyrdom to single it out from every other, otherwise it would not be ascribed as matter of praise to Him alone ; but heaven's arches would echo the names of other martyrs as well as His. But the peculiarity of His martyrdom was, that He was slain for the accomplishment of a divine purpose, the vindication of law, the satisfaction of justice, a display of the divine attributes—in a way in which it could not otherwise be afforded. 'It pleased the Lord to bruise Him ; He hath put Him to grief : when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He

shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.'

The Lamb of God was slain, but it was with His own consent. No one had power to take His life from Him. He had power of Himself to lay it down, and power of Himself to take it again. He laid it down not only readily, but cheerfully. It was not the rage of His enemies—furious and implacable as that was—but His love to sinners, that subjected Him to be slain. This made Him passive in their hands, when He could have saved Himself from death, as He had saved others. He who thus died now lives—lives for evermore; and will for ever retain the memorials of the kind of death He died, which, so far from obscuring His glory, will only render it the more conspicuous and striking. Those honoured by Him shall continually see what their honours cost Him, be constrained to acknowledge the glory to which He is entitled, the deep obligation under which He has for ever laid them, exclaiming ever and again, 'Thou art worthy: for Thou wast slain.'

*Third, THE BLESSINGS HE HAS IMPARTED.*—These are of three kinds:—(1.) RECOVERY. 'Thou hast redeemed us by Thy blood.' If Christ has ten thousand fellow-martyrs, He has not one fellow-redeemer. In this respect He is not only the first, or highest, in a long list of distinguished followers, but stands absolutely alone. His glory thus derived is not only transcendent, it is exclusive—neither man nor angel shares it. 'Thou hast redeemed us by Thy blood,'

are words which shall never be addressed with truth to any being but Christ Jesus. It is not denied that the blood of other martyrs has often been beneficial in several ways. It has confirmed faith, fired zeal, prompted like sacrifice on the part of other adherents to the same cause—ay, and won over some who were formerly opposed to it; so that the well-known saying has become an unquestionable truth: ‘The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.’ But the benefit which that blood confers on the Church is altogether different from that which the blood of Christ confers on it. His was the blood of sacrifice for sin. He gave His life a ransom for many, and on the ground of that ransom the ‘many’ have returned, or are in course of returning, to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; and the songs they raise are hymns in honour of the once dead but now ever living Redeemer, to whose interposition in their behalf, their recovery, in all its bearings, is solely to be ascribed.

(2.) The benefit accruing to them from the shedding of Christ’s blood, includes in it **RESTORATION** as well as recovery.—‘Thou hast redeemed us to God,’ say these celestial worshippers in the praises which they ascribe to Christ, implying that till then they had been lost to God; that though made by Him they had not been answering the end of their creation, but had run to waste, and were sinking into ruin. But now they are redeemed to God, become willing bearers of tribute to His throne, rendered

useful not to Him, for their services are not necessary to Him, but useful in the place which He has assigned them, and to the extent to which their influence can operate there. They are restored to God, not in the way that property is restored to its rightful owner, to be acknowledged by him merely as occasion may require, but restored to be employed immediately in the service for which it was originally designed, rejoiced in as something which affords the highest delight, and on which special favour is to be bestowed. The light of God now shines full upon them, and order, beauty, and life adorn and animate them. They are brought into a state of nearness to Him, whose infinite fulness supplies a universe with good; and are the objects of His love, whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life.

(3.) A third benefit accruing to the redeemed in heaven from the shedding of the Saviour's blood, and which they are constantly acknowledging in the praises they offer Him, is EXALTATION.—‘Thou hast made us unto God *kings and priests*.’ Speak to them of worth in the presence of Him who made them what they are! That would be preposterous indeed!—a perversion of all right order; putting that first which should be last, or rather giving place to that which ought to have no place at all, in such connection and such association. Worth cannot belong to them who were, and must ever continue to be, debtors to grace. True, they are in a high and honoured position; but that is just the reason why, when commendation is

