SERMONS

CHIEFLY ON THE

INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE following Sermons have been collected from among those preached between the years 1832 and 1840; and have been chosen with a view to the illustration of Scripture, "either by explaining certain passages or portions of the sacred volume, or by stating some general rules of interpretation which may apply to the whole of it." The present volume will thus, in some measure, fulfil the intention expressed by my husband in the Introduction to the third volume of his Sermons.

Having been mostly preached in the chapel at Rugby, these Sermons must necessarily be of a practical character; but it will be found that they all bear more or less upon Interpretation—with the exception of three or four, which seemed to demand insertion from their peculiar subjects.

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The order followed has been generally that of the texts: in one or two instances this has been for obvious reasons disregarded. Of the Sermon on "Death and Salvation," it may be necessary to explain, that it was preached on the occasion of the death of a pupil, whose last illness is the subject of several letters in July, September, and October 1835, in the first volume of the "Life and Correspondence."

It is not, of course, possible, that sermons preached often at long intervals of time, and upon no preconceived plan, should present his views as a whole, or on every part of Scripture in due proportion. In some instances, also, this want of proportion has been accidentally increased. For instance, several Sermons on Prophecy, which I have reason to think he had selected for future publication, are missing: and the two printed Sermons on Prophecy, which would otherwise have appeared here in their proper place, have been accidentally reprinted in the fourth edition of the first volume of Sermons.

The Note on Prophecy, which appears at the end of the volume, is extracted from the original work on that subject, of which the general substance was published in the notes of the two Sermons just mentioned, and may be read with interest in connexion with them, as more fully illustrating the principles there laid down.

The seven Sermons on the Epistle to the Romans, which follow, were preached at Laleham in 1827. The difference of style, and, in some respects, of thought, from the later Sermons, seemed to require their transference to another part of the volume. But I have ventured to publish them, both in fulfilment of an intention which was once expressed by my husband himself, and as the most continuous exposition of any large portion of the Scriptures which remains among his writings.

MARY ARNOLD.

Fox How,
January 14*th*, 1845.

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SERMON I.

THE CREATION.

GENESIS i. 31.

And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.

THE order of the Proper Lessons for the Sunday service, throughout the year, may be said to begin from this day. On this day we, as it were, begin the Bible, and the first lessons continue to be taken from the books of the Law and the Prophets successively, till we come again to the season of Advent; those for Advent and the Sundays after Epiphany being taken, for particular reasons, from the book of Isaiah alone. Now it is impossible that so small a portion of the Old Testament, as can be read at the rate of two chapters a week, can give us any thing like a full notion of its contents: indeed, there are several books from which none of the Sunday

Lessons are ever taken at all. Still the selection takes many of the most important parts, and forms a skeleton, more or less perfect, of the substance of the whole Bible. In particular those great events recorded in the earlier part of Genesis, which concern directly the whole race of mankind, are read in the Proper Lessons with tolerable fulness. I mean the Creation, the Fall, and the Flood. It is true that there is much in the accounts of all these events, the real meaning of which it is not easy to understand; and on which, therefore, it does not seem wise to dwell. But still the main facts are sufficiently clear, and contain matter which we can perceive most fit to hold the place which it does hold, as the beginning of the volume of God's revelations to man.

Now, for instance, if we take the account of the Creation in its details, as a piece of natural history, we not only involve ourselves in a number of questions full of difficulty, but we lose the proper and peculiar character of the Scripture as a revelation. This will be well shown by a contrast. There is preserved to us in a Greek writer, the lexicographer Suidas, a very remarkable extract from an old Etruscan author, giving an account of the creation of all things. It says that God designed his creation to last for twelve thousand years; that in the first thousand years He made the heaven and the earth; in the second thousand years He made the

firmament; in the third thousand years He made the sea; in the fourth thousand the sun, moon, and stars; in the fifth thousand all living creatures except man; and in the sixth thousand, He made man: it goes on to say that, as there had been six thousand years before man was created, so mankind was to last for another period of six thousand years; and thus the whole duration of God's works, animate and inanimate together, would make up the term of twelve thousand years.

Now the resemblances of this account to what we have in the first chapter of Genesis are manifest; and it would be a waste of time to point your attention to them. Nor is it of any consequence to speculate as to the causes of this resemblance, or to ask where the old Etruscan writer obtained the notions which he has recorded. What I wish to dwell on is the *difference* in the two accounts; for it is in this difference that we shall recognise the peculiar character of Scripture. First, let us observe what the Etruscan writer has got, which the Scripture has not; and then what he has not, which the Scripture has. It will be seen that he begins with a declaration respecting the times and the seasons, one of that sort which is most welcome to the curiosity of man, but which, as far as regards his practice, is rather mischievous than useful. "God designed all created things to last for a term of twelve thousand years," so he begins; and he

ends with saying that the term of the existence of the human race was to be six thousand years. We know by the various attempts which some Christians have made to fix the time of the end from the prophecies, how natural it is to be curious about this point. And we know also by Christ's express words that it is a point not to be revealed to any created being: the hour of the death of the whole world is to be kept in the same uncertainty as that of the death of every one of us. And accordingly the Scripture account of the Creation gives us no information as to the time that the world was to last; it makes no revelation to gratify curiosity; it tells us what God has done, so far as it concerns our practice, and no farther; and in like manner as to what He will do. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This is a true Scripture revelation, for the foundation of all our duties, of all right notions of ourselves, and of the world in which we are living, is laid in the knowledge of this fact, that it is God who made us and not we ourselves; that we have nothing which we have not received from Him, and that for His pleasure we are and were created.

Now let us see, on the other hand, what the Etruscan writer has not, which the Scripture has. The Creation, as he relates it, is a mere curious fact, and nothing more; the pretended correspondence of the numbers, that as there were six thousand

years before man was made, so there would be six thousand years after he was made, is just a thing to strike the imagination, and to excite wonder. But we find not a word as to anything moral,—nothing that has to do with sin or with duty. But what says the Scripture? Immediately after the mention of the creation of all things, it goes on to give the relation in which man stands to his fellow-creatures and to God; the relation I mean as a matter of practice: that he has dominion over the earth and over all living creatures in it, given to him by the Lord and Maker of him and of them. "God blessed man and woman, and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." We do not find this mentioned in other accounts of the Creation; yet this it is above all other things which it concerns us morally to know. It is a matter of experience that we are more powerful than all other creatures, by means of our reason; it is almost a matter of necessity that we avail ourselves of this power: but neither power nor necessity are satisfactory grounds on which to exercise dominion; they are not satisfactory to a thinking mind, because neither the one nor the other will supply the notion of right. In fact I know of no subject more startling, when we begin to think of it, than the

condition of the lower animals with regard to man. And even now it is full of darkness, it is impossible so to explain it as to leave it free from great difficulties, speaking intellectually. But all that we want practically, for the satisfaction, not of our understanding, but of our conscience, that these few words of God's revelation have given us. "God said unto man, Have dominion over all living creatures." This makes our dominion no longer a mere matter of power, or of circumstance, but of right: the difficulties of the question we may leave contentedly with God, knowing thus much, which is sufficient for our purposes, that the relation in which we find ourselves has God's sanction—and that in making his living creatures minister in such numberless ways to our use and comfort, our so doing is not tyranny, nor in any way sin, inasmuch as we may do it in the full faith that it is according to God's pleasure.

Yet again, one other thing the Scripture tells us of the creatures, man included, to whom the work of creation had given being; it is told in a very few words, yet how much is contained in it. "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." This again is a matter of proper revelation; experience could tell us nothing of it. I said once before, that it was not original sin that was properly a revelation of Scripture, but rather original righteousness. We know, from what we

see every day, that we, the individuals of the human race, are born sinners; but we could not have known without revelation that the human race itself was born righteous. Its present state is not its nature, but its corruption: at its beginning some better thing was prepared for it. The evil which we see and feel in us and about us is man's work and not God's: it is, if I may so speak, the exception to God's creation, and not the rule. And how greatly does the knowledge of this fact minister to our moral good. How greatly does it teach us, with respect to this nature of ours, and this world in which we live, to think humbly, and to hope highly. To think humbly—for we and all around us are a work of God spoiled and marred:—at first all was good: when it came first out of His hands, it partook of His own perfection. It was ruined afterwards, by its own fault, not by His original design. What then if we should be the only part of His creation which has so fallen; if those other worlds, which even our bodily senses can perceive, should deserve the title of "good" still. Had our present condition been our original one, it might have been that of all God's creation; it might have been thought to have been beyond His power or His will to make any thing wholly good. But even we, of whom we know so much evil, proceeded from His hands pure. We must not think then that we are a specimen of God's

works; it is an enemy who hath done this: and we alone, it may be, of all His creatures, have been thus torn from our Father's care, and from the freedom of our birthright, to lead a life of sin and of bondage.

Again, the same revelation of our original righteousness encourages us to hope highly. We see a state of things which justifies the melancholy views which so many have taken of man's nature and destiny. Pain and guilt, suffering and death, teach us too plainly that our actual condition is not one of blessing. And our experience gives us no prospect of any thing better: what happens to one of us in these matters, happens to all. And it has been asked why we should expect any thing better; why our present condition, with so much of enjoyment as is even now intermingled with it, should not be all that God designed for us. It might have been so indeed, for all that we could know of ourselves; but God has told us that it *was not*. He made us good, and he bestowed on us His blessing. We are fallen,—grievously fallen; but because it is a fall, because it is not natural to us to be as we are, therefore we may hope to be recovered from it. We may yet hope to be what God designed us to be.

Thus in the very record of our creation there is contained a lesson best fitted to our actual condition, a lesson of humility and of hope. But most

certainly the hope would have been vague and uncertain, were it not for that positive warrant for it which God has given us in His Son Jesus Christ. To Him were repeated those words which had been uttered over the first man; to Him God said again for the first time since Adam's fall, "That in man He was well pleased." And as He was a man such as man was first created; good in the eyes of God, and fit for blessing; so God showed in Him what would have been man's portion from the beginning, had he never fallen. For death had no dominion over Him: but having died for our sakes, because He put himself in our place, He rose again to die no more, because life is the portion of God's children, whom He sees to be good, and in whom He can declare himself to be well pleased.

Now what I have here observed as characteristic of this first page of the Scripture, is characteristic of it all; and he who dwells upon its inspiration as thus manifested, cannot estimate it too highly. It is an inspiration which indeed stands alone, and which no arts of men have been able to counterfeit. It is marked by what it does not say, as well as by what it does say; by the absence of any thing to gratify mere curiosity, or excite wonder; by the presence of that very nourishment which our moral nature needs, whether for instruction or for encouragement, or for warning, or for comfort. It

is shown by meeting our wants in a way which we should not have thought of, but which, when once put before us, we find to be the very thing that we need. In this way there are some passages in the Old and New Testament sufficient of themselves to show that they are not of man, but of God. Such is that passage on which I have already dwelt,—the revealing to us that God has given to man dominion over other creatures,—and such also is the passage to be found a few chapters later, conferring expressly the permission to use them for our food. How unlike are these marks of God's revelation, from the pretended revelations of men. And there are marks which it will be instructive to trace from time to time in following the course of the weekly lessons. This will teach us on the one hand to have a clearer knowledge of, and value for, the real inspiration of the sacred volume, and also will relieve us from any anxiety or alarm, if we find that to these things God's revelations have been limited, and that His word was intended to communicate as from Him no other knowledge but that which will serve to make us wise unto salvation.

Rugby Chapel,
February 15th, 1835.
(Septuagesima Sunday.)

SERMON II.

THE FALL.

Genesis iii. 15.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

These words are a part of the sentence passed after the Fall upon the three parties most concerned in it, the woman, the man, and the serpent. I have said before, that there is much in these early chapters of Genesis which we do not understand, and which it is anything but wise to dwell on and argue from minutely, just as if we did understand them. But amidst passages of this sort there are others not only clear, but to be numbered with the most instructive of the whole Scripture, for the large and most profitable view which they afford of the condition of mankind. Of this kind are those verses of which the text is one; the judgment

passed upon mankind and on their tempter. These verses offer much to call for our attention, and suggest two ways in particular of considering them; one which I may call the moral view of them, taking them as they show the most important points in our actual condition; the other relating especially to the verse which I have chosen for my text, and showing forth by this earliest example that general character of Scripture prophecy which runs through the whole Bible.

First, then, let us consider the whole passage from the fourteenth verse to the nineteenth, as leading us to observe some most important points in the actual condition of mankind. Now it will be clear, I think, on a moment's consideration, that the points here dwelt on are precisely those which render it impossible for the human race, taken as a body, to enjoy upon earth either physical happiness or intellectual; in other words, to be either perfectly easy and comfortable in their outward condition, or perfectly able to gratify that desire of knowledge which the strong and cultivated understanding feels so earnestly. That is, in other words, yet again, God has so ordered the course of nature in this world ~~now~~ become sinful, that mankind shall be unable to find happiness in those things in which alone their corrupted nature would seek it, the pleasures of the body or of the understanding. It cannot be doubted that the corruption of our nature consists in this very thing, that we are careless of God and seek our happiness from His creatures, either from ourselves or others. But He has ordered things so, that this search can never generally succeed; if mankind will not seek their happiness from God, there is a law of their condition which declares that they shall not find it elsewhere.

Now the enjoyment of this happiness in worldly things is mainly hindered, as we can all see, by the necessity of labour and of death. The difficulty of providing for our bodily wants obliges us to labour; we can neither be fed nor clothed without exertion; without such a degree of exertion as exceeds the limits of natural and agreeable exercise. This necessity bearing alike upon both sexes, although in a different way; imposing upon the one labour and anxiety abroad, on the other labour and anxiety at home in the care of a family; manifestly has a tendency not only to abridge what are commonly called the comforts and enjoyments of life, but also, by denying us leisure, interferes no less certainly with the gratification of our understandings by the pursuit of knowledge. We see that the great bulk of mankind have no leisure to improve themselves to any high degree intellectually. But again, when man was sentenced to death, it implied that his body and all his faculties should have a natural tendency to decay and wear out after a certain

time. Adam may have lived many years after the Fall, yet it is no less true, that the work of death began in him from the very moment when the sentence was uttered that he should die. And so in us all, though we may live out our full term of fourscore years, yet death is working in us, in some measure, from the very hour that we are born. It is true, that when we compare one part of our life with another, it may be said, (as I observed not long since,) that life is working in the young in comparison with the old; there is in youth undoubtedly so much of growth and vigour. Yet even in youth there are signs of death's working; the disorders which befall infancy and childhood, even the occasional pains, sicknesses, weaknesses, to which the healthiest body is liable, all show that this wonderful machine of our earthly frames is not designed to last for ever; that it has tendencies to decay and disorder which cannot even be delayed for fourscore years without much self-restraint and care. Now this construction of our bodies necessarily limits our powers of enjoyment, no less in mind than in body. Even had we leisure to follow after knowledge to our heart's desire, yet the very imperfections of our bodily frames oblige us to moderate our pursuit of it, or else often cut us off in the midst of it. Thus the span of human wisdom is necessarily limited; for if we so redouble our efforts as to anticipate in middle life the full wisdom and knowledge of age,

yet these very efforts are in themselves exhausting, and only bring on earlier the period of decay. I may also mention that most painful consciousness which must beset us all, that at that period of life when we have begun to collect large stores of experience and knowledge, when our faculties are at the highest from full exercise, and we have at last gained large materials to enable them to advance yet further, precisely at that time the course of decay begins, and the added experience of longer life is more than counterbalanced by the gradual weakening of the faculties, so that we actually live to see our grasp upon truth become less and less firm, and our distance from perfect intellectual happiness become actually every year greater and greater.

So surely does that imperfect and mixed state of the outward world which obliges us to labour, and that doom of death upon ourselves which is all our life long making preparations for its full execution, render it actually impossible for mankind as a body to find happiness in God's creatures, if they will not seek it in Him. (These are things which it does not appear that any power or art of man can remove; the very increase of the numbers of mankind being in itself a constant provision to keep up the necessity of labour. And thus considered, as every day and every hour show us how really the sentence recorded in Genesis is actually pressing

upon us all, so we shall understand how exactly calculated it is to effect its object; and we shall gain a true notion of those points in the constitution of things which some have cavilled at, while others have been so foolish as to deny their existence, if we view them, not as an arrangement of the Divine benevolence to produce happiness, but rather as an appointment of Divine justice purposely made to render the earthly happiness of sinful creatures a thing impossible.

I think it is most useful so to contemplate human life, although the view thus offered may be painful. Yet I know not that it need or ought to be painful: for although happiness in God's creatures if viewed as apart from Him is truly impossible, yet happiness through him is not impossible, not even in this world. It is very just to look upon life as a scene of trial, and not as a scene of enjoyment. But those very dark pictures of man's misery which are sometimes given are not just if applied to Christians: it is by no means true that life is to them unhappy under any circumstances whatever; while under circumstances, it is, and may well be exceedingly happy. For to Christians, whatever pain might be otherwise felt from labour and from decay, is constantly made up by hope; and the very circumstance that they have a more abiding city and a better treasure than any on earth, while it enables them to enjoy most thankfully those good things

which God gives them here, takes away also that otherwise sickening disappointment with which we should else see them one by one vanish.

To this restoration of happiness, this undoing of the evil done by the tempter at the beginning, the words of the text are in their highest sense no doubt applicable. And they afford a good example, as I said, of that general character of Scripture prophecy which runs through the whole Bible, and in them it may be shown how those prophecies generally may also be understood and applied.

In their first and literal sense they are true and perfectly intelligible. They describe the relations existing between man and a class of inferior and noisome animals; whom he can destroy or keep under, but who are able in their turn to inflict some pain and injury on him. But in proportion as our notions of other parts of the story of the Fall become raised above the literal meaning, so also must they be raised with respect to this particular verse. The instant that we understand by the serpent that tempted the woman, not a literal serpent, but a being morally evil, by whose arts the world has been ruined, then of course we understand by the serpent between whose seed and the woman's seed there was to be perpetual enmity, that same being of moral evil with whom man's life throughout the history of the world would be perpetually struggling.

And when we read, that in this struggle, the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, while it should bruise his heel, it is no less clear, that here also the literal sense of the words head and heel is no longer to be thought of, but that in this great contest between man and evil, the triumph should be with man, although it should not be won but at the price of some loss and suffering.

Now taking it in this sense partially, and up to a certain point, the fulfilments of it have been many. All those good men of whom the Scripture speaks, from righteous Abel downwards, all who by God's grace lived in God's faith and fear, all found that in their struggle with evil they were conquerors; that it was good for them, and not bad, that they had ever been born. And all found also that, if saved, they were saved as by fire; their experience could enough tell them that evil was not without power to do them hurt.

Yet it is no less manifest that none of these cases came up to the full extent of the comfort required. At the Fall, evil had triumphed over the whole race of mankind; the state of things had become evil, which had before been good. If evil, that had done this were to be crushed and destroyed, it must be by the restoration of all things; the human race must be recovered, which in its first struggle had been lost. And this could only be by

a far greater and more perfect victory over evil than ever man had won; by such a triumph over labour and over death as should indeed show that the latter end of the human race should be better than its beginning.

Such a triumph was achieved by Jesus Christ, the proof of it being his resurrection. For thus it was shown manifestly that death had been overcome; that evil had been vanquished in all its parts, outward and inward; that man was again restored to his original righteousness, and that being in the person of Christ no longer lost to God, but one with God, suffering and death could have no dominion over him, but that his portion was the fulness of joy at God's right hand for ever.

In this same manner it is, that so many passages of the Old Testament are applied to Christ in the New Testament, which, taken in their original place, seem to refer to a subject much less exalted. And the reason of the application of them to Christ is this; that whereas all prophecy is addressed to the hopes of the good, and to the fears of the evil, so the perfect fulfilment of it, that is, the perfect satisfying of these hopes, and the perfect realizing of those fears, is to be found only in the perfect triumph of good, and the perfect destruction of evil; of both which we have the pledge in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and in his exaltation to the right hand of God, thence to come at the

end of the world to judge the quick and the dead. So that if we would fully satisfy the highest sense of all prophecy, if we would give it its entire fulfilment, we must seek for it necessarily in Him in whom all the promises of God, as St. Paul says, are found to be true; who being alone perfectly righteous, has alone shown to us, by his resurrection from the dead, that good shall perfectly triumph, and the restoration of the seed of the woman shall be complete.

This of course might furnish us with matter to engage not minutes only, but hours and days. I can but notice now, in conclusion, how it illustrates the great stress always laid by the Apostles upon the fact of Christ's resurrection. That fact was the real fulfilment of all prophecy, the great assurance of all hope; the great proof that evil should not triumph, that the serpent's head should be bruised indeed. Other events, lesser mercies, earthly deliverances, are in part the subject of prophecy, and in part its fulfilment. But its language, the language of hope in God, naturally goes beyond these; it assumes a tone of unmixed confidence, it speaks of such an over measure of good, as far surpasses man's virtue on the one hand, or his earthly prosperity on the other. And therefore, it seeks elsewhere its real fulfilment: it tarries not on those lower heights which would receive it on its first ascent from the valley, but ascends and

aspires continually to the mountain of God, to rest only at his right hand, when it has found Him who is there for ever exalted, Jesus Christ, both God and man.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
February 22nd, 1835.
(Sexagesima Sunday.)

SERMON III.

MOUNT SINAI AND MOUNT SION.

EXODUS iii. 12.

This shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

IN the chapter from which these words are taken, we have the first beginning of what may be called the earthly redemption of God's Israel, as in the accounts of our Lord's birth, in the first chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, we have the beginning of the spiritual redemption of Israel. It is very desirable to bear in mind, wherever it is possible, in reading the Old Testament, the connexion of what we there read with ourselves and our own condition, lest we should regard it merely as so much past history, and separate it too much from any direct interest of our own. Now, the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt was not merely a great deliverance for a particular people; here, as

in so many other instances, the Israelites were the ministers of good to us. For if we consider how they had lived in Egypt, and for how long a time, that they must have generally lost all remembrance of their fathers, the patriarchs, and have greatly forgotten the God of their fathers, we shall see how hardly the knowledge of God could have been preserved amongst men, had not the Israelites been separated from amongst the Egyptians, and settled by themselves in a land of their own. And had it not been for the knowledge of God possessed by the Israelites, and spread through them, and through their Scriptures, amongst the adjoining nations, it does not appear how there could have been any soil prepared to receive the seed of fuller truth, when the Gospel itself was in its due season revealed to mankind.

This being considered, will give us a much deeper interest in that particular part of the Scripture history which will be read for the next two Sundays, as well as to-day. And in taking the several passages of the lesson for this morning, the words of the text seemed to me to contain much that was deserving of notice. For, first, the words may not be at first clear to every one, and so may require to be explained; and then, when we have explained them, they lead us to consider one of the most striking parts of God's dealings with the Israelites; and thence, as his dealings with the Israelites, in

the old covenant, have almost always some analogy or resemblance to his dealings with us under the new covenant, they lead us also to consider a very striking part of the dispensation of the Gospel.

First, then, let us try to explain the words, "This shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." How was the mere fact, that Moses should bring the people to worship God on that mountain, to be a token to him that God had sent him? because, if he led them thither in obedience to God's command, it could not be properly a token to him that that command was from God, but rather a proof to the people that he believed it to be so. But in the words, "ye shall serve God upon this mountain," there is more meant than that the Israelites should come there to offer their sacrifices. The meaning is, that God would, as it were, meet them on that mountain; that when they worshippéd him there, He would be found by them; that his presence would be shown to them so manifestly, that Moses and all the people should know that He whom they worshipped, and He by whom they had been delivered out of Egypt, and who had called Moses from tending sheep to be the leader of his people, was indeed the Lord of heaven and earth, the one Eternal God.

Mount Sinai, then, was to afford the great sign of the divine mission of Moses; there God would

be revealed to him, and show that He was God indeed. Wherefore He came down with all the signs and seals of His presence, with His power, and His wisdom, and His goodness. He came with His power, with blackness and clouds, and thick darkness; with fire, and the sound of a trumpet, and with a mighty voice. Hear and think upon the solemnity of that day on Mount Sinai, when God gave the signs of his power:—"Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." These were the signs of power; and thus we find Moses appealing to them as such, when he asks the people, "Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?"

But there were also given the signs of God's wisdom and goodness: there was given on that same Mount Sinai, that law of which St. Paul bore true witness, when he described it as holy, just, and good. There were given all those statutes and ordinances which met so many of the worst evils of society, evils which it has been found so hard to deal with,—statutes which, while they made allowance in some respects for the hardness of the people's hearts, for their imperfect notions of right and wrong, yet had

a tendency gradually to raise those notions, and so to prepare them for the yet more perfect law that was to be revealed hereafter. So that Moses could appeal to the signs of God's wisdom and holiness shown on Mount Sinai, no less than to the signs of his power. "What nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"

By what was to happen on Mount Sinai, a proof was to be given that Moses had been sent by God to deliver Israel. But this proof was not after the same manner to be given again to a future Redeemer. For the people had said, "Let us not hear again the voice of the Lord our God, neither let us see this great fire any more, that we die not. And the Lord said, They have well spoken that which they have spoken." Therefore he said unto Moses, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." The next redemption given, the next law delivered, were thus not to have exactly the same sign as that which had accompanied the redemption and the law ministered by Moses.

Yet, as God had said to Moses, "This shall be a token unto thee: When thou hast brought the people out of Egypt, thou shalt serve God upon this mountain;" so was the worshipping of God on His holy mountain to be a token, no less, that Jesus

Christ, the perfect Redeemer and Lawgiver, had come from God also. And so the Apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, compares Mount Sion with Mount Sinai, even while he is contrasting them. For there, too, should be seen all the signs of God, His power, and His wisdom, and His love; only His power itself was to show itself in works of love and not of terror. His power was shown in the great company of the worshippers, that out of every land men were turned unto Him, and His word beginning at Jerusalem, had triumphed even to the ends of the earth. His power was shown in the person of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; for he was dead, and is alive for evermore; and having so overcome death, He hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Further, His power was shown also in the gifts of his Holy Spirit; His signs and wonders, done by the Apostles, and by those on whom the Apostles laid their hands; His better and more enduring signs and wonders, done, not by the Apostles only, and by the men of one generation, but by thousands in a thousand generations; the signs of the renewed heart and the converted will; the signs of peace, and hope, and joy.

And as there were the signs of God's power on Mount Sion as well as on Mount Sinai, though of a different kind, so also were there the signs of His wisdom and of His goodness, differing from those

shown on Mount Sinai, not in kind, but in degree. There were the wisdom and the goodness of Christ's law of liberty, fitted for the highest perfection to which men could possibly ascend, and admitting of nothing wiser or better. These signs we have; these are the signs enjoyed by the Church of God in her worship on God's holy mountain,—a sure token that He, by whom she was redeemed and brought to this holy mountain, was her true prophet, her true deliverer; that her redemption from first to last was the work of God alone.

So, then, we are on God's holy mountain, and He is with us. The first Israel abode for a certain time before Mount Sinai; but then they went on their way through the wilderness. But we are worshipping, if it be not our own fault, on the mountain of God always. The signs of His presence are ever before us, that we may see and believe. But as Israel feared the thunder and the fire, so we despise the milder signs that are offered to us; we see, and do not believe. It is so, and it is our sin and our shame that it is so. But is not our sin yet greater, if we not only despise the signs of God, but are actually engaged in obscuring or defacing them? if we not only do iniquity ourselves, but offend others; that is, cause others, through our fault, to fall the more readily?

I am not speaking now of what I have so often spoken of, the difficulties which we throw in the way

of others,—I do not say deliberately, but at any rate wilfully,—when by laughing, or persuading, or by any other influence, we actually do turn our neighbour away from good to bad. I am not speaking of this, but of a fault common to us all, at every age and in all circumstances. We are too apt to lessen, to obscure, to deface for each other the signs of God's presence amongst us; we live with one another nominally in the bonds of God's holy Church, rather to hinder each other in our Christian course than to forward.

For manifestly do we hinder our brethren rather than help them, by every mark of unbelief and of evil that we show in our own hearts and lives; we so far deface the signs of God's presence, we lessen the assurance that we are on His holy mountain. Our faith is weak; who does not know and feel that it is so? God is not visible to us, nor can we see beyond the grave; and therefore there is a weakness of faith in each of us naturally, and through the effect of our corruption, which wants all the strength which it can derive from others; which is chilled yet more, when it can perceive but too plainly in them the marks of the same weakness.

To meet this evil, this unbelief arising from our natural corruption, to give to each of us the help which we singly need, the Church of Christ was instituted. For if, as we are brethren, we rendered to each other a brotherly aid, how great would be the

confidence which we should catch from that visibly reflected in the hearts and lives of all around us; how real would God's presence be, how real His blessings and his promises, if all about us were living evidences to them, either in assured hope or in actual possession.

And if the whole Church with accordant utterance were to give out in action this most holy creed, this living confession of a true faith, where would unbelief be able yet to linger? What heart would be buried in such thick darkness as that such multiplied rays of God's Spirit should not disperse the gloom?

This were, indeed, a true creed, a holy unity; this would be to fulfil the purposes for which we were bound together in union. If we do not possess these, vain, and worse than vain, is any care after other creeds and another unity. All may speak the same words, but they will be words and no more: the faith will be in the tongue, and not in the heart; we shall not really help each other, but hinder.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
March 20th, 1836.
(Fifth Sunday in Lent.)

SERMON IV.

WARS OF THE ISRAELITES.

DEUTERONOMY vii. 2—4.

Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods.

THERE is, perhaps, no point on which the weakness of human nature is more clearly shown, than in the difficulty of treading the right path between persecution on the one hand, and indifference to evil on the other. For although we are, it may be, disposed according to our several tempers more to one of these faults than to the other; yet I fear it is true also that none of us are free from the danger of falling into them both. Not certainly that this can happen at the same time, and towards the same persons; but if we have to-day been too violent

against the persons of evil men whom we do not like, this is no security against our being to-morrow much too forbearing towards the practices of evil men whom we do like; because we are all apt to respect persons in our judgment and in our feelings; sometimes to be too severe, and sometimes too indulgent, not according to justice, but according to our own likings and dislikings.

Nor is it respect of persons only which thus leads us astray, but also our own particular sympathy with, or disgust at, particular faults and particular characters. Even in one whom we may like on the whole, there may be faults which we may visit too hardly, because they are exactly such as we feel no temptation to commit. And again, in one whom we dislike on the whole, there may for the same reason be faults which we tolerate too easily, because they are like our own.

There is yet a third cause, and that a very common one, which corrupts our judgment. We may sympathize with such and such faults generally, because we are ourselves inclined to them; but if they happen to be committed against us, and we feel the bad effects of them, then we are apt to judge them in that particular case too harshly. Or again, we may rather dislike a fault in general, but when it is committed on our own side, and to advance our own interests, then in that particular case we are tempted to excuse it too readily.

There are these dangers besetting us on the right hand and on the left, as to our treatment of other men's faults. And if we read the Scriptures we shall find, as might be expected, very strong language against the error on either side. A great deal is said against violence, wrath, uncharitableness, harsh judgment of others, and attempting or pretending to work God's service by our own bad passions; and a great deal is also said against tolerating sin, against defiling ourselves with evil doers, against preferring our earthly friendships to the will and service of God.

Of these latter commands, the words of the text, and other such passages relating to the conduct to be pursued by the Israelites towards the nations of Canaan, furnish us with most remarkable instances. We see how strong and positive the language is: "Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy to them:" and the reason is given, "For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods." It is better that the wicked should be destroyed a hundred times over, yea, destroyed with everlasting destruction, than that they should tempt those who are as yet innocent to join their company. And if we are inclined to think that God dealt hardly with the people of Canaan in commanding them to be so utterly destroyed, let us but think what might have been our fate, and the fate of every other nation under

heaven at this hour, had the sword of the Israelites done its work more sparingly. Even as it was, the small portions of the Canaanites who were left, and the nations around them, so tempted the Israelites by their idolatrous practices, that we read continually of the whole people of God turning away from his service. But had the heathen lived in the land in equal numbers, and still more, had they intermarried largely with the Israelites, how was it possible, humanly speaking, that any sparks of the light of God's truth should have survived to the coming of Christ? Would not the Israelites have lost all their peculiar character, and if they had retained the name of Jehovah as of their national God, would they not have formed as unworthy notions of his attributes, and worshipped him with a worship as abominable as that which the Moabites paid to Chemosh, or the Philistines to Dagon? So had Abraham been called from out his native country in vain; and Israel had in vain been brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and fed with the bread of heaven in the wilderness; the witness to God's truth would have perished; the whole earth would have been sunk in darkness; and if Messiah had come, he would not have found one single ear prepared to listen to his doctrine, nor one single heart that longed in secret for the kingdom of God.

But this was not to be, and therefore the nations of Canaan were to be cut off utterly. The Israelites'

sword, in its bloodiest executions, wrought a work of mercy for all the countries of the earth to the very end of the world. They seem of small importance to us now, those perpetual contests with the Canaanites, and the Midianites, and the Ammonites, and the Philistines, with which the Books of Joshua and Judges and Samuel are almost filled. We may half wonder that God should have interfered in such quarrels, or have changed the order of nature in order to give one of the nations of Palestine the victory over another. But in these contests, on the fate of one of these nations of Palestine, the happiness of the human race depended. The Israelites fought not for themselves only, but for us. Whatever were the faults of Jephthah or of Samson, never yet were any men engaged in a cause more important to the whole world's welfare. Their constant warfare kept Israel essentially distinct from the tribes around them; their own law became the dearer to them, because they found such unceasing enemies amongst those who hated it. The uncircumcised, who kept not the covenant of God, were for ever ranged in battle against those who did keep it. It might follow that the Israelites should thus be accounted the enemies of all mankind, it might be that they were tempted by their very distinctness to despise other nations; still they did God's work; still they preserved unhurt the seed of eternal life, and were the ministers of blessing

to all other nations, even though they themselves failed to enjoy it.

But still these commands, so forcible, so fearful, —to spare none—to destroy the wicked utterly— to show no mercy,—are these commands addressed to us now? or what is it which the Lord bids *us* do in these words addressed to his servant Moses? Certainly he does not bid us to shed blood, not to destroy the wicked, not to put on any hardness of heart which might shut out the charity of Christ's perfect law. We must not be cruel, we must do nothing against the law of justice and humanity, even to remove the evil from out of the land. And to do as the Israelites did would be to our feelings, though it was not to theirs, cruelty and injustice. But there is another part of the text which does apply to us now in the letter, thereby teaching us how to apply the whole to ourselves in the spirit. "Be ye not unequally yoked together in marriage with unbelievers," is the command of God through the Apostle Paul to Christians, no less than of God through Moses to the Israelites. "For what concord," he goes on to say, "hath Christ with Belial? or what communion hath light with darkness?" It is, indeed, something shocking to enter into so near and dear a connexion as marriage, with those who are not the servants of God. It is fearful to think of giving birth to children, whose eternal life may be forfeited through the example and influence of

him or of her, through whom their earthly life was given. But though this be the worst and most dreadful case, still it is not the only one. St. Paul does not only speak against marriage with the unbelievers; he speaks also no less strongly against holding friendly intercourse with those who call themselves Christ's, yet in their lives deny him. "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat; but put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Here, again, it is true, that the altered state of things around us has hindered these words also from applying to us in the letter. The church having no power in our days to shut out unworthy members from its society, individuals cannot take such a power upon themselves; and therefore we do in the world very commonly keep company, as far as the common civilities of life go, with those whose lives we know to be unchristian. Yet here, too, the spirit of the command applies to us, when we cannot fulfil it in the letter. We need not actually refuse to eat with those whose lives are evil; but woe to us if we do not shrink from any closer intimacy with them; if their society, when we must partake of it, be not painfully endured by us, rather than enjoyed. We may put away from among ourselves that wicked person; put him away, that is,

from our confidence, put him away from our esteem, put him altogether away from our sympathy. We are on services wholly different; our masters are God and mammon; and we cannot be united closely with those to whom our dearest hopes are their worst fears, and to whom that resurrection which, to the true servant of Christ, will be his perfect consummation of bliss, will be but the first dawning of an eternity of shame and misery.

But whilst, above all other things, I would desire for every one of us an intense abhorrence of evil, yet we must not forget how fatally we may deceive ourselves by hating evil for our own sake, and not for God's. Here, indeed, we had need to examine ourselves carefully, lest we do but serve our own passions under the name of God. And if you ask what this means, I will explain it more clearly. I call it serving our own passions under the name of God, if we shrink from those kinds of evil only which we ourselves happen to dislike, while we do not shrink from all that God abhors. It is very easy for one who is of a generous nature to keep away from those who are mean and niggardly; for one of a high and active understanding to despise the grossness and lowness which accompany ignorance and folly. But if the generous person, while he avoids the company of the mean and low-spirited, has no such objection to the sensual or the extravagant; if the strong understanding, while it revolts

from the low vices of ignorance, has no distaste for those who unite with great abilities and knowledge an indifference for the service of God, then we are but pleasing ourselves in what we like, and in what we dislike; we are not trying to please God. But his is a true and sincere love of God, who, passing by all else in a character, whether it be of good or of evil, merely asks whether there be contained in it the one thing needful. Infinite, indeed, are our differences of taste and of knowledge. Rudeness and coarseness may pain us, ignorance may disgust us; but let us strive to find out Christ's mark, and, wherever found, to love it; to think that as our neighbour has his imperfections, so have we ours; that these may be as painful to him as his to us; but that both his and ours have been washed away in the sight of God in the same most precious blood, and that what God will not condemn in his judgment, we ought to forgive in ours. It is indeed a grievous thing to know and to feel how many good men are divided from one another by trifling differences, not of opinion only, but of temper, of taste, and of manner. It is a fault which besets us all; one of the last, perhaps, which our nature, ripening into Christ's full resemblance, can cast away. But as our faith becomes stronger, as Christ becomes more and more to us our all in all, as eternity seems more real and more enduring, and as earth and earthly things dwindle into their proper proportions,

then our eye fixes upon the one pearl of great price which is to be discerned on our neighbour's breast; and although it be not set off by the other parts of his dress, nay, though its lustre be somewhat obscured by their poverty, still it is the seal of Christ's Spirit, the pledge that he who wears it shall be our companion for ever, that our ears shall drink in together, our voices eternally join in the same hymns of praise, our eyes and hearts and perfected spirits for ever repose in the incomprehensible communion of the same God and Saviour. And not less grievous is it, that for the love of any perishable thing we should be drawn closely to him who loves not Christ. Our tastes may be the same, our knowledge kindred, our faculties alike vigorous, our prevailing feelings towards earthly things may all beat in harmony. But all these things must be destroyed; and where is the pledge that we shall with equal joy awake to the call of his trump, who shall bid the dead arise? Be that our only bond of friendship, the only communion which our souls shall thoroughly acknowledge. All else is but the slight acquaintance formed on a journey, with one who is to part from us at the next town to meet us no more. Whoso loves Christ, may we love him to the death, in spite of unkindness, in spite of all differences of earthly tastes and opinions; for the hour will come when all these things shall pass away. Whoso loves not Christ, and Christ's Spirit, may

our hearts shrink from him evermore, in spite of all sympathy in our pursuits of worldly things; for our paths are wide asunder as the most infinite distances. We are of the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and he is of the children of the wicked one.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
May 5th, 1833.

SERMON V.

SUFFERINGS OF THE ISRAELITES.

DEUTERONOMY xxviii. 67.

In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

THESE words are taken from the chapter which was read as the first lesson for the morning service on Wednesday last. It was not chosen on purpose, for there are no proper lessons for Ash Wednesday; but it is the regular lesson in the calendar for the seventh day of March; and as Ash Wednesday happened to fall on that day, so this chapter was read accordingly. Yet, had it been intentionally fixed upon, it could not have suited the service better. In particular, it well agrees with the commination service, which warns us against falling under the wrath of God for our many and various sins. This chapter

is, indeed, an awful commination: it threatens the Israelites with every conceivable evil, if they departed from serving the Lord their God; it leaves them absolutely without hope, unless they turned with all their hearts, and repented them of their disobedience.

It is impossible, I think, to read or to hear this chapter, without being deeply struck by it. It speaks to the Israelites, before they were yet entered into the land of Canaan, to forewarn them lest they should be cast out of it. Amidst all the signs and wonders which God had been shewing in their behalf, they were taught to look for a time when neither miracle nor prophet would be vouchsafed to them, when God would be as closely hidden from them, as his power was now manifestly revealed to do them good. As if, too, warning were far more required than encouragement, we find that the blessings promised for obedience bear a small proportion in point of length to the curses denounced against disobedience. So the Israelites entered Canaan, and took the lands of the heathen into possession, not without much to sober their pride, and to make them not high-minded, but fear. As when Solomon built his temple, and when Hezekiah showed all its treasures to the messengers of the king of Babylon, there was ever a warning voice mingling with the sounds of pride and self-congratulation, there was always something to check

the fulness of the joy, that so it might be the safer.

The severe judgments spoken of in this chapter, declare also another great law of God's providence, that "to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." It was because the Israelites were God's redeemed people, because he had borne them on eagle's wings, and brought them to himself; because he had made known to them his will, and promised them the possession of a goodly land, flowing with milk and honey: it was for these very reasons that their punishment was to be so severe, if they at last abused all the mercies which had been shown to them. For theirs was to be no sudden destruction, to come upon them and sweep them away for ever: it was a long and lingering misery, to endure for many generations; like the bush which burned, but was not consumed. We know that Ammon, and Amalek, and Moab, that Assyria and Babylon, have long since utterly perished; the three former, indeed, so long ago, that profane history does not notice them; its beginnings are later than their end. But Israel still exists as a nation, however scattered and degraded: they have gone through for ages a long train of oppressions, visited on them merely because they were Jews. Nay, even yet the end is not: however much their condition is bettered, still, taking them the world through, they have even now much to bear; their

hope is still deferred, and as far as their national prospects are concerned, the morning dawns on them with no comfort, the evening descends upon them and brings no rest.

This is one remarkable part in their history; and there is another which I think deserves notice. It is declared in this twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, that amongst the other evils which the Israelites should suffer for disobedience, they should endure so long a siege from their enemies, as to suffer the worst extremities of famine. "The tender and delicate woman among you that would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil towards the husband of her bosom, and towards her son, and towards her daughter." Now it is remarkable that this has, in fact, befallen them twice over. Of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, we have indeed no particulars given; it is only said, in general terms, that after the city had been besieged for eighteen months, the famine prevailed in it, and there was no bread for the people of the land; so that the king and all the fighting men endeavoured to escape out of the town, as the only resource left them. But of the second siege, by Titus and the Romans, we have the full particulars from Josephus, a Jew, who lived at the time, and had the best authority for the facts which he relates. And he mentions it as a horror unheard of amongst Greeks

or barbarians, that a mother, named Mary, the daughter of Eleazar, from the country beyond Jordan, was known to have killed her own child for her food, and to have publicly confessed what she had done. Now we know that the horrors of war have been felt by many nations; but such an extremity of suffering occurring twice in the course of its history, and under circumstances so similar, as in the two sieges of Jerusalem, there is hardly another nation, so far as I am aware, that has experienced.

Indeed, the history of the calamities of the last siege of Jerusalem, as they are given by Josephus, are well worthy of our attentive consideration. Not that in general there is any good to be gained by reading stories of horror; but in this case the value of the lesson overpays its painfulness: it is a full comment on our Lord's words, when he turned to the women who were weeping as he was bearing his cross to Mount Calvary, and bade them "not to weep for him, but to weep for themselves and for their children." It explains why they should indeed, in those days, say to the mountains, "fall on us," and to the hills, "cover us;" how, unless those days had been shortened, there could have been indeed no flesh saved. Eleven hundred thousand Jews perished in the course of the siege, by the sword, by pestilence, or by famine. I do not believe that the history of the world contains any record of such a destruction, within so short a time, and

within the walls of a single city. A number of persons equal to the population of London, in the largest sense of the term, and taking in many of the most populous parishes of the neighbourhood, was crowded together within limits far narrower than those of London, and all perished. In fact, the population crowded together in Jerusalem was much greater than this; for besides these eleven hundred thousand, ninety-seven thousand were taken prisoners; and these were reserved, not for the light sufferings commonly undergone by prisoners of war in our days, but for the horrors of the slave-market, and for a life of perpetual bondage.

I said that this dreadful story was well worth our studying; and it is so for this reason. These miseries, greater than any which history mentions, fell upon God's Church, upon His chosen people, His own redeemed; the people with whom He was in covenant, to whom He had revealed His name, while all the rest of the world lay in darkness. It was not upon Amelek, nor upon Babylon, that this extremity of judgment fell, but upon Jerusalem. And what is Amalek now, what is Babylon, and above all, what is Jerusalem? Whatever be the answer given to the two first questions, there can be no doubt as to the last. "We are the circumcision," says St. Paul, when writing to the Greek Christians of Philippi; that is, we Christians, and we alone, are now the true Israel of Scripture, the Israel of

God, the seed of Abraham. It is even so, and as we have succeeded to the privileges of Israel, we should do well also to remember the fate of Israel. But I am not speaking of ourselves as a nation; it is not as Englishmen, but as Christians, that we are the Israel of God; and it is not as Englishmen, that is, as citizens of an earthly country, but as Christians, citizens of a kingdom not of this world, a country incorruptible and eternal, that it concerns us to dread the judgments of Israel. God has other and far worse ministers of vengeance than the sword, or the famine, or the pestilence. These can but kill the body, and Christ has especially charged us not to fear those evils which can do us no greater harm than this. But we each of us individually, not in the persons of our children, not as the mere abstract idea which we call a nation,—we all of us here assembled, in our bodies and our own souls, have to fear an undying judgment. To us, each of us, belongs in the strictest sense the warning of the text. For us, each of us,—if we do fail of the grace of God, if Christ has died for us in vain, if being called by His name, we are not walking in His spirit,—there is reserved a misery of which indeed the words of the text are no more than a feeble picture. There is a state, in which they who are condemned to it, shall for ever say in the morning, Would God it were even; and at even, Would God it were morning! for the fear of their heart where-

with they shall fear, and the sight of their eyes which they shall see. There is a state in which the tender and delicate woman shall hate those whom once she most loved; in which they who lived together here in a friendship wherein God was no party, will have their eyes evil against one another for ever. For when selfishness has wrought its perfect work, and the soul is utterly lost, there love is perished for ever; and the intercourse between such persons can be only one of mutual reproaches, and suspicion, and hatred. An eternal restlessness, and eternal evil passions, mark the everlasting portion of the enemies of God; just as an eternal rest, and a never ending life of love and peace, are reserved for those who remain to the end His true children. It is true that we see not this state of misery, and may therefore, if we choose, disbelieve it. And so did the Israelites disbelieve their threatened misery; they said that the pestilence should not come unto them, neither should they see sword nor famine; and if refusing to believe that so great a misery as did actually overtake them should ever be their portion, they had, no less than we, the excuse that experience had never hitherto recorded a fate so dreadful. But what no former experience had ever witnessed, did come to pass in that day of God's earthly vengeance; and no less shall all former experience, and even all our conceptions of evil, be outdone in the great day of God's eternal vengeance.

That earthly visitation on Jerusalem was well called the "coming of the Lord." It was His earthly judgment for the final breach of His earthly covenant. Jerusalem after the flesh had had her privileges and her day of trial, and her time being come to its end, she underwent her final sentence. And we, too, citizens of the spiritual Jerusalem, we have our privileges, we have our day of trial, we too have our covenant, not with earthly blessings promised, and no more than an earthly forfeiture incurred; but with a higher stake on both sides, an everlasting crown, or everlasting misery. For this second covenant the judgment is coming—when, we know not; but this we know, that to each one of us the day of trial will be over soon, and then we shall be kept to wait for the judgment, with no further power to alter it. The judgment is coming not less surely, than that whose fulfilment is before our eyes, but infinitely more important when it does come.

Rugby Chapel,
March 11*th*, 1832.

SERMON VI.

BALAAM.

Numbers xxii. 20—22.

And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them: but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. And God's anger was kindled because he went.

Such is described to have been the way in which God dealt with the prophet Balaam, and the following words from the fourteenth chapter of Ezekiel will show that it is the way in which He will deal with all men.

"Then came certain of the elders of Israel before me, and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore

speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols."

The same thing is confirmed in the New Testament, in these words of the Apostle Paul, taken out of the second chapter of his second epistle to the Thessalonians: "God shall send them," that is, those who perish, "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be condemned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

All these passages of Scripture agree in declaring, that if we pray to God with a dishonest heart, He will not enlighten our consciences at all, nor show us what we ought to do; but rather will cause us to take wrong for right, and right for wrong, till we become utterly blinded and darkened, and are sunk without hope in evil. I have read three passages out of the Bible to this effect, but I might have read many more, for the same doctrine is repeated over and over again in a great many places, and in a great variety of ways, as if it were of the greatest consequence to us to remember it, and to

act upon it. It was not put into the Bible merely to frighten us, or to try our submission by teaching what would give offence to many; much less was it put in to drive any to despair. It was written, as every thing else was which we find in the Scripture, for our good; that we might hear indeed and fear, and do no more presumptuously. I do not say, indeed, that every body can derive good from it; there may be some who are living witnesses of its truth, on whom the strong delusion is working, whom God may have answered already according to their idols, and whose sin may be the sin unto death, because they may be so lost in evil, that they can find no place for repentance. But such is not the case with men in general; and therefore the bulk of a common congregation, more especially of such a congregation as this, may be well called upon to profit by these assurances of God, that He will blind the eyes, and harden the hearts of those who do not come to Him in sincerity.

Balaam the prophet presents to us a character which is in several points very remarkable. In the first place, he had the gifts of the Holy Spirit without the graces; he was favoured with the knowledge of God's will, and with the power of foretelling future events, while his heart was far from God, and while in his dealings he showed himself the servant of sin. What is said of Balaam, may be and often has been true of others; we have only to

put in the place of the gift of prophecy any one of what we call God's natural gifts, or any thing that is merely a power, and we see the same thing frequently. Power, whether natural or acquired, whether of mind or of outward condition, is no warrant for our finding goodness united with it. Yet it is still power, and oftentimes it does God's work, and ministers greatly to the good of others, although it is not blessed to the eternal salvation of him who possesses it. There is, indeed, a kind and a degree of wickedness which absolutely impairs the power; the worst of men are not and cannot be the wisest. And so, on the other hand, there is a degree of goodness which actually in some respects confers power; which enables an understanding not naturally strong to arrive at truth in matters of the greatest moment. But it is a mistake to suppose, either that those whose notions are the truest on points even of Christian truth should be men of the holiest lives, or that men of the holiest lives should see the truth most clearly on all points connected with Christianity. God gives His gifts or powers to men who sometimes possess but a small portion of the graces of His spirit; His grace is often to be seen in a very high measure, where His gifts have been bestowed scantily.