to be bestowed on the ground of merit, it should be awarded to the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and to Him alone. Honour was His of right; it could be theirs only as a matter of favour. And when an inquiry is set on foot, such as that which they had been called to answer, it became them to disavow all claim, and acknowledge the obligations under which they lay to Him, to whom prominence belonged and preference should be conceded. They had been captives of Satan, slaves of sin, and outcasts from God; but, through Christ, they had been emancipated, enfranchised, reconciled, restored to favour, friendship, and ever-enduring safety; not only admitted to citizenship with the saints, but to the household of God; adopted into the royal family, of which He is the Head who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and by relation to whom they become part of the nobility of heaven, where all are noble, inherit a palace, wear crowns of righteousness and robes of light, are placed above all want and beyond all fear, exercise a liberty which monarchs on earth, even when most absolute, never possess, and experience a pleasure which earthly royalty never afforded its possessor. They ‘reign in life,’—not life inherent in them, or acquired by them, but life bestowed upon them; bestowed by the Lamb now in the midst of the throne, once slain for them, and to whom, accordingly, they ascribe all the praise, saying, ‘Thou art worthy: for Thou hast made us unto God kings.’

But this is not all the honour He has bestowed

upon them, for, with this royalty, He has combined *priesthood*, and the most honoured of all kings have ever been those who have had a right not only to royal but also to sacerdotal supremacy. By Christ, whose sole prerogative it is to elect to, and in whose power alone it is to afford the qualifications necessary for performing, the high and holy office, they have been called, separated, and consecrated to it. By the unction they have from the Holy One, they offer up praises, holy and acceptable to God, are admitted to His immediate presence, and have a continual residence with Him in His sanctuary. These are blessings which prompt their tongues as well as satisfy their hearts, and constrain them to be ever turning to the Source whence they have been derived, and say, 'Thou art worthy: for Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests.'

*Fourth, THE PARTIES HE HAS BENEFITED.*—These are described in the text as redeemed 'out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.' How great the *number* sharing in this blessedness! Great not only beyond calculation, but beyond conception. This is implied in the language here employed. But we are not left to learn the fact by implication. We are told expressly in this same book, containing other visions of the apostle, that the company around the throne, engaged in the exercise which he had described, was a multitude which no man could number; and this was not merely a notion which he had formed by a rapid glance at the assembled throng, but the

estimate formed of the fact by God Himself, whose infallibility secures it from all error, and whose Spirit made it known to the apostle, as a fact which he was to place upon record for the instruction of the Church in all succeeding ages. Christ's people upon earth appear at present a little flock, compared with the multitudes who people it besides themselves, and whom no charity warrants us to think of as belonging to His fold. 'The ways of Zion mourn because the travellers are few: two of a city, and one of a family.' But when they are assembled together in the heavenly temple they are spoken of as much people, and it is reasonable to suppose they must be so. Christ gave His life a ransom for many, and His omnipotent Father would see to it that not one of them would be lost. The gift was not likely to consist of a small minority. For, as the Son honoured the Father in undertaking human redemption, it amounts to a certainty that the Father would honour the Son in securing a vast multitude of souls to Him as His reward. It was meet that He should not only be a conqueror, but that the fact of His conquest should ever continue to manifest itself in the abundance of spoils He had taken from the enemy; that the Captain of salvation had not only fought but triumphed, and in so doing had brought 'many sons unto glory.' No one of that ransomed throng grudges the honour or happiness his fellow shares with him. He left all selfishness behind him when he put off his mortal frame, having been in constant conflict with it from

that hour when he became experimentally acquainted with the Lamb of God, as the sacrifice that taketh away the sin of the world. So far from repining at the ever-augmenting numbers who are coming to share the inheritance with him, he exults in the fact as one that will enhance his enjoyment ; for heavenly, unlike earthly joy, is intensified by being diffused, and, consequently, the more who partake of it, the more it is increased to each. But this personal advantage is overlooked and forgotten in the disinterestedness which pervades all minds in heaven, and nothing is thought of there but the honour due to Him who procured joy unspeakable and full of glory for beings meriting indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, and put such multitudes in possession of it, that the value of it cannot be estimated, without taking into account both its nature and its numerous partakers.

For many generations one nation supplied heaven with its ransomed population ; but in the fulness of time, the Lamb, now in the midst of the throne, broke down the wall of partition which was between that nation and all others, the Gospel went forth unto all the world, and all the world has ever since, more or less, at one time or another, contributed citizens to the New Jerusalem, princes to the celestial palace, priests to the temple above, where all wear these honours, and all perform these functions. That glorious throng is now made up of persons who lived in different ages, under different dispensations—had belonged to tribes and nations widely separated from, and often un-



relentingly hostile to, each other—had been placed in conditions, and occupied situations, in this world which hindered all intercourse between the classes to which they belonged. But all these discordant elements have been harmonized and brought into a state of perfect union by Jesus Christ. His grace subdued the ferocity of the savage, the pride of the philosopher, the haughtiness of the grandee, and the prejudices of the sectarian—gave them one mind and one heart,—so that now, as with one mouth, they glorify God, even the Father; while the attraction which drew, and the bond which keeps them together, is seen and felt to be the Lamb in the midst of the throne, whose praises, as such, they are accordingly for ever celebrating, saying, ‘Thou art worthy: for Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.’