We understand this more easily with regard to the mere powers of the understanding; we can well conceive that he who understood all mysteries

and all knowledge, might yet be without charity. But the Apostle carries it further, and supposes that a man might give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet be without charity. In other words, a man may lead a very useful life, and yet not be an heir of Christ's salvation. The powers of a man's understanding may be combined with so much activity, he may be able to do such various good, and feel such pleasure in the doing of it, as to be really of the greatest service to his fellow-creatures. And yet there may be wanting in him that one principle which alone is Christian virtue or holiness, the desire to do Christ's will. Without this, moral usefulness is like intellectual power; both may minister largely to the good of others; both will perish in the using, and leave us with nothing that bespeaks our fitness for life eternal. And since the more wonderful gifts of the Holy Spirit have not been commonly given, there is a story told of one of the ablest and most learned writers who have lived since the Reformation, of a man who wrote a book in defence of Christianity, who studied the Scriptures deeply, and wrote long and mostly very good notes upon every part of them; it is told, I say, of this very man, that when he was on his death-bed, he exclaimed in bitter regret, "Alas! I have wasted my life in taking a great deal of trouble to do what is a mere nothing." He calls his books, which he had written about the Bible, by no better

name that a mere nothing. And why? Because he thought, that while he was writing or reading them, he was not labouring heartily for the glory of God, but for his own; because he thought that he had not been careful enough, to govern his own heart while he was employed about them; that he had not, like St. Paul, laboured to bring his body into subjection, lest that by any means when he had preached to others, he should himself be a cast-away. At the present day, indeed, we are willing enough to allow that religious employments do not of necessity improve the heart; that a man may know much divinity, and may preach well and eloquently, and yet may not be a true servant of Christ. Our mistake now is of a different kind; and we attach too high a value to what is called a useful life, to the being engaged in honest labour, whether of body or of mind, for the support of ourselves or of our families. I would, indeed, that we all led an useful life,—if I may so alter the words of the Apostle,—but rather that we led an holy one; for though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though we had the gift of prophecy like Balaam, or though we gave all our goods to feed the poor, and marked every day of our lives with some useful action, yet all this would profit us nothing, unless we had charity or love, the love of God first, and of man for Christ's sake. In Balaam's time, to be a prophet was accounted a

certain sign of God's favour; and this opinion the Scripture takes pains to contradict, by showing us one who was a prophet, and whose life, notwithstanding, was disobedient to God, while his death was with the wicked. In our time, to be useful in our generation, and to be worthy members of society, are the things which most draw the regard of the people; and men should be reminded therefore, that these are not certainly the signs of a regenerate man, unless they are built upon those Christian principles which are given and strengthened in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

Balaam, it seems, was living in his own country when he received a message from Balak, the king of Moab, requesting him to come to him and curse the children of Israel. Knowing that Balaam was a prophet, he could not tell how great was his power; but he supposed that his blessings and his curses would be confirmed by God; and that therefore, if he could gain him over to his side, he would be a very useful friend to him against the Israelites. He sent, therefore, some of the elders of Moab to Balaam, with the rewards of divination in their hand: in other words, he tried to bribe Balaam to say what he wanted; he wished to bribe him by money to speak in the name of God. Now we are told that when Naaman, the Syrian, applied to the prophet Elisha, not to curse any one in the name of the Lord, but merely to cure him of his leprosy;

and when he had been healed, and wished to offer some present in return for the great service he had received, that Elisha would take nothing of him at all: he did not like to make a gain of those wonderful gifts which God had given him for His own glory and the good of man. But Balaam had no such scruples; he was willing to sell his gift of prophecy to any one that would buy it; he did not ask whether it was according to the will of God that he should curse Israel or no, but whether he should get any thing by it or no. Being of such a temper, he was not likely to consider very carefully how he might most please God; but was anxious to go with the men whom Balak had sent, when God told him that he should not go with them, nor curse the people, for they were blessed. This stopped him for a time; but Balak would not give up his purpose so easily. He sent other messengers of higher rank than before, promising him riches and honours in abundance, if he would but come to him. Balaam was again shaken; he wished greatly to gain the rewards that Balak had promised him, but he wished also to gain them without directly disobeying God. He hoped, it seems, to compound the matter: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more." So much he yielded to his sense of duty; but then the love of gain came in, and

tempted him to add, "Tarry ye here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say to me more." He wanted to ask counsel of God, in the way that we ask it sometimes of our worldly friends; we let them see plainly what advice we wish them to give us; and if they have first answered us honestly according to the truth, we try to win from them some softening of their first opinion, something that may encourage us to do that which we are bent upon doing. But woe to him who deals thus deceitfully with God and with his conscience! Balaam gained exactly the very answer that he desired; God answered him according to his idols. He had said that he could not say any thing beyond what God should tell him; but still he might perhaps be allowed to go with the men. And even so was the answer, "If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." God had spoken to him after his own heart, and Balaam was then fully satisfied; he did not ask the messengers to tarry yet another night, that he might know what the Lord would say to him more; he rose up in the morning and went with the princes of Moab.

We are expressly told that the persons to whom God sends strong delusion that they should believe a lie, are those who love not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness; whereas on the other

hand our Lord assures us, that if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or no. There is no doubt that the fact is so; that men of honest and fair minds have a very clear and sound judgment in all points of practice, whilst insincere men, endowed perhaps with much higher abilities by nature, become absolutely blinded and weak, when they come to determine questions of duty. Nor is it to be doubted that this law of God's providence is a just and wise one; inasmuch as it enables persons of inferior understandings to correct their deficiencies by the goodness of their hearts, while it deprives the wicked man of the benefit of those talents which he is abusing. It is not without great reason that the Scripture so often recommends purity and singleness of heart, and threatens the double-minded. Few men, comparatively speaking, will make up their minds to do evil at any rate; and the number of those who wish to serve mammon only, is perhaps even smaller than that of those who wish to serve God only. The great mass of mankind are undone by a vain endeavour to serve at once both God and mammon; to their consciences they hold out the quieting language of Balaam, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord to say less or more;" while to their appetites they whisper at the same time, "Tarry ye here awhile, that I may know what

the Lord will say to me more." Then it is that the voice of the Lord, which they pretended to wait for, does indeed lead them to their ruin. For their conscience is God's voice speaking within them; and this, when dishonestly applied to, becomes a false guide, disguising the guilt of our conduct, or encouraging us to hope that the mercy of God will grant it forgiveness. It permits us to do things for which God's anger will surely be kindled; and although we should make answer that we did no more than we believed to be right, yet we shall be reminded that they who killed Christ's servants, thought that they were doing God service; but that this their blindness rather aggravated their sin than lessened it; for it was a proof, as Christ Himself declares, that they had neither known His Father nor Him. Man indeed may not be able to judge of the heart of man, nor can we pretend to say that our neighbour's ignorance in many points is not an innocent ignorance, rather than a blindness sent by God as an earnest of his future condemnation. But, though we may not judge of one another, yet He who judges us all, can see through every corner of our souls, can separate insincerity from truth, and can well perceive the weakness of those excuses, which to human eyes might appear fair and reasonable. "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest, but suffer me first to go and bury my father," was a speech that could have

conveyed no just suspicion to any man that heard it; but He to whom all hearts were open, knowing that the desire to follow Him was a mere pretence, cut down his hypocrisy, with calling on him to "follow Him, and let the dead bury their dead."

Of all things, therefore, that we can impress upon the mind of a man when first entering into life, or at any after period, nothing is more important than the command of our Lord, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" —"Purify your hearts, ye double minded"— "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." How many doubts and difficulties would be saved, if we were to keep stedfastly before our eyes the one grand object of a Christian's life, "to do all to the glory of God." It is the suffering lower motives to come in too much, and too habitually, that leads us into evil; we act from custom, or convenience, or inclination, or to please our friends, or to gain a good character, till we almost forget what should be our first question to ourselves in every thing that we do, "How will God regard this conduct at the day of judgment?" Nor is it true that such a question would condemn all cheerfulness and refreshment of the mind: it would sanction innocent relaxations, but it would teach us to weigh carefully the difference between what is innocent and what is sinful; and whilst it led us to cast away every thing that might offend

our Lord, it would enable us to enjoy with a free and confident pleasure whatever our Lord really permits to us. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," says the Apostle Paul; that is, whatsoever you cannot fully satisfy yourself to be right, that is wrong. But there are many men, like Balaam of old, who rather reverse this rule, and who seem to think that whatever they cannot clearly prove to be wrong, that must be right. To such it should be urged again and again, that God is not to be mocked, that He requires the free service of our hearts; and if we yield it so sullenly, that, instead of shaping our desires to His law, we try to make His law correspond with our desires, He who sees the secrets of all hearts, will find us wanting in the great day of our account. Above all, the example of Balaam should be a warning to all those persons, who flatter themselves that they shall repent and turn to God when they are tired of the wages of unrighteousness. They do but deceive themselves by such a hope; for assuredly they never will repent. God will take away from them the little grace which they had, he will answer them according to their idols, and will encourage them to go on in their evil ways till they have filled up the measure of their wickedness. In the case of Balaam, warnings and mercies were alike useless; and we read that after his adventure with Balak, he tried to put temptations to sin in the way of the

children of Israel, and at last was killed amongst their enemies, the Midianites. So it will be with all those who endeavour like him to play a double part, instead of following their duty bravely and cheerfully. But if we keep ourselves ever in a state of mind like St. Paul's at his conversion, asking humbly, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" we may depend on being guided into all truth by the enlightening of God's Holy Spirit, and on having the path of our duty made clear before us, whilst we ourselves are strengthened against all temptation steadily to walk in it.

SERMON VII.

PHINEHAS.

NUMBERS xxv. 12, 13.

Behold, I give unto Phinehas my covenant of peace: and he shall have it and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

THERE was a time, not many ages ago, when this passage, and the act of Phinehas to which it refers, were read with delight, and held up as models for imitation; when to be zealous even to slaying was accounted one of the virtues which should mark a servant of the Lord. After this temper had had its course, and had been displayed in various acts of cruelty, and of treachery and cruelty combined, there came as usual a reaction. Men saw what crimes had been committed under the name of religious zeal, and from an abuse of the Old Testament; and they began to think religious zeal a very dangerous thing, and the study of the Old Testa-

ment was suffered to go into neglect;—nothing was so much spoken of as the mildness, and forbearance, and tolerance of Christ's gospel. Then, as was natural, devotion became less fervent, and godly fear grew less. If men did not commit crimes from using the word of God amiss, so neither was there that growth in holiness which is the consequence of using it aright. Men felt that little had been forgiven them, and therefore they loved little. Again, therefore, there has come the reaction; again the spirit of zeal is kindling; and again it seems likely that it will be a zeal not according to knowledge; that it will again, as heretofore, dishonour God by the follies and the crimes which it commits in His name.

Yet we must beware of another reaction to the opposite extreme. Abhorring and fleeing from that false and wicked zeal with which fanatics serve their idols, while they profess to be serving God, we must yet earnestly strive not to be ourselves without true zeal. The story of Phinehas, the severer lessons of the Old Testament, are and ever will be needed;—the blessing which God pronounced upon him is no idle, no dead word; it still lives for all those who tread according to the spirit, and not according to the letter, in the steps of Phinehas. For we could not reasonably hold the Old Testament to be a part of God's revelations to men, if the lessons which it contains, and the characters

which it holds up as examples in their relations to God, were not founded upon truth. God is for ever the same, and in our relations to God we, too, are the same as we ever have been. It is earth and our earthly relations which change; and as our outward practice has to do with these, so our actions must be often very different from those praised in the Old Testament; while that principle from which such actions sprung, and which made them praiseworthy, is still good and most important for us, and still must bring forth its practical fruit, although that fruit will be no longer the same as it was in times past. This applies particularly to religious zeal,—a feeling which is brought forward strongly in the Old Testament, as one most needful to be enforced, and most acceptable to God. And it is surely no less needed now, and no less acceptable: God being still, as in old times, hidden from our sight, and we being continually tempted to neglect Him by our own evil nature, and by the very circumstances of our condition on earth; it is quite as much required as ever that our zeal towards Him should be enkindled; it is quite as just that they who are zealous in His service should be regarded as the objects of His love.

If I might be allowed the comparison, many of the lessons of the Old Testament, and the story of Phinehas in particular, resemble, so far as we are concerned now, our Lord's parable of the unjust

steward. There are some who have found that parable difficult, some who have misinterpreted it, and others who from horror of its misinterpretation would, perhaps, have been glad to neglect it altogether. Yet that parable contains a lesson which we greatly need; and though we may make it minister unto sin by misunderstanding it, yet we may not, therefore, pass it by as useless There, as in the story of Phinehas, a principle most valuable is combined with a particular illustration of it, which in the one case, is always to be condemned; in the other is deserving of condemnation now. The forethought of the dishonest steward extorted something like respect from his master, even though shown in acts of dishonesty. The zeal of Phinehas is held up to our admiration, although the manner in which he showed it would be as sinful for us to imitate as the steward's dishonesty. But transplant, so to speak, this forethought, and this zeal to the soil and climate of Christianity, and they lose immediately all the bad qualities, all the harshnesses which in their wild and imperfect state still clung to them. Christian forethought unites the innocence of the dove with the serpent's wisdom; Christian zeal can be no longer shown in acts of violence; its acts are as blameless and loving as its spirit is fervent and self-denying.

We need not, then, shrink from such parts of the Old Testament as the lesson of this evening's

service. We may shrink, indeed, from the form in which that lesson is conveyed; as we may from the details of the steward's dishonesty: historically speaking, I quite allow that the event recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of Numbers, is altogether extremely painful. But then, that which forms its substance, taken as history, is just its mere perishable form, when it is taken as Scripture. The wilderness of Arabia, the foreign manners and language, the licentiousness, the bloody punishment, all that is national and individual, Midian, Israel, Phinehas the priest of the seed of Israel,—we may drop all these from our consideration. There still remains the true and eternal Scriptural lesson. Temptation assailing God's people, and God's people yielding to it; evil example spreading fearlessly, God's servant not only escaping the contagion himself, but coming forward boldly and unhesitatingly to stop it in others; and God's blessing pronounced upon him, because he had stayed his brethren from their sin. What is there here that does not apply to us? and how many are there amongst the great multitude of the lessons of Scripture which we can consider in our own particular case more needful?

The lesson turns particularly on this point, not merely on the keeping of ourselves pure from following evil, but on the making efforts to put it down in others. The one is innocence, but the

other alone is deserving of the name of zeal. And innocence is a great deal more common than zeal. There are a great many persons who stand aloof from evil, whom none accuse of taking pleasure in it, nor yet of joining it; but neither do they take any active part against it. They say, it is not my business to meddle with the conduct of others; they must themselves look to that. This they say, because they have no zeal; because they are not interested either for God's glory or the salvation of their brethren; because they forget their vows in baptism, when they were pledged not only to be Christ's faithful servants, but His soldiers also; to fight manfully under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil; to do their best to spread their Master's kingdom, and not merely to offer Him the worship of their own hearts, caring little if He receives the worship of none besides. Zeal would look upon life differently; it would not rest contented with worshipping alone and in secret; it would desire to see the society in which it is placed worshipping God with one accord; that His name might be glorified, and that His salvation might be enjoyed by all.

And what is true in large societies of men, holds good also in smaller ones. The zeal which leads the missionary to go to the ends of the earth to convert a people sitting in darkness, may be exerted no less usefully, and no less acceptably within the

very camp of the people of God, within that immediate neighbourhood in which we are each placed to live. Zeal may work its proper work without crossing the ocean; without passing the boundaries of our own town or parish; without, as in our case, going beyond our own walls. Here is the camp of God's professed servants, in which temptation is busy, and many are yielding to it. Shall we then be content merely with not being of those who yield to it? Shall we stand aloof, passing by as it were on the other side, while our aid is loudly called for? I am sure that some deceive themselves in this; that the very spirit which they most need is that of zeal; that they are standing almost neutral in the great contest around them, content if they can be but themselves in safety. But this is not the part of Christians; we are members one of another; we make up together Christ's body, we are pledged to one another as well as to Him in our solemn communion. Surely there is utterly a fault in that person who thinks that the conduct of his brethren does not concern him; that all that can be expected of him is to keep himself from evil; that to struggle against it belongs to others.

It does certainly belong to others also, but not to others only. It is not my work only, nor your work only, but it is our work; not that we have all the same part of the work to do, or the same proportion of it; but we are all concerned in it; and all are

neglecting their duty who take no hand in it. We cannot be in a state of salvation ourselves, if we are wholly without zeal for the salvation of others.

But now, supposing that you allow the truth of this in theory, yet, practically, you may ask, how does it apply to us? The path of duty here, must necessarily be difficult to find and to keep: how can we be zealous without violence and without folly? Would that there might be the zeal in the first place; for it would be, according to all human probability, far easier to direct it than to create it. It is a most true proverb, "Where there is a will there is a way." Nor can it be needful to say much to those among you whose regular duty and business it is to put down and prevent evil: where power and authority are given for a particular purpose, there surely cannot be so much difficulty in fulfilling it, there cannot be in this case any thing like stepping out of your own line, even in the narrowest interpretation of the term. So far, then, the zeal may seem all that is wanted; the opportunity, the power, the knowledge how to act, may appear to follow naturally. But yet, no doubt, there are difficulties in this case, as in the case of others; it may not be always clear how you ought to act, nor easy to act, when the path is clear. And how is the path to be made clear or easy? It does not appear possible to give minute rules that shall always make it either the one or the other; but one

thing may be said, that here, more than in most places, the standing aloof from evil, the never encouraging it by deed, by word, or by laughter, would do more than it would do elsewhere towards actually discouraging it; because nowhere are fashion and numbers more apt to be followed than here. And again, zeal may always be shown judiciously, and very effectually, in giving countenance and support to all who show marks of goodness, more especially if they are exposed to any annoyance, either on this very account, or because they are wanting in some popular or amiable qualities. Kindness to such is real zeal; it is like the giving the cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, which shall in no wise lose its reward. For the rest, as I said before, no minute rules can be given to say how far you should go, and where you should not interfere; but remember that the desire to do something must be right, and must be necessary; and that of all the dangers which can beset you, none, I suppose, is less to be dreaded than that you should run into excesses from an over desire to forward the cause of Christ and of God.

Thus, although I feel entirely that no such guide could be furnished beforehand, as should make the path of duty always plain; yet some points may be made out which may serve in no inconsiderable degree as landmarks. First, and above all, we should consider the strong approbation bestowed

by God upon the conduct of Phinehas. We see zeal against sin displayed in the strongest possible manner—in a manner which indeed it would be great sin now to imitate,—but yet praised most highly. Observe, however, that it is zeal against sin, zeal against a clear breach of God's commandments, which is thus commended: it is not zeal against opinions, or in behalf of forms. But zeal against sin, and for goodness, is beyond all doubt so strongly enforced in its principle, that we cannot be living as God's people should live, if we are wholly without it. This is the great point; and next, if we have the zeal, we have some rules also for its exercise. First, that those who have authority given them, are certainly bound to act up to their authority in the discouragement of sin. In this there is no choice left to them; want of zeal in such cases is a clear neglect of duty, or rather, I should say, it is a neglect of our Christian duty, under circumstances where the duty is plain, and the neglect without excuse. Secondly, the very least that Christian zeal can do in every one, is to take care not to encourage evil. We often do encourage it by laughing at it. Such laughter may often be accompanied in our own minds with something almost amounting to contempt: we would on no account do ourselves the thing which we laugh at in others. This is true; but yet the laughter does encourage; because, though laughter

may be sometimes allied to contempt, it is never allied to disgust; no man laughs at that which pains him. To laugh at sin, then, shows certainly that it does not give us pain; that we do not regard it as Christians should do; that is, as the most sad, and serious, and shocking thing in the world; the last thing in the world to be laughed at. Thirdly, Christian zeal must encourage every spark of real goodness and principle; must forgive for its sake many awkwardnesses, many weaknesses; for it is the one pearl of great price which may well ennoble a rough or a mean setting. Let us but see something of a desire to serve God in earnest, and is not the character where this desire exists ennobled far beyond every other? It may not have agreeableness, it may not have cleverness, it may not have vigour; it may and must have many faults clinging about it: for where is he who is free from fault? But it is God's mark, and the seed of life eternal; and they who are God's cannot but love it; and they who love it not, may therefore well fear that they are not and will not be God's.

SERMON VIII.

JAEL.

JUDGES v. 24.

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

THE first question which it would be wise to ask concerning the two chapters which have been fixed on for the lessons from the Old Testament for this day's service, is this—"What is the benefit that we can or should gain from them?" This, indeed, is the question which we should ask ourselves with regard to every lesson read in the church, as a part of our public service; although in many cases it would be answered as soon almost and as easily as it could be asked. For instance, take the second lesson for this morning's service, (Mark ix.,) or almost any other chapter of the Gospels, and it is manifest that as the life of Christ is our great example, and as in the words of Christ were contained all the

treasures of wisdom for the guidance of man's heart and actions, so we can never doubt what good is to be gained from the record of His life, and the report of His words. Or again, in the second lessons for the evening service, which are taken from the Epistles of the Apostles to the different Christian churches, when we hear them declaring the truths relating to Christ, or encouraging their Christian brethren to all holy and virtuous living, we need not doubt what good is to be gained also from these. Or thirdly, when the lessons are taken from the writings of the Prophets, when we read the warnings delivered to the Jews when placed in circumstances so like our own;—when we see good men holding fast by their faith towards God, and believing that it would be well at last with the righteous, although they were often grieved with the actual prosperity of the wicked;—all this is full of most plain instruction to us, who are walking still by faith and not by sight, amidst so much of evil around us and within us. Here in these three cases, when the lessons are taken from the four Gospels, or from the Epistles, or from the Prophets, the benefit to be gained from them is for the most part clear to every one. But with the historical books, except the four Gospels, the case is different. These are an account of men's actions towards God and towards one another, as well as of God's dealings with them. They are an account, there-

fore, of that which is no certain example to us; for the actions of men are sometimes good and sometimes bad; sometimes therefore to be followed and sometimes not. Yet although this applies to all histories of men's proceedings, yet it is the case with some much less than others. For instance, with regard to the Acts of the Apostles, although it is true that neither Peter nor John nor Paul are infallible examples, yet they were men so largely endowed with the graces of the Spirit as well as with the miraculous gifts, that in reading the Acts every one feels that he is reading an account full of direct instruction; there is matter of example for us in almost every page. Again, there are some portions of the Scriptures which contain a record, if I may so speak, of God's acts rather than of man's: such, for instance, as the account of the creation; of the flood; of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; of the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt; and other such passages. Now, as on the one hand these are not recorded for us to do likewise,—for it is not ours to kill or to make alive, to create or to destroy,—so on the other, the dealings of God with His creatures must always be a solemn and improving matter for their thoughts; and although He may neither punish nor deliver now exactly after the same manner as of old, by the flood or the fire, or by making the sea a way for His ransomed to pass over, yet we have full

assurance that He will punish and deliver after a manner far more complete. Thirdly, there is a considerable part of the historical Scriptures which contains the law which God gave to His people Israel. Here again there is little difficulty in the broad divisions of the subject, though there may be much in the details. We know that such chapters as the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth chapters of Deuteronomy, which are the proper lessons for three successive Sundays after Easter, are full of instruction, inasmuch as they relate generally to those great moral points in the relations between God and His people, which are the same in the Christian Israel as in the Israel that was after the flesh. Other chapters again, such as the sixteenth, which is the lesson for Whitsunday, give an account of the Israelitish festivals, or other matters which are clearly ceremonial; but in which there were often certain correspondences or likenesses to the great Christian festivals, or to the truths which they commemorate. And the object in reading such lessons in the church is to draw our attention to these correspondences, and at the same time, while we mark them, to mark also the difference between the old institutions and the new; the contrast between them being often not less useful to study than the resemblance. Fourthly, there are parts of the Scripture, which although they relate the actions of men, yet relate them chiefly as they are dealing

with God's people by His command, such as the greatest part of the lives of Moses, Samuel, and Elijah; and here too the conduct is so much more God's than man's, if I may be allowed so to speak, that where it is not matter of example, it is like the actual dealings of God Himself, matter for serious and devout thought and study. Lastly, that I may not weary or confuse the memory by going into every minute division, there remains either the general history of persons or nations in the whole course of their lives or existence, or such parts of the history of either, as though done by the command or under the sanction of God, are done towards those who are for that time at least in the condition of God's enemies; whether they be strangers naturally to His covenant, or, as in the case of idolaters amongst the Israelites themselves, had made themselves strangers to it by their own actions. And this last division comprehends, I think, all those parts of Scripture of which the study is most difficult. Of the first kind is the life of David, running through the two first books of Samuel, and part of the first book of the Kings; as well as the life of Solomon, and the kings of Israel and Judah in general. Of the second kind is the greater part of the books of Joshua and Judges, as also very large parts of those of Samuel, the Kings, and the Chronicles; and of this kind in particular are the two chapters which

have been chosen for the two first lessons for this day.

These two lessons then describe a war between the Israelites and the Canaanites, that is, the dealings of God's people with those who were strangers to His covenant. They touch then one of the very points of conduct in which the line of difference is drawn in the very broadest colours between the Christian Israel and the Israel after the flesh. The Israel after the flesh did, and might do lawfully, what to the Christian Israel is a sin. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies." These few words of our Lord's, marking one great point in our moral nature, in which the Christian was to differ widely from good men of the older dispensation, take away at once out of the class of Scripture examples every passage whatever in which good men of the Israel after the flesh are described to us as dealing with their enemies; whether by this term we mean their own personal enemies, or the enemies of their nation and of God.

When, therefore, we read the words of the text, "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent," we have no need, as far as the satisfaction of our own conscience goes, to make any inquiry whether these words were spoken by inspiration or

not; whether Deborah and Barak, in uttering this song, spake as the prophet and prophetess of God, or as the victorious and rejoicing leaders of a people whom they had just rescued from slavery. So far as our conduct is concerned, this inquiry is wholly superfluous. If she whom they blessed was blessed then in truth, yet we know with perfect assurance that whosoever of us were now to do likewise would not be blessed but cursed. There is absolutely nothing in the tone and feeling of this song of Deborah and Barak with reference to their triumph over the Canaanites, which we ought, nay, which we might dare to imitate. Thus much is plain, without a moment's hesitation, that the lesson for this evening's service contains in these points no direct instruction in righteousness.

But what then is its instruction, what its use? It has much of both, but of a kind not easily to be gained, nor by every one, and therefore it may well be doubted how far such portions of the Scripture have been wisely chosen to form a part of our public service. Certainly if scarcely any lessons have been taken out of the book of Revelation, because of their difficulty; if so few in comparison have been chosen from the Prophets, probably for the same reason; much more cause was there why they should not have been taken from the books of Joshua and Judges. For the difficulty in the Revelation and in the Prophets is chiefly of a kind which

would give to ignorant persons no notions at all; but here there is a worse danger, lest they should fancy that they understand, and go away with notions absolutely false and mischievous. The instruction furnished by these chapters of Judges is indeed great for those who can receive it; but it is not obvious, nor can it be gained without much thought and knowledge. Most instructive is it to see such a state of moral ignorance prevailing as would absolutely have been injured rather than benefited, had all truth been then presented to it. Most awfully does it set forth the toil of our nature, and how great is the struggle, if I may be allowed so to speak, of God's light in breaking into the darkness of our hearts, that they who were disposed to serve God knew not how to serve Him worthily; that they who wished to do good, and to advance the cause of good, had not yet learnt that great law of faith, that good must be left undone, and the cause of good trusted humbly to the hands of God, if we can only do it, or promote its interest, by means unholy and forbidden.

Yet this blessing pronounced on Jael, when taken in its true spirit, is in perfect accordance with God's universal dealings with mankind. I would not blame those, who, as a matter of criticism, were to contend that we have no grounds whatever for supposing the song of Deborah and Barak to be recorded as an inspired hymn; that is a question

not to be answered in the foolish and hasty way in which some persons are apt to settle it; but on which this is not the place to enter. But be this as it may, we need not lose the benefit of the words of the text; they may be true, though not inspired. Their spirit is, that God does allow largely for ignorance where He finds sincerity; that they who serve Him honestly up to the measure of their knowledge, are according to the general course of His providence encouraged and blessed; that they whose eyes and hearts are still fixed upwards, on duty not on self, are precisely that smoking flax which He will not quench, but cherish rather, till the smoke be blown into a flame. So it was with Christ's own apostles. Amidst how much of ignorance, how much, according to His own very words, of incapability to receive His full truth, did He yet receive them into communion with Him, and give them the blessed name of His friends, and pronounce them, with one exception, to be all clean. And turn to a later period, to some of those scenes in the Christian Church which most resemble the case of Jael; to some of those stories of persecution, where good men, alas the while for human nature! were both the victims and the executioners. When we read some of those sad yet glorious martyrdoms, amidst all our unmixed admiration for the sufferers, may we not in some instances hope and believe that the persecutors were moved with a most

earnest, though an ignorant zeal, and that like Jael, they sought really to please God, although like her they essayed to do it by means which Christ's Spirit condemns? If this be not so, what shall we say of two of the purest and brightest names of their day, of Calvin and of Cranmer? Can we doubt that it was a sincere, though ignorant zeal for God's glory, which led Cranmer in particular—a man constitutionally the very reverse of hard or cruel—to urge the young King Edward VI., in spite of all his reluctance, to condemn a heretic to the flames? And what if it be said, as is most true, that there is a great deal of ignorance which is not excusable but sinful; that men can and do often deceive themselves, and fancy that they are serving God, while they are really serving their own evil passions. All this, indeed, is most important to us in judging of ourselves, in leading us for ever to suspect our own hearts, lest they call that ignorance or honest error, which is in reality falsehood and sin; but yet it does not interfere with that other truth, which is very useful towards softening our judgments of others, that if there be a sinful ignorance there is an innocent ignorance also; that God the Judge of all will infallibly decide which is the one and which the other; but that if it be innocent ignorance, there the sincere faith and desire to please God shall be blessed, notwithstanding its lack of knowledge. And for ourselves, how great is the lesson here given us of

the necessity of a sincere obedience. For if the single-minded man be accepted, even amid much moral ignorance, what becomes of those who are double-minded amidst abundant knowledge? What will be said of us, if being taught all divine truth, if being able to see, which she could not see, that Jael's act was evil, we have yet nothing of her zeal, which, if joined with our knowledge, would burn indeed with a heavenly flame? What inheritance can we expect in her blessing, who without any of her excuses for evil are full of evil; who with far more than her reasons for serving and loving God, will yet neither serve Him nor love Him? Right and good is it that we should condemn the acts of many of those recorded in the Old Testament; for we have seen what prophets and righteous men for many an age were not permitted to see; but no less right and needful is it, that we should imitate their fearless and earnest zeal, without which we in our knowledge are without excuse, with which they, by reason of their unavoidable ignorance, were even in evil deeds blessed.

Rugby Chapel,
June 8th, 1834.

SERMON IX.

JUDGMENTS AND CHASTISEMENTS.

2 Samuel xxiv. 14.

And David said, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hands of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

We are all familiar with these words of David, his answer to the prophet who came to him from God with a choice of one of three heavy judgments, the pestilence, famine, or war. And the choice which he made is one which we feel was wisely made. He preferred any of those evils which arise directly from the hand of God acting upon natural causes, to those which are produced by the evil passions of men. He thought it better to suffer three days' pestilence, or three years' famine, rather than to taste all the miseries of unsuccessful war in a three months' flight before an invading enemy.

Now the evils by which this country is threatened

at this time are of both these kinds; both natural —that is to say, such as befall us without being in any degree caused by other men—and moral evils, by which I mean evils that are occasioned by the fault of men, whether ourselves or others. The prayers which have been appointed for this day's service allude chiefly to the former class of evils; not that they are by any means the greatest, but because, with regard to these, people are all of the same mind; whereas when we speak of moral evils, or those caused by the fault of man, there is a very great difference of opinion about them, and these differences are very apt to excite angry feelings. Still the opportunities afforded by this day would be greatly wasted, if, while turning our minds towards the evils which assail or threaten the country, we were to omit those from which we have infinitely the most to fear, and from which we may, with a far stronger assurance of faith, pray to God to deliver us.

First, however, I will say a few words on the natural evils which are besetting us; that is, on the new and fatal disease which has appeared in several parts of the kingdom, and which is likely to spread itself over the whole of it. It is a very old remark, that new and alarming dangers are apt to breed a a great deal of folly and superstition. Men's minds become highly excited, and their feelings far outrun their judgment. All sorts of exaggerated notions

therefore have been entertained about the present disorder, and in particular it has been represented as a punishment sent by God for our great and universal sinfulness. Undoubtedly our sins are great, and it would be a most false and mischievous representation which should endeavour to palliate hem. But the aspect of the present disease seems to me by no means that of a judgment of God upon our sins. Of course no one could dare to speak of it as a judgment in the cases of individuals; we know that it would be equally false and uncharitable to think that they whom it carried off were greater sinners than those whom it spared. And with regard to the nation, it has not hitherto been in any degree so destructive as to weaken the power or diminish the resources of the country; in fact, nationally speaking, it has been no more felt than the ordinary diseases of every common season. On the contrary, far from regarding it as a judgment of God in His anger, it seems to me to bear far more of the character of a chastening given in His mercy. Both to individuals and publicly, it is capable of being most profitable, and has in fact in a great many instances actually been so. As I said on a former occasion, it has warned them most usefully of the uncertainty of life, while it has encouraged temperance, and called forth a considerable exertion of active charity. It has been a timely interruption to political violence, and has given men a subject of

common interest, on which not only they could not quarrel, but which placed them towards each other in relations of mutual kindness; and though, like all other chastisement, it "seemeth for the present not to be joyous, but grievous," and though we may lawfully pray to be delivered from it, as from all other visitations of pain and suffering; yet we must feel at the same time that we cannot certainly know whether it is best for us that our prayer should be answered; and assuredly if it be not answered, we may be certain that the refusal does not proceed from God's anger, but from his fatherly love.

How is it then, it may be asked, that we read so often in the Old Testament of pestilence sent as a judgment for sins past, not as a chastisement to warn from sins to come? There are several answers to be made to this question. In the first place, the visitations there spoken of differ from the present case in some important particulars. The destruction was very much greater, and more instantaneous; that is, it did not offer an opportunity for the exercise of those virtues which have been called forth by the present danger. The sight of seventy thousand persons cut off in three days, as on the occasion to which the text relates, was likely to make men overwhelmed with fear, or hardened by desperation; while the evil came in such a moment that there was no time for any wholesome preparation to meet it profitably, or to take any measures for lessening

its dangers. But the great distinction between the visitations of pestilence under the old dispensation and under the new, may be best understood by reading the prayer of Hezekiah, composed by him in a dangerous sickness; and by observing how little it could be the language of a good Christian now. Hezekiah earnestly prays against death, because it would cut him off from God: "The grave cannot praise thee," he says, "death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth." Compare this with St. Paul's language: "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; and we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." It is manifest that a grievous disease falling upon a people whose promises were earthly, was a very different thing, as marking God's disposition towards them, from the same disease falling upon a people whose promises are heavenly. What was in the one case a sentence of death, is in the other a removal to glory. Then, if a parent saw his whole family dying around him, his wife expiring by his side, while he felt his own life ebbing fast within him, would he not have regarded himself as suffering the very last extremity of God's judgments, in not only cutting off himself, but all his hopes of posterity also; so that his name and race would be utterly put out? But suppose the same case in a Christian family,—Christian, I mean,

not in name only, but in deed and in power,—and what before was the extremity of judgment becomes the utmost perfection of mercy. It is a grief for a parent to leave young children behind him, when he cannot but fear that the promise of their early years may in after life, when he can no longer watch over them, be wrecked for all eternity. But to be called to his Saviour with all those whom he most loves; to be released at once from all earthly care; to have done with earth not only for himself but for his wife and children also; to have reached his home in safety with all his treasures, not only with none to mourn as lost, but with none to fear for as yet in danger; the fondest range of hope could go no farther than to imagine such a rich abundance of blessing.

Or to come to our own experience. We know with what an unusual degree of sickness we in this place are at this moment visited; that there are now four persons lying dead in this town, all of whom one fortnight ago were in no more danger of death than any of us here assembled. Are we to call this a judgment of God in his anger? God forbid! Much rather is it a dispensation most mercifully designed,—would that it might be received by us in an answering spirit! It warns us indeed with a striking voice, to become Christians in earnest with all speed; to put on Christ, and to put off all our sinful affections. If we do not listen to it, be

assured that our continued health and prosperity is one of the most awful judgments of all. No sentence is so dreadful as that when God says of the sinner, "Let him alone." The pestilence may cut him off in the midst of his sin; but better even so, than to be year after year hardened and encouraged in it, and thus to be daily swelling its amount. But if we do become Christians indeed, then the voice which was so solemn is but the gracious call of a loving Saviour. The servants who were ready, busily employed in preparing for their Lord's coming, zealously assisting one another, and looking forward for the hour when he would visit them,—they assuredly felt nothing but a bounding joy when, at whatever hour, in the deepest midnight, or the full noon day, they heard the signal of his presence.

If this day leads us to consider all this, to hear both in the sickly season immediately around us, and in the disease which is prevailing elsewhere, nothing but God's warning and earnest call, the chastening of his love, not the judgment of his anger, then indeed it will be blessed to us. But it will be vain and worse than vain, if with hearts full of worldly fear and spiritual hardness, trembling at the thought of pain and sickness and death, careless of sin and of eternal judgment, we pour out our unholy prayers to be delivered merely from worldly sufferings. And should God hear such prayers so

offered? Nay, verily the worst scorn with which unbelievers regard this day's solemnities, would be deserved by us, and more than deserved, if our devotion be no more than cowardice, if our desire be for worldly and not for spiritual deliverance.

But the evil of disease is neither the only, nor by any means the worst evil which at this moment threatens our country. In this there are even to the actual sufferers,—the friends I mean of those whom it carries off,—many circumstances of great comfort; and to society at large it will be, and indeed has been already, as I said before, the means of calling forth a larger measure of mutual kindness and charity. But the other evils have nothing whatever to palliate them; they are bad, and merely bad from the beginning to the end. I speak of those violent passions, that impatience, and pride, and covetousness, and revenge, and brute ignorance, and hatred of law and authority, and selfish indifference to the degraded state of our brethren, and insolence, and extortion, and oppression, which becoming more aggravated every hour, must inevitably ere long lead to the destruction of our prosperity at once nationally and individually, at once as far as regards this world, and as far as regards the world to come. All these different kinds of wickedness, not existing of course in the same persons, but according to the party or class of society to which we belong,—some being the besetting sins in one case, and others in another,—are yet all conspiring together to bring about the same ruin. And together with all these, or rather as the very fountain from which they all spring, there is the bitter root of ungodliness; existing not exactly under the same form, but with the same fatal power, in the unprincipled and wicked of both parties; showing itself on one side in a bitter hatred of all the forms of religion, because they may sometimes be accompanied with the spirit also; attended on the other with a great semblance of attachment to these same forms, because experience has shown, that they do not necessarily ensure the spirit; and so long as they do not do this, bad men on one side find them politically convenient, just as bad men on the other hold them to be a political evil. We find on one side, the blasphemy occasioned by worldly discontent and distress, as when Job was advised to curse God and die; and on the other, the inward blasphemy of the gay and luxurious, who say in their hearts, "Tush, the Lord shall not see, neither doth the God of Jacob regard it." All this evil is so great and so prevalent, that we may almost use the words of the prophet, "I looked, and there was none to help: I wondered that there was none to uphold."

But the difficulty of turning this to profit on occasions like the present, arises from the mixed nature of our common congregations; and from the absolute harm which is done to either side, or class,

or party, by dwelling in their hearing upon the faults of the other. One is restrained, therefore, from going into the particulars of the evil on either side so fully as we might do, because the other side would hear it with pleasure, and would but be confirmed in their own faults the more. Here, however, the congregation consists so much of one particular class in society, the higher or richer class, that their faults may be safely dwelt upon; not that the poor have not their's also, but because it does *us* nothing but harm to think of these, as it seems to afford a sanction to our own. Every one must have noticed the delight with which they who want an excuse for selfishness and a grudging spirit lay hold of any alleged instance of ingratitude or improvidence on the part of the poor. The faults of the poor, the sins of the avowed enemies of religion and of our national institutions, however great they may be, do not concern us; our true business is with our own. I have before, in this place and elsewhere, noticed our great sin,—*ours*, that is, as belonging to the richer classes,—that we measure ourselves by one rule and our neighbours by another; we think that a very little will do for others, while for ourselves we think we can never have enough; and this is the case with intellectual enjoyments as well as with bodily; a very little knowledge, a very scanty measure of social enjoyment, very little show of civility, and next to

none of respect and attention to their feelings, are enough, in our judgment, for those beneath us; while for ourselves, sea and land are ransacked, the utmost ingenuity of man is exercised, to furnish us with new information, with new excitement, to carry to the utmost possible perfection the polish and refinement of our own social intercourse. And this spirit infects us all more than we are aware of; it is a habit gained in childhood, and it goes on with us in after life, in many instances without our being aware of it. I have known good and kind-hearted persons speak so coldly and behave so distantly to those of an inferior station, that a foreigner, not acquainted with our manners, nor with the character of the individuals, would have ascribed it at once to insolence and pride. But though the excuses for individuals doing this are many, from the cause that I have mentioned, namely, that they do it from habit, and without thinking of it; yet it is no less wrong in itself, and like all other wrong things tends to produce evil to society at large. This manner is practised unintentionally on one side, and received as a matter of course on the other; but even while it breeds no ill will, it effectually checks any feelings of positive regard; and when in process of time this cold and neutral state of feeling comes to be tampered with by those who wish to change it into active hatred, they find it but too easy a ground to work upon. Then the reserve and dis-

tance which had before only prevented cordiality, comes to be looked upon as an actual insult, and as such awakens resentment; nor is the length of time which it has lasted considered in any other light than as swelling the amount of the wrong, and therefore adding to the violence of their hoped for vengeance.

True it is that manner is but an outward thing, and does not always show the state of the heart. But when our notice is called to it, it is at least a good ground for examining a little anxiously whether indeed all is right and sound within. I cannot but think, that if we really possessed a true Christian love of our brethren, if we felt towards them as brethren, not as towards what are called, and most sadly miscalled, objects of charity, that we should insensibly assume towards them a very different outward manner also. At any rate this is certain, that the national evil produced by the behaviour I have been speaking of, is most enormous. It is a folly to think that any money given away in alms can at all make up for the want of kindness. He is in fact doing a double mischief to the poor, who, while he alienates their hearts by his pride, makes himself useful to their necessities by his money; he is doing what he can to degrade them, to make them wear an outward show of respect and gratitude and dependence towards one whom in their hearts they can neither esteem nor love. But on the other

hand, kindness without money may do very much indeed; and the comfort is, that there is no one amongst us who cannot be kind, however small may be his ability to give alms. There is no one among us who may not make his daily intercourse with every one in a poorer station, a means of increasing mutual charity, instead of exciting mutual aversion. You know full well the vexations which you are sometimes guilty of towards some of our neighbours; not of any serious amount, and still less purposely inflicted; but still galling and annoying, and tending to perpetuate what is unkind between one class and another, rather than what is friendly. I am sure that you are not aware of the full extent of the mischief created by these apparent trifles; but when you think of the number of schools in England; and that in the neighbourhood of each of them something of the same thing is going on, it is easy to imagine, that the effect on the whole may be felt even nationally. But at any rate, whether the effect be more or less, the mischief to our own hearts is the same; opportunities for kindness are kept out; and a careless and insulting habit finds its way into them.

In other places there are other matters on which I might have dwelt with propriety in addition to this; but I know of none where this could have been rightly omitted. And now in conclusion, the sum and substance of this day's solemnity is to

nourish in us feelings of love towards God and man. Whether we fear disease, love towards God in Christ, and an unwearied kindness towards one another, will take away its sting, and turn it into a blessing; or if we fear civil commotions and revolution, love to God and man is again the only oil that can appease the raging waters; the one love enkindling the other, till, if for no other reason yet for this alone, because of our strong sense of our common brotherhood in Christ Jesus, because God so loved us, we also should all love one another.

Rugby Chapel,
March 21*st*, 1832.
(General Fast Day.)

SERMON X.

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET.

1 Kings xiii. 26.

And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord.

In considering the chapter from which these words are taken, and which was the first lesson for this morning's service, it seems best first to explain such parts of it as may need explanation, considered merely as a story; and then to show what parts of it, and in what respects, afford instruction to us; two things very different in themselves, and requiring always to be kept distinct.

Taking then the account of the disobedient prophet merely as the account of a past event, and wishing to understand it merely as such, we may wish perhaps to know why the prophet who came from Judah was commanded neither to eat nor

drink at Bethel; and still more, why the old prophet should have been so anxious to persuade him to do what was forbidden him. Now the reason why the prophet who came from Judah was neither to eat nor to drink at Bethel, nor to return by the same way that he had set out, was in order to show that Jeroboam and his people were fallen away from the true commonwealth of Israel, that the bond of brotherhood between them and Judah was broken off utterly; that they were become to the servants of God like heathen men and publicans, with whom they were to hold no intercourse. As St. John then desires the Christians not to receive into their house certain men who by their evil deeds had broken the bond of Christian communion, nor even to bid them God speed, "for he that biddeth them God speed," he adds, "is partaker of their evil deeds," so the prophet of God who was bearing the message of God's judgment against Bethel, was to have no friendly intercourse with its people; he was to keep himself aloof from them, and even to return by a different road, lest by renewing his acquaintance with any of the inhabitants whom he had seen on his first journey, he might be the more tempted to hold intercourse with them, and to linger on his way home.

This being the reason of the command given to the prophet of Judah, we are now to consider what motives the old prophet could have had to tempt

him to disobedience. The old prophet must be supposed to have been one who had taken part heartily with Jeroboam in separating himself from the common worship at Jerusalem; one who had strongly supported the setting up the altars at Bethel and at Dan. He would, therefore, be ill pleased to see his own conduct and that of his countrymen declared to be so sinful, as that God's prophets might hold no communion with them. He would feel the command issued to the prophet to be a reproach upon him and on his cause, and knowing the effect of old habits and impressions upon the people at large, he would be afraid lest they themselves should be shocked at finding themselves so utterly condemned as unholy by a prophet of Jerusalem, and lest they might desire to escape from his censures by conforming again to the worship of the tribe of Judah. As Saul had besought Samuel to turn with him, and honour him before the elders of his people and before Israel; so this old prophet wished to persuade the prophet of Judah to abate something of his severity, to enter into his house and eat of his bread, and drink of his cup, that so the people might think that their conduct was not so utterly condemned at Jerusalem; that the prophet, while bearing a message of severity, was himself inclined to think it too severe; that, whilst denouncing a judgment, he acted as if he did not himself believe that it would come to

pass. For men's actions are more than their words; and it would have been of little consequence that the prophet in public, and in his official character, if I may so speak, should have denounced Jeroboam and his worship as sinful, if privately, and in those moments when a man's real sentiments appear, he should hold friendly intercourse with one of the prophets of that worship, and enter with him into the sacred relations of hospitality.

Such were the old prophet's motives; motives arising out of no hatred to the prophet of Judah, but simply from a wish to make it appear, that the cause of the worship of Bethel was not so evil as might be thought from the prophet's public message; and that the prophet by his own acts showed that he himself did not so regard it. And therefore, when he found that the prophet had fallen a victim to his policy, that he had been himself condemned for lowering in a manner the sentence of God's condemnation against others, then his heart smote him, and while he mourned for him whom his arts had ruined, and said over his grave, "Alas, my brother!" he confirmed with his own lips the voice of that sentence on which he had vainly endeavoured at the price of so much guilt to throw discredit.

But now if from understanding this story, as a thing which took place in Judæa so many hundred years ago, we proceed to ask what is its meaning

for us, and what instruction we may derive from it, then the answer must be given warily and with knowledge, or else we shall turn the Scripture to our hurt, and not to our benefit.

Here, as every where else in the Scripture, the spirit of the story is an eternal lesson; the letter of it, as in so many other parts of the Old Testament, must be looked upon as passed away. I mean that it is a lesson for us, if we take into our account the differences between our situation and that of the Jews: if we do not do this, it will then absolutely mislead us. Now, before I proceed to apply this rule to the story of the disobedient prophet, I will show its necessity by another part of the same chapter, where it says that "Jeroboam made of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places;" and adds immediately, "That this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam." Now I have actually met with comments upon this passage, which have argued from it against appointing Christian ministers from what are called the lower orders. This is a complete instance of the mischief of quoting the letter of the Scripture, and not its spirit. It is surely not hard to know that the priesthood among the Jews, as amongst almost all ancient nations, was confined to one particular family; that no one who was not of the seed of Aaron could lawfully be made a priest.

It might be known also that the priest's business was not to teach, but to offer sacrifice; and that Christian ministers are in no respect like the priests among the Jews, but rather like the prophets. Now the prophets were chosen from any family, and from any condition of life: for instance, the prophet Amos was chosen from the lowest of the people, for he was a herdsman; and in like manner, the first and greatest Christian ministers, our Lord's own Apostles, were fishermen, or engaged in other employments equally humble. The letter, therefore, of this passage about Jeroboam has passed away; we have no priests under the Gospel, and our prophets or ministers, like the prophets of old, may be taken freely from any family, or from any condition of life. But the spirit of it remains; that is, it is a grievous sin to appoint as a Christian minister any man who wants that quality, which is as essential to the Christian ministry as being born of a particular family was essential to the Jewish priesthood. This quality is holiness; and he who were to consecrate to our ministry whosoever would, —whosoever wished to enter it,—let his ignorance or his wickedness be ever so great; he, and he only, would be guilty in this matter of the sin of Jeroboam.

Now, then, we must apply the same rule to the whole story of the disobedient prophet. If we do not, a Roman Catholic might very falsely apply it

as condemning all Protestants, or a member of the Church of England might use it as falsely as condemning all Dissenters. A Roman Catholic might say that our King Edward VI. did exactly what Jeroboam did; that he would not let his people go up to Rome to worship, as they had been used to do, but set up another worship of his own in England, like the high places at Bethel and at Dan. And a Churchman might in the same way argue, that the Dissenters were like Jeroboam; that they, too, had separated from the worship of their fathers, and had made places of worship for themselves. And so both would be ready to speak the language of the prophet of Judah, and think it right to hold no intercourse with Protestants in the one case, with Dissenters in the other, according to the command given to the prophet. They would say also, that those who argued in favour of toleration, that they who spoke at all in defence of Protestants or of Dissenters, were false servants of God, like the old prophet of Bethel, trying to make that appear innocent, or at most a light fault, which in God's judgment was a great one. Many, I dare say, would shrink from the practical conclusion of this sort of reasoning, who yet, far from seeing its fallacy, might themselves, in other matters, be tempted to apply the Scriptures just in the same way. But here again, the spirit of the story is our wholesome food, the letter is poison. It was one of the very main points

of the Jewish worship, that it should be performed in one place only; in that place which the Lord should choose to set His name there. The sacrifices were to be offered in one place, and by the one high priest of the nation; other sacrifices offered by other priests were all forbidden. But forasmuch as our worship is now changed, in that prayer and sacrifice are dissevered, and prayer is our only earthly worship; therefore whilst our sacrifice is still as of old offered in one place only, in the presence of God, by our own High Priest who is passed into the heavens, and as all other sacrifices for sin, which we should strive vainly to offer would be as abhorred as the golden calves of Bethel and of Dan, so of that other part of worship, prayer and praise, it is expressly said that it may be offered lawfully alike in every place;—not in the mountain of Gerizim only, nor in Jerusalem, shall they worship the Father, who worship Him in spirit and in truth:—whenever and wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them.