We are thus taught that heaven can only be reached by ‘the new and living way, which Christ hath consecrated for us, which is through the rent vail, that is to say, His flesh.’ For if there be another way, there must also be another heaven than that which the Bible reveals. Persons saved in different ways could not possibly agree in ascribing their salvation only to one Redeemer, and the attempt to do so would only lead to discord; whereas Scripture unveilings of the celestial world go to show, that all the souls which have ever reached it acknowledge that they came thither through the mediation of the Son of God, based on the blood shed by Him as an atone-

ment for human guilt, and that on that account Jesus Christ is the supreme object of their esteem and regard. Let any one come there who is not ready to make this acknowledgment, and an instant demand would be made for his expulsion, as not being in agreement with all the rest. He too would be glad to escape, for that could be no heaven to him where all his views were opposed, and all expressions of his feelings counteracted. He would need to seek a heaven where *his* saviour resided. And where is that to be found? for it is not the heavens into which the great High Priest Jesus, the Son of God, has passed, and revelation tells us of no other. If, then, there be only one divinely selected medium of access unto God, it is indicative of the highest reason, as well as the most genuine piety, that we avail ourselves of it. To reject it, or feel unconcerned about it, is to remain cut off from God, and all the happiness of which our spiritual nature is susceptible. To appropriate Christ as God offers Him, is to lay hold upon eternal life, is to be united to the honoured company of the redeemed, is to pass into a state which secures that the soul shall ultimately and for ever be with Christ; and this is the state into which it is the end of all Gospel preaching to introduce you.

This state is never reached by any one, unattended with exalted views of the Saviour, and deep sense of obligation to Him. 'To them who believe, He is precious.' And He becomes so from the moment they exercise the first act of saving faith towards

Him, and that preciousness is enhanced as they become increasingly acquainted with Him. The inestimable worth of the Lamb of God, was not a perception new to the redeemed upon entering heaven, though doubtlessly rendered clearer and more heart-stirring by the glory that was then revealed to them. That glory had, however, been so far unveiled to them before as to constrain their avowal: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' and their repudiation of the thought of trusting to any other for procuring their acceptance with God: 'To whom can we go but to Thee? Thou only hast the words of eternal life.' They who have not acquired such sentiments and feelings, who are not willing and ready to express themselves in the way and manner these believers did, whose words they are, are evidently not fit to be joined to them. Is this the state of mind and heart which you are conscious of having acquired? or, at least, is it the one of all others after which you aspire? Without it there can be no heaven for you. Deceive not yourselves with the thought that it will come as a matter of course, that right views and right feelings will be acquired on passing out of your clay tabernacle, however erroneous and improper they may have been before. No; whatever is their state then, must be their state for ever. Death, among its many other peculiar effects, confirms character. It not only executes the decree respecting man's earthly destiny, but another which looks beyond it. 'Let him that is filthy be filthy still; and let him

that is holy be holy still.' It will be too late then to rectify error, and yield to the force of saving truth. The power has gone with the opportunity, and the chief source of the misery which ensues, must be the consciousness that it is so. Let, then, truth operate in its full force now. Lay aside all doubt, hesitation, and reserve, respecting the claims of Christ to your homage and regard. 'Be no more faithless, but believing.' Exclaim with one who felt himself justly upbraided for ever having been so, and with him turn to Jesus, saying, 'My Lord and my God.' Then, at whatever time your exalted Lord calls upon you to come up hither, you will not only be ready to obey, but be able at the same time to join in the anthem of the redeemed at whatever note they have arrived in their song upon your introduction among them.

But if you are destined to rise to that exalted state, and be joined to that honoured company, your praises of the Lamb will not be reserved till you are welcomed to the palace and its guests, but even now you will be pouring out your heart to Him in song, endeavouring, as far as in you lies, and in so far as it can be supposed to have any reference to you, to realize this vision, in its remaining portions: 'And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' And let the whole Church say, Amen, and Amen.