We cannot, then, apply the story to ourselves according to its literal meaning, and it would be nothing but mischievous to do so; yet its spirit affords us here, too, a most valuable lesson. We know full well what *is* a going away from God's true worship, and setting up for ourselves our idols at Bethel and at Dan. There are enough who do

so,—men who do not cast off the Christian name altogether; it was still the God of Israel whom Jeroboam professed to worship,—but who take such a view of Christ's service as best suits their inclinations, forming their judgments and often regulating their practice by another standard. Now when God's prophets speak to such persons of God's holiness, of His righteous law, and of the entire service which He claims, when they tell them of the danger of their state, and that they are not living a life of Christian faith, are there none who, like the old prophet of Bethel, endeavour to lessen the effect of this language by tempting those who speak it to too free compliances with evil, or with doubtful things themselves, that so their lives and actions may seem to disclaim the strictness of their preaching, and they may appear not really to believe the judgment which they feel bound publicly and officially to threaten? Surely the true lesson taught us by the story of the disobedient prophet is, that our actions should go along with our words; that the evil which in our speaking or writing or teaching we condemn, we should show that we renounce wholly in our conduct, not stopping to parley with it, not going a certain way along with it, but utterly shunning it and abhorring it. Nor is this lesson only of use to those who are as the prophets of the Christian Israel, who are bound to speak openly to their brethren the words

of God's commandments. Parents, masters of families, all who are ever called upon to exercise authority or influence over the conduct of others,—it is for them to see that they hold no intercourse themselves with the evil which they condemn; that they should appear plainly to speak to others not because it is decent or proper so to speak, but because they believe it to be true, and their hearts as well as their understandings go along with the truth in all its fulness. In our dealings with our children, how often does it happen that our reproofs are given by fits and starts, or because we think it proper to reprove; but our behaviour immediately afterwards, and generally when we seem acting most naturally, seems to show that we cannot really think evil so dangerous, or God so greatly to be feared. And if this be so, we shall neither profit our children nor save our own souls. We shall not profit them, because they look to actions more than to words. And if we tell them of God and Christ on a Sunday, and of heaven and hell and eternal glory, and all the week seem to care for none of these things ourselves, will our children think that we are in earnest? Will not the familiar turning in to eat and to drink in the country on which God's judgment had been denounced, outweigh all the effect of our words in denouncing it? And we shall not save our own souls, even though we delivered our message to others ever so faithfully, even though our advice to our children were all that the wisest and holiest man alive could say to them. For God's first command to every man is, that he serve God with all his heart himself, not that he call on others to do so; and he who does not so serve Him may counsel others with effect, but will surely be himself a castaway.

Yet there is one thing more to be gathered from the words in which the old prophet lamented the death of his disobedient brother. He said, "The saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel shall surely come to pass." The man himself lay torn and dead before him; he had acted as though he did not believe his own word, and therefore he had perished. But the word was true notwithstanding, and would come to pass not the less for the unworthiness of him who delivered it. So it is when God's message is delivered to us now by those whose lives deny it. On their head is the sin of their own unbelief and disobedience; but on ours will be our own sin no less, if we refuse to listen to their word. For what they said against the altar in Bethel, against those idols of our own hearts which we make each man for himself to worship, shall surely come to pass. The altar shall be burnt together with those who worship on it; earth, and they that are of the earth only, and love the earth and bow down before it, shall all be destroyed to-

gether. And instead of passing a harsh sentence upon those who spoke to us, while they themselves were disobedient, may we not often, like the old prophet, take to ourselves some part of their ruin; thinking that our carelessness and disobedience tempted them to join with us in disregarding the message which they delivered, and that therefore our sin is not more to be ascribed to their faulty lives, than the guilt of those faulty lives of theirs belongs to our hardness of heart and contempt of that word which they declared to us.

RYDAL CHAPEL,
July 20th, 1834.

SERMON XI.

THE LYING PROPHETS.

1 Kings xxii. 23.

Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee.

WE have heard in this afternoon's service the chapter from which these words are taken, so that I need only briefly remind you of the circumstances to which they relate. Ahab, going to make war against Syria, consults the prophets as to the success of his enterprise. All promised him victory, and encouraged him to go to war; all, with one only exception, Micaiah the son of Imlah. Micaiah, on the contrary, told him that the prophets were deceiving him with false hopes; that the war would end in his death, and that God had put a lying spirit into the mouths of all the prophets, because He had spoken evil concerning him; because the time of

his judgment was now come. The fact is told in the language of a vision, which very much resembles the opening chapter of the book of Job. There, as in the present instance, spirits both good and evil are represented as presenting themselves before the throne of God, and the evil crave permission of Him to exercise their power upon mankind. It is added that the permission is granted, but so as that it may appear from both stories that evil is made an instrument of God's purposes, and that He suffers it to go so far as He sees fit, and no farther.

Again the multitude of considerations which these passages of Scripture suggest, can scarcely be confined within the limits of a single sermon. Again there is room for explanation on the one hand, for practical improvement on the other; and I shall try, as shortly as possible, to give something of either sort.

First, in these visions, and in all other passages of Scripture which relate to things invisible, to the things, that is, of another world; it is of great consequence to remember that the descriptions are but the shadow of unseen things, and not the very image of them; that the language is not to be taken as literally true, but as intended, like a parable or story, to convey a truth through the means of fiction. The very words, "the throne of God," or, "God sitting on his throne," which occur so often in Scripture, are seen, the moment that our attention is drawn to them, to be merely figurative; and "the spirits standing by on the right hand and on the left," is an image of the same character. All that we can conclude safely from these visions is the general truth, that God allows us to be tempted, allows us to be deceived; and that both the one and the other may serve for our trial or for our punishment: it is for us so to use them that they may become the former only, and not the latter.

In the next place, in these stories and in many others in the Scripture, there is but one difficulty; and this difficulty would not be lessened though the doctrine taught by these passages were false instead of true. The difficulty is simply that great one,—I had well nigh said,—that only one of our condition; "Why there is any evil at all in the world?" It is always right to say plainly on the one hand that this is a difficulty which no human understanding can explain; and to show on the other hand, that, allowing this one difficulty to be inexplicable,—as it must be equally, whether we believe the Scriptures or no,—and trusting at the same time that it will be explained to God's faithful children hereafter as one of the greatest rewards of those who believed though they did not see, that then the truths in the Scripture which many cavil at are not only true, but most profitable; that we need not be afraid of the passages which contain them, nor try to explain away their meaning, but that we should consider

them and study them attentively, and that then we shall find, if I may be allowed to repeat words which I have used before, that the deepest difficulties and the most blessed truths are to be found hard beside one another.

Are we then offended to hear that the Lord hath put a lying spirit into the mouth of any man? Let us confess indeed, that how there should be such a thing as a lying spirit in the universe, where the God of truth is Lord, passes all our comprehension; but that this being so—though how or why we know not—and our own experience telling us too certainly that it is so, it is no wonder that God should not leave it utterly running wild: that He should subject it in some sort at least to his dominion, and make it, evil as it is in its own proper nature, the instrument at least to others, since He sees fit not to destroy its nature, of His own purposes of good.

And if we say again, What purposes of good?—for that this lying spirit was put into the mouth of the prophets not to benefit Ahab, but to help forward his ruin; the answer is,—and we were all at once fit for heaven if we felt the truth as well as expressed it with our lips,—the answer is, that the existence of evil is indeed a mystery, but that the punishment and destruction of evil is one of the greatest of goods. And if we laboured in this work where alone we can labour at it quite purely and

safely, that is, at the utter destruction of all evil within our own hearts:—for while destroying it in others, evil passions so mix in the work that we create as much as we destroy;—but if we did labour heartily and intensely at the destruction of our own hearts' evil, if we did feel how great it was, how entirely God abhors it, and how blessed a thing it must be to destroy it, then indeed we should share the mind of the Spirit of God, and be fit for communion with Him. It is indeed a solemn truth, that the destruction of evil should be so great a good; for it is one which is our own condemnation. Yet so it is, and it is an attribute no less closely connected with the nature of God, than His unfailing mercy to the good.

God then makes evil the instrument of good, when He makes it the instrument of the destruction of evil. And this was the case when He put the lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets, because the time of judgment upon Ahab was come. Only here is God's long suffering, that He is slow to consider any man as evil, and therefore fit for destruction; He suspends His judgment upon them till the very hour of death; till then even His punishments are not without something of chastisement; that is, they may be used for the destruction of the evil that is in the man, so that he himself may be saved. And this was the case with Ahab. For when Micaiah opened the secret of God's counsel against

him, the opportunity was given him of turning it to good. God had resolved to encourage to his ruin the wicked and hard-hearted Ahab; but Ahab, humbled and penitent, became another man, and the judgment against his evil self was revealed to him, that he might become another self, and so escape from it. For so it is ever true, that God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live.

I have dwelt upon points which will not be generally interesting, but yet it was right to mention them, as there are some to whom it would have appeared unnatural to pass them over unnoticed; and as uninteresting and obscure as they are to those who have never thought on them at all, so are they in proportion full of interest to those whose minds have once become alive to them. But what remains is of a different character, and concerns us all. The same thing may happen now, does happen in a degree to all of us. An evil spirit is sent into the mouths of the prophets, and it tempts us continually to our ruin.

I notice the circumstance of its being put "into the mouths of the prophets;" not into the mouths of the prophets of Baal, but of the very prophets of the true God; for the sake of remarking that we are tempted to evil, not always by those who might be supposed to be in favour of evil, but by those too sometimes from whom we might expect good:

that even the very love of our friends becomes sometimes a snare to us; and that there is nothing up to the very Scriptures themselves, the very volume which contains God's revelations to his creatures, from which the evil heart may not expect to find encouragement to evil, from which it may not be tempted to believe a lie, that so its condemnation may be the surer.

This perhaps may be particularly applied to us, when we like Ahab are meditating upon some enterprise, when we propose to do something, the event of which may be either a great hurt or a great good to us. I am not now supposing the case of a man like Balaam, resolving whether or no he shall do a wicked thing which he much desires to do, and looking out for some excuse to lull his conscience in doing it. The case of Ahab is different from this; the war against Syria to recover Ramoth-Gilead, which had been formerly taken from Israel, was not in itself a thing unlawful: it was not a thing which it was tempting God so much as to think of. Ahab was deceived, not for his wickedness in the actual matter then before him, but for the general evil of his life; which made that which was innocent in common cases a snare to him. I cannot give what seems a more complete picture of the general meaning of this passage of Scripture, than by supposing a man of very careless life considering whether or no he should enter into holy

orders. It is Ahab's very question, "Shall I go up against the enemy of God's Israel to battle, or shall I forbear?" And then there are many to answer, "Go up, for the Lord shall deliver him into thy hand." You are desiring a good work, and may expect upon it a good issue. And this is true; but what are we that desire it? Are we such as God loves? Have we been so living as that we may be thought fit to be the honoured instruments of His glory? We are desirous now to fight against the enemies of the Lord, but have we ourselves faithfully served him? or have we not rather been serving Baal? No doubt the work which we desire is good in itself, but it is not good for us. To us, such as we now are, it will be our destruction if we attempt it; and they are but lying spirits counselling us to our ruin who urge us to venture on it.

What follows from this? Surely, not that we should turn away our thoughts and desires from the ministry of God, but that we should rather fix them on it more steadily long beforehand; that so what is good in itself may be good also to us. Then the lying spirit will have no room to tempt us to our ruin, or rather his words will be no lie, but the very truth; we may go up to the battle of the Lord, and He will be with us, and bless us. Now, so many years beforehand, most safely may you be encouraged to desire highly the service of Christ's

ministry, to think of it as your object, and so to fit yourselves for it. But if not thinking of it now, if not thinking of it at college, if living carelessly and sinfully, serving Baal and despising God; if then, at the time when it shall suit your worldly convenience, you turn round and say that you desire now to fight the battles of the Lord, then are you become such as that the very loving counsel of your friends is a snare to evil; their encouragements to go on in the course which you propose, are but urging you on to bring upon yourselves the heavier condemnation.

But this need not be confined to one profession only, it belongs to all. In all we may strive against the enemies of the Lord; all are good in themselves, all are lawful objects of desire. Yet all, like Ahab's war against Syria, will be entered on only to our ruin, if we like him have been habitually serving Baal beforehand. Our friends say well, "this is an honourable and profitable profession; enter on it and prosper." They say what is well in itself, but to us it is but the spirit that tempts us to destruction. We have fitted ourselves to receive not the good of the profession, but only its evil; not to make it a means of glorifying God, and being useful in our generation, but to encourage in us either our pride, or our indolence, or our covetousness; or that fault, whatever it be, which the peculiar line of life on which we are going to enter is most likely to

foster. For we all know that every line of life has its own temptations: every calling may be made the means of destroying our souls, as well as of saving them; and it is our previous evil dispositions and low principles which will make it to us the evil and not the good. And then it is too late to turn back; we must do something in life, yet we can do nothing safely; God urges us on to Ramoth-Gilead that we may fall and perish. Such is the state of those who are preparing to enter upon life,—whatever may be their particular views in it,—under the curse of careless or corrupted principles, with their earlier years unimproved or marked only with sin. If they are saved at last, it may be truly said that they are saved so as by fire; it is God's marvellous long suffering and abundant grace, which enables them to turn what was to them evil into good, by being changed themselves from evil; even as they had in the beginning turned into evil that which was in its nature good, because they had corrupted their way before the Lord, and were marked by Him for judgment.

Rugby Chapel,
August 26th, 1832.

SERMON XII.

JOB.

Job i. 5.

And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

The book of Job, from which these words are taken, contains in substance some of the most important truths of revelation. The greater part of it consists of a dialogue, in which opposite views, both equally erroneous, are maintained by the principal speakers; till towards the close a new character comes in, and states the truth; which truth is lastly enforced by language represented to come from God Himself. Then Job, who had maintained one of the two erroneous views which had been thus reproved, confesses his fault, and throws himself entirely on God's mercy; while his three friends, who had

defended the error opposite to his, persisting in it notwithstanding the answers which had been made to them, are declared to have offended, and are commanded to offer for themselves a burnt offering, lest God should punish them. Now the error which they had maintained was this:—Because Job was suffering they charged him with hypocrisy; for, they argued, had he been really a good man, God would not have punished him; he must therefore have only worn the appearance of goodness to deceive men, whilst in his heart he was the servant of sin. And though Job protested against the injustice of this charge against him, and the cruelty of thus adding to his sufferings, they persisted in maintaining it. Job's error on the other hand was this, that he asserted his innocence not only against men, but against God. He not only denied that he was a hypocrite in the common sense of the term, or a sinner according to man's use and meaning of the word, but he seems to have maintained his innocence in a yet higher sense, as if it could endure God's judgment no less than man's. And for this he is reproved by Elihu, and reminded that although he might justly call himself good, in the common meaning of the word, and justly repel the charge of common hypocrisy, yet that goodness in God's meaning is of a far higher nature; that when tried by His standard, all are sinners; and that in His sight can no man living be justified. To this view

of the case Job at last yields; he confesses that he had spoken in ignorance, and that now, better informed of what God is, and of man's infinite unworthiness in His sight, he abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes.

It is manifest that this is exactly the state of mind which is required before a man can embrace God's offer of forgiveness through Christ. And in the book of Job, no less than in the Epistle to the Romans, we find that he who thus casts away his trust in his own righteousness, and acknowledges that in God's sight he is only a sinner, becomes forgiven and accepted; and that his latter end is better than his beginning.

On the other hand, an exaggerated statement of man's sins, a denial of the goodness of his actions in the common sense of the word goodness, and an attempt to show that the virtues of unbelievers are not virtues in any sense, but are done from some selfish or unworthy motives; in a word an uncharitable spirit, offensive to our common reason and common delicacy, while it pretends to be excessively zealous for God's glory, is condemned strongly in the example of Job's three friends. And it is not a little curious, that the very language of these friends, in which their hard and offensive spirit is marked most strongly, has been actually quoted by persons infected with the very same faults of character, and quoted, not as language condemned by

the Scripture as erroneous, but actually as if it was itself Scripture. A more remarkable instance could not be afforded of the utter blindness of that system, which takes as scriptural truth applicable to us, whatever is contained in the volume of the Bible, without considering the context or the circumstances under which any given passage was written.

Thus much might perhaps be said, not without propriety, concerning the book of Job as a whole, because it is a portion of the Scripture with which many of us probably are little familiar, and the object and lesson of which appear many times to be misunderstood. But the words of the text contain in themselves a distinct lesson; and to this it is now my wish to confine myself.

We see readily what is the statement contained in them. After the days of his son's feasting were over, Job offered sacrifices of atonement for them, lest in the midst of their enjoyments they might have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. He was afraid lest their pleasures had done them harm, and he wished, if it were so, to remedy it. This is the exact point in the text which it concerns us now to attend to.

One expression however seems remarkable. "It may be," said Job, "that my sons have cursed God in their hearts." He does not say, "have cursed him with their lips," for this, as society then was

composed, would not have been the fruit of enjoyment, but of despair. It was when he was reduced to great misery that his wife told him "to curse God and die." It was by bringing upon him the utmost extremity of suffering that Satan hoped to tempt him to "curse God to his face." But to curse God in the heart is a different thing, and in those times arose from a different state of outward circumstances. In prosperity, men go along with the world around them; they echo its language, because they receive the tribute of its respect; they are content to observe its customs, because the actual constitution of it brings them nothing but what is good. Therefore in an age when the outward profession of religion is fashionable, we shall hear no open blasphemy from the prosperous; and so it was in the days of Job. But the blasphemy of the heart is the natural child of prosperity where man is corrupt and God is pure. Prosperity makes a man feel strong in himself and confident; but it does not make him feel grateful, because knowing God to be a holy God and himself to be alienated from Him, he cannot think that his good things are God's gift, but rather that they are enjoyed in spite of Him. But if enjoyed in spite of Him, he is ever fearing that God may take them from him, or punish him for enjoying blessings without deserving them. So then he learns to hate God, and the more he enjoys his earthly good things, the more

he hates Him. He thinks of Him only as connected with death and judgment, and many are the wishes of his heart, that death and judgment might never come, and that there was no God from whom to fear them.

This is the feeling spoken of in the text when full grown. I trust and believe, that none of us know it in this state of ripeness; but I fear we cannot be unacquainted with its first beginnings. The first beginnings of it, are a sense of weariness and impatience when any pleasure is interrupted, or for a short time deferred, by a call to offer up our prayers to God. The two things seem to us unsuitable to one another. Enjoyment and devotion are in our notions altogether opposite. Sometimes this may proceed from superstition, from judging amiss of God, from feeling towards Him an excess of fear, though accompanied with the deepest reverence. But more often it arises from judging of God and of ourselves too truly; from knowing that we do not love Him, and being sure therefore from our consciences that He will not love us. And therefore devotion is not a pleasure; and the form of it, like all other unmeaning forms, can be no better than a weariness. And such persons endure it, though with impatience, when they think they can make it only a form; they will come to church, they will be present at family prayers; but when they think that it cannot be so treated, that if partaken in at

all, it must be partaken of in sincerity, then they avoid it altogether. And this is the real reason why so many persons attend the common church service, while so few in comparison will be partakers of the Lord's Supper.

Now we have many of us, during the course of the last week, had more than our common share of pleasure; there has been gaiety, excitement, enjoyment of one kind or another, but all worldly, of which we have almost all tasted. And this in common language is said to unsettle the mind; that is, to make it feel its common pursuits dull, to disturb it while engaged in them either with a restless recalling its past pleasures, or with an equally restless looking forward to their coming again. Thus there is much in them to make us sin, and to draw away our hearts from God; it being a most certain truth, that whenever we find our duty dull, then the thought of God becomes dull to us also; we are in the first beginnings of cursing Him in our hearts. So we need that something be done for us; that this evil state should be shaken off, lest it grow on to be our ruin.

What then is it that we want? It is not burnt offerings to atone for evil done, but something to stop evil actually doing, and living within us. The sweets of the pleasure are now gone, what enjoyment there was for us in the week past, we have had it all, it is over, all but the evil of it; and

surely it is our wisdom to get rid of this also. Nay, we may do more; we may not only get rid of the evil of it, but may still preserve it as good, and may be as glad to have had it, now that it is over, as before it came we earnestly wished to receive it.

If we think of any pleasure as of God's gift, undoubtedly we cannot repent of having had it, but must continually delight to dwell upon it. Now do we think so of our several pleasures of the week past? Were they God's gift to us or no? Are we at a loss to answer the question? Certainly if any of our pleasures were sinful in themselves, they were not God's gift; of this at least there can be no doubt. Or if not sinful in themselves,—if we abused them by carrying them too far, if they excited in us any bad temper, any bad passion whatever, if they made us proud, or peevish, or jealous, or indolent, or sensual, certainly they were not the gift of our heavenly Father. But suppose they were neither; that they were innocent, and moderate, not exciting any bad feelings, but rather awakening kindly ones; that they were in the best sense of the word refreshments to us. Were theyt hen God's gift to us? Surely they were, if we choose to think them so. It now depends wholly on ourselves; they were God's gift to us, good and tending to good; or, pure as they were and wholesome, they have not come from Him, but have done hurt to us rather than good. It depends wholly on ourselves; they were God's

gift to us, if we can thank Him for them at this moment with a sincere heart, and feel desirous to show by our after zeal, how much we are grateful to Him for His goodness.

Believe then that they were the gift of God, believe that God loves you, and that these as well as all other things which you enjoy, are the fruits of His fatherly affection. Even here it may be said, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth;" and here too we may join in the answer made to our Lord when he spoke these words, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief." We do find it very hard to believe heartily in the fulness of God's love to us; and it is something bad in our own hearts that is still our hinderance. But believe heartily that all that we have been enjoying innocently was indeed God's gift; believe it really, not merely saying it; believe that He loves us tenderly; then we need no sacrifice of atonement to sanctify our joys to us, and to save us from the punishment of inward blasphemy; all is atoned for, all is peace and safety; for we have received the spirit of adoption, and cry Abba, Father; and the Spirit itself witnesseth with our spirit that we are the sons of God through Jesus Christ. They were God's gift, one of ten thousand, and amongst the poorest of them all, but yet an earnest of what He will do for us more. Now then, the sacrifice for sin is no longer needed; for Christ has died, yea, rather

is risen again, and through Him we are accepted and justified. No need then of sacrifice, which if it were needful, we should strive in vain to pay. No need of sacrifice, but much of thanksgiving, much of cheerfulness, much of an earnest zeal to show that we are thankful. God has refreshed us; let us arise with rejoicing hearts and strength renewed, and go on upon our journey. No more loitering, no ungrateful wasting of the time and spirits which He has given. We must not do dishonour to His goodness, we must not shame our feelings of gratitude. There is our daily work before us; with us it is yet day, although there are on whom the night has closed before they could do half they wished to do. It is still the day; let us hasten to make use of it, blessing God that He has given us strength of body and mind to help us to show our thankfulness. And what if on us too the night close prematurely, still if such be our feelings, it is no matter; *our work* will have been done already, for it is our work to love God and His Son Jesus Christ, to be glad to serve Him here, to be happy to be taken from this life to be with Him in glory.

Rugby Chapel,
April 29th, 1832.

SERMON XIII.

THE PSALMS.

Psalm xxiii. 1.

The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing.

Those who attend ever so carelessly to the several parts of the church service, which vary from one Sunday to another, such as the Psalms and Lessons, must have noticed, I should think, the remarkable beauty and character of the Psalms which have been read this evening, as well as of the first of those which were read this morning. And although the notions about them may be indistinct, yet every one would feel, I think, that such Psalms as have been read this evening were well made a part of the service of the Church, that there was in them that which fitted them for the expression of the feelings of God's people at all times and in all countries, which rendered them the one perpetual sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving to be offered by the Church

to God. But this general sense of the fitness of using the Psalms as a part of our service, is very often vague and indistinct; and when we come to repeat them, we are often at a loss to know what we mean by them;—how far, that is, we make them our own, and repeat them as our own words and thoughts; or how far we read them merely as the work of another man, which may be here and there instructive, or even applicable to ourselves; but which, in many parts, we do but listen to or repeat with our mouths, without at all identifying ourselves with the circumstances or feelings of their writers.

I would wish, then, to state in the first place what appears to be the right view of this question, before I say any thing of that particular Psalm from which the words of the text are taken.

Now, first of all, it is clear that if we look upon the Psalms merely as upon so many ancient writings, the works of writers whose names, and, in many cases, whose very age is unknown to us, we should then regard them as altogether expressing the feelings of other men. We might learn from them, in part, where they express any general truths, we might admire their imagery or their devotion, but we could not adopt them as our own language; and many feelings contained in them would be such as to awaken in us no sympathy.

And if we are told upon this view of them that the Psalms are inspired, and are to be regarded as

the word of God, I do not think that this tends much to clear our notions, or makes us find them more universally edifying than we did before. For the notion of inspiration with many people, so far as they have any distinct notions about it at all, is, that God makes the human author of an inspired composition, so far as that composition is concerned, to be perfect even as He is himself perfect; that the sentiments which he expresses must be those of perfect goodness and wisdom; and that as God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, so in writings inspired by God the question of the date or circumstances of the human writer is of no importance, because he is but the organ of a wisdom and a goodness to which earthly time and circumstances must of course be altogether indifferent.

Following up this notion, men conclude farther, not unreasonably, that the language of God being all perfect, must be such as they not only may but ought to labour to make sincerely their own; and that what the Psalmists have said was right and good for them to say, and must be no less right and good in us; for it is not properly the language of the Psalmist, but of the Holy Ghost. We find now one or more Psalms, parts of the 69th, for example, and the 109th, which contain the strongest denunciations and prayers for all manner of evil to come upon the heads of the Psalmists' enemies. This, we say, is inspired language, and therefore it must

be right and good. But Christ has told us especially to love our enemies, and to pray not *against*, but *for* those who despitefully use us and persecute us. And lest we should say that this is the rule for our private enemies, but that we may curse heartily and hate the enemies of God and God's church, we find that our Lord did pray for those who crucified Himself, and who in so doing were surely as much acting the part of God's enemies as we could ever dare to say was the case with any man or men in the world. Therefore the perplexity about certain parts of the Psalms has been great and general. Some have tried to get out of the difficulty by a different interpretation of the sacred text, the constant resource of the unwise and ignorant, and which is as constantly a foolish evasion of the point which presses them, and no fair explanation. For instance, some tell us that the expressions, which in our version are rendered as wishes, are in the Hebrew expressed in the future tense; and that they are not to be rendered as wishes, but as prophecies. And others, again, would have it that all the denunciations of evil in the 109th Psalm are not the wishes of the Psalmist against his enemies, but their wishes against him, which he repeats at length to show their bitterness against him. Others, again, of a different sort of temper, whose minds being naturally unable to distinguish truth and falsehood, have no sort of difficulty in adopting a whole set of

things together, true and false, bad and good alike, are very angry with all such scruples, and delight in repeating the curses with all possible earnestness, applying them to those whom they call God's enemies now, and who at any rate are opposed to themselves. And at this moment persons of such a spirit hurt no one but their own souls: their wishes of evil, however vehemently uttered, are powerless against others, and only involve themselves in sin. But there have been times, and may well be again, when men not only wished and prayed for evil against their enemies, but took the sword also to execute what they prayed for; so that the Scripture was actually wrested by them to their own destruction; and the Psalms of Christ's Church, in which she has in every age delighted to find the fittest expression for her own feelings of penitence and of supplication, of joy and gratitude, of holiness and love, have been profaned into language such as Antichrist might delight in, have been made a cloak for hatred and bitterness, an excuse for injustice, oppression, and murder.

Now any person who has followed me thus far, will easily perceive that this wickedness is the strict consequence of false notions with respect to inspiration; which false notions being allowed to be true, the fanatical consequence is drawn from them correctly. Wherefore others again, seeing that the consequence is detestable, and observing also from

what source it has sprung, proceed to attack it in its very root, and deny either openly, or by implication, the inspiration of the Psalms altogether. They are the writings of good men, it is allowed, but of men good according to the standard of their own time, which standard falls far short of Christian perfection. And therefore, it is said, although we find much in the Psalms in which we can sympathize, there is also much in which we cannot; and in particular, the wishes of evil in the 69th and 109th Psalms, and in others like them, were excusable enough in the men of old time, whose rule it was to love their neighbour, and hate their enemy, but could not be repeated by us now without great sin.

Now this opinion takes a view of the Old Testament, which, it must be confessed, is not the view of it entertained by our Lord and His Apostles. For, not to press St. Paul's famous declaration to Timothy about the Scriptures of the Old Testament, because some, though as I think erroneously, have given to the passage a different interpretation, yet whenever the Old Testament is referred to by our Lord or his Apostles, it is clearly spoken of as invested with the highest authority, as being even, as we commonly call it, "the word of God." Nay, it has so happened, or rather, I should say, it has been so ordered, that some of the very most startling passages of the very 69th and 109th Psalms themselves, are referred to by our Lord's Apostles as

more than human compositions. The words, "Let their habitation be void, and no man to dwell in their tents," are quoted by St. Peter from the 69th Psalm; and those, "Let another take his office," are quoted by him from the 109th Psalm, and both are called by him, "the Scripture which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David."

The authority of our Lord and His Apostles justifies then the practice of the Church in regarding the Psalms as inspired, and in adopting them as such to be the language of her own devotions. But the notion of inspiration is in itself often conceived very erroneously. For inspiration does not raise a man above his own time, nor make him, even in respect to that which he utters when inspired, perfect in goodness and wisdom: but it so overrules his language that it shall contain a meaning more than his own mind was conscious of, and thus gives to it a character of divinity, and a power of perpetual application; while the man who uttered it partakes of this full meaning in infinitely different degrees, but in no case, it may be said, does he partake of it perfectly; for to One alone was the Spirit given without measure. The rest of us, even though inspired prophets, have it not granted them to look through all time, nor to understand the full accomplishment of their own words, according to the depth and height of God's wisdom.

Christ's Church takes the Psalms then as her own

language, or as the language of her Lord; not as that of David, nor of any other of the ancient Psalmists, except in part; that is, there are passages in which their meaning is not her meaning; for she has been enabled to see more of the true mind of the Spirit than the very prophet who uttered it. For those very Psalms, the 69th and 109th, to which we have referred so often,—St. Peter shows us in what sense the Church takes them, when he names Judas Iscariot as the subject of their denunciations of evil. If Judas could be amongst the enemies spoken of by the Psalmist, then it follows that He whose enemies are denounced is Christ our Lord; and in that sense His church uses it. But who are His enemies, and as being His, ours? Who are they against whom we may and ought to feel an enmity so strong? Who are they for whose utter destruction we may breathe the most earnest prayers with no breach of charity? Surely His enemies and ours, till the judgment day shall come, are sin and the author of sin, and they only. Evil men no doubt there are in abundance; men whose designs we must oppose, whose example we must shun, whose society we may and ought to avoid, but so long as they are those for whom Christ has died, they are not yet declared finally to be His enemies, nor therefore may they be ours. But sin is our enemy now, and so is he who is the author of sin, called by eminence the Great Enemy. Hate these

with an intense hatred, it will not damp but increase your charity. Hate all evil, most of all the evil in your own souls; pray to God in the warmest language to extirpate and destroy it utterly; such prayers are pure and holy; they become the Church of Christ to utter; no evil passion can creep into our bosoms along with the hatred of our own sin.

But if there are Psalms in which the meaning of the Church rises far beyond the meaning of the human Psalmist, yet how much more delightful is it to dwell on those where his meaning and ours are all but the same; where he ministered not to us only but to himself; where the communion of God's people before and after the coming of Christ has nothing to interfere with it; they and we are one with each other in Christ their Lord and ours. And of such a sort is that Psalm from which the text is taken, and in which the Church has expressed this day her abiding confidence in God's protection and love both for life and death. For although in one point the Psalmist was checked as it were on the very edge of the full Christian revelation; which seems to have been a part of God's dispensation, that the first open revealing of life eternal should be made by Him who purchased it for us by His own blood; yet surely in the words, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," &c., there is a hope of which we may say, that it entereth

within the veil. He that sowed, and we who are reaping, may in this hope rejoice together. And if I have said, as I think Christ's word allows us to say, that there are passages in the writings of the old prophets in which the mind of the Spirit who gave them utterance is more truly discerned by us than by them, if the truth of God has to us shaken off some part of the veil which in ancient times disguised its import, and stands before us more nearly in its own perfect nature, yet God forbid that this confession of God's grace to us should lead us to be high-minded, or to think that, because of the greater abundance of our revelations, we are nearer to Christ than His holy prophets. If any such feeling does arise within us, let us turn to such Psalms as the twenty-third, and our boasting must surely be changed into the deepest humiliation. For of the faith which worketh by love, and which alone justifies, can we dare to think that we have a larger, nay, that we have in any degree so large a portion, as lived within the heart of the Psalmist? Is his language of faith too hesitating for our full assurance? Is his devotion too cold for our perfect love? Alas! alas! is it not rather the very reverse? that his is the full assurance of faith, the love that casteth out fear; ours the faith as the grain of mustard seed, the love which iniquity has made to wax cold? And then our boasting of superior knowledge may well be changed for fear, when we

think of his portion who knew His Lord's will and did it not: and we may remember that it was to those who possessed greater light than had been vouchsafed to the old prophets, that Christ said, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and *all the prophets,* in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves cast out."

RUGBY CHAPEL,
October 4th, 1840.

SERMON XIV.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

ST. LUKE iii. 4.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

As the lessons which are read from the New Testament are not chosen for the particular Sunday, but are taken in their order according to the day of the month and year, so we cannot expect that there should be any particular harmony between them and the fixed parts of the service, such as the lessons from the Old Testament, and the Epistle and Gospel. But when we do find such a harmony, and can thus connect together all the portions of the Scripture which are read on the same day, the effect is particularly striking. Now this is in a great measure the case with the parts of this day's service. The Gospel speaks of the blessing upon true repentance; and the second lesson for the

morning describes the ministry of the preacher of repentance, John the Baptist; while, combined with these, the two lessons from the book of Samuel present us with the two extremes of human nature in the cases of Samuel and the sons of Eli; the last so hardened in sin that they were beyond repentance; the other so early led to God, and so constant in His service, that in the common sense of the term he had no need of it. While again the second lesson for this evening reminds us, that in the higher and Christian sense we all need it: that by the deeds of the law will no flesh be justified; for that cursed is he who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.

From out all these parts of Scripture so bearing upon the same subject, I have taken for my text the words of Isaiah, by which John the Baptist described himself. He said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." And so he has been commonly called the forerunner of Jesus Christ. But it may be that many have never clearly understood what was meant by John being Christ's forerunner, why any forerunner was needed, and what truth is declared to us in this part of God's dispensations, which showed that he *was* needed.

The subject is very vast, and might be illustrated by many examples, taken either from history or

from private life. And the truth contained in it is this, that Christ's work has never been done effectually in men's hearts, except so far as the work of His forerunner has been done beforehand; that the baptism of the Holy Spirit requires the previous baptism of water; or in other words, that no man can profitably receive the truths of the Gospel, unless they find his heart made ready by repentance, unless they find him in that state that he knows the evil of his heart, and hates it, and longs to be delivered from it.

I shall not dwell long upon the examples from history, but one or two may be mentioned to show what is meant. When St. Paul dwells upon the advantage which Timothy had had in having been taught the Scriptures from his childhood, and adds that they are able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus, inasmuch as they were profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God might be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works; he was comparing with this case of Timothy that of those who had been brought up in heathenism, with nothing that could be called instruction in holiness, with little or no notion of what was meant by sin and repentance. These persons, when they grew up, seeing the folly of the religion of their fathers, and hearing Christ preached as one who revealed the truth concerning God,

came over readily to the profession of Christianity. But they had not known Christ's forerunner, they had not been baptized with the baptism of repentance. Therefore they often turned the grace of God into lasciviousness: they caught hold of the promises of the Gospel without having ever dreaded the threats of the law; and therefore they naturally enough lowered the standard of Christian holiness, and instead of overcoming sin, were driven to that grievous state of denying sin to be sin, because they the children of God, as they boasted, had committed it; and the children of God, they said, could not sin.

Another example occurred, somewhat later, and was followed by consequences more widely mischievous. When the northern nations came down upon the Roman empire, their kings and great men were soon persuaded to become Christians, as it was called; that is, to acknowledge Christ to be their God, and to worship Him instead of idols. In one instance we are told, that one of these chiefs became a Christian, because he ascribed a victory which he had won over his enemies to the power of Christ in his behalf, exerted in answer to a prayer which his wife had persuaded him to offer. We can see that here Christ's forerunner had been little known; that no repentance had prepared the way for the word of life; that Christ was received, not as a new principle of life into a new creature, but

rather as an old principle suited to the old nature, and only presenting itself under another name. And therefore Christ's Gospel grew mighty in word, but not in power; the new converts, as they were called, kept their old superstitions under new names, and indulged all their old passions; and thus it came to pass that the history of modern times has in so many points exactly resembled that of ancient times; that wars, and cruelties, and covetousness, and injustice of every kind, prevailed as much under what was in name the kingdom of Christ, as it had done in the days of heathenism.

These are the examples of history, but those of private life will come nearer to the matter. Why is it, that within our own knowledge, where all profess to believe in Christ, the work of His Spirit is yet wrought so imperfectly? Why are not our lives and thoughts Christian, as well as our outward profession? Is it not because with us too, in so many instances, Christ has been preached to us without His forerunner; because we have never been prepared by repentance to receive his salvation aright? And is not this apt to be the case where our instruction in religion is given us so often as a matter of course along with instruction in other matters, that we hear of Christ, and learn to call ourselves Christians, without connecting that name with any change in our own hearts and lives, or understanding any thing of the necessity of a previous preparation for it? So with us the old nature, and the old notions, and the old practice, often remain unaltered; and we offer the strange spectacle of persons calling themselves Christians, yet neither speaking the language, and much less adopting the practice, of that kingdom of which they profess to be members.

And this will account for the marked difference which sometimes takes place at a later period in life, when a person receives a strong religious impression. If we examine, we shall find that in such cases Christ's forerunner has done his work; repentance has prepared the way of the Lord, and made His paths straight. For a religious impression, I suppose, means always this, that something or other has put us in mind of God's judgment, and our danger from it has made us think of death, and how little prepared we are to meet it. The impression, in short, is one leading directly to repentance, to serious thoughts about good and evil, to a turning from the latter, and seeking the former with all earnestness; and so it puts us in a disposition to receive Christ's Gospel aright. For if we receive Christ as a Saviour from an evil which we had learned to dread and to hate,—I mean sin,—then we shall avail ourselves gladly of His aid to conquer this evil, and Christ will be truly our righteousness. But if we have not learned to dread and to hate sin, then we shall not think of

going to Christ for help against it, but shall think that He will save us in our sins, instead of delivering us from them.

Again, the preparation of Christ's forerunner is needed, because we are apt, as the world goes on, to take up our notions of right and wrong from those about us; to call good what the world calls good, and evil what the world calls evil. I am not speaking now of an entire confusion between them, of calling evil good and good evil; but rather of our taking a very low standard of good, and a very high one of evil; of our thinking very much of a very little good, and very little of a very great evil. This is what is meant by the prophet Isaiah, when in describing the perfect kingdom of God he says, "The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful; that is to say, that very low measure of liberality, and bounty which we praise as a great virtue, shall then sink to its proper level; and so, on the other hand, the sins which we treat lightly under the names of foibles or imperfections, shall then rise to their proper level, and shall be found to be the ruin of souls. Now we cannot wonder that the Jews and heathens had got so low a standard of goodness, and so much needed to be taught to repent, when the same thing has happened even in the light of the Gospel; and our common standard is notoriously so different from that given us in Christ's

law. Thus the business of Christ's forerunner was to make men aware of this, to show them that their notions of good and evil wanted correction; that far less faults than they dreamed of would be their condemnation in God's judgment, that far higher virtues than those which they thought excellent were needed to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

But what shall we do then? Must we wait for Elijah to appear once more, for one like John the Baptist to arise in the spirit and power of Elijah, before the coming of the last great day of the Lord's judgment? It is no unreasonable belief that the prophecy will yet be fulfilled again; that as John the Baptist was the Elijah to prepare the way for Christ's first coming, so another Elijah may yet arise to prepare the way for His second. But whether it may be fulfilled in one individual or in more, or in any one church, or in any one people, this can be known only in its season, when God shall reveal it. Meantime we should remember that our Lord was pleased to make the baptism of water the way by which we all should be admitted into His kingdom, in order to show us that His forerunner's work is ever needed; and that as He Himself came not by water only, but by water and blood, so He came not by blood only, but by blood and water; that repentance and His salvation could never be parted

from each other. So, then, the disciples of John are become the disciples of Jesus; but the disciples of Jesus still preach, not alone certainly, yet they must preach it, the baptism of John. Every minister of Christ is a minister of two things, repentance and faith; and either of these without the other avails not. And as every minister of Christ is a minister of repentance and faith, so every member of Christ must keep these two things together for his own salvation. If he asks, Why is my faith so weak? is it not that his repentance has been and is deficient, that the way of the Lord is not kept duly prepared, that the ground is not cleared and levelled for the foundations of His holy temple, and that therefore it cannot be built? We should all of us think more of this: those of us whose lives man's judgment dare not do otherwise than approve, those of us who understand and admire the revelations of God in Christ Jesus, to whom reading the Scriptures, and exercises of prayer and praise, are any thing but unwelcome; even these may feel sometimes that their faith is weak, and may confess, if they examine themselves, that repentance has not its due place in their religion. I am not speaking of repentance for some great and manifest sin. It may be that we have not committed any such; but of repentance for the manifold faults and unworthiness of our lives, for falling so

far short of God's perfect law not in our practice merely, but even in our very principles. It is not an idle lesson which our church service teaches us, when it begins with a solemn confession of sins. It is easy to repeat this over from mere habit, without thinking of it. It may be, too, that some of its expressions may be stronger than we may think applicable to every single individual. But the thought of having left undone things which we ought to have done, and having done things which we ought not to have done, and that therefore there is in ourselves no health; that is, that we dare not meet God's judgment as men entitled to be acquitted by it—this is a thought which I am sure should be present to our minds whenever we come before God, and which we should earnestly labour to cherish, and to strengthen its sincerity. For indeed, if we do look into ourselves fairly, the thought will not be affected, but most sincere. It is because we do not examine ourselves carefully to see how much is really amiss in us, that expressions of repentance seem exaggerated, and so we use them without meaning. But the more we do examine, the more we shall see ourselves as we are; and then we shall be anxious to do away with some of our many evils, to be prepared in some measure for Christ's forgiveness. Then we shall go on more steadily to follow the full leading of His Spirit, till virtues, of which now we scarcely conceive, may

become familiar to our minds; and it will be as sincere a matter of repentance to have failed in them, as it can now be to us to have neglected the commonest duty, or have committed the commonest sins.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
June 19th, 1836.

SERMON XV.

ZACCHÆUS.

ST. LUKE xix. 9.

This day is salvation come unto this house, for so much as he also is a son of Abraham.

THESE words were spoken of Zacchæus, whose story, mentioned by St. Luke alone among the four Evangelists, was read in the second lesson for this morning's service. Although it is in its principal points in exact agreement with other passages in the Gospels, equally relating to our Lord's treatment of sinners, yet I do not know that the *whole* view of the Gospel forgiveness of sins is anywhere more fully given than in this particular case, and it is for this reason that I wished to make it the subject of our consideration this day.

Zacchæus was a chief among the publicans, and rich. I need not say that by publicans are meant farmers of the taxes; that is to say, not simple

collectors of taxes, whose business it is merely to collect from different individuals a certain sum fixed by the law, and which they, having collected it, then pay over into the hands of other officers appointed to receive it: not tax-gatherers or tax-collectors in the present sense of the word; but farmers of the taxes, men who made it a trade or speculation, first paying to the government a certain sum, and then being empowered to repay themselves, and to make their own profit, by getting as much as they could from the people. Having thus a direct interest in the collection, they were not only watchful to exact to the utmost every thing which might legally be demanded; but, as the times were bad, and the law not always strong enough to protect the poor, they often frightened persons into paying more than was due, by the terror of bringing false or frivolous accusations against them if they did not comply with the publican's extortions. Accordingly, they became so generally odious, that they are, as we know, represented as one of the worst classes of men; so unprincipled that it was a discredit to any respectable person to mix with them in society.

A calling in such ill repute as the publican's, and abounding in so many temptations, must have been highly unfavourable to any man's virtue. If a disgraceful mark be fixed upon any business or calling in life, men of the best sort are apt to avoid this calling, and it gets filled chiefly with the worst.

Again, in a way of life which is very ill spoken of, a man is likely to think a great deal of a very low degree of goodness. He is not so bad as others in his profession, and of that he makes a merit. He might thus be at once living in great sin, and in much self satisfaction also; living worse than the generality of men in other callings, and yet proud of himself, because he was not so bad as the generality of men in his own. So exceedingly dangerous is it to have a low standard of virtue in that particular society to which we belong, as we are thus disposed not only to live wickedly, but to deceive our consciences all the time by thinking that we are better than our immediate neighbours.

With these temptations in his particular calling as a publican were united, in the case of Zacchæus, the general temptations of wealth besides. These are, to draw us away at once from God and from our poorer brethren, and to fix our minds on our own enjoyments; for indulgence, like other things, grows by practice and exercise. He who is rich has the means of indulging himself; and the more he does so, the more he wishes to do it. Further than this, if public morals be low, or public opinion not able to reach the highest classes, then the indulgences procured by wealth will often be of the worst kind; and riches will lead not only to selfishness, but to that degree of shameless wickedness which we find noticed both by sacred writers and pro-

fane about the time of the beginning of Christianity.

Thus Zacchæus was, humanly speaking, in as unfavourable a situation for turning to God, as any one could be at that time. He was one of a set of men who might emphatically be called, "that which was lost." And therefore when we find our Lord saying of this man, "This day is salvation come into this house; for that he also is a son of Abraham," it is impossible not to perceive the freeness and fulness of the grace of the gospel, which at once,—with no long probation of penitence or trial required,—at once forgiving all the past, and trusting for the future, declares to this lost sinner that he was one of Abraham's children, and partaker therefore of Abraham's blessing.

This is so true, that to deny it were to deny the very foundation of the Gospel. But yet in giving this statement, I have not yet given the *whole* picture contained in the account of Zacchæus, and what remains is no less essential. The forgiveness was entire and immediate, because the repentance had been no less unhesitating and no less entire. "Zacchæus sought to see Jesus,"—we know not with how much of mere curiosity, nor with what an imperfect knowledge; but he sought and took pains to see Him; and He who is found by all that seek Him, said immediately, "Zacchæus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at

thy house." But when Christ was come to him, when his first imperfect desires for good had been so largely blessed, then the love of Christ constrained him, and with no reserves, with no hesitation, he gave up all his heart to Him. Zacchæus stood and said unto the Lord, "Behold, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." His repentance goes the full range of his temptations: he was rich, and had probably been self indulgent and neglectful of his brethren; behold, now "he gives the half of all his property to the poor;" half of all his means of support and indulgence he throws from him at one blow. Again, he was a chief among the publicans, he had done as others of his calling had done; he had exacted more than the law allowed, by the terror of false informations: behold, now, if he has robbed any man in this manner, he resolves to restore him fourfold: he cares not for the sacrifice; he does not ask whether strict justice required so large a measure of restitution; much less whether the law was ever likely to enforce it. But he wishes to free himself wholly from the accursed thing, unlawful gain; he wishes to judge himself, that he be not judged of the Lord; he cannot bear that any portion of sin or sinful profit should remain in that heart and house which Christ, and Christ's Spirit, had deigned to visit. So, then, no less complete

and unreserved than the gift of the Gospel forgiveness, is the feeling and the act of Christian repentance.

Here, then, we find the Gospel in all its entireness; we see what it means by forgiveness, and also what it means by repentance. Let our repentance be as full, as unreserved, as immediate as that of Zacchæus, and this day, yea, this hour, is salvation come into our house, and it is proved that we also are sons of Abraham.

Indeed, the story is our own in part already; it remains with us to see whether we will make it ours wholly. Christ has come to us, even though we sought not for Him so much as Zacchæus did, yet He says to us all, "To-day I must abide at thy house." To-day, while it is called to-day, this one short day of our earthly life, He is pleased to abide with us. He is here with all His goodness, His full forgiveness, His grace inexhaustible; He is here amongst us to-day. Shall it be that when the morning of the next, the eternal day, arises, we shall let Him pass on His way, and shall have had Him amongst us in vain for one short space, to see us again no more for ever?

He is come to us, and now He waits to see how we will receive Him. Perhaps it may be as he was received by the Pharisee, with cold respect, and no gratitude. We call him Lord, nay, when He tells us that He has something to say to us, we answer

Him respectfully, "Master, say on." We hear His word, we listen to it, we admire it; it is very pure, very beautiful; never man spake like this man. We delight to have Him amongst us, to enjoy the high distinction of being a Christian nation; not sunk in ignorance, but having the full light of truth, and able thereby to understand all knowledge. But where is our true love for Him the while, and where our consequent repentance? We think that we need but little to be forgiven, and therefore we love little; and because we love little, therefore also we repent little.

Or we may receive Him as Martha did. We may honour Him, admire Him, love Him, and be anxious to serve Him. We may be diligent in serving His body, the Church, diligent in promoting its worldly advantage, diligent yet more in setting forward its great work, the advance of truth and goodness. Whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, noble, pure, and true,—on these we may think, and love them, and do them. And yet it may be that we do not receive Him with the true penitence of Zacchæus, or the true love of Mary; and therefore we may miss the full pardon of the one, and the blessing of the other.

But we may receive Him also like Zacchæus, and like Mary; first like the one, then like the other. First, like Zacchæus: Christ is come to us, but we cannot sit down with Him at the table of which

He vouchsafes to be a partaker with us; we cannot be one with Him, or He with us, till we have stood and given up to Him our whole heart in true repentance. Do we ask of what we are to repent, and how we are to show it? Let us look again at Zacchæus, and consider, as he did, the sins and temptations of our general life, and those also of our particular calling. In the former respect we are for the most part as he was. We all here assembled, in comparison with the largest portion of our fellow-creatures, may well be called rich. We all must so far be like Zacchæus, that we have tasted and are tasting daily of the indulgences which riches, or, if you will, which plenty, can afford us. We have all in this respect something to look to, something, I am sure, of which to repent. We may not be called upon to give the half of our goods to the poor, though neither, in fact, does it appear that he was called upon to do so. But surely there are indulgences which might be restrained, there are denials of ourselves for the sake of our poorer brethren, which if we do not make, how dwelleth the love of Christ in us?—how can we be moved to true repentance?—how obtain Christ's free forgiveness? Then again, in our particular calling, have we nothing to repent of there? no waste of time, which should be made up by a fourfold diligence? no spirit of indifference to our duty, to be made up by a fourfold zeal? Can we

wonder that so few of us feel the abiding sense of Christ's forgiveness, when we know,—our hearts too surely tell us,—that we have not probed them to the bottom? We have not opened them wholly to Christ: all their evil has not been abandoned; all their best has not been offered.

I hardly dare go on to dwell on the blessed state of those who, having once received Christ like Zacchæus, receive Him now like Mary. Those who, having truly repented, and having been fully forgiven, can now sit gratefully and joyfully at Christ's feet to hear His word. Not indeed that they sit still in the literal sense; they are not idle, not indolent, not inactive, but contented and peaceful. Their bodies are at work, their minds may be vigorous; but their spirits are still at Christ's feet, and nothing can draw them from their rest. Theirs is indeed the better part, who have so found Christ in this life, as to make this life appear no other than the beginning of life everlasting. But who among us have attained as yet to this state?—who may dare to look upon it without presumption, or without humiliation?

Zacchæus' state must be ours first; and woe be to us if it be not so. Christ is with us, but we are not with Him; our salvation is not come to us, unless there be first our hearty repentance: unless we are afraid to sit down with Him, to take any rest in His presence, before we have opened our

hearts to Him, praying to Him to help us in opening them; that whatever of lurking evil is in them may be made as visible to our eyes as to His; and that having been made visible, it may be cast off utterly; even as He also will cast it off, and us together with it, to everlasting destruction, when the judgment which we had been afraid to pronounce upon our sins, He will pronounce for ever upon them and upon us.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
March 8th, 1835.

SERMON XVI.

THE SECOND BIRTH.

ST. JOHN iii. 5, 6.

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

IF we read the 15th chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, that famous chapter with which we are all so well acquainted, and which speaks at so much length of the resurrection, we shall find that there were some who called themselves Christians, and had joined the Christian society, who did not believe in any life after death. Now this to us seems a contradiction; we cannot fancy a man's being a Christian, and at the same time his not believing in the resurrection. But what these persons meant is explained in a passage of St. Paul's second Epistle to Timothy, where he says that Hymenæus and Philetus maintained that the resurrection was past

already. Of course they did not mean that either they or their disciples had been dead, and had risen again from the dead; but they maintained that the resurrection which Christ had promised was a rising from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; that a man so rose when he was baptized and became a Christian; that thus to all who were Christians, their resurrection was past already; they had received what Christ had promised, and for the future had nothing to trust to but such hopes of another life as they could gain from their own natural reason, without in any degree relying on any especial revelations of the Gospel.

Now it is true that the words "death" and "rising again" are often used in this figurative manner in the Scriptures, to express a man's being sunk and lost in wickedness, and then rising out of that lost state to a life of virtue. They are so used, it is probable, in the very next chapter but one to that from which the text is taken; namely, in the 5th chapter of St. John. In the 25th verse our Lord says, "the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." It is probable that our Lord here means exactly what His Apostle Peter means, when he says that "the Gospel was preached to them that are dead, that they might live according to God in the Spirit," and what His Apostle Paul also means, when he writes to the Ephesians,

"Even when we were dead in sins God hath quickened us," (i. e. hath made us alive again,) "together with Christ, and hath raised us up together." You see that St. Paul himself maintains that in one sense "the resurrection was past already;" for he declares of himself and his fellow Christians, that "God had quickened them and had raised them up, when they were dead in sins." But after our Lord had spoken figuratively of the resurrection in the 25th verse of the 5th of St. John, He goes on in the 28th verse to speak of it literally. "Marvel not at this," (i. e. that they who are dead in sins shall be roused by the call of the Son of God to a life of righteousness,) "for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of condemnation." His call can do more than rouse those who are dead figuratively, sunk and lost in sins; it shall rouse the really dead, the very dead who are in their graves, mouldering or moulded, returning to dust or already returned to it. All of these shall hear His voice, and all shall obey it; but it is no longer, "they that hear shall live." It is now another resurrection, in which they who never rose before, that is, who never heard Christ's first call from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, shall now arise only to condemnation. But truly may we say

with St. John in the Revelation, " Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection ; on such the second death hath no power." He who has risen in this world at Christ's first call to a life of righteousness, shall assuredly rise without fear at His second call to a life of glory.

I may seem all this time to have forgotten my text, but in truth I have been preparing the way for the explanation of it. We see that the words death and resurrection are used in the New Testament in two senses, sometimes figuratively, sometimes literally; we see that they who used them *only* figuratively, who like Hymenæus and Philetus, maintained that there was no other resurrection than that which was past already, erred concerning the truth, and overthrew the faith of some ; yet we see also that it were to err no less to interpret them *only* literally, for it is not true that all the really dead who shall hear the voice of the Son of God shall live eternally ; on the contrary, many shall hear it and shall obey it, but shall find it a call not to life, but to condemnation. Now what is true of the words " death " and "resurrection " is true also of the words "birth " and "kingdom of God ;" they also are used in two senses, a literal one and a figurative one ; and in these too as well as in the other words, it is to err from the truth, and to lose some part of the profitable instruction of Scripture, to take them either only literally, or only figuratively.

But in the text there is a mixture of the two senses which makes it a very good opportunity for trying to explain both, as without understanding both, we cannot fully enter into its meaning.

By " being born again," then, is meant exactly the same thing as by " rising again ;" or rather the same two things are meant by it. In its literal sense it means what is meant by the resurrection literally ; that is, our entrance upon a new state of being, after our present one is over ; by being born, we came into this world from a state of nothingness; by being born again, we shall pass into another world from a similar state of nothingness ; that is, from death. This is being born again literally ; and by thus being born again, we enter into the kingdom of God. Now in one sense certainly we are all in His kingdom already ; we cannot go anywhere where He is not over all ; we see the whole of nature around us, the very stars of heaven in their courses moving according to His laws. But here there are some things which do not obey Him, but have chosen to themselves another king ; and these things are the evil hearts of men. It will then be the kingdom of God truly and perfectly, when there shall be nothing which does not obey Him, when not the earth, the moon, and the stars shall move more entirely according to His will than the hearts of all His reasonable creatures. All things that cause to offend, all things that do offend, shall

be gathered out of His kingdom and cast away; there shall be nothing, no not so much as the most secret murmur of a single heart, to break the full concord of the elders' hymn, who rest not day and night giving glory to Him who made them.

Into this kingdom of God, into this new and divine life, we can by no natural process be born. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. God's ordinary laws,—God our Creator,—has provided our natural birth, perishable and evil as we are, for we can give life to other beings; but they must be perishable and evil likewise. But for our second birth, our birth into the kingdom of God, we require, not the natural laws of God our Maker, but the interference, in a manner different from the known laws of our present nature, of God our Sanctifier; of that most Holy Spirit who in a particular manner is the Lord and Giver of life eternal. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. By His new creation a new nature is wrought for us, incapable of decay, incapable of sin, and so fit for the eternal society of God. It is said of Christ that He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; and it is said again, that if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies, by His Spirit

that dwelleth in us. Without venturing to be wise beyond what is written, we can see from these and other passages of Scripture, that God the Holy Ghost, who forms our hearts to love Him and to cleave to Him, is in a peculiar sense our Maker in our second birth, when we arise incorruptible to enter into the kingdom of God.

This is the literal sense of being born again, and of entering into the kingdom of God. But undoubtedly these terms are used in a lower and figurative sense also, like the terms death and resurrection. Properly, that is the kingdom of God where God is perfectly obeyed, where all evil is shut out utterly. But as compared with the common state of things in this life, that may well be called the kingdom of God, where God is acknowledged to be King; where, if He be not perfectly obeyed, yet every act of disobedience is self-condemned, because he who is guilty of it knows that it was against his duty, that it is his privilege to be a servant of God. And therefore the Christian church or society, where all acknowledge themselves to be God's redeemed people, and to be bound to live wholly to Him, who has purchased them with the blood of His dear Son; this also is called the kingdom of God. Further,—because to belong to such a society is a great change from the principles of common men, because it is a great thing for those who have been used to live to themselves to begin to live unto God,—

therefore the entrance into the Christian society on earth is called by the same name which belongs properly to our entrance into the society of just men made perfect in heaven; it is called by no less a name than being born again.

Now the second birth—in its literal sense, our being raised up incorruptible to enter into the true kingdom of God,—is the work of God's Holy Spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." And of the second birth figuratively,—that is, our being so changed in principles as to be willing to enter into what may be called the kingdom of God on earth,—it is said no less, that it is the work of the same Holy Spirit. "Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But of this second birth figuratively, it is said also, that a man must be born "of water and of the Spirit;" and it is this expression, "being born of water," that has given occasion to many frivolous controversies and foolish superstitions. But consider the various passages in which the baptism by water is opposed to the baptism by the Holy Spirit. "I, indeed," says John the Baptist of himself, "baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, who shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." So our Lord to His disciples, after His resurrection, "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Again, speaking even of

Christians, it is said in the Acts of the Apostles, that Peter and John were sent down to Samaria, to give the Holy Spirit to the converts whom Philip had made; "for as yet," it is added, "He was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus;" that is, they had received the baptism of water, but not the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Now what is meant by these two things? For it is clearly impossible that a mere outward ceremony, such as putting a person into the water, or pouring water upon him, should be spoken of in such language as is here used by our Lord. First, what is meant by the baptism by water? This John the Baptist explains, when he says, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance." The natural meaning of the ceremony of baptizing with water was the putting off the defilements of sin, the being cleansed in spirit from sin, as the body is washed by water. To be born of water then, is in other words to be prepared for the society of Christ by a hearty repentance; to have cast off all former sins, and to be ready with a pure and single heart to receive the teaching of His Spirit. To be baptized with the Spirit, as an introduction into the Christian society, has had at some times a wider signification than at others. In the time of the first Christians it meant particularly the receiving the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which were bestowed by the laying on of the

Apostles' hands, as a sign of the great power of God. But as it does not appear that all Christians received these gifts, the baptism of the Spirit is to be looked for in another thing, which was more universal, namely, the faith in Jesus Christ, required of every man, together with his repentance, before he was admitted into the Christian Church. "No man," says St. Paul, "can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost;" and it was an especial work of the Spirit to present to the mind the things which concerned the Person of Christ. So that the water and Spirit here spoken of by our Lord, so far as they relate to the entrance into the kingdom of God in its lower sense, that is, into the Christian Church on earth, seem to apply most properly to the repentance of past sins, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, required of those who are received to baptism.

But this is not the sense in which it most concerns us to dwell upon them. We have been all long since admitted into the Christian Church, and the value of that admission depends very much on the state of the church at any given time; it may do very little towards gaining us an entrance into the true kingdom of God. But into that true kingdom, that state of eternal life and joy, we must all be born by water and by the Spirit. These are they which must prepare us through what is well called our travail time of life, for the moment of

our heavenly birth hereafter; without these we shall never come to it. By constant repentance, constant faith,—and not faith only, but all the other graces of the Holy Spirit, each in their order, —we are gradually ripened for our appointed hour. In this sense we may say, if we will, that we are born daily, by daily becoming more and more ready to be born; but the actual birth is at our resurrection, or else, in a lower sense, when we are admitted into the Church of Christ on earth for the first time. But as in this sense it is past with all of us, and as in that higher sense which alone concerns us, it can only come after our deaths; so there is no birth to be looked for now, as some one sudden change, which shall divide, as by a great gulf, the latter parts of our lives from those which have gone before. We cannot be born here any more, but we may by water and the Spirit be prepared for a real birth hereafter. The preparation may not cease till the time of that birth be fully come. It is still by the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, all agreeing in one, that we are brought nearer and nearer to the redemption of our body, to the real resurrection, the real birth, into the kingdom of God—not by "water" only, that is, by repentance, but by "water and blood," by our repentance, and our grateful faith in God's love through Christ; and not by these only, but by the constant indwelling of "the Spirit" of Him who

raised up Jesus from the dead, that abiding with us, and ripening in us all His blessed fruits of love, and peace, and joy, He may, when our spirits are fully quickened, quicken also our mortal bodies,—that having heard Christ's call from the death of sin, and having arisen to His spiritual life, we may hear it also from the very grave, and come forth, and be born again to a life which shall never die.

Rydal Chapel,
July 15*th*, 1832.

SERMON XVII.

CHRIST'S MIRACLES.—THE DEMONIACS.

St. Matthew viii. 31.

So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

The second lesson for this morning's service contained these words, in the account of the cure wrought by our Lord on the two men possessed with devils, on the shore of the lake of Gennesaret. Few parts of the New Testament have been the subject of greater difference of opinion than those which relate to the cases of men possessed with devils; and in addition to the general difficulties of this question, there are others peculiar to the particular story to which the text belongs. Now the difficult parts of the New Testament require to be touched upon occasionally, or at least once for all,

in order to remove that perplexity which might otherwise beset men's minds in reading them. When I speak of removing perplexity, I by no means use the expression as equivalent to removing the difficulties of this and other similar passages; for a part of the Scripture may be exceedingly *difficult*, and yet may occasion us no *perplexity* at all. I mean by *perplexity*, that state of mind in which we do not know clearly how much can be understood of a part of Scripture, and how much cannot; a state in which we do not know what to do with a passage, what lesson we ought to learn from it, and how far we must be contented to pass it over as a thing sealed beyond our opening. This is a painful state, and an unedifying one; whereas the being conscious of a difficulty which we cannot explain, is not, or ought not to be, either the one or the other. Before a confessed and palpable unconquerable difficulty, the mind, if in a healthy state, reposes as quietly as when in possession of a discovered truth, as quietly and contentedly as we are accustomed to bear that law of our nature, which denies us the power of seeing through all space, or of being exempt from sickness and decay. And thus the clear consciousness of the necessity of ignorance in any given matter has a tranquillizing effect upon us, and allows us to turn ourselves wholly, and with no fond looking back of hope or regret, to those matters which we are equally conscious may be rendered intelligible to our minds, and therefore in some way or other improving to them.

Our perplexity, then, may be removed as to the parts of Scripture which relate to men possessed with devils, although we may be quite unable to remove the difficulties of the subject. The difficulty consists in this, that of spiritual beings, as we call them, we can have no distinct conceptions. What a spirit is, and how it acts, are questions to which we can give no answers. And therefore when we hear of a man possessed with a spirit, all that we can understand or judge of in the matter is limited to the effects of such possession, whether for good or for evil. When we hear of one possessed by the Spirit of God, we can in no way understand the manner of the Spirit's working, far less perceive it with our bodily senses, but we can see and understand its fruits, and from them judge of the power that wrought them. And so with one possessed by a spirit of evil, nothing is visible, nothing is intelligible to us in the process of its working, save only the evil fruits produced by it; evil whether as relates to the body or the mind; for in both, as God is confessedly the author of all good, though working in some measure by secondary and intelligible causes, so it is no less conceivable that evil spirits may be the authors of all evil, though *their* working, too, may be through the instrumentality of such physical and moral causes

the transaction, the mere circumstances of the case might have induced us readily to believe. Divine power was surely there, when a single word dispelled in a moment, in the case of two separate persons, a violent access of madness, and restored them at once to their perfect senses; and some evil power, setting in motion as it were the physical causes of madness, might well have been supposed to be present, when the words of the seeming madman, asking to be allowed to visit the swine, were so instantly answered by the event; and while they who in all appearance had spoken them were sitting quietly at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in their right mind, the spirit of madness had gone from them into the swine, according to its word, and as before was manifesting its presence and its power only by effects in themselves apparently natural.

But the question is asked, Why have evil spirits ceased to possess men now, if they really possessed them in the time when our Lord was on earth? It has been answered, that with so great an interposition for good as was then shown, when God became manifest upon earth in the person of Christ, an unusual interposition of the powers of evil is conceivable also; devised by them for their own cause, permitted by God for His own glory. This answer would indeed be of much weight, if we were obliged to allow the fact which the question takes for granted. But how can we be sure that evil spirits

have ceased to possess men now? The effects of evil are sufficiently visible now as in the times of our Lord; the spiritual authors of that evil were not more visible then, nor without His interposition and His revelation would they have been more known to us then, than they are at this moment. God and God's spirit still work continually for our good; not less certainly because the working is invisible, and its effects seemingly natural. How can we be sure that evil spirits are not at work as continually, with an agency as real, with a power as untraceable, with results as seemingly natural? All the difference is, that we, having no longer that gift of the spirit of power which could attack evil in a manner at its source, and destroy the effects by a direct removal of the cause, we are now compelled to combat evil in its effects only, to meet secondary causes by secondary, to imitate in short those ordinary workings of God's providence which we call natural causes, instead of those more direct manifestations of Himself which we call miraculous and divine.

There is another question sometimes asked with regard to one particular part of the story, namely, why the evil spirits were permitted to enter into the swine? I say permitted, for it is a manifest mistake to suppose that they were sent by our Lord into the swine, as His act, and not theirs. But the only answer to this question is another:

Why are evil spirits, or why is evil permitted to work at all? Why are they not all shut up at once in the abyss or deep, to use the language of the Jews: hindered, that is, from going to and fro in the earth, to the injury of our bodies and our souls? And this is one of those questions before which, as I said, a sound mind may repose as quietly as in the possession of discovered truth; for it is a question which never has been answered on earth, and never can be; the gates of paradise must be entered before the answer to it can be given us. Here there is no perplexity, but a confesssed unconquerable difficulty, which to assail in the hope of overcoming it, is madness. Let us rest contentedly before it, acknowledging this fact, and dismissing for ever the restless hauntings which might tempt us to an inquiry so fruitless. But yet, amidst the inscrutable darkness of that principle of the permission of evil which is declared to us in all nature, and with neither more nor less of obscurity in our Lord's permission to the evil spirits in the text, there is still that in their request and in His answer, which is full of warning to us all. Have we cast out any evil spirit from our own hearts, or the hearts of others? Let us be sure that the evil so expelled goes not out into the abyss; it is not so much taken for ever from the dominion of our great enemy; the evil is permitted till the great day of the restoration, still to wander about in search of

prey, sometimes to return to the place whence it was cast out, sometimes to fix its hold on some new victim. "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come:" the work will not have been fully wrought; there will be left enough of those over whom the spirit of evil is exercising dominion, from how many hearts soever that spirit may have been driven. Not yet, then, may the disciples whom their Lord has sent out to combat the enemy, turn back in triumph as though the work were done; not yet may they enter into their rest, nor lie down secure for themselves or for their brethren. Still ascends the cry of the evil spirits, "Suffer us to enter into this new victim;" still they do enter in and dwell; and those in whom they dwell run greedily to their own destruction, and perish in the overwhelming waters.

And with regard to the whole account of these men who were possessed with evil spirits, and whom Christ delivered from their power, thus much may be at least allowed, even if we refuse to allow that any similar cases of possession occur now. The belief in the existence and active efforts of spirits of evil, is surely capable of much practical usefulness, and has no natural tendency to lead to superstition. Its practical use is to excite us to watchfulness; there are more things against us than our own natural weakness and tendencies to evil; there is a spirit who hates us, who, restless

in his efforts against us, will aggravate every bad tendency in us, and who gives us more than passive resistance to contend with. But, unless we go beyond our knowledge, there is in this no room for superstition: the enemy acts only through our own hearts, and through them alone can we resist him. By no superstitious follies can he be repelled, who assaults us only by means which we call natural. And on that ground are we to meet him; if evil thoughts and desires arise continually within us, it is by prayer, and faith, and watchfulness, that they must be repelled. The Spirit of God helps us as surely as the spirit of evil threatens us; but our part in following the one and resisting the other, is in all soberness and reason, with godly fear and godly love, not with fanatical confidence or superstitious fear.

Rugby Chapel,
May 10*th*, 1835.

Rugby Church,
June 19*th*, 1836.

SERMON XVIII.

CHRIST'S PARABLES.—THE GROWING SEED.

St. Mark iv. 28, 29.

For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately they put in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

The short parable from which these two verses are taken is very remarkable. It is to be found only in St. Mark's Gospel, although his account, generally speaking, is very much confined to the miracles of our Lord, and gives fewer of His parables and discourses. And it is one of those parables which in the general view which they give of human life and character are so peculiar to our Lord. It speaks literally of the kingdom of God, that is, of the state of Christians considered together as a body; but it describes no less truly the state of individual Christians, and it is in this point of view that I am proposing now to consider it.

It begins, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a

man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." Now the seed cast into the ground is undoubtedly to be understood of the knowledge of good which may be at any time laid before the mind of another. We have an opportunity, it may be, of doing this; a person is with us for a certain time, and then perhaps is removed from us; we must even leave the seed to itself and go on our way, trusting that God in his good Providence will preserve it, and make it spring up in its season. It does spring up, and the plant begins to grow, very small at first, then larger, then showing signs of coming into ear, then coming into ear, and lastly ripening. We may be impatient for its appearing sooner, but it waits its own time; we may wish to forward its growth, but we can do nothing for it; it comes on and ripens in its season; and when it is ripe, then they put in the sickle, because the harvest is come. Then we are repaid, and much more than repaid, for any labour which we may in the beginning have bestowed on it. Its fruit speaks for itself, and we see and taste its benefits.

Still, however, it may be asked, what is the lesson which we are to learn from this; for it is not the custom of our Lord merely to state a thing as a matter of fact actually occurring in life, unless there may be something derived from it practically useful.

And we cannot suppose that He means to advise us to be careless, to take no pains of our own, but to leave the event wholly to God; to sleep and rise night and day without taking any thought for the welfare of those whom we wish to benefit; in the hope that God will be watching for us though we may be asleep, and that He will bring forward and ripen the fruit which we have neglected.

Undoubtedly it does not mean this; for how does our Lord represent Himself?—as the gardener digging about and dressing the barren fig tree, in the hope that it might perhaps at last bring forth fruit. He did not leave it to itself, saying that God would take care of it, and either cure it in His own time, or destroy it; but he laboured upon it that its nature might be altered, and that so God might not destroy it. And what Christ teaches us in one parable will never contradict what He teaches us in another.

Yet the two parables teach us different lessons, each making that of the other complete. We should do all that we can do, and then leave the event to God with confidence. To provide for the future by any present act is wise and good; but to be anxious about the future, where no act of ours can affect it, is a weakness and a want of faith. The parable of the fig tree teaches us the duty of the first, the parable of the growth of the corn while men slept, teaches us the foolishness of the second.

But together with a vain anxiety, the parable also condemns a vain impatience. "The earth brought forth, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Each in its own order, but not all at once, and still less the last first. What we should look for in the spring is promise, in the summer and autumn, it is performance. What should disappoint us is to find these wanting; it were a strange folly that should seek in summer for the fresh leaves and delicate flowers of spring, or in spring should require the deep foliage and abundant fruits of summer.

Now why does all this fit particularly the present occasion? Or is it merely the explanation of a part of the Scripture which may be given on one day as well as on another? It does suit the present time, I think, particularly. For unreasonable expectations are sure to be followed by disappointment no less unreasonable. If from confirmation, from this day's communion, from our serious thoughts and earnest prayers, we expect too large or too early a return, we shall surely be disappointed, and apt to think, because we found not the good which we looked for, that therefore the ordinances, the prayers, and the resolutions were all in vain. Then follows a greater and more desperate carelessness, because we think that care has done no good already. And we may, still retaining our former error, look for the chance of some sudden and almost extraordinary conversion,

as if that at least would at once bring the fruit which we desire. For still as before we wish to strike off if possible the season of spring and gradual growth; we would fain see the corn ripen the instant that the seed is thrown into the ground.

A third parable may here be called in to make the whole image yet clearer. We must be patient when the seed is sown; such is the lesson of the text: yet we must not be careless, nor neglect our duty to the ground in which it is to spring up; so teaches the parable of the fig tree: and to learn what that ground may be, and what are the dangers which most threaten the increase of the plant, and against which our care should be most directed, we should attend to the lesson of the parable of the sower.

As a mere delight to the understanding, I know of none greater than thus bringing together the different and scattered jewels of God's word, and arranging them in one perfect group. For whatever is the pleasure of contemplating wisdom absolutely inexhaustible, employed on no abstract matter of science, but on our very own nature, opening the secrets of our hearts, and disclosing the whole plan of our course in life; of the highest wisdom clothed in a garb of most surpassing beauty; such is the pleasure to the mere understanding of searching into the words of Christ, and blending them into the image of His perfect will respecting us.

But if this be all, we shall surely search into them in vain. Let us apply them then to ourselves, not for our delight only, but for our benefit. And first of all, those who were confirmed yesterday, and those who have received the communion to-day have, I doubt not, made many serious resolutions; or at any rate all were more or less moved to something better than their usual temper, and prayed and wished sincerely to be good. But consider that the week which is now begun is likely to lead to other thoughts; pleasure of another sort, the return to your homes, and all the enjoyments which that return brings with it, are likely to fill your hearts between this time and the period when you will actually depart. So that directly after the effect produced by the services of yesterday and to-day, there will come in something to lessen it. Now if you had expected any immediate change to take place in your minds, so that your thoughts would have been more fixed on God, and your enjoyment of earthly things less lively, you will in all probability be disappointed. Then if you feel that you have fallen back so soon after so solemn a service, you may think what hope there can be for the time to come that it may not be the same again; you may consider it of no use to make up as it were the accounts of your souls, if they are so soon again to fall into confusion. But what is the truth? The seed, I earnestly hope, has been sown in your

hearts, which may hereafter bring forth fruit unto life eternal. And what is the nature of the different soils on which it has been sown? This you can each tell for yourselves; that is, you can tell what your faults are most likely to arise from; whether from thoughtlessness, or from some strong passion which masters you, and leads you to care for nothing but itself. These two characters are represented in the parable of the sower, by the stony ground, and that overgrown with weeds. It is clear that in the majority of persons—of young persons at any rate—the danger is of the former kind; it is not that with strong desires and powers for good, the desire for evil is yet stronger; but that in the light soil nothing will grow vigorously, except such plants as require no depth of earth; ordinary follies and selfishnesses with no great crimes and no great virtues. This is the disadvantage which the seed sown has most commonly to struggle with. It is hard to give it root, and therefore the first temptations are apt to pluck it away. Here, then, the work required is to give depth to the soil, to make the character more decided, to encourage the growth of kindly affections, of generous and ennobling pursuits, although they may not be by any means the highest of all, nor that with which we are to sit down contented at last. But the earth will bring forth, first the blade, then the ear, and last of all the full corn in the ear. We must rejoice at first to see the

blade, although, if it is never followed by the ear, the seed certainly will have been sown in vain. For instance, whilst the pleasures of going home are so pressing on our minds, I would not say, "Strive to shut out your love of such things: they, like all earthly things, are vanity; God alone endures for ever:" but I would say, "It is a great happiness which you are going to enjoy, and thank God for it. But consider whether the pleasure with which your return is looked forward to at home is not somewhat purer than yours. Your relations look forward to welcoming you, not that it will bring to them any relief from unpleasant work, any greater liberty, or greater indulgence; but because they are glad to see you for your own sake, because they love you. Dwell upon this thought, and let it urge you to return their love worthily. Encourage your family affections; in the manifold chances of life you may be soon separated; make the most of the time while you are yet together. Draw closer your friendship with your brothers and with your sisters, and avail yourselves of your increased age since you were last at home, to increase the confidence and openness of your intercourse with your parents. Return here, not confirmed in selfishness and coarseness by six weeks' indulgence, but with a spirit at once more manly and more affectionate, and therefore braced, not weakened, for the work which will again be set before you. If you go home with such

resolutions, and begin to perform them when you arrive there, be sure that the thought of God will be no burden to you; you will remember this day and yesterday with no painful shame. Thank God for His goodness to you, and so learn to love Him better and better. You will be then more ready to do every duty which you have to do: pure happiness, such happiness as dwells in an open and a loving breast, is a wonderful excitement to labour in very thankfulness, that we may please those whom we love, and who have made us so happy, whether it be our earthly friends or our heavenly one. Your whole character will then have been strengthened and raised, and so there will be more depth of soil in which the heavenly seed may hereafter ripen. The work will be going on, silently and surely; there will be the beautiful and healthy promise of a plentiful harvest."

If, again, there be any whose minds are of a different quality, whose characters are formed beyond their years, in whom the love of knowledge or the love of distinction is already a strong passion, for them the approaching return to their friends offers no less the peculiar benefit which they need. The soil with them is deep enough, and its produce will be vigorous: may God grant that it be the fruit of the tree of life, and not merely of the tree of knowledge. But here, too, home has an influence softening and sweetening, as for the weaker mind

it was strengthening and elevating. Most heartily do I pity him who feels the common intercourse of affectionate hearts wearisome, and is always longing for some intellectual stimulus. Most heartily do I pity him, who is insensible to the happiness of a well-spent Sunday in the midst of his family. For him who is too ambitious, whose intellect is growing unnaturally, and fast overbalancing his love both of God and man, it is no wisdom to carry on the same fevering process at home, to think time lost when it is not spent in advancing his idol. For him the most familiar and simple pleasures will have a healthful tendency, by reducing the overweening growth of that plant which is fast becoming a deadly poison.

If there are those also amongst us whose hearts may be likened to the good ground of the parable, not too shallow for good, not overgrown with any luxuriant weed, for them little needs be said, save to bid them thank God with the deepest humility. But let them, too, not expect the fruit immediately, nor deform their character by any unnatural putting on of the manners and habits which do not become their years. Let them increase evermore in their love of God; but let them remember also that God wills them to improve all the talents which He has given them, and that they can glorify Him best by discharging in a Christian spirit the particular duties to which He has called them.

I know that some would say that I have been dwelling only on weak and beggarly elements; that I should have better followed up the service of yesterday and to-day by calling on you to stir up the grace of God that has been given you, and to hold fast to your Saviour's cross. But indeed I have been doing so; else it were most true that my preaching were worse than vain. I have called on you to stir up the grace of God that has been given you, by forming such resolutions for the coming holidays as may help you to love God best, and to look back on these days with least regret. I have urged you to hold fast to your Saviour's cross: for I have urged you to look into your own minds, and see what are your prevailing faults, and against those favourite faults to struggle most vigorously, rooting out selfishness by love, and pride by peacefulness and humility. And if the love I have spoken of, namely, the love of earthly friends, be but a weak and beggarly element, yet who has ever attained to the heights of knowledge by despising the first simple elements which lead to them. They deserve only the reproachful name of poor and beggarly if we rest contented in them, and seek to go no farther; not if we use them in their proper season to help us to that which we could not reach without them.

Deeply indeed should I grieve if I had awakened thoughts in any one's mind which, in any proper

sense of the term, were low and worldly. I might, indeed, have produced a stronger excitement by using a different language; but would that excitement have maintained its ground against the different excitement which is now coming upon you? The soberer feeling is, I think, the more likely to be lasting; the letting your thoughts glide gently from the most solemn things to the things of the world, keeping with them that which will sanctify the worldly pleasure, and make it turn to forward Christ's work. May God bless you, bless you in your serious thoughts, bless you in your happiness; and make you to know and feel that, whether serious or cheerful, He is your loving Father and eternal Friend, through His Son Jesus Christ.

Rugby Chapel,
June 30th, 1833.

SERMON XIX.

DEATH AND SALVATION.

St. Mark xiv. 21.

Good were it for that man if he had never been born.

When we consider by whom these words were spoken, and when also we think steadily of what is contained in them, they are, I think, altogether one of the most solemn passages to be found in the whole of the Scriptures. They were spoken by Him who so loved us that He gave His own life for us, by Him who spoke of what He knew, to whom all things were open, the things of death, no less than the things of life. They were spoken also when He was just going to lay down his life for us, when His love towards God and man was most perfectly displaying itself. Yet the words spoken by one so full of love and so full of all knowledge, the words spoken by Him who was truth itself, and at the moment when He was most showing

His love, these words express the most fearful amount of misery which the human mind can possibly conceive. For they declare of an immortal being, that it would have been good for him if he had never been born. Now consider what immortality is, consider what is conveyed to us in the words "never ending;" and it will be plain that if it were good for a man that this never ending being should never have been begun, it can only be because it will be to him a being of never ending misery. For let the misery last ever so long, yet if it has any end at all, the eternity of happy existence which follows that end must make it not bad, but infinitely good for us to have been born. Thousands on thousands of years of suffering, if that suffering is to end at last, must be infinitely less to an immortal being, infinitely more vain, infinitely more like a dream at waking, than one single second of suffering compared to threscore and ten years of perfect happiness.

There was one for whom it would have been good if he had never been born. But if this were all, if it were no more than a particular truth relating to one particular man, better a great deal that we should turn away our minds from a subject so dreadful, rather than fix them on it; for why should we pain ourselves, why injure the calm tone of our feelings, by presenting to them images of gratuitous horror? What I have said already

would have been far too much, if this were so. But if it be no particular truth, but a general one; if there have been many of whom it might have been said no less truly that it were good for them if they had never been born: when, above all, it will be truly said of our very selves,—of us, now sitting here,—of us, most of us so young and so happy,—of us, so full of hope and of enjoyment,—when I say it will be true of every one of us, that it were good for us if we had never been born, unless we cross over from death unto life, and so strive, and so watch, and so pray, as many of us now perhaps can hardly fancy themselves doing,—then it is no useless horror, no unnecessary exciting the feelings, but a work rather of soberness and truth, and loving-kindness, to open the eyes of any on that gulph of infinite darkness into which he of whom Christ spake once fell; on whose edge, unconscious of our danger, we ourselves in many cases are now standing.

There is no occasion to dwell on the particular sin of him of whom the words in the text were spoken; for we know that except we repent we shall all likewise perish. Otherwise we might remember that they who sin against their Saviour are expressly said to crucify Him afresh; their guilt being thus made directly of the same sort as well as degree with his of whom Christ said that it had been good for him if he had never been born. It

is not the particular sin, however, with which we are concerned, but rather the general state on which this fearful doom was pronounced. It was the state of one who with many opportunities long offered to him, had neglected all; who had brought himself to that condition that he might despair, but could not repent. Now if this condition were wholly ours, then it were vain to speak of it; if we had so long and so obstinately hardened our hearts that there was no place left for repentance, then indeed we might sit down and cross our arms as helplessly as the boatman when he feels himself within the sure indraught of the cataract, and that no human aid can save him from being swept down the fearful gulf. But if the boat be not so surely within the grasp of the current, if yet, though it be fast hurrying downwards, it may by a vehement effort be rescued, if the shore of certain safety be not only near, but by possibility accessible, who cannot conceive the energy with which we should struggle under such circumstances? who cannot feel of what intense efforts he would then be capable, when on the issue of a few moments of greater or less exertion, life or death were hanging?

The words of the Scripture which I have been dwelling on are known to the ears of us all; they stand ever before us, with a truth no less awful at one moment than at another. Yet we are so formed, that truths, at all times equally important

in themselves, present themselves to our minds under some circumstances with greater force than others. It seemed to open to me the full force, the full magnitude of the truth of our Lord's words, when I heard them read this morning. For when should the importance of every moment of trial be more felt, than when we witness cases of trial ended? When should we all feel more deeply what we have to do here, the infinite evil of neglect, the infinite blessing of Christian exertion, than now at this moment, when so many who have been long amongst us have just been removed from us, when on all of these one scene of trial has passed for ever, improved or wasted; when to one of this very number not this scene of early trial only, but the time of all trial is gone, and even at the very moment when his companions are removed to another field of labour, he has been taken to his eternal rest?

And then how flashes upon the mind along with the awful truth of Christ's words to Judas, the accompanying truth as blessed as that is awful,—how good it is, good beyond the power of tongue to speak of, for Christ's redeemed to have been born! How bright a light is thrown upon this earthly life when we so look at it! How good is it for us to be here; how thankfully, how joyfully, may we feel the consciousness that we are alive, if having joined ourselves to Christ, and, walking in

His faith and fear, we know that this life shall be for ever!

So then on both sides the importance of our time here, of every day of it and of every hour, is brought out, not with exaggeration, but simply without disguise or concealment, when we are looking as now upon trial ended. We judge of things then as God judges of them; for an instant our view of earth and earthly things is like His. For when I came yesterday from witnessing all but the very death-bed of him who has been taken from us, and looked around upon all the familiar objects and scenes within our own ground, where your common amusements were going on with your common cheerfulness and activity, I felt that there was nothing painful in witnessing that, it did not seem in any way shocking or out of tune with those feelings which the sight of a dying Christian must be supposed to awaken. The unsuitableness in point of mere natural feeling between scenes of mourning and scenes of liveliness, did not at all present itself. But I did feel, that if at that moment any of those faults had been brought before me which sometimes occur amongst you; had I heard that any of you had been just guilty of falsehood, or of drunkenness, or of any other such sin; had I heard from any quarter the language of profaneness, or of unkindness, or of indecency; had I seen or heard of any signs of that wretched folly

which courts the laugh of fools by affecting not to dread evil and not to care for good; then the unsuitableness of any of these things with the scene I had just quitted would indeed have been most intensely painful. And why? Not because such things would really have been worse then than at any other time, but because at such a moment the eyes are opened really to know good and evil, because we then feel what it is so to live as that death becomes an infinite blessing, and what it is to live also, that it were good for us if we had never been born.

Thus when feeling strongly what it is to have our trial happily over, we turn with something of a fit interest to the trial which is still going on. From regarding those for whom our hope had even grown into confidence, we turn to those for whom anxiety is almost becoming fear. We look around upon some whose characters are manifestly undecided, upon others who we may fear seem, although not yet bad, to be yet less promising for good than they once were; upon others, again, who though looking upwards, seem still as it were on the edge of danger; upon others, lastly, for whom hope is lively, yet still we know how often hope is blighted. We look around on such a scene, just fully impressed with the full importance of its tendencies both for good and for evil, and earnestly disposed, —who could be otherwise?—to assist with God's

help in turning the scale for good. But then there comes upon the mind also with no less force the conviction that no man can deliver his brother. With all the desire in the world to help in such a cause, we cannot but feel that there is no help in us. The work of turning souls is God's only; and your own, each for himself, is in not resisting the workings of His Spirit for your good.

Yet, feeling this most entirely, we would still pray you as in Christ's stead that ye be reconciled to God. We cannot but feel sure that many must need so to be reconciled; those at any rate, if there were no others, who have not yet begun to think of God, but who for many a year have been old enough to offend Him; those who have only the thoughtlessness of childhood left, but who have long lost its innocency. To them in particular the call is addressed, "Be ye reconciled to God:" to them belongs the warning, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." How marked even to human eyes is in most instances the change from thoughtlessness to God. Not marked by changes of manner, or by adopting a peculiar and unnatural language; but by a manifest sincerity of purpose, by a plain desire to do what is right, by keeping aloof from the evil and the foolish; or as this cannot always be in such a society as ours, by not joining in their evil or their folly, by having better things to love and care for, and by not being

ashamed to show that it is so. He who shows such a change in him we may well believe to be reconciled to God: not that such works in themselves, or any works that he can do, are able by their own merit to reconcile him; nor does he for a moment believe that they are; but because, as it is our sin and carelessness that keep us away from Christ, so, where we see a manifest disposition to avoid sin, there we may be sure that Christ's Spirit has worked, and that Christ's redemption has been thankfully received.

And now then may I not well call on all who hear me to be reconciled to God? On all who have any influence, from whatever cause derived, that they being converted may strengthen their brethren, and not, while they perish themselves, incur also the dreadful guilt of leading others to perish also? On all who are ripening in age, and on all who are not yet ripening; for neither can afford to linger on their way, and both, if they delay, are as yet in that state in which it would have been good for them if they had never been born? On all who being possessed of some ability, are either wasting it in absolute idleness, or disposed to exert it for the sake of their own distinction and credit, exercising their understandings while their hearts are neglected? On all who being deficient in ability have little or no interest in the peculiar business of this place, but who have therefore the more reason to take

heed lest while they give up earthly prizes with indifference, they should give up the pursuit of eternal life besides? On all, in short, of whatever character, of whatever powers;—lest it should be said of you that it were good if you had never been born, when to the poorest understanding, to the humblest in age and influence amongst us, every hour of life may be made so precious, that to have been born shall be an eternal and infinite blessing?

RUGBY CHAPEL,
October 11*th*, 1835.

SERMON XX.

CHRIST'S DIVINITY.

EXODUS iii. 14.
And God said unto Moses, I am that I am.

ST. JOHN viii. 58.
Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.

RESEMBLANCES in words merely between one part of Scripture and another, and especially when those words are looked at by themselves, without any reference to the context, cannot be insisted upon as proving any thing. But when the passage in St. John from which I was just quoting was chosen for the Gospel of this day, the chapter in Exodus from which I have been also quoting, having been chosen for the first lesson, the resemblance between them to which it was intended to draw our attention was not verbal only but real. Verbal indeed it is not,

as far as the Greek version of the Old Testament is concerned; for the expression there which answers to the "I am that I am" of our English Bible, is not the same with that in St. John's Gospel, which is translated in English by the same words. But the resemblance is real notwithstanding; for He who redeemed His people out of Egypt, and whilst revealing Himself in a visible form described Himself as essentially and eternally existing, is the same with Him who redeemed His people from their sins, and who, whilst again revealing Himself in a visible form, again declared that His existence was not measured by time, that He was the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Those who are acquainted with controversial theology well know that the words of our Lord are made to bear a lower sense by those who do not acknowledge His Divinity. By them they are interpreted as meaning only, "Before Abraham was, it was determined in the counsels of God that I should be, and as to God all things are eternally present, so I may say that in God's sight before Abraham was I am." Many persons who would without any scruple reject such an interpretation in this case, yet do not hesitate often, in explaining the prophecies, to adopt a similar rule of interpretation there; that is, they give the words a meaning as far below their simple and obvious meaning, as the interpretation, "Before Abraham was, I was

present to God, inasmuch as he had determined that I should be," falls below the simple meaning of the words "Before Abraham was, I am." But the fault in both cases consists not in giving such partial interpretations of the words of Scripture as *a* meaning of them, but as *the* meaning; as their highest meaning or their only one. It is true that our Lord's incarnation was determined, so the Scripture tells us, from the beginning of the world; it is true, therefore, that our Lord was present in the mind of God, if we may so speak, before Abraham was born; and if any Jew who had heard him say these words, and who knew nothing of His divine nature, had understood them in this sense, and therefore, seeing in them nothing which he would think blasphemous, had not joined his countrymen in taking up stones to cast at Him, such a Jew would have understood them well according to his light, and would have gained from them the knowledge of a truth. And so when the Apostles preached the resurrection, they were not wrong who said that the rising from the death of sin to a life of righteousness, was a part of the Christian's resurrection. But those were very wrong, who said that this figurative and partial interpretation of the doctrine expressed the whole of it; and so should we be wrong, if, taking only the lowest sense which our Lord's words will bear, that sense of which they are a highly hyperbolical expression, we were to say

that this is all which they contain; that he who has learnt without offence to embrace them fully, to take them in their length and in their breadth, in that sense in which they are no longer hyperbolical but literal, has extracted from them more than they were intended to supply.

And thus with respect to the interpretation of prophecy. We do often very right in taking a lower or partial sense; it is that sense which according to the particular view before us may happen to be the true one. For instance, in taking the prophecies in the simple and historical view of them, as relating, for example, to Babylon or to Jerusalem literally, we should then do wrong if we were not to understand them in a sense much lower than the literal one; everlasting destruction, perfect happiness, and perfect glory, belong neither to the one city nor to the other. But then it would not be right to say that this lower meaning is all that the words bear; there is a spiritual Babylon, there is a spiritual Israel, to which the strongest expressions of misery and happiness apply without any hyperbole; nor is it till we have ascended to these, that we can be said to have entered fully into the mind of the prophecy. So again, many persons in the Old Testament are commonly said to be types of Christ; there are points in which they resemble Him, and language is often used concerning them, which as understood of them is hyperbolical and

hyperbolical only; but which when understood of Christ Himself becomes literally true. For Christ being both God and man, language suitable to those human and imperfect types of Him may be applied to Him without blasphemy; while on the other hand language which as applied to them is extreme hyperbole, finds in Him, I do not say its entire, but much more than its entire fulfilment; for what human language can adequately express the perfections of the Eternal God?

The rule then is, that, in all that is said in Scripture of our Lord, or of any type of Him, the full and highest meaning of the words is true of Him without hyperbole, although lower and partial meanings may very often be true also. For instance, when He said to the Jews, that He and His Father were One, there was a lower sense in which this was true of Him even as a prophet; and thus our Lord actually appeals to the Scriptures, to show that similar high expressions had been there used to those who had received God's word, and declared it again to man. But it would be very wrong to rest in this lower sense of the words only; take them in their literal sense,—follow them to a height where they become lost to man's conceptions, in the utmost, and much more than the utmost human conception of unity,—it is true that Christ and the Father are One.

That St. John so understood the expressions

which he has recorded of our Lord, is absolutely certain. "Before Abraham was, I am," is an expression which is true to the letter of Him who was in the beginning, who was with God and was God. The first chapter of St. John's Gospel is a clear declaration that all the language which he records as applied to our Lord is to be taken in its literal sense, that it is not, like similar language when applied to persons merely human, the language of figure and hyperbole. That first chapter is the key to all that follows; it tells us that St. John, now that the Spirit had taught him to understand Christ's words fully, acknowledged much more in them than he had found perhaps when he actually heard them: that he has recorded them for after ages, that they also might receive them to the utmost, that they also might join with the Apostle Thomas in owning Jesus of Nazareth to be their Lord and their God.

Thus much I have said as to the interpretation of the solemn words of our Lord, which I have taken as a part of my text. I have tried to show that they are to be taken in their full literal meaning, according to a rule which applies to the whole of the Scripture, that whatever is said of Christ, or of any type of Him, may and ought to be taken as relates to Him in the full extent of its meaning; that while the prophets and kings of Israel were often types of Him, and therefore that for His sake language was used towards them which their human nature,

inasmuch as it was human only, could not worthily fulfil; He Himself is the fulfilment of all prophecy, and no word or thought of man can conceive of Him beyond, or in any degree approaching to the truth. Men could be types of Him, because He was also man; they could be no more than types of Him, because He is God. And I have shown from the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, that the Evangelist himself clearly so understood the language which he has recorded; it being evident, that no expressions can be too high for Him whom he has described at the very outset of his Gospel as existing in the beginning, as being with God, and being God, and as being the Maker of all things.

But I have not often touched on this point as a matter to be proved; nor do I think it is needful or desirable often to do so. I do not imagine that the peculiar danger which is likely to threaten any of you, is the infection of what are called Unitarian opinions. It is mostly, I think, another class of society, and one differently educated, that is most in danger from Unitarianism; with us here I should expect that we should either be in danger of judging those who hold such notions too harshly, and of being far too well satisfied with ourselves for not being as they are; or else that the temptation will be to something far worse than Unitarianism—to the casting away of our Christian faith altogether, and of our very faith in God. Utter unbelief is far

more really prevalent, I believe, than Unitarianism; and its language is far more dangerous. For Unitarianism, acknowledging the authority of Scripture, and asserting its own peculiar interpretation of it, appears to me to lose in strength intellectually exactly as much as I hope it gains by so doing morally. I mean, that the very clinging to the authority of Scripture, and professing to follow Christ, and Christ's Apostles, which makes a wide difference morally between them and the unbeliever, yet renders their peculiar arguments the less dangerous, inasmuch as it forces them to rest their cause on interpretations of Scripture which the most ordinary knowledge of language and of the common principles of criticism show at once to be extravagant.

It is more, I think, to the purpose, when we consider to what society so many of you are likely to be removed when you go away from this place,—to remind you, that while it is easy, I think very easy, to see the errors of Unitarianism intellectually, yet that many speak of it with a violence of condemnation which in them is clearly unnatural and wrong; they neither know its evil, nor the good of that truth to which it is opposed. He who could truly speak of the evil of Unitarianism, must be one who has made some progress himself in real godliness; who has felt the blessing of some of those helps of which Unitarianism would deprive him. He

who condemns Unitarianism for denying Christ's Divinity, does he make Christ's divinity a real support to his own soul? He who cries out against the impiety of those who would do away with Christ's Atonement, does his own faith in that atonement lead him in true and earnest love to follow that Lord who died for him?

I can well conceive a short season in a young man's life, in which, believing on the authority of others that Unitarianism is the denial of most important truths, and going about humbly and earnestly to derive to himself the benefit of those truths, he may for a while be justified in condemning Unitarianism, even though he may not yet have become able himself to appreciate its evil. But this state of things must in its very nature be short. Either we get beyond it, or we fall back from it;—either we attain to that experience of the virtue of the doctrines of Christ's Divinity and Atonement, which enables us to know how sad it is to want them; or else we relax in our endeavours to obtain it, and then we do but condemn others for denying in word what we are no less denying ourselves in heart and in life. And few things are more painful than to see the union of theological uncharitableness and religious indifference—to see, as we often do see, men violent in condemnation of others for their denial of certain truths, which truths it is most evident they themselves neglect altogether.

Unhappily, there are few things easier to our nature than to entertain feelings of dislike. We dislike others from a hundred causes, more or less personal; and then are thankful to any one who furnishes us with a pretence for our dislike on some ground of principle, which we neither knew nor cared for. It often happens that we dislike a man or a party who really have something in them which deserves to be disliked; but it is clear that this is not our reason for disliking them, if we are at no pains to gain the good opposed to their evil. We dislike the dishonest not on principle, but merely for our own selfish convenience, if in our practice it is evident that honesty is not our rule. And this is now much to be insisted upon, because religious animosities are violent amongst us beyond all proportion to our love of truth and of Christ; and it is evident therefore that these animosities are no part of Christian zeal, but of lower and worldly feelings, by which we deceive ourselves and others. Sometimes, too, our violence against an opinion is greatest when we feel ourselves least secure in reason from its influence; we endeavour in a manner by the loudness of our voices to conceal our secret fear. It is no hopeful symptom to see those of any age, least of all the young particularly, forward in religious dislikes: but it is a good symptom in old and young to be eminent for their religious affections;—not to be loud in denouncing

heretics, but to be simple and earnest in loving Christ and their brethren. The love of truth is the only sure way of teaching us to dislike error aright; to dislike it in itself and for itself;—to dislike it reasonably, calmly, charitably;—to be most secure from being misled by it ourselves, whilst we make the largest and most Christian allowance for the men who hold it.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
April 1st, 1838.

SERMON XXI.

CHRIST'S WORDS AND CHRIST'S WORK.

St. John ix. 4.

I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

In these words of our Lord there is nothing which peculiarly belongs to His divine nature, nothing even which belongs to Him as a prophet; they were spoken as by one who was in all points tempted like as we are, by one who became fully partaker of our flesh and blood. They are His words spoken, as He is our great example. It is no presumption, no claiming to ourselves any portion of His power, either as prophet or as king, if we pray and labour to be able to repeat them ourselves truly. This, indeed, is the great difference, that whereas Christ not only said the words of the text, but did accordingly. So if we repeat them, it is too often like the son in the parable, whom his

father had told to work in his vineyard: his answer was, "I go, sir," but he went not. So we may say, that we must work the works of Him that sent us while it is day; but we do not actually work them. We may say that the night cometh when no man can work; but we live as if the day would last for ever.

Many and many are the words of our Lord, the riches of whose wisdom will far outlast the longest life in its attempts to come to the end of them. From the first time when our childish attention was drawn by the mere beauty of the story in His parables, or the solemn and affectionate impressiveness of His promises and commands, down to the latest hour in which our unimpaired faculties can ponder over them, their wisdom and excellence seems continually to be rising upon us,—the light which streams from them appears to be growing ever more brilliant, ever more searching, ever more cheering and more delightful. Every year's experience, both of our own hearts and of the lives of others, sets their manifold truth more fully before us. In every fresh combination of thoughts and ideas, in every new view which we acquire of the bearings of the world around us, their universal range has gone before us;—we find them the light and life of every new country which our minds discover, no less than of that with which we have been long familiar. I speak thus on purpose, not that I suppose it pos-

sible for many who hear me to enter at present fully into the truth of what I have been saying; but to tell them beforehand what will hereafter be their own feelings if they continue faithfully to study Christ's word. There are persons to whom the Scriptures are now their daily bread of life, who would find it impossible to express their admiration and delight in them, whom I could startle by recalling to them their words when they first began to study them—I do not mean words of profaneness, but expressing their strong sense of the difficulties of what they were reading, and doubting how that could ever be so intensely valuable which they found at that time so obscure.

For all those, then, who loving what they can understand of the Scripture, yet find themselves unable fully to enter into the excellence of many parts of it;—nay, who though they love the plainer parts, yet do not see in them that perfection of wisdom which they hear ascribed to them;—for them there is a most encouraging prospect if they do not cut themselves off from it. If they were to hear such language, as I have been using, ten or twenty years hence, it would then seem to them not exaggerated, but inadequate; their own sense of the treasures contained in the Scriptures would go far beyond it; or else—and it is a fearful alternative—the language would sound not exaggerated merely, but utterly wild and extravagant: those

who now can go with it a certain way, would then despise it altogether. So surely do advancing years tell upon our minds for good or for evil;—so surely will your full manhood be greatly improved in the knowledge and love of God, or greatly fallen back in it; it most certainly will not be fixed at the same point at which you are arrived now.

I was led to say thus much by thinking over the words of the text, and considering how complete was the lesson which they contained. And then connecting them with the parable of the sower, and with other parables which I have from time to time alluded to, it was very striking to compare the picture there given with what is daily passing before our eyes, and to consider its perfect and startling truth. "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day;—the night cometh, when no man can work." We must work, and that diligently; but not Satan's works nor our own, but the works of God. The soil must bear much, but its strength must not be wasted on weeds, however luxuriant; it must bear that which will be kept for ever. We must work while it is day, for the night is coming. Even while working busily, and working the works of God, we must not forget our own infirmity. We must not repeat those other words of Christ, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," for that was language suited to Him only in whom it was no presumption to make himself

equal with God. But we must remember and repeat His words in the text,—for in them He speaks as one of us, and not as our God,—"The night cometh, when no man can work:" the day which is so happy to us, and we would fain hope not unprofitably wasted, is yet hastening to its close. It is of no less importance that we should remember that the time is soon coming when we cannot work, than that we should avail ourselves of the time present, to work in it to the utmost.

I will not say much now to those, numerous as they probably are, who require simply the first part of the lesson contained in the text, "to work while it is day, and not be idle." Their fault being thoughtlessness, any word spoken to them is likely to make but a small impression; they hear it and forget it. Yet thus much may be said, and perhaps it may strike you:—When you divide your companions around you into the working ones and the careless ones; when you know, as you well do know, whether any individual belongs to the one class or the other, you are as it were making the very division which Christ made in his parable of the sower:—you are separating off on the one hand those who are like the hard wayside, or the shallow stony ground, and on the other hand, those who may prove hereafter either the thorny ground or the fruitful. That division of the idle and the thoughtless, so long as they continue idle and thoughtless,

is condemned already. No good fruit can be produced by a soil that bears nothing. Their character of it continues unaltered, is that of the beasts that perish, with the fearful difference that what in the brutes is a mere condition of their nature, is in us a deadly sin. To live with no more than a brute's enjoyment, a brute's intelligence, and a brute's merely instinctive likings and dislikings, is in us not a forfeiture only of this world, but of eternity; it is not only resigning the dignity of a man, but incurring the everlasting misery of a sinner.

But from this wretched and most degraded condition there are many instruments which raise us; many that are effectual, but some which are at the same time dangerous. We know well enough, that human motives are very frequently found strong enough to excite the careless to attention, and the indolent to work. Human motives are naturally sufficient for this, for even this world's prizes depend generally upon our exertions and our reputation. And these human motives are various: the love of distinction, the wish to please our friends, the fear of punishment, the hope of reward; and after some time, when the effort of exertion has been once made, the very pleasure of it encourages us to continue it. Thus from one or more of these causes, many are brought over continually from a state of idleness to one of application; they learn to know the value of time,—they work and work diligently

while it is day. And this is no doubt a great step gained; it is the beginning of a progress to everlasting life, a departure from a state of certain condemnation. By whatever of the motives just named either boy or man is brought from a state of brute thoughtlessness to one of thought and activity, undoubtedly there is a good work done; undoubtedly the person so altered is so far nearer than he was before to the kingdom of God.

Let us confess this, and confess it with thankfulness; but let us remember that he of whom it is said that Christ loved him for the progress which he had made in goodness, yet went away grieving, and, so far as we hear of him, fell short of the kingdom of God, because he did not go on still farther. Let us be thankful that any who before were careless are now working; but let us not rest, nor ever let them rest, till we may hope that through Christ's Spirit we and they are not working only, but working the works of God.

And here one difficulty which arises is this, that in one sense we are working the work of God probably already; for certainly the particular business of our profession, or calling, or situation, is to us the work of God. And thus, if actively engaged in that, we may seem to be, and in one sense are, not only working, but working the works of God, we are doing what God wills us to do. This seems to me one of the most dangerous snares of all; we

are busy, and we are busy about our duty, so that the more we work, we fancy that we are doing our duty more; and the very thing which seems to be our help, is unto us an occasion of falling

That it should not be so, two things are to be observed. First, we say to ourselves that we are busily engaged in our duty, and that our duty is God's work. We say this to ourselves if any thing leads us to examine into our state; but it would be well if we said it not only to excuse ourselves, but habitually; if we said it not to ourselves only, but to God. For if we are busied in God's work, we are fellow-workers with God; and what more natural than to ask His aid and His blessing on it? Let us come before Him, and do so. But there seems some unwillingness to do this; we will talk about our employment, and think about it, but we are not so apt to pray about it. Wherefore is this, or how can it be, that being busied as we say in God's work, we are not fond of thinking of Him who is working with us? Is it not too plain that when we come to the point we feel that it is not God's work but our own? that we have taken it in a manner away from His co-operation, and separated it from His blessing? that feeling how we have unsanctified it, we dread speaking to God concerning it, knowing that in His sight we have rendered both it and ourselves sinful? We may be well assured that this is a true touchstone, if every

morning we bring as it were our work before God, and crave His aid and blessing on it: if every evening we again come to render our account to Him, to say how much we have done, and to ask His pardon for having done so little and so imperfectly: if at other times in the day, even when most busy, we offer in thought our daily sacrifice, one passing thought, one short prayer: "Lord, I am thy servant; this is thy will, and thy work, bless me in it for Christ's sake." Then the answer to our inquiry may be boldly given; God himself will confirm our heart's testimony; our deeds will be made manifest that they are wrought in God.

The second caution is contained in the latter words of the text, "the night cometh when no man can work." Worldly-mindedness among the first Christians had one powerful check which it cannot have now, in their belief that the world itself was soon to be destroyed. The works of the greatest and best of men, as far as they related to earth, could not be of any great importance, as in a few years hence earth itself would perish. But now we are apt to be beguiled by the thought that our works may abide for centuries; that they may influence for good thousands as yet unborn. It may be so; but this is no safe thought for us to dwell upon: it may cause us, if indulged, to become castaways ourselves, however much we may have benefited others. It is a far safer thought to consider,

not how long our works may last, but how soon we must leave them. The shortness of our own time bids us remember that we are but God's instruments, appointed to labour for a little while on a particular little part of His great work; but that neither its beginning nor its finishing belongs to us, nor can we so much as understand the vastness of its range. Our best praise is that bestowed on David, that we serve our own generation by the will of God, and then fall asleep, and be gathered to our fathers, and see corruption. Whether our work may endure on earth or no, we can never tell; the wisdom of the wise, and the virtue of the good, have too often remained without fruit, except that eternal fruit which remains for all those who work God's work heartily, without presuming to think that it is their own.

We look forward often enough; it is indeed one of the distinctions of our nature that we can do so: the future is frequently the subject of our hope and fear. It were well, if while looking forward as we sometimes do, far into our future life, we would look at once to the end of it; that we would form something of a definite notion of the prospect before us, —so many years of youth, so many of prime, so many of decay, and then the end. This is a very different thing from the unwise practices of superstition, such as meditating over the remains of mortality, and bringing before our eyes and minds,

not the solemnity of death, but its loathsomeness. For this there is sometimes even a morbid eagerness; but this is not the soberness of Christian wisdom. I would advise none to dwell in detail upon the circumstances of death to excite the feelings, but rather to keep before their minds simply the general truth, that after such a period they will have ceased to live; that earth will to them have passed away, and the time of judgment be arrived. This, I imagine, can be nothing but wholesome at every age,—not unnatural even to the youngest. Do not fancy your time shorter nor longer than it is, but simply consider it as it is: a period very likely of many years, but still only of many years; that there will most surely be an end of it. Then remember what that end is, that it is a time when no one can work any longer; when all must rest for ever, or for ever suffer.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
December 1*st*, 1833.

SERMON XXII.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.—THE CONFESSION OF THOMAS.

ST. JOHN XX. 28.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

EVERY one, I suppose, who reads the Scriptures much, cannot but feel that there are certain particular parts of them to which he turns with an especial delight; which seem in a peculiar manner to meet the wants of his own individual nature, whether for comfort, or for warning, or for mere thought and reflection. Nor does this appear blameable, so long as we do not neglect or despise other parts of the Scripture; it belongs rather to that variety of tastes which God has given to men, and which, as it is certainly in a very large proportion innocent, so we can often see that it is beneficial.

But of these passages of Scripture so especially cherished by different minds, a very large number will I think be found to exist in the Gospel of St. John. Most readers feel that this Gospel contains some of the most invaluable treasures of Christ's revelation; that it contains what could be supplied to us from no other quarter. Thus, for instance, in the accounts given of our Lord's appearances to his disciples after his resurrection, how ill could we spare the account given by St. John of His appearance to Thomas, and that of His appearance to Peter and his companions by the sea of Tiberias? Confining ourselves for the present to the former, how great and manifold are the treasures which a few verses contain for us!

The Collect for St. Thomas's Day addresses God as "having for the more confirmation of the faith suffered His holy apostle Thomas, to be doubtful in His Son's resurrection." And this is one of the most obvious uses of this passage of the Scripture. We are, I think, hardly apt to be enough aware how much of all our Christian faith and hope must rest on the reality of our Lord's resurrection. It is in the first place the fulfilment of all prophecy. I mean, that whereas all prophecy looks forward to the triumph of good over evil,—to its triumph not partially, merely, but entirely, and with over measure, so the resurrection of Christ is as yet the only adequate fulfilment of these expectations; but

it is itself fully adequate. Every where else, the last seen and recorded thing in every man's history, is the triumph of death over him. Hope and faith, resting upon Christ's resurrection, do indeed go farther than this; there are many, no doubt, of whom our last and prevailing idea is that of their happiness; we believe that death's triumph will be altogether, and is already in part undone. But this can be belief and hope only, not sight and knowledge. It still remains true that the last known and recorded thing of the strongest man is his weakness; of the wisest man, the failure of his powers; of the best man, that he has suffered the punishment of sin. Thus, as far as sight and knowledge go, the end of every man is the triumph of the enemy over him; the victory cannot be said to belong to the cause of good. But in Christ this is not so; with Him the end—I do not say the end as hoped and believed, but as seen, as known, as recorded—was His triumph over the enemy,—the victory was His wholly and finally. One such instance,—one seen, and known, and recorded instance,—may indeed be the support of hope and faith for the rest: if Christ's triumph was complete, so also may be the triumph of those that are Christ's; but without this, let hope go as far as she will, let faith be ever so confident, still prophecy has been unfulfilled, still experience gives no encouragement; if Christ be not risen, all that is known of

the best and wisest of the sons of men is, that they were alive, and are dead; that they served God in their own generation, and advanced His glory, but that for themselves they were not conquerors at last; that the great enemy has prevailed against them, and has cut them off from the land of the living.

Well then may it be said with the Apostle, that if Christ is not risen, our faith is vain. And therefore, how thankful ought we to be for the knowledge of this great truth, that Christ is risen indeed. "Let God deliver Him now if He will have Him," was the scornful language of the scribes and Pharisees, when they saw our Lord upon the cross: "for He said, I am the Son of God." If Jesus was truly the Son of God, God, they thought, would deliver Him: if He were not the Son of God, then death would have dominion over Him. But death had not dominion over Him, for He rose again from the dead. It was indeed almost too great a joy to be believed. He had heard all the scoffs of His enemies in silence, He had not come down from the cross; He had not repelled the hand of death, but had yielded to it. His disciples had seen Him dead and buried in the grave. Was it possible to think that the prey should be torn from the spoiler even after he had begun to devour it; that there could be one found who had not avoided death only because He rather chose to triumph over it? There

might be illusion; the spirit of one so good and so beloved by God, might be allowed to return to comfort His friends, to assure them that death had not done all his work; but who could dare to hope that he should see, not the spirit of the dead, but the very Person of the living Jesus?—that he should be satisfied by his very bodily senses, not merely that death had not done all his work, but that he had done actually nothing; that he had triumphed neither over soul nor body? Surely it was a natural expression of one fearing to resign himself lightly to a conviction of such overwhelming blessedness, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." Thanks be to God, who allowed His Apostle to be thus careful ere he consented to believe, that we from his care might derive such perfect confidence.

Behold, some days are past; Thomas has not seen his Lord; he has not had the proofs which he desired that it was Christ Himself, and not His departed spirit, whom his fellow-disciples had seen. Perhaps his fears had caught the minds of the rest; it might be so,—they might have been deceived by an illusion; it might have been only the spirit of Christ whom they had seen, the spirit of one who was dead. But a week is gone; and again at evening, on that same first day of the week on which, eight days before, or seven after our manner

of reckoning, they had well believed that they had seen the Lord; again they were within, again with fastened doors, and Thomas was now with them. Then came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace be unto you." He answers to the words which Thomas had spoken to the ears of his fellow-disciples only; but it is to the thought of his heart rather than to the words of his lips that the Searcher of Hearts answers, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." Eye, ear, and touch, at once appealed to, and at once satisfied; the form and look, the voice, the solid and actual body; and withal, not the senses only, but the mind satisfied too; the knowledge that searches the very reins and hearts, the love that loveth unto the end, infinite and eternal. Who is this in whom all these are combined? Not a spirit, yet most certainly more than man; alive in body, soul, and spirit, perfect in knowledge, infinite in love! One only can it be in heaven and in earth, He of whom bare all the prophets witness; the Hope of Israel, the Priest of Israel, the King of Israel, the Lord of Israel. May we and all the whole Church join in the first fruits of Christian worship offered by the Apostle, now at last resigning himself to the fulness of his joy; may we from the bottom of our hearts say, as he did to our risen Saviour, "My Lord and my God!"

But is there even something yet more? "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." A few days before Christ had prayed, "not for his present disciples only, but for all those who were to believe on Him through their word." How graciously is His act in accordance with His prayer. Thomas was fully satisfied; his fellow-disciples were satisfied; they had received all that they desired, and thankfully acknowledged it. But Christ remembers those also "who were to believe on Him through their word." To them must be given that same satisfaction which his first disciples were then enjoying; the beloved disciple of our Lord who had seen first the empty sepulchre, and who was now rejoicing in the full presence of Him who had been there, but was now risen, he was to convey what he had himself seen to the knowledge of posterity. And he was to convey it hallowed as it were by Christ's especial message; he was to record that on that evening in that one chamber, there were present before the Lord not His eleven disciples only, but all His universal Church to the end of time; to them He shows Himself; to them He addresses Himself; nay, His words to them are if possible even more gracious than those to His earliest disciples:—"Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed." We have all our portion in Christ's

look and words of love, we have our portion in the full conviction then afforded that He was risen indeed; and besides all this, we have received a peculiar blessing. Christ Himself gives us the proof of His resurrection, and blesses us for the joy with which we welcome it.

With this most gracious message from our Lord Himself to those who should read his Gospel, St. John may be said to have concluded it. The last chapter was in all probability added afterwards; its character is clearly that of a distinct supplement, added after the original design of the work itself was completed. And the two last verses of the twentieth chapter are but a reference to our other accounts of our Lord's life, lest any should think that because St. John had omitted so much of what others had recorded he meant to throw a suspicion on its truth. "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book." St. John has himself related only a few, but he tells us that these were but a few out of many; it was far from his purpose to relate all, probably it has not been God's will that even the other Evangelists should have related all; it may be, and probably is true, that many other signs did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in the books of any of the Evangelists. But what we have were "written, that we might believe that Jesus was the Christ the

Son of God, and that believing we might have life through His name."

Seeing then that St. John's Gospel properly concludes with our Lord's answer to Thomas's confession, it is not surely fancy, if we connect this end of the Gospel with the beginning of it, and observe how St. John brings round his account of our Lord to the very point from which he began it. His Gospel opens with declaring who Christ was from the beginning; the Lord and Maker of all things. He then relates how the Lord of all things became flesh and dwelt among us; or, in the language of St. Paul, how He who was before in the form of God took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. Whilst He was on earth His Divine nature was veiled from the eyes of His disciples, but now that He was risen to die no more, it was declared to them fully; and thus we find Thomas, immediately on being convinced that his Lord was truly risen, acknowledging Him to be his Lord and his God. So that St. John ends at that very point where the statement of Christ's nature made at the beginning of his Gospel was justified as it were by the event; he had told how Christ had come forth from His Father and was come into the world; and he ends his Gospel with showing how He left the world and returned to His Father; and how His true nature was at last manifested and acknowledged.

His true nature manifested and acknowledged! Yes, in one sense certainly, acknowledged in all our forms of worship, repeated in our creeds from one end of the world to the other. But not so acknowledged as St. John meant, when he said, as we heard in the Epistle this morning, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" If this and this only be in St. John's sense an acknowledgment of Christ's true nature, then I fear that He is not yet acknowledged; not fully acknowledged, but I hope acknowledged in part, and becoming acknowledged more and more. I do trust that your faith is not in vain, that you do many of you know what it is to gain a victory through faith over the world and over yourselves. I do trust that to many of you Christ is risen indeed. May He be more perfectly acknowledged by them and by us all.

Rugby Chapel,
April 2nd, 1837.

SERMON XXIII.

THE ANCIENT CHURCH.

Acts ii. 46, 47.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.

It has always seemed to me one of the great advantages of the course of study generally pursued in our English schools, that it draws our minds so continually to dwell upon the past. Every day we are engaged in studying the languages, the history, and the thoughts of men who lived nearly or more than two thousand years ago; if we have to inquire about laws or customs, about works of art or science, they are the laws, customs, arts, and sciences, not of existing nations, but of those whose course has been long since ended. And the very difficulty which is often found in realizing the things

of which we read, the difficulty of representing to ourselves times so remote, and so unlike, in many respects, to our own, shows how much the mind requires such a discipline, and how naturally it rests contended with the scenes immediately around it. On the other hand, there are some who study the books which relate to past times very diligently, but who have no real understanding of the times themselves, because they do not know or understand their own. What they raise up to themselves being drawn wholly from books, is a dead and imperfect image; and when they would set up this image as a model by which to fashion the present state of things, the folly of the proceeding is almost ridiculous. Nay, of the two, he is a wiser man and a safer guide, who, knowing nothing of the past, has yet had a large experience of the present, and has observed it carefully, rather than the other, who is blind to the very world in which he lives, and therefore is perfectly incapable, with all his reading, of understanding a world in which he does not live.

Again, in studying the past as a guide for the present, it is of importance that we study it widely and fully. In this respect our classical reading, though not without its imperfections, is on the whole conducted wisely. That is to say, although we are led to study some periods of ancient history more than others, yet in the main we are led to an

acquaintance with all its periods, we study it in its beginning, middle, and end. Where this is not done, the knowledge gained will be often delusive; we see things taken just at the moment when they were going on well or ill, and we are shut out from that farther prospect which would have taught us how that seeming good was full of the seeds of centuries of after mischief; or how that seeming evil was but the short and cheap price paid for a long futurity of good. To study one single period of history, is to take a passage apart from its context, and thus to lose its real sense and purport. We cannot judge of what history has to teach us, if we only stop to listen to her for a short time, and go away before she has concluded her instruction.

These thoughts present themselves when we are led to consider that important subject, the study of Christian antiquity. Important it is, and indeed indispensable to a thorough understanding of the Church in its actual condition, of its good and of its evil. But it is not to be understood itself without a lively sense of what the Church is actually; so that from what we do know and see, the varieties of human character and their connexion with particular lines of opinion, we may be able to fill up and to comprehend the scanty information which the actual writings of the early Church can furnish, and image to ourselves truly the picture of what the early Church really was. Nor, again, must we

leave these two periods, the age of the primitive Church and our own, unconnected with one another. Seventeen centuries are the link between them; a continuous link, by which, if I may so speak, the electric power of the earliest age is continued on to us; yet having other properties in them than those of simply transmitting from the ages before them, to the ages after them; something they have added, something, perhaps, taken away; and if they have not affected the quality of that which is transmitted, they have at least greatly affected our character and circumstances who are to be the receivers of it. Their error was great, who, passing over nearly fifteen centuries, used to leap at once in their studies from the Apostles to the Reformers; but theirs would be much greater, who, studying carefully the records of the Church from the first century to the fifth, were then to break off, and to apply their supposed knowledge and experience for the guidance of the Church now.

Some, perhaps, will have already anticipated me in their application of these remarks to the words of my text. Those words contain a description of the Church at Jerusalem, almost immediately after the ascension of our Lord. We see and feel at once how different a state of things is here described from that which we actually witness. We feel farther,—that is, all who can think and feel upon such matters,—we feel farther that this

description cannot be wholly indifferent to us, that the Church, so soon after its foundation, with Christ's words as it were still sounding in its ears, guided by Christ's own apostles, and having so lately received the promised baptism of His Spirit, must be in many points capable of serving as our model: that if we are wholly unlike it, the difference must in great measure at least be matter of regret or of blame. And then comes the natural and earnest question, How can we lessen or remove this difference? how can we bring ourselves back to the standard of primitive Christianity?

Then we look at all the facts which we can possibly recover from the darkness of time, relating to the early church; all its institutions, all its practices; the very names of its offices, the very style of its language. "All these," we may say, "belonged to the primitive Church; let us restore them all." But this is absolutely impossible; the very past will not live again. If we were to insist on restoring it altogether, it would be like those who should unbury the dead; we should restore not the living friend, whom we loved and honoured, but only a lifeless corpse. But the thing is impossible. We do not raise our friends' bodies out of their graves; we cannot bring back the actual image and exact outward resemblance of departed ages.

Are therefore past ages for ever lost to us? Must we look at what is good and wise and holy in them,

as on that which we must only lament in vain, and can never hope to restore? And this too, above all, in Christ's holy Church; as if God's hand were shortened now that He could not save, or as if our Lord was no longer exalted at God's right hand, with all power in heaven and in earth? God forbid! there is no reason for such despair; there is no impossibility in the restoration of all that was good in the primitive Church. We may become the true descendants of our fathers, though we cannot become our very fathers themselves, nor make our age theirs.

"They, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Now compare the language of the Psalmist in one of the Psalms of this very evening's service. "One thing have I desired of the Lord which I will require, even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His temple." The prayer of the Psalmist, and the practice of the early Christians are, we see, exactly in accordance. But do we not feel that this dwelling in the house of the Lord, which he so desired, and that continuing daily in the temple, which the first Christians practised, are both of them, so to speak, typical; we must go farther before we arrive at the very reality. That reality undoubtedly is the daily walking with God,

the daily abiding in God. And if we do not so walk and so abide, we undoubtedly have not that blessing for which the Psalmist prayed, nor do we truly imitate the example of Christ's early Church.

Farther, the early Christians continued "breaking bread from house to house;" that is, they assembled continually in each other's houses, and as they ate and drank together, so once in every day their eating and drinking together was that solemn act of Christian communion, which in the highest manner bound them to one another and to Christ. And doubtless the end of that communion was the end of every other commandment, namely, the increase of love towards Christ and towards one another.

I have purposely put these two parts of the life of the early Christians in this manner, because I would wish to show where the spiritual interpretation of scripture becomes often dangerous, and leads us away from the spirit which it professes to follow, no less than from the letter which it does not scruple to neglect. I have said that the essence of the Psalmist's prayer, and the early Christians' practice, was the walking with God, and the dwelling in God. I have said also that the essence of the Holy Communion itself is the increase of love towards Christ, and towards our brethren. But the error of spiritual interpretation consists in supposing that if we clearly see the antitype or reality, we may

at once cast aside the type as incapable of affording any instruction. For instance, it may be said that the walking with God is all that is important; the walking in the actual earthly temple is altogether indifferent. Now here is a point of the greatest difficulty, judging from experience, because the type has always been in danger of being idolized on the one hand, and despised on the other. The truth is, that the type itself is not wholly typical: it has a real affinity with that to which it points, greater or less in different instances, but always up to a certain measure. As in the case now before us; the walking in the visible temple is, it is true, typical of the walking in heart with God; but then there is a real resemblance between them. The one has a tendency towards the other; so that he who never walked in the visible temple would never be likely to walk with God in Spirit. And thus the true imitation of the practice of the primitive Church would be, no doubt, that we should all walk with God in heart. But in order to do this we have need of helps and means; and as the early Christians found that it kept God in their minds to dwell in His visible temple, so it is reasonable to think that to have churches constantly before our eyes, and to have them frequently opened for divine service, would with us also be a means of keeping God in our minds; and that if with all these helps we still should be in danger of forgetting Him, much more

are we likely to forget Him if we use no help at all.

More frequent church services, more frequent communions, would then it seems be a real imitation of the primitive Church, and not merely a fond or formal one; because, with relation to the end aimed at by both the early Christians and us, namely, the walking with God in heart and spirit, we stand nearly in their case; and the same human nature in both of us, not being here affected by any differences of age or country, is likely to require in both the same helps. But in the meanwhile, for those who cannot alter the Church's ordinances, or if there be any causes which in any place render the imitation of the primitive Church as yet impracticable or inexpedient, then there is the proper place for the recollection that what is of the last necessity always, and to all, is the walking with God in heart and spirit. If our helps are fewer, it is our misfortune; but if we do not use such as we have, it is our fault. This chapel is opened but rarely; the communion is celebrated in it still more rarely. So much the more reason, then, why we should make the most of the occasions that are offered to us; why we should not be careless or inattentive during the short time in the week in which we can be in God's outward temple; why we should not turn away from the breaking of the bread of Christ's communion, on those rare occasions when we can

partake of it. This we may all do; and to neglect this is our folly and our sin. God is not tied in His dealings with us to save by few or many. If He gives many opportunities and we neglect them, as not needing them, that is our own presumption; but if He gives but few, and we avail ourselves thankfully of these few, their power multiplies under His blessing, like the five loaves and two small fishes, which fed more than five thousand men; and, without continuing daily in the temple, or daily breaking the bread of Christ's communion, yet if we profit by such opportunities as we have of hearing His word, and partaking of His communion, we shall share the blessing of those who were in Christ, at the beginning, and we too, like them, shall eat our meat with joy and singleness of heart: we shall live in thankfulness to God, and having favour with all good men.

But now, in conclusion, as I have in the case of the text taken the example of the early Church as applicable in more than its mere spirit to ourselves; or rather, as we have seen, not only that we should aim at the same end with the first Christians, but that we should do well also to pursue it by the same means; to what purpose, it may be asked, were those cautions as to the study of antiquity, which I gave at the beginning of my sermon, as if the example of the early Church were not immediately applicable? The cautions were given because on

very many occasions they are greatly needed; and when, referring in one instance to the example of the early Church, I wished to show how that example might always be consulted with advantage. Doubtless there are many points in which he may run who readeth, in which the practice of the early Christians was so clearly good, and their circumstances respecting it so much the same as ours, that it would be our wisdom to follow their example closely. But their practice was not always good; or at any rate, difference of circumstances, in many instances, makes that which was most right and good in them no longer right or desirable for us. And here it is that a lively understanding of the present, and a comprehensive knowledge of the past, are, as I said, so necessary. I am most convinced of the wisdom of studying the remains of Christian antiquity; only it is to be desired that that study should be so conducted and united with so much of wider knowledge and lively understanding, that it may not sometimes mislead, and be useful only by chance, but may minister uniformly and according to fixed and intelligible principles, to edification and to truth.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
April 5th, 1840.

SERMON XXIV.

ST. PAUL'S SPEECHES.

Acts xiii. 43.

Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

The congregation here spoken of was one at Antioch, in Pisidia, to which Paul had been setting forth the first principles of Christian truth. It may be observed, that the wisdom of God has provided for us, in the Acts of the Apostles, specimens of St. Paul's manner of addressing three very different classes of hearers; from each of which we may derive a lesson in speaking to persons under like circumstances. We have in his speech to the Athenians a specimen of his way of opening the Gospel to those who are wholly unacquainted with it, who knew nothing of the expectation of the Messiah, nothing of the Old Testament, and next to

nothing of the Jewish people; to men whose minds had in them nothing eastern, but had received in the fullest measure the benefits of that cultivation which they were designed first to enjoy themselves, and then to communicate to all mankind. Again, in his address to the synagogue, at Antioch in Pisidia, contained in the chapter from which the text is taken, we have a specimen of his way of opening the Gospel to those who were Jews either by blood or by religion; to those, that is, to whom the promises of the Messiah were known, and who were well acquainted with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Thirdly, in his address to the elders of the Church of Ephesus, when they came to meet him at Miletus on his way to Jerusalem, we have a specimen of his way of speaking to those who were acquainted fully with the Gospel. As, in the other two speeches, we might suppose that more truth was yet behind, which could not be communicated all at once to those who knew nothing of Christianity; so we may be sure that in a speech addressed not only to Christians, but to elders of the Church, to the rulers and teachers of the Christian society, there could be no reserves whatever; that whatever is to them insisted upon as the substance of the Gospel, is so to us, and to all Christians; and that any man who would dream of some yet higher and more secret doctrine, taught only to those most advanced in Christian perfection, is merely adding to God's

wisdom and God's truth, not the wisdom and truth of man, for in such a case the words truth and wisdom have no place, but rather his folly, and superstition, and falsehood.

It is not, however, with the view of showing the differences between these addresses of the Apostle to different persons, that I was led to the choice of my text. It may be enough for this view of the subject simply to notice, that as in the speech to the Athenians we find the Apostle setting forth the great outlines, so to speak, of a Christian's faith, that there is one God, the common Maker and Father of all men, higher and purer than we can conceive of,—a righteous Judge, who will render to all men according to their deeds, and who, by raising up Jesus from the dead, has given the pledge that all men shall likewise rise for their happiness or for their misery; so in the speech to the Jews of Antioch, and in that to the elders of Ephesus, we find just that one point added which men wholly ignorant of God and of the Jewish covenant, could not at first have well borne,—namely, that Jesus is more than a pledge of our own resurrection, more than the righteous Judge before whom we must all stand to give our account; that He is also our Saviour, who stands before us when we truly repent of our sins towards God, to claim our thankful faith; that for His sake our sins are fully forgiven, and made as though they had never been; who presents Himself

to us again, when, by reason of our imperfect repentance and most imperfect obedience, we see not how we can have confidence towards God, to tell us that for His sake, and through faith in His blood, we are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses; that we, though sinners, are accepted and forgiven, and loved as children by our Heavenly Father, because God gave His own Son to die for us.

This was given as the substance of Christianity to the members of the synagogue of Antioch; and we find it again spoken of as such in the speech to the elders of Ephesus. One thing, however, we notice, which the elders of the Church of Ephesus had learned, which might not perhaps have been known in the first instance by Paul's hearers at Antioch. For when those who had been used to the Old Testament, and to what is there so earnestly taught concerning worshipping God only,—when they were told that Jesus was their Saviour,—when they were told to believe, not merely in His word, but in Himself, to trust to His person, as a worthy object of faith,—they would ask, "Who is this Jesus, that we may so regard Him; and how can a man no longer upon earth be loved as our Saviour, and trusted in as our sure Help and Deliverer, and be an object of our faith, without interfering with that faith and love and trust, which seem in the invisible world to be due to God only?"

Then they would be told to look into the Scriptures, and see how God had said that He would Himself visit them, that He would Himself come to His temple, and redeem His people. This promise He had fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Let them not fear then to be guilty of idolatry in loving Christ with all their hearts, in believing in Him with an entire faith, in trusting Him with a perfect trust: they might safely honour the Son even as they honoured the Father; for that divine nature which in the Father was invisible and incomprehensible, veiled in light which no man can approach unto, was in the Son made manifest in our flesh, and so set forth before us that we could see, and hear, and feel, and understand. And this having become a familiar truth to the elders of Ephesus, they were nothing startled when Paul expressed it to them in the very strongest words which God has left recorded for us in His Scriptures, when he ventured to unite to their minds so closely and so vividly, the notions of their Saviour Christ being both God and man, as to call them,—in language not elsewhere to be met with, in language which some unwise Christians were so afraid of, that they actually in many copies altered the very text to avoid it,—the overseers over the church of God, "which He had purchased with His own blood."

But now to come to the very words of the text itself. The substance of Christianity had been given

in Paul's address to the synagogue at Antioch. It had been listened to with attention, and had so much interested some of those who heard it, that they besought that these words might be spoken to them the next sabbath. This is what often happens: it is the natural tribute either to the novelty and interest of any subject in itself, or to the ability and eloquence of him who has been speaking upon it. But the text goes on to say, that when the congregation was broken up, many still followed Paul and Barnabas, and that the apostles then spoke to them and persuaded, or rather tried to persuade, them to continue in the grace of God. Now this is the point which I wish us to dwell upon—this proof of the impression remaining after the congregation was broken up,—of men seeking to prolong that impression afterwards,—and desiring to confirm and to increase that knowledge which they had gained within the walls of the synagogue. With what pleasure can we fancy the apostles to have observed these hearers of their word, who seemed to have heard it in such earnest! How gladly must they have talked with them,—entered into various points more fully than was possible in any public address,—appealed to them in various ways which no one can touch upon who is speaking to a mixed multitude! Yet with all their pleasure and their hope, their knowledge of man's heart must have taught them not to be over-confident, and therefore they

would earnestly urge them to continue in the grace of God; to keep up the impression which had already outlasted their stay within the synagogue,—to feed it, and keep it alive, and make it deeper and deeper, that it should remain with them for ever. What the issue was, we know not,—nor does that concern us,—only we may be sure that here, as in other instances, there were some in whom their hopes and endeavours were disappointed; there were some in whom they were to their fullest extent realized.

It is very easy, speaking of this or any other congregation as a body,—considering them only as so many human beings, and not bringing any one of them distinctly home to our minds,—it is very easy to say, what is undoubtedly true, that of that multitude some will retain in their hearts what they hear spoken, and others will forget them; that some will believe, and others will not believe. But certain as this is, when put thus generally, yet the moment that we take away one individual, and present him to our minds, we could not bear—and it would be no less wrong than shocking—to conceive of him as of one that would not believe. For when we consider what is the full meaning of the words "not to believe," we cannot endure to connect a thought so dreadful with any human being who is to us more than an abstraction;—we cannot connect with any face, or voice, or mind that we

have actually known, the idea of final impenitence. This is most right; but yet there is one exception;—we may and ought in one instance to depart from the abstract view of the congregation around us. We ought not only to know generally that some will believe, and some will believe not; but in one case we should all make the thought distinct and definite; we should clearly and vividly connect the idea of faith and that of unbelief with a person, with a mind, with a being with which we are most familiar,—we should follow the thought steadily, and not turn away from it till we had possessed ourselves with it wholly. Yes, my brethren, we should each of us do this in one instance, and in one only, and that instance is our own selves.

I lay the stress on the word "final." It is the notion of our believing or not believing at last that I wish us to dwell upon. We can bear to be unbelieving now, or even to think of ourselves as such ten or twenty years hence. But we must go farther:—we must think what it is to be unbelieving at the last. We say that out of every large congregation some will be so; let us exemplify it, then, in ourselves. We all know that there must be *a* time, though some of us may put it later than others, when repentance becomes impossible. Suppose ourselves arrived at that time. We have, then, no longer a Comforter, nor a Saviour, nor a God. In whatever sense the last words may be

true, yet it is the doctrine of Scripture that God is in relation only with the living:—to them who are dead, He is as though He did not exist at all. We are literally without God in the world; that is, without all that is good. We are with all that is evil, such as we now can conceive of, and probably much more. The worst men we know of,—the worst we have ever read of, have in them something that is not wholly evil. Pure evil we never saw, and can scarcely conceive it. It is a most faint image of it, yet one sufficiently horrible, to suppose all our acquaintance stripped of all their good and agreeable qualities, and with nothing left but their several faults. What should we, then, think of the prospect of passing a year or a month in such society? Conceive these faults increased to desperate and fiend-like wickedness,—conceive that month or year multiplied into eternity, and we have something of our condition when we are unbelieving at the last. Add to this one thing more;—when we are in pain or trouble of any kind, we know that there are some who care for us, who feel with us, and try to relieve us. Generally there are some such close around us,—almost certainly there are some such in the world,—quite certainly there is One such at the right hand of God, our truest friend, as well as our mightiest. But when we are unbelieving at the last, all this is over. There exist for us in infinite space no loving looks, no

kind words, no feeling of sympathy, no desire to relieve us. Relations, friends, neighbours, fellow-creatures, whatever term includes in it any notion of regard, is to us utterly perished. There is One still at the right hand of God; but he sits no longer to intercede, but to judge. The only words that proceed from Him are the eternal sentence—"Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

This, we say, will surely happen to some of us. Let each, then, suppose it to be his own case. We say, too, that some of us will be believers at the last: it will not be injurious to us to try to connect this notion also, each of us, with ourselves. Hope is as allowed a motive as fear; nay, it is one which God would far rather employ upon us. But in the portion of the believer, the greatest and most blessed point is one which only a believer can well conceive of,—the being allowed to be with Christ, and to know God. Other and lower points we can all fancy. Absence of pain and fear—absence of all unkindness, of all falsehood—the being surrounded by loving hearts—the making happy and being made happy perpetually. But the crown of all the rest, the Christian's hope, the Christian's inheritance, this none but a Christian can long for. He only who has listened long and obediently to the voice of God's Spirit, can truly desire to know God as He is. He only who has thought of Jesus often, who has believed on Him, trusted in Him,

loved Him, followed Him, can truly long for that moment when he shall see Him, and hear Him, and be with Him for ever.

Yet even they who can least feel this can bring home to themselves the notion of some part of the joy of believing at last, as they can the misery of not believing at last. It is this which will make us anxious to be believers *now*. It is this which will make us, when the congregation is broken up, still follow after the words which we had heard while we were together. May it make us each and all do so! What has been spoken here we shall *now* hear, each of us, in very different places, and with very different congregations. But it is the same word of life leading to the same Saviour; and when we meet again—as many of us as shall meet, to form again the same congregation within these same walls—may it be with hearts that have retained the impression of God's word spoken before, and ready to increase the impression every time that they shall hear it again!

RUGBY CHAPEL,
December 13*th*, 1835.
[End of the Half-Year.]

SERMON XXV.

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES.

2 PETER iii. 15, 16.

Account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his Epistles speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

LEAVING out of sight for the present all other points contained in these verses, I would wish now to confine myself to two;—the divine wisdom here ascribed to the Epistles of St. Paul generally, and the difficulty spoken of as existing in some particular parts of them,—a character which some, we might imagine, have been almost tempted to reverse; as if the general character of St. Paul's writings was difficulty, and only some particular

passages were full of that wisdom which tends to edify God's people.

"Our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you." According to that wisdom which God had given him, that he should fully make known to the Gentiles all the revelation of God. First he spoke according to this wisdom, and taught by word of mouth; but afterwards he wrote according to it, that the wisdom might not die with him and his first hearers, nor be trusted to the handing down of others, who, not having it in themselves, could not well appreciate it, but would be sure to corrupt it by some additions or alterations of their own; but that it might be kept safe and pure through the course of ages, as fresh and perfect for us as at the time when it was first delivered.

He wrote according to it in fourteen Epistles; for although the Greek words of the present text of the Epistle to the Hebrews may not be his own, yet the wisdom of it is no doubt his; and no one has ever supposed but that it was written at least by one of those who went about with him,—Luke or Silas, or Apollos or Clement. Now, then, taking these fourteen Epistles, and dividing them according to the order of time in which they were written, we find, first, the two Epistles to the Thessalonians, then those to the Corinthians, and that to the Romans, all written before that journey to Jerusalem,

and the beginning of that long imprisonment, first at Cæsarea, and afterwards at Rome, of which we heard in the second lesson of this morning. Then come the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon, written during his imprisonment at Rome. And thirdly, we have the two Epistles to Timothy, and that to Titus, written at a period later than the history in the Acts reaches down to; that is, between the end of St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, and his death. The date of the remaining two Epistles, those to the Galatians and to the Hebrews, it does not seem possible to fix with certainty.

This is the division of St. Paul's Epistles according to the order of time; and this is one very important division of them, because by thus considering the different states of the church at which they were written, we understand their object better, and can see why some things are more dwelt on in some of them, and others in others. Another very important division of them is according to their subject, whether general or particular; and in this division the Epistles to the Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians, are to be put as one class, and the other eleven Epistles as belonging to another class. What I mean is this, that the Epistle to the Romans was written to a church of which St. Paul as yet knew nothing personally, and is sent as a general view of what Christianity was, and what practice should naturally

flow from its principles. And the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians seem to have been of the nature of circulars; for the Colossians are directed to pass on the Epistle directed to them to the church at Laodicea, and to get in return the Epistle from Laodicea; that is, in all probability, our Epistle to the Ephesians, which, having been sent on from Ephesus to other places, had come to Laodicea, and was from thence to be forwarded immediately to Colosse. Thus both these Epistles are quite of a general character, containing, like that to the Romans, only on a smaller scale, a general view of Christian principles and practice, not more fitted to one church than to another.

On the other hand, all the other eleven Epistles are more or less particular. That to Philemon is written to an individual about a private affair, his slave Onesimus having fled from him to Rome, and being sent back to him by Paul. Those to the Thessalonians and Philippians seem like the overflowing of the apostle's affection towards two churches, for which he appears to have felt an unusual degree of regard. Those to Timothy and Titus are addressed to persons in a particular office, and are commonly called the Pastoral Epistles, as containing directions for Christian pastors or ministers. That to the Galatians, and the first to the Corinthians, were occasioned by reports which St. Paul had received of certain faults in those two

churches, or are an answer to questions which had been specially put to him by those to whom he writes. The second to the Corinthians was also occasioned by a particular circumstance,—the collection that was making amongst them for the benefit of the Christians at Jerusalem. And lastly, the Epistle to the Hebrews is principally taken up with showing how the priesthood and ceremonies of the law were fulfilled in Christ, and therefore were no longer to be retained as a matter of religion. This also is a most important division; for it teaches us where the apostle is giving a general view of Christianity, and where he is dwelling on some particular point or points in it; and prevents us therefore from being surprised if we do not find all those things which we deem important insisted on in every Epistle. And further, by some of the Epistles being general, and others particular, we have a double advantage. We have, on the one hand, a complete view of the Gospel as a general guide to us all; and then we have also particular lessons for more particular duties and situations, such as may often occur again, and for which a mere general picture of Christianity would hardly contain all the instruction which we require.

One thing further may be observed, in which Paul, by the wisdom given to him, has done yet more for our benefit. From his habit of being frequently led away by some particular word to

leave his immediate subject for that contemplation of Christ's gospel in all its fulness, which was the subject ever nearest his heart, it has happened that, even in an Epistle written upon some particular subject,—I had almost said, upon a matter of business,—we have the most full and beautiful general views of the whole of Christianity. For instance, nowhere do we meet with fuller statements concerning our Christian hopes after death, concerning our forgiveness for Christ's sake, and our having to stand before his judgment, than in the fourth and fifth chapters of the second epistle to the Corinthians. Yet these, with the third chapter also, all arise out of a particular and personal matter, namely, his not having come to Corinth at the time that he had first purposed; a circumstance which had been laid hold of by his enemies, as proceeding either from fickleness or from a distrust of his own authority; and which leads him therefore to uphold the dignity of his ministry, and to contrast it with the humiliations and distresses to which himself and others engaged in it were continually exposed. And then when thinking of these, he goes on in the fulness of his heart to enlarge upon that eternal hope and love which supported him under them. So that, in fact, the very portion of the second epistle to the Corinthians, which is perhaps to us most valuable, is, with respect to the particular object of the Epistle, no more than a digression.

But in considering what St. Paul, by the wisdom given unto him, has left for our benefit, one point must not be left unnoticed. That divine wisdom is shown, not only in what he has written, but in what he has not written. Here is the great contrast between him and those Christian writers whom we call the Fathers. They, holding the truths which St. Paul has taught, have left us those same truths —all the truths of Christ's Gospel,—put forth with great earnestness, and sometimes with great beauty. His hopes, his faith, his love unfeigned may be seen often in their pages, assuring us that the same Spirit of holiness and love, who had done so much for Paul, had filled their hearts also; that they were partakers with him of the same promises, and were servants of the same Master. But what they did not partake of was that spirit of wisdom, which was given to Paul far more for our sakes than for his own, because his words were to be our guide for ever. Therefore in him there is not only all Christian truth, but it is free from the mixture of human foolishness and error. In his Epistles all is equal; all is grave and sober, and wise and true; all is fitted to be an authority and a rule. Whereas in those Christian writers who came after him, we find immediately the necessary mixture of human error: unwise sayings, hasty judgments, fanciful and exaggerated notions occur in the same writer, in the same writing, in the same page with the words of

Christian truth and wisdom. There is much to admire in these writers, much to love; but because of this mixture of error, they are not fitted to be an authority. The distinction is of immense importance, and one without which they cannot be read with advantage: while, on the other hand, he who amidst the goodness and the sense of the Fathers is grieved from time to time at those marks of human infirmity which make it clear that they are no staff to lean upon, he may turn with greater thankfulness to the epistles of St. Paul, and of the other Apostles, and may there find that which the human heart so eagerly craves for,—an authority which it may trust without reserve.

And this brings me to the last division of my subject. How can those writings be an authority, it may be asked, in which are some things hard to be understood, and which may be wrested even to our destruction? They may indeed be so wrested by "the unlearned and unstable," as the other Scriptures are also wrested; as every good gift of God has been, is, and will be. But why need we be "unlearned and unstable?" for "unlearned" does not here mean those who have not read many books, nor got much of what is commonly called "learning." Another ignorance is here spoken of: that ignorance which St. Paul meant, when he said, "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is;" or, again, when he charged

the Colossians "to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." If we know nothing of God and duty, or if we are for ever wavering in our principles and practice, St. Paul's Epistles, the words of Christ Himself, all may be wrested to our harm. More especially the particular passages which St. Peter no doubt had in view, when he spoke of "things hard to be understood." For he doubtless meant that part of St. Paul's doctrine which St. James had heard so much misrepresented; his doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of the law. Wrested indeed this doctrine has been by many, at different ages of the Church, but only by the "unlearned and unstable," by those who knew not God and Christ, or who followed Them wavering and with a double heart; by those who knew not what sin is, or if they knew, did not feel it. Not the unlearned, in the common sense of the term; not the simple readers, who with little of outward help go to St. Paul's Epistles for the words of comfort and of instruction: they are not the persons who have wrested to their destruction his most true and most holy doctrine. When they read that they are justified by faith without the deeds of the law, they know well the merciful meaning of the words, that they can be, and are, forgiven when they come to Christ, even though in their deeds they are most unworthy of his acquittal. They feel that these words are

spoken for the penitent; but he is no penitent who does not hate his sins, and in his heart cast them from him. They know that to whom is much forgiven the same will love much; but that—if there be a nature so base as to be moved by this free forgiveness not to love, but to a bolder ingratitude, —then having been forgiven, he will therefore sin the more presumptuously: then St. Paul tells him, that thus building again the sins which were destroyed, he makes himself a transgressor, and that for such wilful and obstinate sin there is no second sacrifice: he was once freely justified, but forasmuch as he incurred obstinately a new account of guilt, he will be judged according to his deeds, and certainly condemned.

This is what the simple reader draws from St. Paul's epistles; whilst the unlearned and unstable, —those whom the Scripture calls "fools," a term never applied by it to the innocent deficiencies of the mere intellect, but to the moral errors and blindness of the heart,—they wrest them to their own destruction. But they wrest all Scripture also, and all God's gifts of every kind: "To the impure and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled;" the evil is in themselves, and can only be removed by a change within. For those who are pure in heart, let them read St. Paul's epistles earnestly; they will find, indeed, passages which they may not understand,

but nothing which they can wrest to their harm: they may not have the key to all the treasures of his wisdom, but they will find enough to make them wise unto salvation, and nothing to hinder them in their progress.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
April 24th, 1836.

SERMON XXVI.

THE EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS.

1 Corinthians viii. 2.

If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Those who are acquainted with that delightful book, the Pilgrim's Progress,—and who is there who is not acquainted with it?—will recollect that the Pilgrim is described as carrying the volume of the Scriptures in his bosom; and that when he is in any difficulty he opens the book, and finds in it some passage suitable to his case. Now, the meaning of this is, if it be not needless to explain what is so clear, that the Scriptures furnish every man with a guide to his practice; and that he who in every difficulty acts according to the principles which are to be found in the volume of Scripture, will be sure to act rightly. But many persons seem to have

applied what is said of the Pilgrim Christian literally to themselves. They seem to think that if they literally open a Bible, and read whatever they happen to find there, that because it is a part of the Scripture, it will therefore furnish them with the direction and comfort which they need. And agreeably with this notion, I have heard persons say that they studiously excluded from their minds all thought of the human writer, whether it were Paul, or John, or Isaiah, or David, and considered themselves to be reading only the words of God.

These "things may indeed have a show of wisdom in will worship and humility," as St. Paul says of another sort of superstition; but like that, they are really mischievous and unchristian, founded in error, and having error, or worse than error, for their fruit. If indeed we supposed that when we opened the Bible, God would so order it that we should always open it at the right place, that our looking into it, in short, would be accompanied with a perpetual miracle, then the practice would answer as well with us as the story represents it to have answered with the Pilgrim Christian. There the writer takes care to make his Pilgrim open his book at the right place; the passage which he finds is made to be the very one which his case requires. And most true is it that the Scripture does contain in every case what we want, if we know how to look for it; but the great wisdom which we need is

this very thing, to know how to look for it aright. Now those who say that they try not to think of the human writer, whether it be Paul, or John, or David, or Isaiah, go the very way to prevent themselves from finding what they need. For Paul and John, and David and Isaiah, wrote to different persons, and these persons were in many respects unlike each other; so that what was said to some of them, would have been often of no use, and might even have been hurtful, to others. If then we do not think who wrote the part of the Scripture that we are reading, or to whom it was written, or under what circumstances, we run a great risk of applying to our own case a medicine intended for cases of a very different nature; and then, however good the medicine may be when properly used, yet we in our folly shall make it a poison rather than a cure.

This then is the knowledge which we want for every part of the Scriptures; a knowledge of when, and by whom, and to whom, and for what purpose, it was written. This is what I may call the outward knowledge, the knowledge which we must gain by reading or hearing, for which we want notes, and expositions, and sermons. But then comes another sort of knowledge, without which the first is useless; a knowledge not to be gained by reading, hardly by hearing, for which we may look in vain through commentaries and works of

learned men, and which comes only by thinking and by prayer. This is, the knowledge of ourselves. For to use the comparison which I used just before: suppose we know the nature of various medicines,—that this is good as a stimulant, that as an alterative; such an one in cases of fever, another in paralytic affections, and so on; yet still we should gain little by our knowledge, unless we knew whether our own case was one of fever or of paralysis, whether our state required to be stimulated or to be lowered. If the symptoms deceive us, and we form a wrong judgment here, our knowledge of the uses of the medicines avails us nothing; they become our poison, and we die. But in these matters we do not trust our own judgment; we go to those who have a knowledge of bodily disorders, and ask them to prescribe for us. In the disorders of the body we have this resource, but it is not so with the disorders of the soul. There we must, generally speaking, judge for ourselves, and at our own peril. The symptoms of disorder here are often such as our own hearts alone are conscious of; and we shrink from laying open our hearts to any eye but His who made them. Nay, even if we would, it is not always that we can do it without mischief; it is not always that we can do it at all. We cannot always do it without mischief; for to recall thoughts which passed through our minds almost without consciousness, is little better than to dwell upon

our dreams. It is a morbid habit to be searching, as it were, into the very minutest operations of our minds, to be examining every particular process within us, how much did we assent to such and such a thought, how really did we form such and such a wish? in what exact portions did kindness, or the love of God, or selfishness, mix together to form the motives of such and such an action? And not only is it morbid to be doing this so constantly and carefully as would be required, if we would open our whole heart to the eye of another, but I scarcely believe it to be possible. I doubt whether in making such a confession aloud to any human ear, any memory would be so exact, any impartiality so rigid, as to describe us exactly as we were. A slight exaggeration or a slight omission would alter the true effect of the whole picture; and the counsel which we should receive might in consequence lead us into error. It is as I said before; we must gain a true knowledge of ourselves by thinking and prayer. Feeling that we have to do with Him to whom all hearts are open, we know that He can well supply whatever our own memory fails to recall; that His infallible discernment can analyze our most complex motives, where we should but grow dizzy by the intenseness of the inquiry. Praying to Him to remove from us the veil of self-love, yet to save us also from the restlessness of nervous self-suspicion, and judging

of ourselves in accordance with that prayer, not hastily or insincerely, yet not over minutely, we shall see assuredly where our faults and dangers lie, and then, if we have that outward knowledge of the Scriptures of which I spoke before, we shall have all that is needed to enable us to apply for their remedies with a certainty of not applying in vain.

But this outward knowledge itself may seem more than persons in general can attain to. In its perfection no doubt it is, and more indeed than any one can attain to, for the materials do not exist out of which it could be gained. Like perfection in other things, it is more than we can expect to arrive at; but although this knowledge of the Scriptures cannot be gained perfectly, yet it can be gained up to a great degree; and every step that we advance, we find that it abundantly repays us. Now the words of the text afford an instance of what I mean; and it was this passage indeed, occurring in the lesson for this evening's service, which turned my attention to-day to this subject. The words are characteristic of the Epistles to the Corinthians, which amongst all St. Paul's writings are particularly valuable to persons of a certain turn of mind, and for this very reason are not so applicable to persons of a different description. We know that Corinth was a large city, with a great deal of communication with other countries, and an active state of knowledge existing within itself. The Corinthians

were likely to be struck with the beauty of the Gospel morality, to admire its large and liberal views, embracing as it did all nations and ranks of men without distinction, and laying no stress upon outward ceremonies, such as they had seen the Jews so fondly attached to. But their habits and characters would lead them to take this view of Christianity alone, and to run wild upon it; whereas its other features, its humility, its intense charity, and its self-denial, they were very little inclined to value. Thus they readily understood that there could be nothing wrong in itself in eating any particular kind of food; that meats offered to an idol could not really differ from meats of any other sort. But the charity and self-denial which should accompany enlightened views, they had not learnt to practise. They had no thought of denying themselves for the benefit of persons less enlightened; being risen above superstition, they did not feel as they should have done for those who were superstitious; nor consider that if they could not enlighten them, they should at least be careful how they tempted them; that although ignorance was a bad thing, and a scrupulous and superstitious conscience was a great misfortune, yet that it was far worse to act against conscience, however superstitious, than to obey it; and that if a man could not be persuaded to see no harm in eating meats offered to idols, it was doing him a great unkindness to tempt him to eat them

by the force of example, and thus, in fact, to lead him to do what to him was wrong. Again, whilst entering readily into what they heard of the liberty and glorious prospects of the Christian, they wanted the humility and soberness which should save them from running into the evils of fanaticism. The gifts of the Spirit, which they had received, were to be displayed without the cold restraints of order or usefulness; women having become heirs of the promises no less than men, why should they still retain in their public assemblies that old fashion of dress which directed them not to appear abroad unveiled, as if they were intruding beyond their own proper element? Again, the Lord's Supper was a Christian festival, a commemoration of their high privileges; let it then be celebrated with nothing but joy: the earth was the Lord's, and He had given the use of it to His redeemed children; they need not then fear to enjoy His gifts. Further still, there were not wanting some of those impatient aspirings of the intellect, which were the worst part of the old philosophy. To be immortal was a glorious prospect; but to rise again with a body,—not to be allowed to consider their outward body as the prison which kept in the pure spirit, and so to cast off upon it, away from their proper selves, the blame of all their evil,—this was what they could not endure. Even worse remained behind: the liberty of Christianity freed the spiritual Christian

from the yoke of the law; he was no more subject to the old restraints upon the free affections of the heart: fornication and incest were but names to describe phantoms of evil, in which there was no evil in reality. Hence the one and the other of these sins were practised among them, as appears from the first Epistle, and were not only practised, but uncensured, and even defended.

To a people then of this sort, there was more need of that which might humble them than of any thing to encourage them more. They needed not to be told of the excellence of knowledge, but rather to be warned of its insufficiency when not accompanied by humility and charity; to be reminded, when they talked of their knowledge, that knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth; that if they allowed themselves to dwell on the satisfaction which Christianity had given to their intellects, on the clear views which it had afforded them of the divine nature, whilst others were sunk in the folly of heathenism, they should remember, that if any man think that he knoweth any thing in such matters, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to do; but if any man love God, the same is known of Him. As much as to say, that to know God here intellectually is impossible: if we love Him, God will know and acknowledge us, and raise us to a state in which we may know Him even as we are known by Him. Again, when speaking of that

reasoning by which they had persuaded themselves that sensual indulgences were no sin, the Apostle writes to them, "If any among you seemeth to be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness."

Many more instances might be given in both the Epistles to the Corinthians, serving to set forth their peculiar character, and the peculiar addresses which it required from the Apostle. And the same thing might be done for others of the Epistles; showing how there is in them severally a separate character in the persons addressed, and, therefore, a separate tone and character in the addresses to them: that thus they afford instances of divine remedies applied to a particular class of spiritual disorders; we may see the disposition, and the way in which that disposition is treated, and if we feel that ours is such an one, then this is a part of the Scripture which suits us particularly; we should read it over and over again, for here is the wisdom of God for the curing of our own special infirmities. But this cannot be done within the limits of one single sermon; it would rather be matter for a volume.

Only in conclusion now,—if any of us have powerful understandings; if we love truth heartily, and follow it vigorously; if we have no sympathy with superstition, and little respect for authority,

but require a reason for every thing, and are willing to be bound with the fewest possible ties;—then the Epistles to the Corinthians are a part of Scripture which we shall find especially profitable. There will be in it enough of what is truly liberal and wise and manly; there will be enough to gratify the loftiest hopes, the highest aspirations for an exalted hereafter. But there is preached withal, to the very extent of its power, the doctrine of Christ crucified: that doctrine which is of all others the most humbling and the most softening; which is indeed the power of God and the wisdom of God; but which speaks even more strongly of His holiness and of His love; that the thought of the one may lead us to an intense self-humiliation, the thought of the other may enkindle in us the most fervent and most affectionate love towards God and towards each other.

Rugby Chapel,
Sept. 23*rd*, 1832.

SERMON XXVII.

CHRISTIAN PROPHESYING.

1 Corinthians xiv. 24, 25.

If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

"To prophesy," in the language of the Scripture, is "to speak the words of God," as opposed to speaking our own words from our own devices. It is manifest, therefore, that it admits of very great degrees, being applicable, in a low sense, to the uttering of any word of wisdom or goodness, inasmuch as all such words are the words of God; while in its highest sense it applies to Him only to whom the Spirit was given without measure, and whose words were in a perfect sense the words of God. Between this highest sense of the term and

the lowest, there are other gradations,—according to the fulness and clearness of the knowledge of God's will which is enjoyed in each particular case; but certainly, any minister of Christ speaking out of the Scriptures, and declaring to his brethren God's will concerning them, may truly be said to prophesy: the lessons which he delivers are not his own, but those of God.

Whatever especial revelations, then, may have been given to those called prophets in the early Christian Church, what is said of them and of their prophesying, is, in the main, applicable to us and to ours. The differences between them and us are not of so much consequence as the resemblance. Nor are we concerned now with another difference, although in itself of considerable importance, that whereas in the church to which St. Paul was writing, there were many in each congregation who prophesied; now with us there is only one. What we have to consider is the nature and effects of Christian prophecy; whether speaking from an immediate and particular revelation, or from a general one already existing and known; whether it be confined to one, or imparted to many. We are to consider its nature and effects, such as the Apostle has described them, at once so truly and so beautifully,—that it convinces,—that it judges,—that it makes manifest the secrets of the heart; and that it at last urges the hearer of it to give himself

up to God, and acknowledge that what he hears has God's authority.

Such is Christian prophesying; such it should be made, on the one hand, by those who utter it; on the other, by those who hear it.

First, we see that its nature is practical. Since the world began, God has spoken to man for one purpose only, to make him better. Wisdom He has spoken to him: words of divinest wisdom; but they belong to that wisdom only which purifies the heart, and so makes wise unto salvation. But when we say that Christian prophesying is practical, we must take care not to limit the meaning of the word practical, so as to take only half of its proper signification. We must not suppose that there is nothing practical except what is given in the form of a command or rule: "Thou shalt not kill;" "Honour thy father and mother;" "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" and other such words. Every thing is practical which is calculated to affect the practice; that most so which is calculated to affect it the most. If then there be a way of addressing us more fitted to affect our hearts and lives than the way of precepts, rules, or commandments, that way may be justly called even still more practical. And it seems there is such a way: either by putting before us facts tending to awaken hope and fear, or such as address themselves to our affections. Not less practical, then, than the com-

mand to love the Lord our God with all our heart, is the truth declared by our Lord, that "in our Father's house are many mansions," and that "He is gone to prepare a place for us;" not less practical is His word, that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, to the intent that all who believe on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

When I say, then, that Christian prophesying is practical, I do not at all mean that it should consist wholly of rules or precepts; for these are not the only, nor even the most powerful means of affecting the practice; but that, whatever means it makes use of, it should always bear in mind that they are means, and that its end and object is the improvement of the heart and life. Thus it is most highly practical to dwell on the promises of eternal life, and the threats of eternal death; to show, on the one hand, how much there is to hope, and on the other, how much to fear. But it is possible to treat of these things in a manner that shall make them not practical, but curious; that shall leave on the mind not an impression of hope or of fear, but of amusement or interest offered to the imagination; and then there is a departure from the true character of Christian prophesying, inasmuch as this does not tend to edifying. Or again, nothing can be more practical than to dwell on the love of God in Christ, on the most gracious promise that the Holy Spirit

should abide with us for ever, that we might not be alone in the world with our own evil thoughts and desires, our temptations and our tempters. Yet how possible is it to speak of these things in a way that is not practical; to raise questions about the connexion between Christ and the Father, between the Spirit and both: or again, to turn the promise of Christ's abiding Spirit into a source of metaphysical perplexities, into attempts to distinguish between God's work and man's work; whether God's work can be resisted by us or no; whether our own is our own in any way or not. Then, again, there is a departure from Christian prophesying; for questions of words, questions that gender strifes, questions that perplex, that provoke the intellect to reason rather than the heart to love, may indeed have to do with the same subjects with which God's word has to do, but they are not themselves God's word, inasmuch as they do not minister to the edification of God's people; and not being God's word, they are not the true language of Christian prophesying.

Having thus explained what is meant by the word "practical," a word often used vaguely and in an imperfect sense, we may now follow St. Paul's description of the particular way in which prophesying is made practical; namely, that it convinces, that it judges, that it lays open the secrets of the heart. Christian prophesying convinces. By

"convincing" is meant overcoming an opposition, whether lurking only in the heart or expressed in words. This opposition consists in a desire to justify ourselves. God speaks to us as to sinners, calling on us to repent and be saved. We resist this call; saying, or more often feeling, that we are not sinners; that is, not in danger of God's punishment; that we shall not be lost, even if we do not repent. This opposition must be convinced, must be overcome. It must be convinced, to use our Lord's own words, of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: that we have sinned,—that we need to become righteous,—that we shall be judged. And this conviction is effected by showing, on the one hand, what God requires of us, and on the other by appealing to what we have done. It is effected also mainly by appealing to Christ crucified; for if we were in no danger, or could have saved ourselves, why should Christ have died for us? When we are convinced by Christian prophecy, then we are also judged by it. It speaks of God's judgments, and we feel that they belong to us; our conscience hears, as it were, the sentence already spoken, the sentence which declares that the soul which sinneth, it shall die.

Then are the secrets of our hearts made manifest; it does not mean to others, but to ourselves. We gain a knowledge of our hearts which we never had before. The light has broken in upon us, and

shines into every corner of that which before was darkened. Were we so evil, and we knew it not? in such danger, and we thought ourselves so safe? This needs looking to. The man arises, and searches his heart thoroughly, to see what evil it contains, and of what sort; what it is that has blinded his eyes thus long; what idols he has worshipped and is worshipping; on what his trust has been placed, which has not been placed on God. Wonderful is the degree of self-knowledge thus gained, and of consequent improvement. He sees his mind with all its weaknesses, and all its temptations. He says, "My nature, I find, leads me to this fault; it is one which I must carefully watch against. My way of life exposes me to this temptation: it is here that I must especially pray for strength from God. Such a being I find myself; so endowed, so ruined; with such promises before me, and such warnings; on my way to an eternal portion, yet walking with blinded eyes and shackled feet, so that I can neither see the right road, nor follow it with vigour."

Then falling down on his face, the man whom you, prophets of Christ, have so convinced, so judged, so made the secrets of his heart manifest to him, he will worship God, and confess that God is in you of a truth. He turns to Christ and to His salvation. He has found all that he needs. Here, and nowhere else, is God to be found; here

is His holiness, here is His power, here His wisdom, and here His love. He knows and feels that there is none other name given under heaven whereby he may be saved, but only the name of his Lord Jesus Christ. He confesses that this God is his God for ever and ever: He shall be his guide unto death.

This should be the effect of Christian prophesying: such it should be made by us and by you. Such it should be not once only, but perpetually; once it may be with peculiar force and power, but not once for all. As often as we eat the bread, and drink the cup of Christ's communion, we do show the Lord's death till He come. So also, in all Christian prophesying, wherever any are gathered together in Christ's name, there the word spoken is of the Lord's death, and so it will be till He comes again. And why thus often,—why does Christian prophesy still speak the word of Christ crucified? why does Christian communion show forth in its solemn act and deed the same truth? It is because we ever need it. Not once only at the beginning of our Christian course, as if from that time forward we should have no more to do with Christ crucified, but only with Christ risen; as if conviction of sin, insight into our heart's secrets, falling down before Christ in joyful penitence, were for one point of our lives only; to be never needed again, or if needed never gained. They are always

needed; they may always be gained. As sin steals upon us, and our hearts have hardened, so we again need to be convinced and judged. As self-deceit has blinded us, so we again need to have the secrets of our hearts made manifest; as we have walked coldly with Christ, so we again need to fall down on our face before Him, and own Him for our only Lord and God. It does not follow that we should have utterly gone back from Him; it is enough that we have walked coldly and carelessly, and therefore need to be awakened—need to be reminded of His death, which none can ever keep steadily in his mind, and at the same time live coldly and unthankfully.

This we are to bring home to ourselves, from Christian prophesying and from Christian communion. Our word is not God's word if it be not fitted to minister such thoughts to you; and if it be so fitted, and yet fails to excite them, then see if there be not a fault in you. I do not mean that Christ's death should immediately be the subject of all our prophesyings, or should be directly brought to your minds by your own receiving of them. But if our words serve to edification, they will bring you to Christ's death sooner or later; for all feelings of true self-knowledge, of repentance, of confidence, and of devotion, must lead to the cross of Christ. Our words fail, either through our fault, or through yours, if they do not lead you to look

into yourselves, if they do not in some degree convince, judge, open to you the state of your hearts, and dispose you from the knowledge so gained to seek after salvation; that is, to come to Christ crucified. The first impression may have nothing to do with Christ; it may be only one of general seriousness, of a disposition to consider your ways, and look into your hearts and conduct. And this is a good and wholesome impression,—a work of Christ's Spirit,—though as yet He has not wrought it in Christ's name. But if followed up, it will and must lead to Christ; and if it does not then it will be sure to fade away, and to end in nothing. If any of you has received this word as God's word, as Christian prophesying, then it will convince him and judge him; it will make him feel that all is not right with him, that inquiry into his own heart is wanted. Let him so inquire; let him search it carefully, and find out its weaknesses, and pray to God to pardon him and to strengthen him, and turn with faith unfeigned to Jesus Christ, in whom he will find both pardon and strength. And then, needing as he will do the pledge of pardon and of strength sure and perfect, let him draw near next Sunday to the holy communion; and in shewing forth the death of Christ, let him receive them both to his soul's salvation.

Rugby Chapel,
May 31*st*, 1835.

SERMON XXVIII.

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT.

1 Corinthians xii. 14.

The body is not one member, but many.

The chapter from which these words are taken, the lesson for this evening's service, is one of those passages in St. Paul's epistles, the wisdom and profit of which are most inexhaustible, and yet have been most neglected. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we know how little able men are to go beyond the latter for any good and wise purposes, however fondly they may depart from it in the way of fancy and superstition. Now this chapter speaks of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as they were enjoyed in the early church; and as these gifts have long since ceased, it may seem to those

who follow the letter of a rule without entering into its spirit, that the directions given with regard to these gifts have ceased to be of importance also. Whereas it is manifest that a moral rule applies to the reason of a case, and not to the particular form which it may happen to wear in any one age or country. And thus, as St. Paul's rule here is a moral one, and teaches us how we should act and feel with respect to God's gifts, it matters not that the particular gifts to which it is actually applied in the Epistle to the Corinthians, are no longer in existence, if we know that other gifts of God are in existence; which, like those spoken of by the Apostle, may either be used or abused, may either excite in us good feelings or the contrary.

Now, first of all, the gifts of the Holy Spirit were given according to His will. "He divideth to every man severally as He will." This is one point. And again, these gifts were not the greatest perfection of a man's nature; he might have the very highest of them, and yet perish everlastingly. "Covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet show I unto you a more excellent way; for though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." This is another point. Thirdly, these gifts were given to enable him who

had them to do good to others. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." This is a third point. Now then, if there are any gifts of God now enjoyed by us, in which all these three points are to be found: gifts given according to God's free pleasure; gifts which we may have in the highest measure and yet perish: but at the same time, gifts which may enable us to do good to others, and therefore are highly valuable and earnestly to be coveted, then St. Paul's rules, with regard to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, are applicable to us now.

It is most evident that there are such gifts; and that we all are, more or less, partakers of them. Nay, so close an analogy exists between what we call the course of nature, that is, the course of God's ordinary providence, and the dispensation of grace, that is, the course of His special providence, that it might be possible to go through the several gifts mentioned by the apostle, and to find for each of them some strictly corresponding gift in God's dealings with us now. Yet, lest we should be driven into any thing like extravagance, by so insisting on this parallel as to fancy a resemblance beyond reality, it will be better simply to notice what are, beyond question, God's gifts to us now; as freely given, as capable of being made useful, as capable also of being separated from that holiness which alone shall see God, as were the gifts of the

church of Corinth. Consider for a moment; let each of us think within himself whether he has not some power, some talent, some taste, some advantage of one sort or another, in which he feels that his main strength lies; something particularly capable of improvement, and which beyond other points in him, would reward the care spent on its cultivation. Perhaps some may doubt this, from being accustomed to confine the notion of God's gifts to something which they consider very high and important: they would never dream of carrying it down to little things. Yet what is the Apostle's comparison: "those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary; God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked." I may safely use these words, as confirming what our reason will show us, if we apply to it; that God is the author and giver of the least of our gifts, faculties, tastes, talents, and advantages, no less than of what we call the highest.

Bearing this in mind, and extending as widely as possible the notion, that all that we have comes from God, these three great points form St. Paul's rule for us to follow: that every gift is a means of good; that no gift extends to our highest spiritual good; that we should value every gift, however humble, and not despise our neighbour because his gift is not the same as ours. These are the great

points of St. Paul's lesson, which we may now proceed to consider particularly, each in its order.

I. Every gift is a means of good. It is easy to moralize, as has been done very strikingly and beautifully by various writers, on the vanity of human wishes, in being anxious for wealth, for talents, for beauty, for influence: things which so often tend to the ruin of their possessor rather than to his good. This has been truly said; for the very fact of over anxiously desiring these things, or of desiring them at all without desiring something better, even that grace of God which keeps all our life and being in healthful order, is a sign that we shall use them amiss. But God gives to some these gifts, and to others other gifts; in many cases without their wishing for them at all. A healthy constitution, a strong understanding, a vigorous body, quick senses, acute and accurate tastes, the inheritance of a competent fortune, or of a noble name,—these are given without our searching, given before we were able to search, given at our first entrance into the world, or at any rate before our own exertions could at all determine our own destiny. But there are gifts also to be traced, not only in faculties granted, but in sensibilities withheld. There are constitutions of mind and body so acutely sensible to things painful, whether physically or morally, that to them certain situations and duties in life are almost necessarily closed: their

nature would sink under the effort which strove to force it to endure them. Then there come the mass of mankind, not feeling this pain so overwhelmingly, but yet feeling it strongly; to whom the endurance of particular callings would be, if not an impossible effort, yet a great one: necessity alone could urge them to make it. But beyond these, there are persons also whose nature scarcely feels this pain at all; who, without distress to themselves, can witness scenes most repulsive to many natures, and who are thus enabled to do great good. Who will deny that this less sensitive nature is a gift, as well as the more sensitive one; gifts given, it is true, for different purposes, and leading to different lines of duty, but both given to us to profit withal; to do good to our Christian brethren.

This instance will be sufficient to show what I mean: that every faculty, or talent, or taste, or advantage which we may possess, is capable of ministering to the good of others in some way or other, and that for this very purpose it was given to us. And I believe that it would be very difficult to find out any person who had not thus his own gift, and who was not capable, in some way or other, of benefitting or pleasing his neighbours especially.

II. It is most clear that gifts of this sort, whether of the highest kind or of the humblest, do none of them imply our highest spiritual good. St. Paul speaks of one bestowing all his goods to feed the

poor, and yet being nothing if he had no charity. It may be asked, how can the giving our goods to feed the poor be called a gift, when it seems rather to be a grace. The answer is, because the giving to the poor here spoken of, appears to be connected with one of the offices in the church, that of the deacon or minister. It would be possible for a man to have in a high degree the gift of ministration, if I may so speak; great activity, great interest in his office as such, and, therefore, great readiness to make personal sacrifices to a very large extent to promote its objects; and yet not to have a pure and humble and generally loving spirit towards God and man in matters not connected with his office. And so it might be now. Activity, love of business, love of doing well what we are well fitted to do, might make a man most highly useful in his generation; he might know his gift and improve it; but yet it is very possible that he might value the gift more than the giver, and so might never seek for that state of heart towards God and man, which, being an abandonment of self and a submission of our gifts, together with all other things, to Him who gave them, is alone the state of the children of God; that is, of the heirs of life eternal.

III. We should value every gift however humble, and not despise our neighbour because his gift is not the same as ours. St. Paul's comparison, drawn from the human body, is as just as it is

striking. If we were ever allowed to despise any one, it should be those alone who did not improve their gifts, or who, while neglecting what they had, foolishly aspired after such as were denied them. But the world of providence, that is, the society of men, and the world of grace, that is, the Church or society of Christians, are alike formed out of various elements, and would alike be spoiled by uniformity. It is a well-known fable, that gold itself, the most precious of things, when made by its foolish possessor the only thing around him, punished his folly with death. He was starved, because he would fain have every thing gold. So would society perish, if there were no gifts of God but such as are accounted most precious; if there were no faculties but the rarest and loftiest, no tastes but the most refined. Let any of us who is inclined to value himself most, consider the gifts which he has not, the things which he cannot do, the services to society which he cannot render. Would that all persons, that all classes, and all divisions of men of whatsoever sort, would remember this practically. It is not a dream of fantastic equality, which would pretend that all gifts are equal, that all services should be honoured alike; that is not so; in the natural body we may value our sight above all our senses; we would gladly sacrifice other members rather than lose our eyes. This is well; but it is true, also, that the eye cannot supply

the place of a limb, or of the smallest part of a limb; it cannot do the work of the limb, any more than the limb can do its work; and by the loss of that limb there is a loss to the body which not its noblest faculties can repair. Even so common sense has spoken in the social body, that there are some faculties more precious than others, less to be spared, and more highly to be honoured. Yet there is that which these most precious faculties cannot do; there are benefits to society which the loftiest mind may be unable to render, and which may be done by the stronger body of the rudest.

So beautifully is this our social body knit together; so variously are we gifted that we may supply each other's wants. But the same Apostle who has used this comparison, and who has compared the society of Christians to the natural body of a single man, has also carried it further, and added one point more which we may not omit to notice. He calls us a body, of which Christ is the Head. We have relations to one another, we may render services to one another, but there is a yet higher relation in which we all stand to Him; and it is only when this relation is acknowledged and acted upon that the body goes on healthfully. He is the Head of us all, of the greatest and of the humblest. Have we a high station, great influence, great powers?—yet what are we to that perfect Man who is our Head? What are our

faculties, what the value of our best services, when we think of His infinity? Can we do but little, are our powers very humble, our means very small, our opportunities of doing good next to nothing; are we very young or very old, very sick or very poor; are we such as society would scarcely miss, whose place a thousand seem ready to fill? yet we are no less members of the body of Him who filleth all in all; and He values us and loves us with an infinite love; and prizes our souls so deeply, that He gave His own life to save them. So in Him we each shall find according to our need; humiliation, if we are exalted in our own strength; exaltation, if we are humbled in our own weakness.

The state of union with one another, and with Christ, of feeling ourselves to be, in St. Paul's words, the body of Christ, and severally members one of another, is the perfection of a Christian life; it is that perfect communion of which the outward sign is the act of communion at the Lord's table. For that body of Christ of which they who worthily communicate at that table become partakers, is and can be only His spiritual body, that body of which He is the Head, redeemed by the offering of His natural body once for all, and now so united to Him, that whoso is a partaker of it partakes of Him, and truly belongs to Him. It were then to separate what He hath made one, to look upon the communion of the Lord's Supper as a mere act between

Christ and our single selves, as if we alone were or could be His body. Rather is it our communion with Christ in all His fulness; the being joined heart and soul into the fellowship of His body, and so as he himself expresses, the being one in Him and in His Father. Therefore we go thither to increase our love to one another as well as to Him. We go thither to learn the feelings that become His members: sympathy and kindness towards each other, a desire to minister to each other's good and to His glory, by the use of all the gifts which He has given us. So indeed would there be no division in His body, no unkindness, no neglect, no pride; but all would care for one another, and value one another; and all, whilst improving to the utmost their own gifts, and honouring those of their neighbours, would have found out also that more excellent way of which St. Paul speaks; the way of love towards God and man; the way, in short, to express it in the highest possible language, of communion with Christ's body.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
September 27th, 1835.

SERMON XXIX.

EXCITEMENT.

EPHESIANS v. 18, 19.

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit: speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

ON the first reading of these words, it may not be evident to every one what is the connexion between the first part of them and the second, between the command not to be drunken with wine, and the bidding them to be filled with the Spirit. When we begin to think, however, about it, we shall recollect that when the Spirit first descended on the day of Pentecost, some of those who saw its effects, said mockingly, "These men are full of new wine;" and when we consider it a little more, we shall see that the direction of the Apostle in the text relates to that which in this generation is even more familiar

than it was of old; to that which varying in form is yet in one shape or other universally acceptable, and is found to be one of the greatest of human pleasures,—I mean, excitement. The Apostle notices one sort of evil excitement, the lowest certainly, but one of the most common of all; and on the other hand he notices one sort of good and wholesome excitement, not indeed the most common of all, yet the best and purest.

Let us first see what we mean by excitement; a term which may not be quite clear to all of us, or at least our notions may not be distinct about it, though we may understand its meaning generally. Now here, if we understood our own nature perfectly, we might perhaps be able to describe what excitement properly speaking is, how it is caused, and on what part of our system it acts. But, as in so many other instances, the imperfections of our knowledge oblige us to be content with much less than this; we cannot do more than describe excitement by its effects. To speak generally, that is excitement which interrupts our quiet and ordinary state of mind with some more lively feeling; which makes us live more consciously, and in a manner quicker, than we do in common. This more lively life, if I may so speak, is pleasant universally, or almost universally; but the nature of the excitement, or rather the things which are capable of exciting different classes of men, and different individuals,

are of course exceedingly different. Highly agreeable and intellectual society, which to some is one of the most exciting things in the world, is to others one of the least so; and the same may be said of poetry and of music. But whatever does excite us, also pleases us; and the pleasure, or at any rate the craving, grows with the indulgence; whence arises the known difficulty of persuading a confirmed drunkard to leave off his habit of drinking. Life is so insupportable to him when robbed of its excitement, that he cannot persuade himself to abandon his propensity, although knowing its sin and its danger.

The direction of the Apostle in the text bids us choose that excitement which is good and healthy, instead of that which is bad and mischievous. And, as I said before, the command which was needful in his days is even more so now. I do not mean, indeed, with regard to the particular excitement of drunkenness; for although that was not, probably, a very general vice in those days amongst the inhabitants of a warm climate, yet neither is it in our rank of society general amongst us now. And comparing our own country, and the richer classes in it especially, with what they were forty or fifty years ago, we shall find that there is much less danger from this temptation now than formerly; in fact, in the ordinary state of things, it can hardly be called a danger at all. But the increase of other sorts of

excitement has more than kept up with the decrease of this. The whole state of society is more exciting; —the great inventions which have been made in various ways enable men to do more than they could formerly, and in a much less time; that is, they enable them to live at a quicker rate; they also multiply pleasures, and put them more within our reach, thus accustoming us the more to crave for them. And in books this is exceedingly striking. We have heard of the story of that Grecian king who ordered a magnificent Persian feast to be served up side by side with the simple meal of his own countrymen, to contrast the luxury of the one with the plain and frugal habits of the other. So if we could place side by side the books which formed a boy's entertaining reading thirty or forty years ago, with those which are within his reach now, the difference would not be less extraordinary. Those whose experience does not reach so far back would hardly believe how simple was the feast, so to speak, which was set before their fathers, when compared with the variety and the richness of that which they now enjoy.

All this is not without its effect, nor can it be. The mind early begins to lose the keenness of its wonder, because it is so early made acquainted with such a variety of objects. Forty years ago, the probability would have been, that out of a number of persons of the age of those who now hear me,

very few would have travelled further than from their own homes to school, and all else would have been new to them. But now the exception would probably be of those who had not seen more than this; in most cases it would be much the contrary. Thus, manhood is in various ways anticipated in youth. Much that used to strike the mind at twenty, or five and twenty, with all the freshness of novelty, is now become familiar to it before that period; there is, therefore, a craving for something more, and it seems difficult to conceive what will be the effect twenty or thirty years hence, when those who have been brought up amidst all this excitement shall have passed the prime of life, and shall have exhausted in forty years more than those sources of interest which used formerly, under a more sparing distribution of them, to last out for our threescore years and ten.

Again, with regard to that low excitement spoken of in the text, the course to be taken is sufficiently plain. "Be not drunk with wine;"—abstain, as you may do, from a vice so degrading and so fatal. But how can we say, "Be not led away by the excitement of our present state of society?" How is it possible for you to escape it? Is it not around you on every side? And with regard to books in particular, would it be wise, even if it were practicable, to advise you to content yourselves with such as amused your fathers? Here, then, is an excitement, of doubtful character indeed, yet still inevitable. The world is moving at a quicker pace, and we cannot help moving on with it. Yet two things we can do: the one to watch ourselves amidst this worldly excitement, and not allow ourselves to move faster than we must; the other to have recourse betimes, to begin early, and to go on late, with that other and divine excitement of which the Apostle speaks, and whose virtue, alike to kindle, to strengthen, and to soothe, keeps pace by Christ's appointment with the increased activity of what is of doubtful character, or of evil.

And first, let us watch ourselves amidst this worldly excitement, and not allow ourselves to move faster than we must. In this respect our studies here greatly help us. For, as it were foolish to bid you live out of your own time, and not to avail yourselves of its inventions and activity, so it is the happiness of our employments here that they hinder us from living in our own time exclusively. They acquaint us and oblige us to become familiar with a calmer and simpler beauty, with a less pretending and excited wisdom than that of our own age. And what the studies of this place do for us we may also now and hereafter do for ourselves. We may, and should always, temper the draught of modern interests, and tastes, and passions, with the cooling and sobering study of those of past times. In this way it is possible to partake of the activity of the

present without catching its feverishness; our very taste will shrink from what is over exciting, as the healthy appetite shrinks from over luxuriousness of living in matters of food. Again—although this undoubtedly is harder to practise—yet those who are entering upon life may in other ways also temper and moderate the vehemence of their progress. It may not be needful, or far less needful than formerly, to say, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess;" but it is quite needful to warn against excesses of other kinds. I do not speak of things absolutely sinful, but of things over exciting. Excess of bodily exercise, to which consciousness of strength often tempts us; excess of intellectual exercise, whether in reading or in society, to which we are no less tempted by a consciousness of power of mind; excess even in our hours; for though it seems a little thing to speak of, yet it is really not so: and the habit of sitting up during a great part of the night is essentially injurious, let the hours thus unnaturally gained be employed as they will. I well know that to all these things there are abundant temptations; but do you suppose that, forty or fifty years ago, the temptations were less to the grosser excitement of drunkenness? And if every one would say that it would have been our duty, then, to struggle against that temptation, shall we not confess also that it is our duty to strive against those temptations of our own days, wherein there is

excess also, though of another kind; excess and excitement opposed to that happiest of all tempers, the temper of Christian sobermindedness?

But most of all, while we strive to lessen our worldly excitement, let us begin early and go on late with that divine excitement of which there is no fear of drinking in over measure. I am not forgetting the evils of fanaticism; but is the spirit of fanaticism indeed the Spirit of God? and is not the Spirit of God as truly a spirit of peace and wisdom as it is a spirit of love and of power? Truly we need put no caution, no restraint on the Apostle's command, "Be ye filled with the Spirit." Study the things of God in their depth and in their simplicity, and then see how they realize that seemingly impossible problem, at once to excite and soothe. I spoke of exhausting subjects of human interest, of having accustomed our taste and feelings to such varied indulgences from early years, that ere the vigour of manhood was over they would have lost all healthful activity, and crave the strongest excitements to awaken them. But who can ever exhaust the subjects of eternal interest? Who has come to the end of the goodness of God? who has sounded the depths of His wisdom, or drained to the bottom the cup of His love? Enter life as Christians, and you need not fear lest the world should hurry you on too rapidly. There is much to learn, much to admire, much to enjoy, and much to

do. Vast powers are at work, vast results producing; do not despise them, nor yet fear them. Walk amidst them, study them, use them; you will not be carried away with their intoxication; for on the one hand you see also what there is in them of weakness and of unworthiness; whilst you see and know what is hid from other eyes, the workings of a far greater power, results a thousand times more wonderful;—good brought out of evil,—good triumphing amidst evil, and over it,—self-subdued,—God glorified,—Christ's kingdom advanced in man's salvation. Never at any time, since the Gospel was first preached to mankind, were its peculiar qualities better fitted to the peculiar evils of the world. It raised and excited an age of barbarism: it is no less able to excite and to tranquillize an age of the highest civilization. For let the human mind go on as far as it will, and the wisdom of the Gospel still expands before it, satisfying its highest refinement, as it humbled itself to its greatest ignorance; but whilst giving a perpetual interest to life, it is also perpetually soothing, because it calls us to those thoughts and to those quiet and humble actions which must be sobering; which must stay the vehemence of our feelings, and give us intervals of rest and of peace.

But who can be thus filled with the Spirit, unless he seek the appointed means of gaining it? In comparing the reading of the present generation

with that of their fathers, I cannot but think that, amongst the higher classes of society, the Scriptures are less familiarly known than they were formerly, in those cases where religion has been really attended to. There were more instances of utter ignorance and carelessness in former times; but where there was a serious mind, and a religious education, I am not sure whether the Bible was not more familiarly known than it is in similar instances now. But be this as it may, it is at least certain that very many who are in earnest, and who serve God in Christ Jesus, are yet so far deficient in their knowledge of the Scripture, that its various stores for counsel, for encouragement, for warning, are not enough at their command; they go out into the world, knowing some other things better. This, however, should not be so; it is not well to be more familiar with any thing than with the word of life and truth. This should be our most complete knowledge, as it is our best; and thus only will the Gospel be found to answer as fully our intellectual wants as we know it to answer to our moral wants, even when our knowledge of it is far less perfect.

Rugby Chapel,
June 28th, 1835.

SERMON XXX.

WILLS.

COLOSSIANS iii. 17.

Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

THIS is one of those passages in the Scripture, which are quite familiar to the ears of us all; which we receive as a good and holy command, but which, I think, we seldom follow up into its real meaning, or rather into that multitude of lessons for our daily life which lie wrapped up as it were within it. One great business of Christian preaching, as it seems to me,—of preaching, I mean, as a part of our Church service, in distinction from the prayers and psalms, and the reading of the Scriptures,—is to form the link between human things and divine: to form a bridge, so to speak, by which the truths taught and the feelings expressed in the other parts

of the service may be joined on to the common business and common language of life, and not allowed to remain apart and unapplied; respected, indeed, but powerless. And this same thought is contained in the words of the text. The Apostle had been speaking of acts of direct religion. "Let the word of Christ," he says, "dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." And then he proceeds to speak of all the various acts of human life which are not in themselves acts of religion: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." That is, let all your actions and all your words be done and spoken as in Christ's presence, and as done and spoken by His servants and His redeemed.

Many actions there are of our daily life which it would be curious to paint in what I may call their dead state and their living: first, I mean describing any given action, the choice of a profession or calling, the purchasing or selling of property, the contracting marriage, the engaging in a lawsuit, or any other of our more serious acts, as done under the influence of our common and worldly feelings only; and then describing the very same things as done in a Christian spirit, and with Christian resolutions and feelings; or, in other words, as done in the name of the Lord Jesus. But there is one act

which I would wish now to consider in this double form; an act which ought, it would seem, to be all but an act of direct religion; and yet which is many times done under the influence of worse motives than almost any other of a man's life; the act, I mean, of making a will.

"A testament or will," says the Epistle to the Hebrews, "is of force after men are dead." Therefore I said that it might seem to be properly all but an act of direct religion. For the very notion of our last will and testament implies the notion of our death: what we write is absolutely written only for that time when we shall be no more in the land of the living. There is something exceedingly solemn in writing words which shall not be read till we can write and read no more; in sealing a paper which shall not be opened till we are laid in our graves. And thus one would think that the bare thought of making our will, the mere consciousness of writing and sealing an instrument so full of death, if I may so speak, in every line, ought in itself to be the most impressive of sermons.

There is another thing in the act of writing a will, not nearly so obvious as what I have just noticed; not known perhaps, certainly not considered, by all of us; but yet which deserves our notice. We are so accustomed to hear and talk of men's wills, that we regard them as matters of course; as what always has been and must be. Yet

it is a great power to be able to act when we are dead; to dispose at our pleasure to this person or to that, on such or such conditions, of lands, money, goods, over which we can exercise no control, and which we can by no possibility enjoy. And thus history and law tell us of a time amongst several nations, when wills were either unknown, or were but a request of the dying man, which might after his death be either granted or refused. A state of things is on record, when the succession to all property was fixed by a general law, and a man's power over his own ended when, to speak properly, it was his own no longer. And in one sense of the word, this state of things was the natural one; natural according to that perverted meaning of the term, by which we lose sight of our own proper nature, and speak of that nature only which we have in common with the brutes. For in so far as we are creatures who, in a few years, must cease to be, and, when dead, can do nothing and enjoy nothing in this world, so far is it natural that all our will and all our power should end with us in our grave. But in so far as we have another nature than this, even as far as regards this world; as we are connected with our fathers and our children with us, and we can in no manner get rid of the manifold influences of the generations which have gone before us, neither can our children by possibility get rid of the influences of our generation; so it is most natural

and most wise that the past and present and future should be linked to one another, in a chain not to be broken; that in every age the dead should still, in a manner, be present amongst the living; that their words and actions should still have force, and share with our own in the disposition of us and ours.

These considerations are each of force to make us consider the making a will as one of the most solemn actions of our lives. For the power of making it is given us by society, which entrusts us with what we never could have taken to ourselves, and allows us to extend our life in a manner far beyond its natural bounds, in the confidence that so great a privilege shall be exercised in a becoming spirit; that having a second term of existence given us, we should use it worthily. And again, thinking of what we write in our will, as written for that time when we shall be actually abiding God's judgment, with no power whatever to repent of, or undo any foolish or wicked thing that we may have said or done; we shall thus also consider carefully what we are doing, and take heed not to commit sin in such a matter, where, by the very necessity of the case, there shall be no place left for repentance.

Yet with all this, wills, as I have already said, often exhibit the saddest marks of sinful passions; so that there are cases in which we should think worse of a man from the spirit shown in his last

will, than from any thing that he had been known to do or say in the course of his life. This arises no doubt from the practice, in itself reasonable and good, of making our wills when we are in full health and strength; when we have no distinct sense at all of the period for which we are making them. And again, the great abuses formerly practised by superstition or by fraud, when the priest beset the dying man, and persuaded him to leave his money to what were called spiritual uses, and which were neither always really spiritual and Christianlike, nor recommended on just and Christian reasons; these abuses have left such an impression upon men's minds, that there is often a shyness in the clergy of speaking upon the subject, either personally in their visits to the sick, or publicly in the pulpit. Yet to speak of it in the pulpit, at least, can by no possibility be open to abuse; and it may be something to lay down generally, and when there can be no particular application intended, such rules as a Christian ought to follow in a matter so solemn.

First of all it may be right just to observe, that a will in all its directions and bequests should be free from extravagance and folly. There are instances of wills in which the testator has seemed to indulge some strange fancy, as if he wished to excite astonishment, or exercise a capricious power even after he is dead. But when society enabled us to live on in a manner after our death, it meant that

our reason and principle should so live, and not our folly. And what sense can he entertain of death and judgment, who, in the very preparation for both, indulges in some absurdity such as would be ill fitted for the graver moods and better tempers even of our common life? But as this is not the commonest fault in wills, I need not do more than thus briefly allude to it.

A worse feeling, which sometimes appears in a man's will, is that of resentment or revenge. There is a pleasure felt in remembering old slights, in vexing or disappointing those who may once have offended or neglected us. And with such feelings unrepented of, nay, gloried in, and exercised, so to speak, after death, we appear before God to ask that we may be forgiven. Surely every such will is no other than a horrible record, written and signed and sealed by a man's own hand, of a man's eternal condemnation. By it, he, being dead, yet speaketh, to say that he is indeed dead, body and soul. For what hope can the fondest charity entertain of such a man's repentance, when he tells us himself that up to the very latest minute of his life he did not repent and would not?

But this also, it is to be hoped, is a fault comparatively rare. By far the commonest evil feelings manifested in wills are covetousness and ambition. The desire of leaving a name, of making a family, of conferring enormous wealth and consequence on

ourselves as living in our posterity. Thence the spirit of tying up property for as long a period as we can, that our own power may be the longer felt, and the idol which we worship may not pass away. How often is the peace and mutual love of a family broken by such wills as these; when brothers and sisters are put in a wholly wrong position with regard to each other; one unduly exalted, the rest unduly made dependent! But here, too, the thing which is most plain on the face of such a will is, that it could not have been an act done in the name of the Lord Jesus. For if there be such sins as covetousness and ambition, and worldly mindedness, I know not how they can be more shown than by thus retaining them to the last, and declaring that riches and worldly rank are things far more precious to us than love for our children individually, or their cherishing towards one another the natural feelings of brotherly confidence and affection.

Another point, harder to touch upon, and on which one cannot give any universal rule, yet requires, I think, to be noticed. There are, I believe, some parts of Europe in which no will is valid unless it contains some bequest to the poor. This is evaded, as such rules are apt to be, by making the sum so bequeathed to the poor merely nominal. Yet the feeling which dictated the rule was founded on truth; that in the last act of his life a man should regard not only justice, but charity; that he

should remember those whom Christ so often and so earnestly has recommended to our care. And that our Church shares the feeling may be seen from one of the rubrics in the service of the Visitation of the Sick, which says that "the minister should not omit earnestly to move such persons as are of ability to be liberal to the poor." Certain it is, that bequests for charitable and public purposes are far more rare than they were formerly, in proportion as those wills of covetousness and ambition have more abounded; the spirit of charity and of Christ has departed, and the spirit of pride and selfishness and mammon has come in its place. And certain it is also, that there are some purposes both of public usefulness or ornament, and also of what is more directly called charity, which in every man's immediate neighbourhood require to be promoted. Such objects, let them be of what particular kind they will, deserve surely to be considered. Not, of course, to the real injury or impoverishment of those whose claim upon us is one of blood and nature; yet greatly in preference to views of aggrandisement for our children, or of giving them more than enough, which is quite as great an injury to them as giving them less than enough.

Now it is true that self-deceit, which never forsakes us, would very likely try to persuade us, in the several cases that I have been noticing, that our will was just, or at any rate that we have a right to

do as we will with our own. But let men consider that, although they may deceive themselves, yet they cannot deceive God; that they must be judged not according to what a hardened or corrupted conscience whispered here, but according to what it will tell them when the time for such deceit is over, and sin appears to them as it is. And as the risk of what they are doing is great, inasmuch as their will must outlive all possibility of their repentance, and if it be a sin it must stand as such for ever, it were well if they used beforehand the precautions of Christian wisdom. And as there is a god of this world who blinds our eyes, and as there is a deceived conscience which sometimes will not let us see that we have a lie in our right hand, were it not wise to seek that aid and that light which have been given us, that we should not walk in darkness? that we should make our wills in the first instance, and review them from time to time afterwards, with earnest prayer to God that an act so solemn may be done under the influence of His Spirit, and in the name of the Lord Jesus? It was once the custom that every will should begin with the words, "In the name of God;" and the testator very commonly stated that he committed his soul to God through Christ, before he proceeded to say a word of his worldly affairs. No doubt the use of these expressions outlived the true sense of their reality: they may be found, it is but too likely, standing in

the front of a will so little Christianlike, that they are no better than blasphemy. But what is our state when we leave off the very expression of good feelings because we will keep our real feelings at such utter variance with what is good? But whether the words are used or no, certain it is that every will not conceived in their spirit is an act of sin. To look forward deliberately to what is to happen after our death, without any thought of what death is, and into whose presence it brings us, cannot but be great ungodliness; that mind can hold but little communion with God at other times which is not led to think upon Him then.

A truly Christian will, as it is a solemn act, and the exercise of a great privilege, so it is full of happy thoughts and of blessing. The best and holiest human affections are mingled with the thoughts of death and of eternity. What there is of good and precious in this world stands out the brighter when we are steadily observing how much of it is passing away. Together with the pleasure of exercising for the last time our tender care for those whom God has given to us, must rise also our thankfulness to Him for having enabled us to provide for them, and our prayers that He will continue to abide with them when we are gone. Nor is it unpermitted to the Christian parent of Christian children to glance in thought from this, his latest act of communion with them in this mortal state, to his first meeting

with them again in the kingdom of Christ, when no more care will be needed, either for himself, or for them, for both will be joined in everlasting love and blessedness, one with each other in God and in Christ.

RYDAL CHAPEL,
January 12*th*, 1840.

SERMON XXXI.

THE EPISTLES TO TIMOTHY.—CHRISTIAN USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

2 Timothy iii. 1.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

So little regard has been paid to chronological order in the present arrangement of St. Paul's Epistles, that the two first written are immediately followed by the two latest of all; the two to the Thessalonians, I mean, are immediately followed by the two to Timothy. We may thus pass at once from the beginning of St. Paul's written Gospel to its end, from a period only a few months later than his first crossing over into Europe, to one in all probability only a little while preceding his death. And in doing this, we may compare the more full language of hope which abounds in his earlier Epistles, with the darker anticipations which are more common in his later ones. For although it

was revealed to him very early, as we see by the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, that the progress of the Gospel would be grievously obstructed, still the full sense of the extent and greatness of the evil does not appear to have possessed his mind so thoroughly then, as we find it to have done some years afterwards, when it was not only a matter of expectation and belief, but of actual experience.

To those who love to realize past times, and to bring them before their minds with something of the freshness and distinctness of the scenes actually present to them, it is often a grievous disappointment to find great chasms here and there in the records of history, where the road, so to speak, has been almost wholly carried away, and there is no possibility of restoring it. But of all these chasms, none is so much to be regretted as that wide one of more than a century, in which all full and distinct knowledge of the early state of Christianity after the date of the Apostolical Epistles has been irretrievably buried. In the Apostolical Epistles themselves we have a picture clear and lively, from which we can gain a very considerable knowledge of what the Christian Church then was. But from these Epistles, which merely as historical monuments are so invaluable; from these records, undoubtedly genuine, uncorrupted, uninterpolated, and in which every thing is drawn with touches equally faithful, bold, and distinct, we pass at once

into a chaos. We come to works of disputed genuineness, with a corrupted text, full of interpolations; and which, after all, are so different from the Apostolical Epistles in their distinctness and power of touch, that even if we could rely on their authenticity, the knowledge to be derived from them is exceedingly vague and scanty. In this absence of good and trustworthy records, all manner of wild guesses, and stories either without any foundation or greatly altered and exaggerated, grew up plenteously; and it is sufficiently striking that while we have a legendary account, pretending to relate the place and manner of the deaths of all the Apostles, there are scarcely two of the whole number, of whose deaths we have even so much as a statement of probable authority.

Thus God has, as it were, encircled the goodly garden of Scripture truth, in which there grows the the tree of life, with a wide belt of desert on every side, preserving it manifestly distinct from all other and merely human cultivation, and condemning to a more than ordinary blindness those who can see but little difference between the garden of the Lord, and the howling wilderness that reaches up to its very walls. We stop then at the last Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, with something of the same interest with which one pauses at the last hamlet of the cultivated valley, when there is nothing but moor beyond. It is the end, or all but the end, of

our real knowledge of primitive Christianity; there we take our last distinct look around; further the mist hangs thick, and few and distorted are the objects which we can discern in the midst of it.

But this last distinct view is overcast with gloom. "In the last days perilous times shall come." Then there follows a picture of what men would be, who in word and form were Christians, but in deed led the lives of the worst heathens. Those who had the form of godliness, or of Christianity,—for the two words in the Epistles to Timothy are generally synonymous,—those who had the form of Christianity, were yet false, unholy, disobedient; lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Into what hands then was the Church of God to fall, when such men as these were to be its members? But the Apostle relies that Timothy would in his own generation struggle against this evil, because he had from a child been familiar with that revelation of God which was profitable for the teaching of truth, and for the removing of error, for correcting all that was amiss, and fostering every seed of good in us, for the perfecting of God's servants in all good works. This is St. Paul's testimony to the importance of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, when as yet the truths of Christ's Gospel were known more by the hearing of the Apostles' preaching than by the reading of their written works.

This testimony is one that is well deserving of our attention. No doubt it is applicable, and even in a higher degree, to the writings of the New Testament; but yet this is not its original meaning; St. Paul spoke it entirely of the Old. And it is manifest that he points to the Old Testament as to the only sure foundation, to speak generally, on which Christianity could be built; that those who received it without this foundation were likely grievously to corrupt it, that those who received it upon this foundation were likely to be made wise unto salvation.

Now it is manifest that St. Paul is not here referring to the types or prophecies of the Old Testament; he is not regarding its witness to Christ, but its own preparation for Him. For it is plain, that although a knowledge of the prophecies might greatly contribute towards making a man believe in Christ, yet if he had believed on Him without knowing these prophecies, he would, so far as their witness was concerned, be exactly in the same place as though he had known them: they would but have helped him to that faith which he had reached without them, by the mere hearing of the words and works of Christ, and of His resurrection from the dead. What St. Paul means, then, is something different from the witness afforded by the Old Testament; it must be the general character of its revelation to God. And in this respect it

does certainly seem that the Old Testament is most perfectly fitted to be, not only historically, and regarding the world as a whole, but for each one of us in the formation of our own minds, a preparation for the knowledge of Christ.

We all know that the predominant character of the New Testament is mercy, in the widest sense of the term. It speaks of light, of freedom, of exaltation, of glory. It does away with the bondage of forms and ceremonies; it addresses men as reasonable beings, appealing to their consciences and their inward sense of right and wrong. In a word, it holds out to them the privilege of being no more the servants of God, but His children. All its tendency, therefore, is comforting and elevating. But do we all need to be comforted and elevated? May it not be that we are in no distress that needs comfort?—that we are in no such humiliation as requires to be exalted? Surely it very well may be so, and is so beyond all question with many of us.

And is not the effect of Christianity on such a state of mind very often just what the Apostle describes it? Men retain its form, but deny its power. They are not enemies to Christ; on the contrary, they admire His character and His words exceedingly; the beauty and purity of Christianity affects them with unfeigned pleasure; its promises cannot but be most delightful to them. But meanwhile the yoke of Christ, light as it is, and so great

a relief to those who really are wearied and heavy laden, is more than they can consent to bear. They admire Christianity, but can scarcely be called themselves Christians; their lives therefore are full of evil,—self-indulgent, proud, disobedient, unthankful, and unholy,—exactly in the manner described by St. Paul.

Now what, on the contrary, is the predominant character of the Old Testament? May it not, speaking of it as a whole, be certainly said to be awe? One instance may be mentioned which shows this in the strongest manner. The characteristic differences of the Old and New Testament may be seen in the two last chapters of St. John's Gospel on the one hand, and in the last chapter of Deuteronomy on the other; in the view given of Christ rising on Mount Calvary, and Moses dying on Mount Nebo. For consider who and what Moses was; how faithful a servant of God, and how favoured. Yet even he, for one unadvised word, for one indulgence, as it should seem, of a hasty temper, though generally the meekest man upon earth, even he was not allowed to enter that promised land, which for so many years he had been looking for. He had laboured, and another was to enter into his labours; and before Israel might arise and go over Jordan, to take possession of the land of their inheritance, Moses their leader, their lawgiver, and their prophet, must retire alone to

Mount Nebo, to die by himself, and even in his burial to be separated from his people. Surely for our sakes this was written, that we might know what that judgment of God is from which Christ has delivered us; and how little we could in our own strength endure to abide it.

But what is written concerning Moses is but in accordance with what is written concerning the people of Moses, and concerning other nations also. We see everywhere the language of judgment, not unmixed certainly, yet predominant; because the evil which draws it down is predominant everywhere. We see obedience required to the minutest outward observances, even on pain of death. We see devastations of war, of pestilence, of famine, sweeping away the young and the old, and, to speak man's language, the righteous and the wicked together. We see one thing above all others insisted on, the worship of God, and the keeping of His law. God is everywhere exalted, whilst the wisdom, the glory, the power, and the pretended righteousness and innocence of man, are all humbled in the dust together.

And is not this the very impression which we need, in order to go with true and wholesome feelings to the cross of Christ? Is it by talking of man's frailty and God's goodness that we shall ever learn the full meaning of that which Christ has purchased for us,—the being reconciled to God? Is it

by going on carelessly, by taking life as we find it, by being under no concern for our actions, by talking of heaven as the natural termination of our life in this world, that we can ever understand what is contained in the word Redemption? Or is it not certain, that to such a careless and confident state of mind the very mercy of the language of the Gospel acts as a poison? We turn the grace of God into lasciviousness; we do not judge ourselves; and we are therefore in danger of being not saved, but judged by the Lord, when He shall appear at the last day.

Surely the Old Testament is well fitted for the reproof of such feelings as these. It represents most awfully to us what God will be to us if we do not fear Him. Nor is it true that we need this representation once only; that having once felt the fear of the Lord, and rejoiced therefore in Christ's salvation, we have nothing to do with fear any more. As I said last Sunday,—that no man is ever wholly dead to the law,—so it is true, or rather it is the same thing to say, that no man has wholly done with fear. We are ever needing something to sober us, to remind us from what evil we have been delivered. We need what we have; the Scriptures in their fulness; the Old Testament and the New together: that, while the New Testament shows us clearly what of the Old Testament has passed away, and what in it was but imperfect, and suited to a

time of greater ignorance, the Old Testament may show us no less clearly what will be our portion if we neglect the great salvation offered to us; if boasting of living in the light, our deeds are yet deeds of evil. It may show us what God's law is, and what His judgments; how He puts down all who exalt themselves against Him, or live without regarding Him. It may finally make us understand that as the law of faith exalts most highly the law of works, so the law of works, on the other hand, is no less the highest, and only true exaltation of the law of faith in Christ Jesus.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
November 20th, 1836.

SERMON XXXII.

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD.

HEBREWS x. 31.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

SOME perhaps, when they hear these words, may be reminded of the somewhat different feeling expressed by David, when he was told to make his choice between three different sorts of judgment proposed to him. His expression was, "Let me now fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hands of men." Yet here again these sentiments, seemingly so opposite, do but make up together a great and most wholesome truth. "Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are great; that we may not fall into the hands of the Lord, when He shall come to judge His people."

"Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hands of men." Let us experience God's judgments, and not men's. Strictly speaking, indeed, every thing that befals us is God's judgment, whether it comes upon us through the instrumentality of nature or of man. And again, on the other hand, it is very possible that nothing, whether it come from nature or from man, may seem to us to be God's judgment; we may see in it nothing beyond the instrument, and not look up to its Author. But still, undoubtedly we are more apt to see God's hand in what we call natural visitations, than in those brought on us by man; and therefore they are far more apt to do us good. And the reason of this is evident. In evils brought on us by the hand of man, the injustice, or cruelty, or dishonesty of the instrument, that is to say of the man, hinders us from looking any further; and as injustice and cruelty excite our anger, we are rather disposed to be angry with another than with ourselves; we think not of our own sin, but of our enemy's wickedness. And this is a great aggravation of his wickedness, and is indeed one of the worst parts of all injustice, that it is likely to do not a worldly injury only, but a spiritual one besides; by exciting in the mind of him to whom it is offered such feelings as lead him away from his great business, the business of watching his own heart and conduct.

We may reasonably pray, then, to fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men. We may pray to be visited rather with sickness, or with poverty, produced by no fault, but simply by misfortune, or with the loss of friends by death, than to meet with ill usage, with neglect, injustice, cruelty, unkindness, than to lose our friends through their fault or folly. But the reason why we may thus pray, is, that by falling into the hands of God, and by feeling that we are doing so, we shall escape falling into His hands hereafter. For now His mercies are great, but then His judgments will be intolerable.

If we have attended to the lesson read this afternoon from the Epistle to the Hebrews, we may have observed how, amidst the fullest dwelling on the mercy of Christ's sacrifice, it also contains some of the most solemn language of warning that is to be met with anywhere in Scripture. It warns us of the infinite danger of falling back, if we have begun to do well; of neglecting that great salvation offered us, if we have never begun to be in earnest at all. It declares that a worse judgment shall overtake those, who are disobedient now, than ever fell on those who broke the law of Moses. Thus there is, even in our dispensation of mercy, a place left for heavier judgment than existed even in what is called the dispensation of death.

This is, of all the revelations of Scripture, the one

which men can least bear. They would fain find something of hope, something of mitigation, even in the heaviest sentences of God's anger. They would fain believe that all shall be well at the last. Most natural is it for flesh and blood so to wish; most natural that the strong wish should labour to become belief. And in this matter, where the temptation to deceive ourselves with a false belief is so great,—where the truth, however unwelcome, is yet one which bears on it so much of practical importance,—where, in short, it is God's declaration on the one hand opposed by all the suggestions of our evil nature on the other,—what security for our faith has God provided,—on what authority is the truth made known to us,—with what plainness and fulness is it expressed? It is worth while to observe this, whilst so many are again endeavouring to revive the old arch falsehood of the enemy of our souls, and pretend that the Scriptures are not enough for us, that they are not plain enough or full enough, that their view requires to be adjusted and interpreted according to the standard of man's tradition. How is it with the great matter of which I have been speaking, our condition hereafter? Are we left to pick this out from obscure or ambiguous passages, on which the interpretations and traditions of the Church can alone throw a clear and decisive light? Are we told to go to some writer who lived so near the Apostles' time, that he could not have

mistaken their doctrine; although it be notorious that they themselves, till the Holy Spirit came upon them to lead them into all truth, did often mistake the doctrine of their Lord, even while they were continually hearing Him? Not so, my brethren. God has not willed that we should rest on that rotten staff, which His word earnestly exhorts us to cast away. The declaration of His truth is in His own Scriptures, clear and full: no man can mistake, no man can dispute its meaning. None was ever so foolish as to try to strengthen it by the testimonies of Councils or Fathers; for we have it in the words of Christ Himself, who knew with the knowledge of divinity the certainty of the things which He uttered. He said of Judas, that it were good for him if he had never been born. He said that His own sentence on the wicked at the last day should be, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Can that be inconsistent with God's mercy, which is declared by Him who laid down His life for us? Are we more wise than Christ? Are we more full of love than He is, that our measure of what is true and just and good should be one that we may dare to prefer to His?

Observe, again, that where authority is really needed for the human mind to lean upon, there it is provided for us; and of such a kind that we may safely rest on it. We cannot possibly understand

the reasons of God's judgments: the whole system of His Government must be infinitely beyond our grasp. What might fully explain to us the grounds of His dealings with us, is absolutely beyond our present knowledge; yet the fact that He will deal so and so with us, is one of the utmost importance for us to know and believe. Now here is the Scripture notion of faith when it relates to the understanding, and is required to struggle against difficulties of the intellect, as well as temptations of the senses and corrupt affections. It is not that God proposes to us some proposition which we cannot fully understand, and which after all has no tendency to make us wiser and better; still less does He require us to believe a thing thus unintelligible and unprofitable on the authority of men no wiser than ourselves. But he declares to us a statement perfectly intelligible and most deeply practical, namely, that those who are condemned at His judgment are condemned without hope for ever. We can understand fully what this means, but we cannot perceive the reasons for it; we fancy that we see reasons against it; we are tempted, therefore, to doubt its truth. Here, therefore, is the place for authority on the one hand, and for faith on the other. God himself gives us no less authority than His own. Christ says to us in effect: "I have shown you that in Me there is the fulness of wisdom and power and love. I tell you, that this

thing which seems to you so shocking and so incredible will yet come to pass, and that I myself will do it. The reasons for it you cannot now understand, nor can they therefore be revealed to you. But I tell you that so it will be, and that so it is right that it should be. Believe it for the sake of my word, if you have known that man cannot do wiser or better than to trust in God, his Maker and his Saviour." Then whosoever loves and has known Christ, will believe His word; and those who have not known and loved Him will not believe Him. But to those who do know Him, faith in His word is their highest reason; they know that they might a thousand times better doubt themselves and their own wisdom and goodness, than doubt the wisdom and goodness of Christ.

Such is the faith which Christ will bless, or rather, which is in itself the greatest blessing, of all that His Spirit, the Giver of all good gifts, can bestow upon us. It is a blessing so to know and so to love Him, that entire faith in Him becomes the first dictate of our enlightened Christian reason. It is a blessing to believe all His words, for nothing has ever come from Him which does not help to make us wise unto salvation; His words are spirit and life. Here is nothing of idolatry, nothing of folly and superstition. Here is no worshipping day by day in an idol's temple, till our corrupted mind transfers to its idol the glory of the living

God, and bestows upon it that faith, which, as it had folly or wickedness for its foundation, so it has one or both for its fruit. And when we have thus bestowed our faith upon our idol, and stand ready to believe and do its bidding, then comes the second curse of this wretched state: that whereas Christ's words are spirit and life, and to do them is life everlasting; so the idol's words are some folly or ungodliness, which to hearken to and obey is death. Then what in Christ's service is devotion, in the idol's is fanaticism: what in the service of the All-wise and All-righteous and All-merciful, is a wise, a holy, but still a most charitable zeal, becomes naturally, in the service of the evil idol, a mad, a dishonest, and a bitter bigotry, calling evil good, and good evil; and putting the sign of its idol, whatever it may be, in the place of the sign of God's Spirit, the departing from all iniquity. This is that evil one which, according to St. Paul's prophecy, has thrust himself into the temple of God, has exalted himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; and claiming that faith and obedience which are due to Christ alone, has so shown himself to be as God.

But the real Christian faith in Christ's promises and Christ's threatenings, and which is in danger of being supplanted by a false and idolatrous faith in man's superstitions, is indeed what we all require daily. Where is the man of us, however earnestly

he may love Christ's words, who can pretend that he believes them with the same undoubting faith that he would do if he knew and loved Christ better? If Christ is in some degree manifest to us, yet is it so far as to fulfil His promise, that He and His Father would come to us, and make their abode with us? Conceive, if that were the case, how entire would be our confidence in all God's words; how steadily should we look beyond the grave and see the river's further shore. For what makes death clear or dark to us, is exactly our greater or less knowledge of God: I do not mean a pretended knowledge of His nature, but a knowledge of His goodness to us, and of His holiness; that if we are with Him, whether it be in life or in death, we shall be safe and happy. And it is a knowledge also of His terrors, that it is indeed a fearful thing to find ourselves in His hands for the first time, when He comes to judgment. For then will be fulfilled in us that Scripture, "We shall look on Him whom we pierced." Here we knew Him not, and therefore carelessly offended Him; but then we must know Him, and shall find that the evil done or the good not done to one of the least of our brethren, was a wrong or a neglect to Him. And one way of learning to know Him here, is that recommended to us in the same chapter from which my text is taken; where it says, "Let us consider one another, to provoke

unto love and to good works;" and of what kind of considering he is speaking, and that our love should look beyond our neighbour's bodily good, is plain from the verse following: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but exhorting one another;" not serving and loving God alone by ourselves, but striving to sympathize with others and to get others to sympathize with us, that we may love each other the better from all loving Him. This is the very bond of our Christian communion; this is the meaning of our receiving it together. As far as it is a communion with Christ alone, we might receive it each by ourselves; but the Church wisely orders it otherwise, because Christ is not alone nor are we alone: He is the head of His body the Church, and we are members one of another, and we cannot come to Him alone. O that we might feel this more and more, and all draw one another towards Him; then we should be indeed one with Him and He would be one with us; and being thus with Him in this life, we should be with Him for ever in happiness, and not fall into His hands as a God of judgment.

Rugby Chapel,
December 4th, 1836.

SERMON XXXIII.

ST. JAMES.—CHRISTIAN SERVICE OF GOD.

ST. JAMES i. 27.

Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

THE word here translated "religion," is one which occurs very seldom in the New Testament. It denotes commonly the outward service of religion, as consisting in rites and ceremonies; and as these were supposed too often to be the real service of God, so the title of "religious" might be and was applied to persons, who in their lives and hearts scarcely served God at all. Hence the language of the Apostle in the text, and in the verse immediately before it, declares how much the word had been misused, and how it should be used properly. His religion or service to God is vain, who bridles

not his tongue; whereas his is the true religion or service to God, who visits the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and who keeps himself unspotted from the world. Such is the meaning of the text; let us now proceed to consider it more fully.

It has been the fate of certain passages of Scripture to be continually made use of for party purposes, and to be used for the sake of giving the authority of Scripture to views and doctrines to which in reality the Scripture is either adverse or indifferent. Thus worldly men are for ever quoting the text, "Christ's kingdom is not of this world;" in order to prevent the Gospel from being admitted as the world's law. Others, who would represent differences of religion as of no consequence, quote the words of St. Peter, that "in every land he who feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him." A third set are fond of applying to the practice of using written forms of prayer in the church, the expression of St. Paul, which has not the slightest relation to it, about "holding fast the form of sound words;" while there have been others no less absurd, who have quoted, as condemning the repetitions in our Church service, our Lord's words to His disciples, telling them, "when they pray, not to use vain repetitions." So also with the words of the text; they also have been used invidiously to decry what we commonly call devotion or religious affections, and to represent the whole of

religion as consisting in acts of charity and temperance.

Now the lesson to be drawn from these misquotations, as far as our own use is concerned, is to show us how necessary it is to study the Scripture in the first place generally, and in the second place carefully and sensibly. He whose reading is confined to detached texts or passages, or to particular parts of the Scripture only, cannot see the whole mind of the Spirit respecting us, but must get views incomplete and partial. The Epistle of St. James presents one view of Christianity, and one most beautiful and instructive; but it does not give us all the views which we need; we were not intended to refer to it alone, as the Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John have been provided for us also. So, on the other hand, it is ill done to admire St. Paul so exclusively, as to refuse, as some have done, to listen to St. James also. Again, it is necessary to study the Scripture carefully and sensibly, as well as generally to understand what the words meant in the first instance, and how far they can or ought to be applied to things seemingly similar now. Obvious as this seems, even to a truism, yet it would be well if it were attended to in practice; and that it is not attended to, every day's experience of men's talking and writing upon points connected with the Scriptures does but prove too fully.

But to return to our particular subject. It is

clearly wrong so to interpret St. James as to make him say literally, that the whole of religion consists in acts of charity and temperance. It is manifest that every idea of religion contains in it the idea of serving God. And it is equally clear that there can be no serving God without intending to serve Him; that is, without thinking Him to have a claim on our service. When then St. James calls the works of charity and temperance "pure and undefiled religion," or service of God, it is plain, by the very force of the words, that he must mean such works of charity and temperance as are done in order to serve God; that is, such as are done in faith. For if they be done without any notion of God, they cannot be called a pure service to God; for they are not a service to Him at all, except accidentally; they are no service so far as regards our intention. But it may be said that still the words include no mention of Christ; and that pure religion, according to St. James, may exist without any belief in the Son, provided there be a belief in the Father. Undoubtedly, if the words of the text were a single fragment, written by we knew not whom, and belonging to we know not what, this might be said fairly. But I only allude to it now, to show the mischief of looking at texts of Scripture separately, without regard to the writer, or the occasion, or the whole composition from which the text is taken. The interpretation which might be given of the passage

fairly, if it were the fragment of an unknown writer, becomes absurd when we know that it is a passage out of an Epistle written by a Christian to Christians; and that if the writer had really meant that true religion need not include faith in Christ, both he and the persons to whom he was writing were no better than madmen; for they had separated themselves from the mass of their countrymen, and were exposed daily to persecution, only for their profession of that very name which yet, according to the supposed meaning of the text, has no necessary connexion with pure religion.

What St. James does mean then, is no more than this; that the Christian who would truly serve God in Christ, must serve Him not in word, but in deed; and he selects especially two classes of good deeds, which form as it were the very essence of this service, those of charity and purity.

And here undoubtedly the lesson of the text is one perpetually applicable. It points out what are, and ever have been, the peculiar virtues of Christianity, what all parts of the New Testament alike insist on. And they are so insisted on, not only for their importance, but also for their difficulty; because they are at variance with some of our strongest inclinations, and must be practised against the greatest temptations to the contrary; because, although we may find one of the two agreeable to us, it hardly ever happens that we

find both to be so; but on the contrary, men have endeavoured, as it were, to make up for neglecting the one, by their great attention to the other, as if benevolent persons might be excused for their worldly-mindedness; or persons of strict, and pure, and quiet lives, might be excused for their want of active charity.

And what applies to all others, applies also to us. The remaining part of this sermon will therefore be employed in showing what we are to learn particularly and personally from the words of the Apostle in the text. Now, then, speaking as a Christian to Christians, we who have believed in Christ's salvation, and feel that through Him alone we stand before God as capable of doing Him service, if we ask how we can best serve Him, let us hear the Apostle: "by visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world."

1. "By visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction." "There is something here," you will say, "that does not quite apply to us. Not only does our age seem to make this command unsuitable to us, but also our situation here. At home, surrounded perhaps by those whom we have known from our childhood, even our age would by no means hinder us from contributing to the comfort of our neighbours: we might often perform acts of kindness with no presumption or

impropriety. But here, amongst strangers, and without the guidance and sanction of our friends, a literal fulfilment of the Apostle's command would seem almost an intrusion: it would be ridiculous if we were to attempt to fulfil it." So you might say, and certainly there would be much reason in your statement. Yet we may all remember cases in which the command has been fulfilled literally even by some in your situation; and fulfilled, so far as I know, without any circumstances of impropriety or of ridicule; while I do know positively that much comfort was received by those who were the objects of the kindness. But, of course, to do this does require a certain age, and a certain weight of character; it cannot be expected of all. It is possible, however, to relieve the fatherless and widows in their affliction without personally visiting them. Occasions occur when your numbers make it as easy for you to give relief in money, as they might render your personal attentions impossible. And it was with great pleasure that I heard that when such an occasion did lately offer itself, it was not altogether neglected. I was very glad to hear that a work of pure charity had been begun and carried on amongst yourselves, a work to which no bad motives could have prompted you,—as in the instances of that unholy and unchristian bounty which the young, amongst the richer classes, sometimes show to the vile tools of their vices and their

follies,—and which, so far as I can see, must have arisen out of good, and ended in good. Here was one such occasion; but do you suppose that others can ever be wanting? Do you not think that fit objects are always to be found, to make it your duty to deny yourselves in your expenses for your own mere pleasures, that you may have to give to him that needeth? Is it not evident that a great school might thus, at comparatively a small sacrifice to its members, be rendered a positive blessing to the poor around it, instead of being, as has been too often the case, a positive evil? And if so, is it not clear also that you have a way of fulfilling St. James's command, without any forwardness or extravagance, a way open to the very youngest? And if it be open, is it not clear, lastly, that not even the very youngest can, without great sin, refuse or neglect to follow it?

2. Our Christian service to God consists further "in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world." In this I do not see that there is any thing which concerns one period of Christianity, or one age of any of us, as individuals, more than another. It were a mistake to suppose that, by living in the world, we must necessarily be "spotted," that is, defiled and corrupted by it. The two things are very different; inasmuch as the one is our duty, and the other would be our ruin. But along with this, on which there is little need to dwell, it becomes us

to remember that, because we do and must live in the world, because a life of religious solitude is out of the question, that therefore the command to keep ourselves unspotted from the world concerns us so much the more. We are in danger of being corrupted by it, because we must have so much to do with it. And what is the corruption to be dreaded? It is of various sorts; but perhaps, if I might take one as the representative of all the rest,—and being, indeed, the very source of them all,—I should say that it consisted in letting things seen hide from our minds the things that are not seen; in letting the life that now is so engross us, that we think not of the life that is to come. This is the corruption of the world generally; how different soever may be the particular sort of things seen by which the things unseen are veiled to us. No doubt there is a great difference here. In middle life we have already outgrown many of these idols; and in old age we shall have outgrown more. Nothing is easier than for the old to overcome the temptations of those in their prime, or for those in their prime to think little of the temptations of the young. But still to all of us it is the world that hides heaven from our view: it is something on this side of death which prevents us from fixing our eyes on that which is beyond it. And wherever this prospect of things eternal is so closed, there are we spotted by the world, there our service to God is

not the service of faith, is not pure and undefiled religion. This is a temptation from which we cannot escape,—we must not hope to fly from it, but to overcome it. It will haunt us through life in every condition, even amidst sickness and poverty, which we might fancy would save us from it. But undoubtedly it haunts us most, and such whose circumstances are like ours. Age has not yet weakened our powers, poverty and sickness have not taught us how much there is in the world besides enjoyment. And yet in our youth or vigour, in our health and comforts, woe to us if we are not unspotted by the world,—woe to us if we do not still keep the view of eternal things open; still, with an unsparing hand, clearing away the branches and the trees, how beautiful soever, that would obstruct the prospect of the mountain of God; doing that for ourselves by our own watchfulness and prayer, which no outward circumstances will ever do for us, if our own care has been wanting.

Rugby Chapel,
May 24th, 1835.

SERMON XXXIV.

ST. JAMES.—FAITH AND WORKS.

ST. JAMES ii. 18.

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.

THE Epistle of James, and the manner in which some have received it, and many more neglected the lesson which it teaches, affords a remarkable instance of the way of teaching followed in the Scriptures, and of the difficulty of getting men in their teaching to follow the same. The Epistle itself takes up one view of Christianity almost exclusively, and follows it through with the utmost perfectness. The view which I speak of, I may be allowed to call the moral view, as distinguished from the doctrinal; the laying out of sight the great peculiarities of Christianity, and considering

it only as it is the law of nature and of Moses, perfected in the two points of love to God and man. It would not have been possible for any part of the Christian Scriptures to have taken up the view exactly contrary to this; that is, to have dwelt wholly on the doctrinal points, without the moral points;—for doctrines not used as principles of life, that is, coupled with the moral conclusions for the sake of which they are revealed, are no better than theoretical truth, with which Christianity has nothing to do. We have, therefore, no part of the New Testament so wholly doctrinal as the Epistle of James is wholly moral; but we have a great many which are both doctrinal and moral; and some in which the doctrinal part has been by some of its interpreters made so far theoretical, that the whole book has seemed in their use of it to be exclusively doctrinal, though in reality it is not so.

The view contained in the Epistle of St. James is undoubtedly not the whole of Christianity, any more than the view contained of it in St. Paul's speech to the Athenians. But it was not God's purpose that we should possess either the one or the other of these by themselves. Our whole knowledge of Christianity was not to be drawn from these sources only. It is enough that God judged it fitting that this view of it should be presented to us along with others, as being not only in itself beautiful and useful, but serving especially as an

antidote against an evil, which was sure from time to time to exalt itself in the church, and always to be in existence, the evil of dwelling exclusively or predominantly upon mere doctrines as theoretical truths.

Such is the well-known course of scriptural teaching, to oppose as it were one evil at a time, and that with the utmost force, and often without qualification; leaving the qualification required to be sought for in other parts of Scripture directed against the opposite error. Hence the difficulty of reconciling some passages of Scripture theoretically; although taken practically they lead to the exact balance in temper and conduct which is most according to God's will. But some not liking this method, and desiring a far greater theoretical exactness than it allows us to attain, have either explained away the passages which they did not like, or, as in the case of the Epistle of St. James, have shut them out of the Scripture altogether. It is well known that Luther rejected this Epistle, because he judged it contrary to the doctrines of St. Paul. And many others besides Luther, while they have professed to receive it, would undoubtedly have condemned any writings of their own time, which might be confined like it to the same single view of Christianity.

Indeed, this Epistle of St. James, to those who admit its authority, should make them cautious of

condemning sermons or books as unchristian, because they may say very little upon the principal doctrines of the Gospel. For here is an Epistle written by one of the very chief of the Apostles, which says nothing about them also; which does not name so much as the resurrection of Christ, nor His atonement for sins, nor the sanctifying of our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Was it that St. James did not know and value these great truths as much as we can do? Far from it,—but he knew also that there were circumstances under which these could not, or needed not, to be brought forward; and that it was not to be demanded of all Christians, in all their writings, to be for ever dwelling upon them.

Now directly in opposition to the moral view of the Gospel stands the extreme doctrinal view; and this extreme doctrinal view is combated accordingly in the passage from which the text is taken. And as God foresaw that this view would, in after ages, be grounded chiefly on a false interpretation of St. Paul's writings, so it was ordered that against those very writings, as so interpreted, the language of St. James should be especially directed. For nothing is more evident than that the whole passage now before us is directed against the language in the Epistle to the Romans, as that language was misinterpreted by wickedness or fanaticism; and that it does not in the slightest degree interfere with it, as

taken according to the meaning of the writer. Nor is it at all to our purpose to ask whether St. James, from his situation amongst the Jews at Jerusalem, had heard so many things said against St. Paul, that he really believed him to have held the doctrines here condemned. If, as a man, he so judged, yet God would by no means allow His Apostles, in those writings which were to guide the Church for ever, to impair each other's authority. We know that St. James has not written against St. Paul, even though he himself, misled by the inveteracy of those about him, may have thought that the doctrine which he was combating was really taught by St. Paul. But we are sure of this, that he could not have intended to answer what St. Paul has actually said in his Epistle to the Romans; because there is nothing there to which the answer is really applicable.

In the words of the text, it cannot be doubted that the words, "Show me thy faith without thy works," are intended to allude to such language as we find in St. Paul, "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." They are intended to allude to it as it has been often misinterpreted at various periods, and as it might be interpreted fairly enough if we took it by itself, and had no other means of knowing what St. Paul meant by it. For taking "faith" in the sense in which it has been too often used since, that is "correct

opinion," and taking the words "without the deeds of the law," with nothing further to explain them, and we have at once that most wicked doctrine which St. James condemns, namely, "that if a man's opinions about God be right, he need care nothing about his affections and conduct." And to show that this is the sense in which St. James is taking the word "faith," appears from the example given,—"Thou believest that there is one God,"—a point which, as so simply stated, is merely an abstract truth, the belief of which is no more than "a true opinion respecting a matter of fact," and may therefore be held by any one whose understanding is sound, though in his moral qualities he may be no better than the devils. He does not say, "Thou believest that God made thee," or "that God has redeemed thee," or "that God will judge thee," or "that God loves thee;" for belief in these matters is more than opinion, and becomes a principle of action; so that this cannot be believed by the devils, except so far as it is mere fact; and can, by reason of their lost condition, in them lead to nothing. Whereas St. Paul was not speaking of any such belief as was no more than opinion; he did not say that "He who believes in one God is justified," but "He who believes in Jesus Christ is justified;" nor, again, did he mean by "believing in Jesus Christ," believing in such facts about Him as the heathens believed, namely, that there had

been a man so named crucified in Judæa, under Pontius Pilate; but "whosoever believed that Christ had died for his sins;" a thing which never was believed really by any one who did not care for his sins beforehand, and can be really believed by no man without its making him care for his sins a great deal more than he ever cared before.

The same notion of the word "faith," taking it exactly in the sense of opinion as distinguished from practice, is seen no less clearly in what follows about Abraham. St. James instances his offering up his son Isaac, and then adds, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by his works his faith was perfected." Which is exactly saying;—taking faith in the sense of opinion, it did nothing for Abraham, but as being "perfected by his works," that is, as being a principle of action, it justified him. Now this is the very sense in which St. Paul uses it; for he speaks of Abraham "against hope believing in hope, that he might become the father of many nations;" that is, that Abraham so believed God's promises to him, that he left his country, and sojourned all his life in a strange land, not tempted to despair of the prospects held out to him, and to give up following God because there seemed no natural possibility of the promise ever being fulfilled. It is manifest that this faith, so far from being a mere opinion, was a strong and abiding principle by which the whole of his life was governed.

Or, again, take the case of Rahab. Had her faith been no more than opinion, it would certainly have done nothing for her. Suppose that she had heard and believed that the Egyptians had been visited with a great many plagues because they would not let the Israelites go, and that the Israelites had been wonderfully protected by their God through the wilderness. But suppose, also, that she had thought, as many heathens in like case would have thought, that all this was nothing to her or to the Canaanites; that the gods of Israel had been too strong for the gods of Egypt, but that it was yet to be proved whether they would be too strong for the gods of Canaan. It is manifest then, that her belief of the mighty works done in Egypt and in the wilderness would have been no more than a mere opinion; it would have led to nothing; and her belief would not have hindered her for an instant from giving up the spies into the hands of her countrymen. But because she believed that the mighty works done in Egypt showed the God of Israel to be mightier than all gods; to be Him whom she was bound first and above all to serve; therefore her belief was not mere opinion, but principle; and a principle so strong as led her to break her most sacred earthly ties at her own great risk, in order to escape from the heavier danger of offending Him who was Lord of all.

All, then, that St. James says in this passage, and

which he does say most strongly, is, that correct opinions will save no man; or,—to use the term faith, not in St. Paul's sense of it, but in the unhappy sense which others have too often attached to it,—that a sound faith in religious matters will alone save no man. And most assuredly St. Paul has never said that it will, but as much the contrary as it is in the power of language to express. His faith which justifies is a principle of action so strong as to make a man abhor all former sin; and if it becomes weaker afterwards, then in that proportion it ceases to be faith, and ceases to justify. For, says he, "if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor:" if I return to the sins of which I repented, then I make myself a transgressor; but a transgressor is the very opposite to a man justified or acquitted, for a transgressor is guilty, and to be punished, an acquitted man is one judged to be innocent, and therefore not to be punished. So that, in St. James's sense, Faith without works is not justified; in St. Paul's sense, Faith without works is not justified either, for it is no faith at all.

But from this language of these two great Apostles, particularly from the expression which St. James does not hesitate to use, that "a man is justified by his works," we may surely derive an important lesson, not to make one another offenders for a word. How forward some would be to deny

the very name of a Christian to one who were now to use the same language, and to say that "men's works justified them." Undoubtedly there is a sense in which St. James would have abhorred the notion of a man's being justified by his works as strongly as any one, if it was meant by it that a man had so lived that he could fairly challenge of God the reward of eternal glory. But there is a sense also in which St. James did use it without scruple; and others in the same sense may use it also. In the same sense in which Zacharias is said to have walked in all the ordinances of the law blameless, in that common sense meaning, which does not strain every sentence spoken or written to its strictest literal acceptation, men may be said to be justified by their works. If there is no sense in which this can be said truly, then to talk of our being judged according to our works is idle. Most true it is that we never do or can deserve heaven; that that is God's gift through Jesus Christ; but it is no less true that we should not condemn our brother for using words which an Apostle has used before him, as he, like the Apostle, may mean no more by them than this, that Christ's people are those only in whom the Spirit of Christ abides.

Rugby Chapel,
April 13*th*, 1834.

SERMON XXXV.

ST. JUDE.

St. Jude, 20, 21.

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Without entering into a discussion of such points relating to the Epistle of Jude as are open to doubt, it is clear on the face of it, that it was written late amongst the books of the New Testament, after many Christian churches had been for many years in existence. Thus, in common with some others of the Epistles, it is, in a manner, a transition to that state of the Church which we ourselves and our fathers have for so many generations witnessed; a state in which the truths of the Gospel have already lost their freshness to our minds; the first impression has had time to cool, and the evil of our nature,

which had been checked for a moment, is again breaking out fatally. But the Epistle of Jude differs from our experience in this, that although it was written after Christianity had for some time existed, yet it was so near its beginning, that the evil which then was most dangerous bore, even in the midst of its mischief, the marks of that great power which had given occasion to it. I mean that the evil was not that of our common worldliness and selfishness, but was a direct perversion of that great excitement, that awakening of new hopes and feelings, which the Gospel had brought into the world. The evil was a *fanaticism* of wickedness; and our ordinary state of mind in these days, is far enough removed from fanaticism.

But though the evil was different, yet the way to meet the evil was the same then as now. Whether Christianity be corrupted or neglected, it is pure Christianity which must still be the cure. And how does Jude express this pure Christianity? "Building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." How like is the language of all the writers of the New Testament to one another, when they come to the sum and substance of our principles and practice! "Building yourselves up on your most holy faith;" that is, in St. Paul's words, as we had them in the epistle

of this morning, "Keeping in memory that Gospel which was delivered to you;" and that Gospel was, to use again his own words, "that Christ died for our sins, and was buried, and rose again the third day." It is still the same thing, whether it be called "our most holy faith," or the "revealed secret of godliness;" it still relates to the person of Jesus Christ, that He died for us, and rose again.

On this foundation, on our belief of this truth, the goodness of our lives is to be built up; the goodness of our lives and of each particular portion of them. And we see how simple in point of words, how soon spoken, how soon heard, and how easily remembered, this foundation is. It is also very easily understood, at least understood so far as to enable us to work by it, or in the words of our text, "to build up ourselves upon it." This we see from the numbers of persons who in the beginning of the Gospel became Christians on the hearing sometimes no more than one single speech or discourse of a Christian minister. Shall we say that the persons so converted were at once perfect in Christian wisdom, that they understood the full bearing of the Christian doctrine upon all the various parts of their understandings and of their hearts? We know that it was not so; we know that it could not have been so. But shall we say either, that no moral feelings were touched, and no moral principle gained? That they entered into a

new society, knowing nothing about it, but that it was named after one Jesus who was dead, and whom His disciples affirmed to be alive, or that a man who had been crucified had afterwards risen from the dead? We know that neither was it thus with them. It was not the mere fact that a man had died and been raised from the dead, but that this had been done for their sakes; that He had died for them, that all might know that God would forgive them; that He had risen from the dead, that all might hope through Him to be raised also.

Now what was thus given as the Gospel to the first Christians, and on which they went on building themselves up in goodness more and more to their lives' end, is just as capable, with God's help, of being told in one single discourse now, and of becoming from this time forward the foundation of good living to us. Let us suppose—though I hope it is an unlikely supposition—that there is any one here as ignorant as some of those who heard the Apostles; that the doctrine of Christ is as new as it was to them. Why, even then, if the person be but old enough to know right from wrong, the time in which we are here assembled is long enough to give him the Gospel, long enough to give him the foundation of life eternal. Much more, then, if it is not all new to us, must it be possible to derive such benefit from what is briefly told in this brief

space; much more, if we are not learning for the first time, but only refreshing our memory of what we do know.

This may well be brought before you in a congregation containing not only the usual differences of character which are always to be found in a number of human beings, but also great differences of age, which perhaps some of you dwell upon more than is desirable. That is, the youngest in this congregation, knowing how much younger they are than others, are too apt to think, or to pretend to think, that what is meant to draw the attention of older persons, must be above their comprehension, that sermons, in short, have nothing to do with them. I grant that it is very difficult on many subjects to speak to a number of persons of different ages at once, so as to interest the younger and the older, especially where an excuse for indifference is eagerly sought after; where the one class would be apt to say that what they hear is too trite, and the other, that it is too hard. But when speaking of the foundation of our Christian life, of the revelation of the Gospel, although in one sense it will be trite to all, and in another too hard for all, yet in another it is neither trite to any nor hard to any. There are none amongst us to whom the thought of Christ crucified and Christ risen has been presented so often, that we have completely exhausted it; there are none amongst us to

whom the same thought is so hard that it cannot be understood to their benefit.

Let us then dwell upon it as the foundation not only of our whole lives, but of that particular portion of them which is now beginning to us here; a foundation on which we may build ourselves up continually till we come to the end of it. It is a most holy faith, indeed, that Christ died for our sins, and rose again. We all of us know right from wrong, we all of us have some notions of duty, and some of religion; we have a sort of notion, however confused or faint, that we have something to do in the portion of time set before us, that we may be in it either good or bad. To this state of mind, with all its ignorance, with all its thoughtlessness, Christ sends the message of His gospel. To the youngest boy here, He says that He has died for him; He tells him that He is risen. And if such a boy were to ask why He died for him, Christ would answer, "Because you are thoughtless and careless; because you think much of your own pleasure, and little of God; because you are living not like one born to immortality, but like one born to die. And therefore I died for you, to show you that it is not a trifle that you are so careless, to show you how much God loves you, though you think so little of Him; to encourage you with the thought, if ever you are touched, if ever good thoughts arise in you, and you would fain come to

God, that God will most certainly receive you, that He who gave up His own Son that you should not perish, will most certainly forgive you and accept you." This Christ would say, for He has said it in the Scriptures; and is there one amongst you so young that he cannot understand this language, and feel in it at once warning, and softening, and encouragement.

Again, Christ tells you that He is risen. I allow the difficulty of a young boy fully embracing this, although it may seem the easiest part of the Gospel. Not yet entered on the life that now is, the life that is to come will seem to be very far distant. Nor will instances of early death amongst other young persons bring the impression quite home to you; you know that such instances are an exception to a general rule, and you do not permanently regard them. This will be so commonly: still there will be moments when it will be otherwise, when you will feel, even while very young, that it is a comfort that Christ is risen. I do not allude now to the deaths or sufferings of your friends, but to troubles of your own. I do not say what the troubles may be, they are very various; but still we all have troubles; and even if they may seem light to others, they are not light to us who bear them. There will be moments in the lives of the happiest of us, when, if we were accustomed to apply to it, we should find intense comfort in Christ's

assurance, that He is risen, for us also to rise to life eternal.

I say, if we are accustomed to apply to it; that is, if we bear in mind that Christ has died for us: otherwise I do not think that we can well comfort ourselves in any light, or in any serious trouble, with the prospect of eternal life; for that prospect then seems either too uncertain in itself, or too high for us to aspire to; other hopes and comforts are applied to, and they, as best they can, relieve our pain. It is very important to remember this, that we shall never in any trouble go naturally to Christ risen, unless in our common life, in that quiet time, free alike from great joys or great troubles, we do continually remember that Christ has died for us.

But suppose, now, that the Gospel which we have now heard should also dwell with us, as it did with the first Christians; that we keep in memory the things which we have heard, and so do not believe in vain. Would it do nothing for us? or should we not indeed be so built up,—should we not so grow in grace and in goodness,—that the effect would commend itself, in a manner not to be mistaken, both to our eyes and those of others? Is it not certain, for instance, that it would instruct us in many points of conduct, and influence us in many points of feeling, which cannot be reached by direct rules or advice from another person? How im-

possible would it be for any one,—even supposing that you were willing to comply with his directions,—how impossible would it be to tell you how you should spend your money; at what point you were beginning to be guilty of extravagance or blameable self-indulgence? Or, again, supposing that, in the matter of spending your time, you were willing to take exactly another person's directions,—yet who could direct you?—who could draw the line between Christian watchfulness and excessive severity? between the refreshment proper and most useful for all of us, and a sinful idleness? It could not be done by others either by word or by writing; books will not give it you, nor human teaching, but only the teaching of Christ's Spirit, through the love of Christ, who died for you. I mean, that if you think that Christ has died for you, and feel the thoughtfulness and the love which that faith inspires, you would have an instinct to guide you surer than any rule; you would feel what Christ would wish, and would be glad to do it; and you would feel no less surely what Christ would give you without upbraiding, and would accept it fearlessly and thankfully.

But this would not be with all in equal measure, for riper years and a more thoughtful disposition would undoubtedly bring forth in some more fruit than in others. Only there would be fruit in all; and this is what our Lord requires of us. Some

might be more improved than others, but all would be improved. And then Christ's blessing would be upon us, on the youngest no less than on the oldest. Then having been built up on our most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit,—for who does not pray when he feels at peace with God, forgiven and beloved?—we should keep ourselves in the love of God, and look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose mercy to the youngest of us will make the path through this life safe and free from misery, and keep the prospect of eternal life ever before us, brightening as earth and earthly things grow darker.

Rugby Chapel,
August 30*th*, 1835.

SERMON XXXVI.

ST. PAUL.

Acts xxii. 21.

Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

These words, taken from the second lesson which you have just heard read in the service of the day, describe shortly the business for which St. Paul was set apart by God: for which he lived and for which he died. He was the Apostle of the Gentiles; and through him and his preaching we, and all Christians now living,—for where are we to find the remains of the churches of Judæa?—have received the knowledge of Christ's Gospel. His name is familiar to every ear, and so, no doubt, are the principal circumstances of his life. Nevertheless, as through the division of the Bible into chapters we are apt to read his history as it were piece by piece, and as we do not always connect his writings with his life, nor consider under what circumstances they were

written, it may not be useless if I endeavour to lay before you in one view the principal points in his life and character; noticing at the same time his several epistles, as the order of our account leads us to each of them in its turn.

You have heard his early life described in his own words. "I am verily," he said to the Jews at Jerusalem, "a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in the city, at the feet of Gamaliel; and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers; and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day." He was brought up, he says, in Jerusalem, and taught by Gamaliel, one of the most famous doctors or teachers of that time, so that he was well acquainted with the law of the Jews, and with their traditions respecting it; and, as he says in another place, "according to the straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." Nor did he study merely the ceremonial part of the law, but was what we should call in common language a good and conscientious man: again he describes his early life by saying, "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, I was blameless." And because he loved the law in which he had been bred up, and had a great reverence for its minutest ordinances, and thought that the most eminent teachers of the law could not err, therefore he was very angry with the Christians, who declared that Jesus of Nazareth, whom the

teachers and rulers of the Jews had crucified as a deceiver, was really the Son of God; and who declared farther, or were accused of declaring, "that this Jesus should destroy the holy place at Jerusalem, and should change the customs which Moses had given to the people of Israel." These things seemed to Paul such great profaneness, that, as we heard him say in the lesson of this morning, he persecuted the way of Christ unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

There are and have been many good men like St. Paul, who respecting and loving the Church in which they have been brought up, and being fondly attached to its minutest forms, and regarding with the fondest reverence the wise and learned men who have in times past and present been its ornaments, have like him been very angry with all those who have differed from them, and have sometimes, when they have had the power, persecuted them even to death. So the Roman Catholics dealt with the martyrs of our Church, with Latimer and with Ridley; and so did the zealots of our Church deal, —not persecuting indeed to the death, but delivering him into prison for twelve years,—with that true and earnest servant of Christ, whose writings have been the delight and edification of so many of us, both in youth and age; the author, I mean, of the Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan.

Now what was Paul's fault in this matter, and what the fault of other good men who have in later times acted in the same way? The fault in all these cases is the same,—it is the putting the lighter things on a level with the greater,—the ordinances of man on a level with the eternal will of God. The law of the Israelites declared that he who blaspremed God should be stoned: the Jews stoned Stephen because they said he had spoken blasphemous words against the holy place and against the law; although, as they might have known, he was as far from blaspheming God as they were. And so Paul persecuted the Christians for calling Jesus of Nazareth the Son of God, when the rulers and chief priests had declared him a deceiver; although the Christians, as Paul himself afterwards found, "according to the way which he then called heresy, so worshipped the God of their fathers, believing all things which were written in the law and the prophets." Thus in later times, the Church of Rome and the Church of England punished men for not complying with their ordinances, nor acknowledging their authority; although the men, so made to suffer, worshipped all the time the God of their fathers and believed in his Son Jesus Christ, and in all things which are written in the law and the prophets, in the Gospels and in the Epistles.

But it pleased God to call Paul to a truer know-

nearest to Europe; and Paul had a vision in the night, and saw a man of Macedonia, the part of Europe nearest to where he then was, standing before him, and praying him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." So Paul, understanding from this that it was Christ's will that he should cross over into Europe, took ship and landed on the coast of Macedonia. This was the first introduction of the Gospel into Europe; and it is a point in the Christian history which to all Europeans is of the greatest interest. The first European church which Paul and his companions founded was that of Philippi, and here it seems they were first joined by St. Luke, who wrote the Acts of the Apostles; for in his account of what passed at Philippi he first uses the terms "we" and "us," showing that the writer was one of the persons of whom he is speaking. You may observe this in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts: and it seems further that Luke remained at Philippi for some time afterwards, for the terms "we" and "us" do not again occur till the twentieth chapter, when Paul, passing again through Philippi on his way to Asia, took Luke with him; and after that he remained with him during several years.

From Philippi Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus went on to Thessalonica, and to Athens, and to Corinth. Paul stayed eighteen months at Corinth, and it was during his stay there that he wrote his

two Epistles to the Thessalonians, the earliest in date of all his Epistles. He speaks to them of their recent conversion, when he had been so lately in their city, and of the persecution which both he and they had had to endure for Christ's sake.

From Corinth, Paul went back to Asia Minor; and after having gone up to Jerusalem and to Antioch, he returned to the western coast again, and stayed for more than two years at Ephesus. Here there happened that remarkable tumult excited by Demetrius the silversmith, whose trade of making images was hurt by the spread of Christianity. During this long stay at Ephesus, Paul wrote his two Epistles to the Corinthians.

Again Paul crossed over into Europe, and passed three months more in Greece. From Corinth at this time he wrote his Epistle to the Romans, which is remarkable for its containing a more complete and general view of Christianity than any other of his Epistles, because he had never yet visited Rome, and had no particular or personal matters on which to write to them. In that Epistle he mentions his intention of going up immediately to Jerusalem with a collection of money made by the Greek Christians for the poor Christians at Jerusalem; after which he tells them that he hoped to visit them at Rome, and pass on into Spain, to preach the Gospel there. When he had done his work in Spain, he purposed to return to Rome, and pass

some time with the church there; and so fully did he think that his labours in Asia were ended, and that the rest of his life would be passed in the west of Europe, that on his way to Jerusalem, when he stopped at Miletus and there gave his farewell address to the elders of the church of Ephesus, he told them that they all, among whom he had gone preaching the kingdom of God, should see his face no more.

But it pleased God to order it otherwise. He was seized by the Jews at Jerusalem on a charge of having brought Greeks into the Temple, and being an enemy to the law and customs of his nation; and, as he had inherited from his father the privileges of a Roman citizen, he chose to avail himself of them, and to claim to be tried, not by the Jews, but by the Roman government. But the Roman governors in Judæa at that time cared little for justice; and, after Paul had been kept a prisoner for two years, he appealed to the judgment of the Emperor himself, and was therefore sent to Rome. On his voyage he was shipwrecked on the island of Melita or Malta; but he reached Rome at last in safety; and as he still could not obtain a hearing, he was kept a prisoner at Rome for two years at least, and probably for more. During this imprisonment he wrote his Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians, and the Epistle to Philemon.

And now, as the Acts of the Apostles reaches no farther than to the end of the second year of his imprisonment at Rome, we have no particular account of what happened to him afterwards. Only it appears that during the five or six years of his imprisonment, in Judæa and at Rome, the churches which he had planted in Asia were greatly corrupted; so that when at last he did obtain his liberty, instead of going on to Spain as he had formerly purposed, he was obliged to return to the east. It was now that he sent Timotheus to Ephesus and Titus to Crete, giving them full powers to correct the evils of the Church in those places, and to appoint new elders on whom they could rely, and who might instruct and guide the people in the true faith and practice of Christ's Gospel. The First Epistle to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus belong to this later period of St. Paul's life, when he visited Asia again, after his first imprisonment at Rome.

And now still, though in old age, retaining his Christian zeal undiminished, he returned again to the west, hoping perhaps still to fulfil his desire of preaching the Gospel in Spain. Whether he did so or not, we know not; but either on his way thither or on his return he was again seized at Rome and cast into prison as a Christian. It was at the time that the emperor Nero was putting the Christians to death in great numbers, so that Paul

had no prospect of escape. He now wrote his second epistle to Timothy,—in which he says that he is now ready to be offered, that he has fought the good fight, that he has finished his course, and kept the faith. And soon afterwards his words were fulfilled, and he was put to death in Rome for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Thus I have given an outline of the life of this holy Apostle, and shown when and under what circumstances most of his epistles were written. The date of those to the Galatians and to the Hebrews is so uncertain, that I could not bring them in with confidence at any one particular period of his life; but with respect to the others there is no doubt, and it greatly helps our understanding of them if we connect them with the circumstances of their writer's history.

I have given you an outline of his life, and that in itself tells us his character. For it tells us that from the prime of manhood to old age he gave himself wholly to setting forth the name of Christ; that is, to the exalting God's glory and to the saving of men's souls. And if we wish to know at one view what sort of sacrifices this work required of him, read his own declaration of what he had suffered in the eleventh chapter of the second Corinthians: only remembering that, as that epistle was written before his imprisonment in Judæa and at Rome, it can only contain the sufferings of a

part of his life; and that five years of imprisonment, shipwreck, another imprisonment, and finally martyrdom, are to be added to the account there given. Nor must we forget that which came on him daily, the care of all the churches. For we must not think of St. Paul as of a missionary who preached or read to the people in different places, and having taught them about Christ, went on and left them to themselves. His duties were those of a ruler quite as much as of a preacher. He founded churches everywhere; that is, societies of men whose whole lives were to be regulated by his directions; for whose good order he was to provide; and whose faults affected him with the deepest personal concern. Read in the first epistle to the Corinthians the various questions proposed to him for answer; and consider, if one church furnished him with so much matter for thought and regulation, what must have been the care of regulating all the churches of Europe and most of those in Asia? Such was Paul's life of labour and of suffering; labour both of body and mind; suffering both of body and mind. And then, if we observe the spirit and cheerfulness which prevail in all his epistles, down to the very last,—the calmness, the fervent love, the impartial and clear-judging reason, without the slightest mixture of fanatical violence or folly, —we shall understand how wonderful are the graces of Christ's Spirit; that He is at once

wisdom, and power, and love; and being such, and changing His servants into His own image, they also are full of wisdom, and power, and love, after their measure, and therefore have in them also a peace of God that passeth all understanding, and a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

BRATHAY CHAPEL,
December 22d, 1839.

SERMON XXXVII.

ST. JOHN.

2 JOHN 5.

And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

I ENDEAVOURED last Sunday to give a sort of outline of the life of St. Paul, and to connect most of his Epistles with their date, and with the circumstances under which they were written. The second lesson for this evening service is the Second Epistle of St. John, and the day before yesterday was St. John's day; so that the Apostle St. John is now as naturally brought before our minds, as the Apostle St. Paul was last Sunday. It is true, we have it not in our power to give St. John's history with the same fulness as St. Paul's; neither can we so certainly fix the period of his writings, nor connect them so distinctly with the circumstances of his life. But there must be a benefit surely in

collecting together every thing that we can know about him, and in tracing out as much as can be discovered to illustrate his writings; inasmuch as if we ask who St. John was, the answer is, that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved; and if we ask what are his writings, we know that in them there is so eminent a measure of divine truth, that he was called by way of eminence in ancient times, "the Apostle who spoke of God."

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were, as we all know, fishermen on the lake of Gennesaret, or sea of Galilee, when our Lord called them to be His disciples. We all know also that they with Peter were alone with Him when he was transfigured on the Mount, that they alone were with Him when He raised Jaïrus' daughter from the dead; and that they alone witnessed His agony in the garden of Gethsemane. After His resurrection and ascension, it was by Peter and John that the first miracle was wrought in His name, the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the Temple; and several years later, when St. Paul went up to Jerusalem to communicate with the Apostles, he addressed himself particularly to Peter, and James the brother of our Lord, and to John; who, as he says, were accounted pillars in the church. This is the last scriptural mention of St. John that is free from all doubt and uncertainty; but what I have noticed is enough to show that from the beginning

of the Gospel onwards, St. John was ever regarded as among the most eminent of our Lord's disciples.

But this is not all:—we know also that St. John had the highest and most awful privilege ever bestowed upon any human being, for he was in a peculiar manner the disciple whom Jesus loved. It were profaneness to attempt to dwell on this point farther than merely to notice it; but if we ask for what purpose it was recorded in the Scripture, and how without any profane curiosity we may yet regard it with benefit, the answer is, that this simple statement, together with what is said of our Lord's love for Lazarus and Martha and Mary, is the highest and most precious sanction for our own feelings of personal friendship and affection, as distinct from our general brotherly love or benevolence. The general language of the Scripture enforces general charity,—love to our brethren, that is, to our fellow Christians;—love to our neighbour, that is, to all our fellow men. It was needful that we should have a Divine command for this, because we are so apt to fail in it; but we do not need to be commanded to feel personal regard or love for one or more individuals, for to this Nature herself prompts us. Lest however we should think that this was no more than an instinct of corrupt nature, which our renewed nature should endeavour to overcome, it has been recorded that of this feeling our Lord Himself was a partaker; that He who

so loved us all, that He laid down His life for our sakes, yet had those also for whom He entertained a particular, and, if I may venture so to speak, a personal affection; that John was the disciple whom Jesus loved.

But when the mother of James and John ventured to ask for her sons that they might be exalted next to Christ Himself, when He came in His kingdom, His answer was,—"To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared." "It is not mine to give in the way in which it is now asked,—as an earthly prince might give honours to his favourites, out of partiality or private regard,—but it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared of my Father; —my judgment will be the judgment of Him who searcheth the reins and the hearts." Infinite is the difference of feeling with which we should regard the greatest Apostle, or her who was highly favoured and blessed among women, and Jesus Christ our Lord both God and man. Let us respect and love the characters of prophets and apostles;—let us consider with awe and gratitude unspeakable that love to man which did not abhor the Virgin's womb. But let us beware, as of the most certain idolatry, of that superstitious reverence which, separating the prophets and apostles and the Virgin Mary from all others of God's faithful servants, does really regard them with something of religious veneration,

—with feelings I do not say the same in degree, but actually the same in kind, with those which we entertain towards our Lord. Nor let us be deceived with fond words, telling us that such veneration bespeaks an humble and reverent mind, such as becomes Christ's disciples, and that to refuse it is cold, and hard, and proud. For these are fond words, like those of the same sort of men in St. Paul's days, who in their supposed voluntary humility tried to persuade Christ's people to worship angels. If simple reverence or veneration be a Christian virtue, without reference to the claims of the object, then he who bows down before a thousand idols exercises more Christian virtue than he who worships God alone. One is our master, even Christ, and all we are brethren:—all we, prophets and apostles included,—all we are brethren. Did Christ mean that we should respect all men alike, or that we should think none better or wiser than ourselves?—God forbid! But he did mean that we should think none so much better or wiser than ourselves as to forget their infirmities, as to bestow on them any the slightest portion of religious honour; that is, to suppose that they by reason of their holiness can obtain favour for us from God; that they sit on Christ's right hand, and on His left, nearer to Him who judges than to us who are to be judged. When we so regard them it becomes idolatry;—we give to man the honour due to God only. We

shall all stand before Christ's judgment seat;—we have all need of His atonement, of His mediation; to seek help from one another, or to pretend to offer it to one another, is alike blasphemy.

It is necessary to say thus much, because this idolatrous regard for the Apostles, and even for other Christians far less eminent, is beginning to increase amongst us; and besides all its other evils it has this which is not of small importance, that it hinders us from studying the Apostles' characters as those of men like ourselves, and thus of deriving benefit from the faithful picture recorded in Scripture of their faults no less than of their virtues. For instance, it is recorded of St. John, that when he saw a man casting out devils in Christ's name, without following him as a disciple, he forbade him. And again, when the inhabitants of a Samaritan village refused to receive our Lord and His disciples, John asked "whether he should call for fire to come down and consume them, even as Elijah did." You see that in St. John's early life, no less than in St. Paul's, there was a zeal not according to knowledge, a zeal which leads not to goodness and wisdom, but to error and to sin. Is it irreverent to these two blessed Apostles, to whom we owe more than to any two mere men who ever lived upon earth, thus to venture to notice their defects? —Nay, rather, to refuse to notice them were an irreverence to that Holy Spirit which has recorded

them for our instruction. But observe now, if these great Apostles, so unlike in many respects, had yet in their early life this same fault of over and misguided zeal, may we not think that there is something in zeal, even when in error, which promises well at least for future excellence;—that theirs is not a hopeful state who are wholly without it; or to speak more properly, are zealous only for their own interest and their own pleasure? And when we see again how this false zeal, in both St. Paul and St. John, was purified by God's Spirit from its error and its evil; that it was no more narrow-minded, no more violent, but wise and gentle, yet still earnest withal, and fervent; directing its abhorrence only against wickedness, and not against differences, or even against errors in things of no moral importance; and even against wickedness, striving not with the fire from heaven, nor with the high priest's power, to bind and to imprison, but with patience and reproof, and moral influence only, then we may learn how our natural qualities may be perfected by Christ's Spirit, how in us, too, our false and violent zeal, if such be our defect, may be purified and softened,—how our false and selfish indifference, if that be our fault rather, may be strengthened and enkindled into the holy flame of Christian charity.

St. John's latter life was passed in Asia Minor; and it was there, according to all appearance, that

his Gospel and Epistles were written. The exact date of either cannot be fixed; but the Epistles cannot be placed earlier than the period of St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome; and probably both the Epistles and Gospel were written still later, during St. Paul's second imprisonment, or after his death. It is quite clear that his Gospel was designed for those who were already familiar with the principal events and discourses of our Lord's ministry; that his Epistles refer to a period when Christianity had been for some time in the world, when as in our own days, many were Christians in name who were not so in reality. In this respect St. John's Epistles are a painful contrast to the earlier Epistles of St. Paul, in which he delights to consider all those to whom he is writing as the heirs of eternal life, and cannot bear to think that either height or depth, or any other creature, can ever separate from the love of Christ those hearts which have once believed in Him. But St. John is obliged to warn the Christians of his time, that they might not dare to indulge such hopes of all who bore Christ's name. "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as Christ is righteous."

It is universally allowed that St. John lived to a great age, insomuch that as years passed away, the impression grounded on a misinterpretation of our Lord's words, that he should not die at all, gained

strength, and he himself in his Gospel thought it expedient to contradict it. He outlived the destruction of Jerusalem, still remaining in Asia Minor, and principally at or near Ephesus. There, in extreme old age, he still continued to repeat that favourite lesson which we find so often in his Epistles, "Little children, love one another." And a story is told that when some one asked him why he confined himself to saying the same thing, he answered, "Because that one thing contains every thing." This is the fitting conclusion surely of the life of that Apostle whom Jesus loved.

Let me add, in conclusion, a few words more with respect to St. John's Gospel. I have said before that it was designed for those who were familiar with the principal events and discourses of our Lord's ministry; for it mentions scarcely any of those recorded by the other Evangelists, and only notices six miracles in all, although in one or two places it speaks of our Lord as having wrought a great number. So again it leaves out the Sermon on the Mount, and most of the parables, which having been early recorded and reported by several writers, were already well known; but it gives many particular conversations, and especially those held by our Lord in Jerusalem, former writers having noticed principally such as took place in Galilee. And still more, the earlier accounts of our Lord's life had confined themselves to a history,

in the common sense of the word, of what took place during his earthly ministry; some, as we see by St. Mark's Gospel, went back no farther than His baptism; while those who went back farthest still, related only the circumstances of His birth, and its miraculous announcement. The earlier Evangelists spoke of Jesus of Nazareth, a Prophet mighty in word and deed, the son of David, wonderfully born of a virgin, whom the chief priests and scribes rejected, whom Pilate crucified, and whom God raised from the dead. But St. John was to tell more than this; he was to enter as it were within the veil, to go back to times, if I may so speak, before time was; to speak not only of things done on earth, but of the things of heaven. Hence his Gospel opens with declaring that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: that by Him all things were made; and that He became flesh, and dwelt among us. With St. John, therefore, our Lord's resurrection is something more than a mere rising from death to life; it is Christ's return to that Divinity which He had before the world was, and which for our sakes He for a while veiled in our nature; and thus the last thing recorded in his Gospel,—for the twenty-first chapter is clearly an addition made by him at a later period,—the last thing recorded is the confession of the Apostle Thomas, when he believed that Christ was truly

risen, and said unto Him, "My Lord, and my God." Thus Christ was acknowledged upon earth to be what St. John in the beginning of his Gospel had declared him to be from all eternity; and the words of Thomas, at the end of the twentieth chapter, do but repeat the truth which St. John had stated before in his own words in the beginning of the first.

Such is St. John's Gospel, the main pillar of our faith and hope, the most effectual enkindler of our love. It stands perfect alike as an historical witness, and as a divine teacher; the work of one who heard, and saw with his eyes, and looked upon, and whose hands handled, that Eternal Life of whom he wrote; the work of one whom Jesus loved, whom the Holy Spirit endued with wisdom and with power; power over outward evil, and over inward; wisdom which understood all mysteries and all knowledge. The wisdom and the power were given him for our sakes, for the confirmation of our faith, and the increase of our spiritual knowledge. But wisdom and power, even such as belonged to an inspired Apostle, must cease and vanish away. St. John possessed also that spirit of love which never faileth. And he whose latest exhortation was, "Little children, love one another," was and is an example of the truth of his own words, that "he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Bratthay Chapel,
December 29, 1839.

SERMON XXXVIII.

ALL SAINTS.

REVELATIONS vii. 9, 10.

After this I beheld, and lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands: and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

WE heard these words read this morning in the Epistle for this day, the Festival of All Saints; the Festival, that is, which the Church keeps in commemoration, not of any one or two of her members, as is the case with the rest of what are called Saints' days, but of all God's people; of her whole communion, both past and present, reaching back to the remotest times, and extending to the farthest countries. Amongst those whom she this day commemorates, Patriarch and Apostle, Prophet

and Preacher, Jew and Gentile, Asiatic and European, old and young, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, are met together; amidst innumerable differences, nay, too often amidst fierce controversies, one thing alone is to be remembered of them this day, that they were God's people, living and dying in His faith and fear, and supported by His Spirit in a lifelong warfare against his enemy.

And those whom God has so joined together let no man put asunder. True it is, that as one star differeth from another star in glory, so the services rendered by all this blessed company to their one great cause have been by no means equal: true it is also, that there have been points in the lives and in the doctrine of all of them which have done their great cause injury. There are many amongst them who have built hay and stubble upon Christ's foundation, or who valued it so highly when it had been built by others, that they have been very bitter in their feelings and conduct towards those who wished to clear it away. It might be done, indeed, but it were a thankless labour, to look over the list of God's saints, of those, I mean, whose lives and minds are in any way known to us, and to notice the blemishes in each; how some, according to their several constitutions of mind and circumstances, have omitted duly to cultivate one virtue, and others have omitted to cultivate another; how some have too much neglected some great

truth, whilst others have raised to the level of truth, or even above it, some monstrous error: how some have been very zealous for much that was evil, while others have been too cold towards much that was good. Above all, it would be possible, but very painful, to mark so often their alienation from each other; how they mistook each other for enemies, and shunned each other's society; insomuch that, as in the sad story of the contention between Paul and Barnabas, they parted altogether from one another, and instead of doing the Lord's work together, they each were obliged to do it alone. All these things might be noticed, and history must notice them. But with all this, there is another point no less true, which is equally matter of history, and which it is far more profitable to us to contemplate; that with all this difference, nay, with all the sense of discord which actually may have prevailed, there was in all, even where they themselves observed it not, a secret harmony; all were Christ's soldiers and Satan's enemies; all, in that great struggle between good and evil which has gone on in the world since man's first sin, were, according to their measure, fighting on the side of good.

Therefore now, when all have entered into their rest together, and they who were parted from one another here, find to their exceeding joy that they must needs be one for evermore, inasmuch as they

each are one with Christ, let not the Church dwell upon their differences, nor attempt to fix which of them shall sit nearest to Christ, on his right hand and on his left; but let us consider them all with thankfulness and great joy, giving thanks for them earnestly to God, their Father and ours, that He has magnified His grace in them, and made them conquerors over sin and death; and praying that we may be added to their number, and that we too may be a subject for thankfulness and not for sorrow to the generations which shall come after us.

These are the general feelings which this day should awaken in us. It gives a sort of consistency to the pleasures with which we read of good men in various ages and countries; it bids us unite them all together in thought, and to view them as enjoying that perfect good which by faith they formerly saw and loved. But besides this general joy, there are also many particular trains of thought connected with this festival, too full to be exhausted now, but some of which it will be proper to notice, and for a certain distance at least to follow.

We have acknowledged, what is indeed most evident, that there have been great differences amongst God's saints, and that many of them have been marked by some great sins. What is there then in them which makes us regard them as so essentially united, and as being undoubtedly, notwithstanding their sins, received into the kingdom of

God? One of the most striking and most universally known instances of what I mean is the character of David. We all know that his life was stained with two sins in particular, such as even common men rarely commit, adultery and murder. And yet we know the language in which the Scripture generally speaks of him, and to which the judgments and hearts of Christians, who abhor those sins most earnestly, have yet borne constant witness. Other instances might be given in great numbers, but this one sufficiently shows the nature of the question. What is that in human nature which emphatically entitles a man to the name of good? with which, although he may have committed great sins, he still belongs to God's true people; without which, although his life may be marked by no direct evil nearly so flagrant, he does not and cannot belong to them?

Now the Scripture, I think, will at once suggest the words of our answer: we should say in the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that what distinguishes God's people from those who are not God's people, was the presence of faith on the one hand, or its absence on the other. And this would be a true answer; but, as so given, it would not be a clear one. For we may be asked, what is faith? as the word has undoubtedly been used in many various senses, and what is very truly said of it in one sense, may be most untrue when said of it

in another. And therefore this short and simple answer, that faith is the great moral distinguisher between man and man, cannot be left in its shortness and simplicity; we must add to it by explaining it, or else it may well be that we shall gain from it no true instruction.

We will say then, that the faith which we mean may be substantially described as a coming to and walking with God: or, if we like it better, in other words, a firm and present conviction that the great business of life is to please God, and to fulfil all righteousness; so that habitually the man is trying to please God, and therefore his life being judged of by its habitual and prevailing tenor, we call him holy and good. And as, on the one hand, it is clear that this habitual principle may occasionally be driven from its command over our lives by some strong temptation, and that in its absence the worst of sins may be committed; so it is no less clear, that where it is habitually absent, other motives may so far supply its place as to save us from flagrant sins such as men commonly abhor and punish. We may be perfectly without faith, and yet be restrained from adultery and murder, either from the absence of temptation, or by the fear of human censure or human law. But then the great difference between one who has faith and one who has not, is this,—that in the common and habitual course of their lives, the one

is trying to please God, and the other to please himself; that is, that the one is consciously and by preference enlisted as it were amongst God's soldiers; his business and his pleasure is to do God service, so that he must assuredly belong to God. Whereas the other is never amongst God's soldiers, and is never consciously and by preference advancing God's service. He may indeed be doing God service unconsciously; that is, he may from some other motive be doing the same things which he would have done had he wished to serve God. But although it may thus happen that his works sometimes serve God, yet he himself never serves Him; and, therefore, when he himself is judged he is found not to belong to God's people, for he cares nothing about God.

Here, then, as it appears to me, we have the one common point in all that great company of which the text speaks, who out of all nations and languages stand before the throne of God, and are clothed in white, and bear in their hands palms of victory. For all these have, through the faith that was in them, overcome the world: they lived neither to please the world nor to please themselves, but to please God. And it is thus very easy for us to judge whether we truly belong to their communion, and are with them in spirit now, and may hope to be with them both in body and in spirit hereafter. If we have their faith in us, then we are one with

them; but if we have not, we are strangers to them. Is the prevailing principle in our hearts a desire to serve and please God? then we are of God's people. Is it, on the contrary, a desire to please ourselves? then we are not God's people.

And this, as I have often said before, is true amongst us without any qualification: for it scarcely ever,—does it indeed ever at all occur amongst us? —that desiring to serve God truly, we mistake His will, and do evil while believing it to be good. On the contrary, here, if there is a real desire to do God's will, our path is as clear as day; no one mistakes it, no one can mistake it. The evil which is most common here, whatever other fair semblances it may put on, can never pretend to be the way in which we should please God. Take all the faults to which we are ever tempted, those of which I have spoken so often, those which you know so well, and think whether any one could ever persuade himself that they were the way in which he should do God service. Vice here may have other fine names, but the names of holiness and zeal for God it dares not to meddle with. And therefore, as I said, whoever truly wishes to serve God here, in whomsoever this wish is the ruling motive of his actions, he, we may be quite sure, does serve God actually.

For our own use here, therefore, we need not consider those most difficult cases which appear to contradict what I have said, as to the distinguishing

mark of God's people; those cases, I mean, where men, whose zeal for God seems manifest on the one hand, have yet on the other hand, not from occasional infirmity and in spite of their principles, but knowingly and as a direct consequence of their principles, committed great crimes. How can we consider him as belonging to God's people, who down to the very last moment of his life, has been so blinded as to be deliberately committing sin and counting it God's service? We must confess that there are cases of this sort, which we can only leave to God's righteous judgment; there is a misguided zeal for God which is the punishment of serving our own passions under His name: when our Lord spoke of those who, in killing His disciples, would think that they were doing God service, He added, "that they would do this because they had neither known the Father nor the Son." But yet these very cases, although if we were to have to judge of individuals, they would occasion us hopeless perplexity, yet do not really touch the principle which we have laid down: for he who serves his own passions under God's name is not serving God, neither he who serves his own prejudices; and where was there ever an instance of any man, who really sought to serve God and not an idol, whether in himself or out of himself, whose life was not kept pure from the deadly error of believing evil to be good?

This, however, is a difficulty most affecting a later stage of life than yours. A few years hence indeed, the idol may so cunningly seat itself in the Temple of God, and so invest itself with God's name and authority, as to try your spiritual discernment to the very utmost. But here, at your present time of life, it is not so. To you God is in His holy place, and into that place no idol ventures. To you the idols before which you bow down, are idols as confessed as were ever Moloch, or Dagon, or Remphan; not for one moment do you believe while serving them that you are serving God. To you, then, the turning to God is a turning to Him in truth; in your case, faith would put you, without doubt, among God's people. And if you cannot now turn from what are idols beyond all doubt, nor resolve to serve the living and only God, may not the judgment on this your sin assume two apparently opposite forms, though they are one in their reality. Some who will not turn from their boy's idols now, will continue to follow man's idols hereafter; and will neither then nor now ever pretend to turn to God, or to belong to His people. But others may find their judgment to be of another sort; that as now they would not leave what they knew to be an idol, so at a later period of life, when they would turn to God, they may be deceived by an idol under his name; that thus, whilst believing that they are serving Him, they will, in fact, be idolaters no less

than now: hating truth and justice, and worshipping a lie in truth's place; persecuting God's people, while they think that they are doing God service; and this, because they have neither known the Father nor the Son, but have worshipped idols all their days, wilfully and knowingly first, and afterwards by that judgment of God which takes the power of sight from those who had refused to use it.

Rugby Chapel,
November 1, 1840.

SERMON XXXIX.

ALL SOULS.

Hebrews xiii. 7.

Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

It is probably known to many of us that, in the Roman Catholic calendar, every day in the year is a Saint's day; that is, there is no single day to which the name and remembrance of some persons or events connected with our common faith are not associated. And it is known also, perhaps to many of us, that some Protestant churches keep no anniversaries at all; not even those of our Lord's birth, crucifixion, and ascension. The Sunday is their only day set apart for religious worship, with the exception of such particular fasts or solemn days as may be appointed by the Church from time to time on particular occasions. Our own Church, as we know, keeps several anniversaries, while it has discontinued the greater number of those formerly

observed. Among the rest so discontinued, is that one which used to be kept on this day. Yesterday, which was All Saints' Day, is still observed. But All Saints' Day was followed immediately by what was called All Souls' Day, or the Day of the Dead, —a day which was, indeed, made to serve to very superstitious purposes, on account of the fables which were invented about the state of the dead, but which, as soon as those fables are forgotten, is capable of being made a truly Christian solemnity no less so than the day of All Saints, immediately preceding it, and which our Church still observes.

The notion of All Souls' Day was to keep up the remembrance of those of our Christian brethren, who, having finished their course on earth, are kept in peace till the day of the resurrection. Undoubtedly, as I said before, very gross superstitions were mixed up with it, which it would be most unedifying to dwell on, even for a moment. Still the state of the Christian dead, both in what we know of it, and in what we do not know, is itself a very useful subject of reflection. In the celebration of All Saints' Day, we recall to mind our fellowship with God's servants in respect of their and our immortality. The Day of the Dead recalls to us our fellowship with God's servants, in so far as both they and we are mortal. In the former we include not only all Christ's earthly servants, but those also who are in heaven. The Communion of Saints

extends to the holy angels themselves, and centres in Christ Himself, their Head and Lord, as well as ours. But the Day of the Dead is, in a manner, of the earth, and earthly. The holy angels do not share in this communion with us, and though Christ Himself died unto sin once, yet He is alive for evermore, and entered already into the most holy place, to prepare an habitation there for us also when he shall come again. The Day of the Dead, then, is the day of those who are yet in some measure under Death's power,—of our departed brethren who are yet so far under it, that they have not entered into their perfect and eternal life,—of ourselves, even more, over whose heads Death's dart is still hanging, who have not felt its stroke, but will surely feel it.

So far, then, our departed brethren and we are in the same condition;—to neither of us is the power of the last enemy as yet quite overcome. But if in this we are alike, there is another thing in which we are most different. The power of death is not wholly past from over them; but the sting of that power is past for ever. They have done with sin, if they have not yet done with death. But of us this cannot be said truly. We have not yet done with sin, and therefore to us not only the power, but the worst sting of death may be yet remaining. How can we, then, become like in this great matter to our departed brethren? How

can we bring ourselves to feel no more or worse portion of death's power than they now feel? To this question the words of the text afford the answer: "Consider the end of their conversation, the issue of their earthly life, and imitate their faith."

In speaking of our departed brethren, I wish the term to be confined to those who have died in Christ's faith and fear. We have nothing to do with any others than these. Now of some of these we must gain our knowledge from reading or hearing; of others our own experience may inform us. For among that number of persons whom we once knew on earth, and who have now finished their course, there must surely be many of whom we may pronounce at once quite confidently, with much more than the mere hope of charity, that they have died in Christ's faith and fear. For, as there must be many of whom we may hope not only charitably, but reasonably, yet of whom we cannot feel that their faith, as it were, is manifest, and goes before to judgment; so there must be many, I trust, of whom we feel that it was manifest; whom God's Spirit had sealed so visibly that none could mistake its impress. Now consider, for a moment, the state of any such person whom we have once known, and compare his case with ours. We knew him when he was as we are now; with the world around him as it is around us; with

temptations besetting him as they are besetting us; with the same weaknesses of body and mind under which we, too, are labouring. Consider, that to him life was as real, and all its interests as pressing, as they can be this day to us. If he were nearly of our own age, we may well remember many occasions of ordinary employment, or amusement, or conversation in which he shared our interest, and in which we no more thought of death in connexion with him than with ourselves. So truly and entirely was there a sympathy between us, in respect to what we see and feel now. But to him this "now" is gone by for ever. To him the world is really nothing. We can see how wise he was, not to set his heart upon it,—how short, and vanishing a point is the life of faith when compared with the life of glory. Whatever pain he suffered, whatever common pleasure he enjoyed, we have seen the end of both. It may be that we retain some of his books or of his letters; his handwriting is before our eyes, the subject of his thoughts in his books, their expression in his writing. He used these things as not abusing them; and can we not readily carry our minds forward to the moment when the like memorials of us may be in the hands of our friends; and can we not fancy the infinite wretchedness of our case if even loving friends could only hope, and not feel confidently sure, that neither had we abused them?

And where are our departed friends now? I can answer only by one word; but how much does that word contain! I cannot tell in what place they are, or with what degree of happiness or consciousness. I cannot tell if they regard us still, or if they can pray for us, or wish us any good. But they are in *safety*. O comfortable word to think of, when the danger so escaped is an eternal one! They are in safety; they have done with evil for ever. No more sickness, no more pain;—no more sorrow for others, and no more fear;—no more sense of private misfortunes or of public. Poverty, strifes, tumults, wars,—whatever images of evil, with more or less of distinctness, haunt us in our mortal condition,—of all these they know nothing any more. But how much more than all this is it to be freed from temptation, and to have ended the work of faith! We, with all our faults, with all our difficulties in the way of serving God, our eager passions, our base fears, our childish follies;—we, with this veil drawn so thickly over us, and through which faith sometimes can scarcely penetrate, can we conceive ourselves to be as our departed brethren,—passions, and fears, and follies all swept away together, and the veil lifted up from all things, so that we can see God? And yet it is true that many whom we have known, who have shared our graver hours and our lighter ones, are now as really in this state of perfect safety as they were a short time since, and as we are still in danger.

It is therefore well said, "Follow their faith, considering the end of their earthly conversation." It is well said; for by considering their end we may be best encouraged to follow their faith. You will see that, when speaking of considering their end, I have not dwelt on the actual scene of their deaths; on any particular instances of faith which they may then have exhibited, or any particular parting charges which they may then have left to us. The truth is, that the real example is to be sought for in their lives, not in their deaths. The real solemnity of their relation to us consists not in the greater or less impressiveness of a period of a few hours, but in the abiding fact that they were alive and are dead. Besides, it often happens that they, whose lives have been the holiest, of whose safety now we may be most assured, exhibited nothing remarkable in their last hours, from the peculiar nature of their disorder. And it is of importance not to encourage that craving for stories of interesting deaths, which some feel so strongly. In this respect there seems to me to be a peculiar fitness and value in the manner of the death of Bishop Heber. For all that we know of him is his life and vigorous health;—there his example speaks to us; and as his simple devotion to his Master's service showed itself in his life, in all fruits of power, and love, and of a sound mind, so it was ordered that neither in his death should he minister to any false or extravagant feeling. We

have no record of his faith and hope when his body was sick, and his mind enfeebled; but we have an abundant record of both, while he was daily and cheerfully giving up to his Master's work all the energies of his undecayed body, and all the manifold faculties of his pure and beautiful mind.

The mention of this great and good man naturally leads me from those of our departed brethren whom we have ourselves known, to that great multitude whom we can know only from the accounts of others. They are scattered up and down over the whole period of the world's existence; but yet, so soon as they are taken from this world, they have no more to do with time. All of them stand to us now in one common relation,—all are the dead who have died in the Lord. How refreshing is it to join ourselves in the only permitted way to their communion! Not by asking or wondering what they may be now; whether they care for us, whether they can do anything for us: all that we may know concerning them now is, that they are safe, and under Christ's care, and that we shall meet them when Christ comes again. But we can join in communion with them by studying what they were. Often we have their very prayers and secret thoughts preserved to us; or, if not, we have their actions, which tell clearly enough from what seed so goodly a fruit was ripened. It is very much to be regretted that we have not more records of the lives of Christ's

servants; and sometimes, too, we may be forgiven the wish that what we have, had been more simply told. Still there is a goodly company of God's people, on whom we may look with comfort and thankfulness, who, amidst all varieties of time and place, bear the same divine seal that they were God's redeemed; who, though dead, are yet capable of guiding and of strengthening us; who, though unknown to us in this mortal body, shall yet, when we have all put on immortality, be our companions for ever, if we, too, shall to the end of our lives steadily have followed their faith.

And now this Day of the Dead seems to deserve a better, or at least a more cheerful name:—it may be called the Day of the Living. For who are so truly alive as they who have been, and are, and shall be God's children;—alive, and truly alive for evermore; whether, like our brethren, they have passed through the valley of the shadow of death, or, like us, have yet to pass it. But if we must dwell upon the word "dead," let us think who there are who truly deserve to be called so. Not those, of whom I have been now speaking, not our departed brethren; and I hope and pray not ourselves. Dead, indeed, we can scarcely be yet;—as we do not share our departed brethren's safety, so neither can we yet share the death of the truly dead. Here we may not, we dare not dwell upon individual cases: but, if we have ever known—I would rather say, have

ever heard or read of—some whose faith had given no sign of its existence, then as we presented to our minds the change that has taken place in our Christian brethren, so for a moment let us fancy the change that has taken place in the really dead. If we have ever known such alive once, active and healthful, full of powers and opportunities, yet wasting all,—living, alas! but too livelily in this present life, and sharing in its concerns but too eagerly,—can we bear to think what is their state now? No: we may not think of it, except to remind us, that as they are we may be. Nay, as they are, we shall be; and others may talk, and draw examples from us, as we do now from these; life will be over with us for ever, and death for ever will have begun; unless even now we join ourselves to those holy dead, to those truly living, whom we as on this day commemorate.

Rugby Chapel and Church,
November 2d, 1834.

SERMON XL.

THE HOLY TRINITY.

Revelation iv. 11.

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Before we enter any farther into the consideration of these words, it will be proper to notice one expression in them, which may perhaps leave a false impression on some minds, from their comparing it with the words of another passage in Scripture. I mean the expression, "for thy pleasure," which, by a comparison of what is said of human fathers, in the 12th chapter of the Hebrews, that they "chasten their children after their own pleasure," may at first seem to convey a notion somewhat at variance with the fatherly love of God. But it should be noticed that the expressions, though so nearly alike in our translation, are not so in the

original; and that what is translated in the text, "for thy pleasure," would, according to the general practice of our translators, be rather rendered, "because of thy will;" a difference which, strictly speaking, indeed comes to nothing, but which, notwithstanding, is of consequence; as in our language respecting God, the impression conveyed to our minds is of quite as much importance as the actual correctness of the language itself, when strictly inquired into.

The text then says, that "because it was God's will all things are and were created." It means to convey to us the notion of God's entire sovereignty, but apart from any thing which in a man we should call capricious and arbitrary. God's will is a will of infinite justice, and wisdom, and goodness, and can be no other, because it is the will of God.

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things:" all things visible and invisible. There is one Maker in the universe, even God, and all things else are His work. There is one Lord in the universe, even God, and all things else are His ministers; whether they be things with life or without life, whether they act by instinct or by will.

But amongst these His ministers, —that is, amongst created beings, the differences may be greater than we can estimate. Even within our own knowledge, who can measure the difference

between a grain of sand and the sun of our system? or between the lowest creature that seems to form the link between the animal and vegetable world, and the mind of Solomon or of Paul? But the differences may be, and indeed are, far greater than these; we do not know to what minuteness, to what humbleness God's creation may descend on the one hand, nor to what greatness it may arise on the other; we know not the nature of the smallest created atom, nor of the mightiest angel.

Still all these beings, so different, extending from things lower than we can conceive, up to things higher than our conceptions; all, from the highest angel to the feeblest atom, are yet, religiously speaking, all classed together, as though they were all equal. They are all creatures, and however different when compared with themselves, yet they seem actually to be all on one level, when contrasted with that infinite difference which exists between the highest creature and God. All then are servants, all are ministers; and there is one only Lord and Master of all, whom all may, and all must worship.

But this is a matter of Revelation. Man's natural tendency has been to worship creatures, or rather to worship many beings in an ascending order, some less powerful, others more so; till after many steps, at the end of an almost infinite series, far removed from man's common thoughts and feelings,

was the Supreme Father and Ruler of all. That is, man not knowing God, and seeing great varieties actually existing in creation, dwelt more on the differences of lower things amongst themselves than of their common difference with God. But God's revelation came in and said, "Thou shalt have none other Gods but me." Thou shalt worship nothing in heaven or in earth, visible or invisible, save Him by whom all things were made, their Lord and thine. This, then, is the first great work of Revelation, to show us that in all our religious feelings and relations, we have to do with God alone.

But yet Revelation tells us farther, that in our religious feelings and relations we have to do with Jesus Christ. For it tells us that to Him all power is given in heaven and in earth; therefore we are living under His government; it tells us that whether we live, we live unto Him, or whether we die, we die unto Him; we are His, therefore, both here and hereafter: we are told to love Him and to fear Him, though we see Him no more: these are clearly religious feelings. Does then Revelation undo its own work, and, after having laboured to teach us to worship God only, and to lose all differences between creature and creature in the infinite difference between all creatures and their Creator; does it mean again to fix our minds and affections upon a creature, to bid us love and fear Him religiously, to believe Him and put our trust in Him,

to look to Him in life and in death, as the Lord of heaven and earth; whereas He no less than ourselves is the work of God's hands, and therefore removed to a far greater distance from God than he can be by any superiority of nature from us his fellow-creatures?

Revelation would thus undo its own work, if Jesus Christ of Nazareth were indeed a man, and no more. Or go much higher still; exalt Him ever so highly—above the highest angel, to a perfection which shall to our eyes seem infinite,—still if it be not infinite,—if, however exalted, He be yet only a creature, one of those who were, because it was God's will that they should be, then also Revelation undoes its own work; then it teaches us practically to have more gods than one, it revives that very instinct of our nature which it had condemned, the aptness, namely, to dwell more upon the differences between the lower creatures and the higher, than on that infinite difference which exists between the highest creature and God, by whom he was created.

But lest we should so conceive, and be involved in such perplexity, Revelation has abundantly justified itself; it has shown that its latest language agrees with its earliest, that the Creator alone is to be worshipped, and no creature, however exalted; that there is still one, the Maker and Lord of all, and all else creatures and servants; for it has declared that He whom we have known as Jesus

Christ, in whom we still believe, and whom we love and fear and worship as the Son of Man, was in truth the Maker of all things, by whom this world in which He vouchsafed to sojourn was itself made; that not this world only, but angels and archangels, and all things visible and invisible, were created by Him as their author, and for Him as their end.

"Thou art worthy, then, O Lord our Redeemer, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for Thou hast created all things." Thou art not ashamed to call us brethren, for Thou hast been made in the likeness of man: but Thou art no less our Lord and our God, by whom we and all things were made; by whom we alone, so far as we know, of all the works of Thy hands, have by a second manifestation of Thy love, been made again, when our first life had been by our own act destroyed.

Furthermore, Revelation teaches us that in our religious feelings and relations we have to do with Him whom it calls the Holy Spirit. And here indeed our conceptions are dim, and our words must be most imperfect; yet there is One who deals with our heart and inmost nature, working in secret, yet with effect most visible, in us, yet not of us; and sometimes showing most awfully that He is not *of* us, because He ceases even to be *in* us. Of Him, then, the Spirit of Good, who struggles for us against the spirit of evil, who opens our understandings and softens our tempers; who gives us the heart to

pray, and aids us to put up our prayer,—is He a mighty angel, who does God's work within us, the Creator of all true life in us, yet Himself the creature of God? Or has not Revelation here too preserved steadily its own language? Has it not taught us that the Holy Spirit is no other than He who is alone in the highest sense holy? that when He breathes to us of the things of God, He breathes to us of Himself, as we cannot separate the spirit of man from our notions of man's nature? And He too moved on the face of the waters of the deep, when this world came into being; and by Him must we be created anew both in body and soul, before we can enter into the perfect kingdom of God.

"Thou art worthy, then, O Lord, our Sanctifier, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for Thou hast created all things." Thou hast created outward things: mayest Thou so create and raise up our glorified body, that we may be fit for life eternal. But Thou dost work in the inward heart also: Thou art a Spirit, and Thy work is spirit; create us again inwardly after Thine own image; create in us peace, and faith, and love, and joy; create in us that seed of eternal life which is fit for thy spiritual kingdom, that our spirits and bodies may be alike Thy work alone.

"For Thy will, O Lord, we are and were created." And what is Thy will concerning us? Is it that we should, according to our various lot, enjoy

pleasure or suffer pain for a few years, and then be no more? Is it that we should do useful or mighty works, which should remain to after times, prolonging in a manner our life, even when we were dead? Or is it that we should be a monument of Thy justice; that being alone of all the thousand worlds which Thou hast made, buried in evil, and turned away from Thee, we should alone be an eternal warning, condemned to bear the fierceness of Thy wrath for ever?

None of these are Thy will towards us, for Thou hast given to us Thy Son, and Thy Holy Spirit. If we were but born to enjoy or to suffer for a few years, why should Christ have died for us?—a sacrifice so infinite for an end so small, and which in this respect has not altered our condition; for we enjoy and suffer still, and the good are many times they who suffer, and the evil are they who enjoy? If we were born to do mighty or useful works for after ages, why was the Spirit given, whose works are not of such a kind; while they who do such works, do them many times by a far other spirit than Thine? Above all, if we were born to be a monument of Thy justice, then Thou wouldst have given us neither Thy Son nor Thy Spirit; Thou wouldst not have redeemed those who were born to eternal death; Thou wouldst not have created anew by Thy Spirit of Holiness those who were to be for ever the children of wrath.

But Thy will towards us is far other; that we should be born again into Thy heavenly kingdom, never to die any more. For this Thou hast made us once and again after Thine own image, the image of Thy holiness; for this Thou hast redeemed us; for this Thy Holy Spirit has been given to us. That so the process of our heavenly birth might go on without ceasing; the parts of our heavenly nature being fashioned day by day by Thy hand, when as yet there were none of them; that so, when our full time is come, and the heavenly nature is ripened so as to bear to be born into its own proper world, it may be delivered from this mortal body, and receive a new and incorruptible body, and so be truly born.

If this is God's will towards us,—if for this we are,—for this we were created,—for this were put into this fair world, with so much to do in it,—what shall be said of us, if we live wholly against God's will,—if in every day and every hour of our lives we are living as He would have us *not?* By what right do we thus, as it were, steal a life to which we have no title; for we were not made to please ourselves? By what right do we live, and are yet not being daily born for our eternal being? What if in another sense than St. Paul's we are not being born daily, but daily dying? What shall the end then be, but according to the beginning; and if God's Spirit is not quickening us, and forming us

for the kingdom of God, is there not another spirit busy upon us, forming us after another and a hellish nature, and making us be born daily, if we may use such contradictory language, until we are ripened for a life which is death eternal?

RUGBY CHAPEL,
May 29th, 1836.

APPENDIX A.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE TWO SERMONS ON THE INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY.

[Extracted from a Manuscript Work, of which the rest is incorporated in the Notes to the Sermons.]

. . . . . IF this view of Prophecy be correct, there flow from it several rules of prophetic interpretation, of no small importance to understand and apply.

I. That whereas some persons have insisted on the literal or primary, and others on the spiritual or second meaning of Prophecy: or have attached respectively a literal and a spiritual sense to different parts of the same prophecy, it appears rather as a general rule, that all prophecies uttered under an imperfect dispensation have both a literal or human meaning, and a spiritual or divine one; and that the same prophecy is not to be taken in part literally, and in part spiritually, but is all capable of being understood in both senses: in other words, it may be read according to the meaning of its human author, or according to the meaning of its Divine Author.

II. That prophecies uttered under a perfect dispensation, when the notions of good and evil are presented to us in their pure and spiritual form, divested of those associations with particular persons and places with which they had been mixed up heretofore, have generally one interpretation only, and that a spiritual one; and that if the form and language of

imperfect prophecy be still in any instances preserved, it is but in form and language, employed for the sake of old associations; and often bearing evident marks, that it is now no more than the ornamental dress in which a truth, wholly spiritual, is conveyed.

From these two main rules of interpretation, others of a subordinate character may be derived. For instance, it follows from the first of them,—

1. That in ascertaining the first, or human meaning of any prophecy, we should proceed as with any other work merely of human composition. We must try, in the first place, to ascertain its date, the circumstances under which it was delivered, and the ideas which were predominant in the mind of the writer. For the benefit of this lower sense of prophecy is chiefly historical; it gives us a reflection of the human mind under particular circumstances,—disclosing to us at once its sources of trouble and of consolation. And here, I imagine, there is room for the exercise of much deeper learning and sounder criticism, than have ever yet been applied to the books of the Old Testament.

2. That notes of time, place, or individual persons, belong to the lower sense of prophecy alone, and not to the higher: with the exception of such prophecies as may relate to the first coming of our Lord in the flesh. For with the exception of Christ alone, as has been already stated, persons are no pure embodying of principles, nor is there any essential holiness attached to one country more than to another. What is prophesied, therefore, of persons and places, belongs necessarily to the lower and imperfect tone of prophecy; the full truth cannot be estimated till we substitute for these concrete terms the pure and abstract principles for which alone the highest happiness is reserved.

3. That descriptions of good and evil, destined to be the portion of any such individuals or nations, will be hyperbolical when applied to the human meaning of the prophecy, and true only if applied to its divine meaning. For the language sometimes reaching to the highest conceivable amount of

blessing, its fulfilment would be unfit to individuals so compassed about with sin and infirmity. And so, also, will it be with the language which describes the interpositions of God's power to execute judgment. For here, again, the very continued existence of this earth, with its evil and its good dwelling together, is a proof that God's interpositions in judgment hitherto have been but partial and typical; that He has stayed His arm in the midst of His work: and thus that language which describes Him as pouring out the full measure of His anger, can only receive its proper fulfilment at that great day, when good and evil shall be so separated as that the abstract principles and the persons in whom they are embodied shall be properly identical.

Now, if any reader, having followed me thus far, should be disposed to deny these rules, because prophecies occur to his mind to which he cannot apply them; let him remember that I do not pretend to state them as universal, but as general; that of some apparent exceptions I am myself aware, and others I may possibly have forgotten or passed over. Still I think that the rules are generally true, and I will proceed to try their validity on some of the most remarkable prophecies of the Old Testament, which are especially referred to in the New.

My first instance shall be taken from the second Psalm. Here, as in almost all the Psalms, I shall consider merely the internal evidence in attempting to ascertain its date and circumstances, considered in its human meaning. The titles of the Psalms, to say nothing of the difficulties of the actual interpretation of them, are, I am convinced, of no more authority than the short notes added to St. Paul's Epistles by some of the ancient copyists. Both are found to be inconsistent with the internal evidence furnished by the very works to which they refer.

The second Psalm, then, in its first meaning, is an expression of confidence and triumph on the part of a king of Israel, that he, as reigning in God's name, and enforcing God's law, would be upheld by God's power; and that the neighbouring

heathen princes, who were impatient of his supremacy, should yet be forced to acknowledge it. So fully does the Psalmist feel that he belonged to God, that he says, "Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee;" and again, at the end of the Psalm, he addresses his enemies with this warning, "Kiss [*i. e.* do homage to] the Son, [*i. e.* the King, whom Jehovah regarded as His Son,] lest He be angry, and ye should perish from the right way."

The Psalmist then, a king of Israel, and one faithful to the law of God, says that God called him His Son, and had, as it were, begotten him as such in the day that He raised him up to be king over his people. So we read in Psalm lxxxix. verse 27, that God declares that He will make David "His first-born, higher than the kings of the earth;" and again He promises of Solomon, "that He will be to him a Father, and Solomon shall be to Him a Son." (2 Samuel vii. 14.) A king over God's people, ruling in righteousness, is so much in the place of God, that God vouchsafes to call him His Son. Further, the Psalmist represents God as saying to him, "Desire of Me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for thy possession." He was to be the greatest of kings, inasmuch as he was the Son of God, that is, the ruler of God's people, according to God's law.

Now by whatever king of Israel we suppose this Psalm to have been written, even if it were David himself, still we must allow that the circumstances of his case do not fully come up to the picture here given of the excellence and greatness of the king, the Son of God. And the reason is, because, notwithstanding the general sincerity of David's obedience, yet he could not be said to answer perfectly to the idea of a righteous ruler over God's people, so like to God in character and office as to be called the Son of God. Up to a certain point David was such a ruler, but yet imperfectly; and so, also, the promises made to the Son of God in the Psalm could only be fulfilled to David imperfectly; for the fulness of the promises required a corresponding fulness of resemblance to that

Divine character, for which alone they were fitted. Accordingly, much of the language of the Psalm in its human meaning is hyperbolical; man's nature could not properly attain to the excellence or to the greatness of a true Son of God.

Here, then, God has provided One to whom the language might apply without hyperbole. By sending One to be the King of Israel, who was in truth the Son of God, the exact fulfilment of the whole Psalm followed immediately. All nations shall bow down before this Holy and Divine King, before His reign is ended; and all who do not obey Him and own His power, shall indeed perish from the right way. There is no expression in the Psalm which is not rendered simply true, so soon as He appeared, who by the perfection of His nature could alone realize those lofty hopes and images of greatness, which nothing merely human could justify.

Let us now take another prophecy equally applied to Christ in the New Testament, the 16th Psalm. In its human or historical sense, this Psalm contains a good man's address to God, an address expressing successively the several feelings of true piety:—Humility, v. 1—3; a profession of zealous obedience, v. 4; thankfulness, v. 5, 6; watchfulness, v. 7; confidence and hope for the future, v. 8—11. In the latter part of the Psalm, the Psalmist expresses his hope that God will deliver him from death, and keep him in life and happiness: "Thou wilt not leave my life in the grave, nor wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see[1] destruction." It is the language of Heze-

[1] לִרְאוֹת שָׁחַת. This must undoubtedly be the same expression with that in Psalm xlix. רְאֹה הַשָּׁחַת. In the latter place the Septuagint translation is *οὐκ ὄψεται καταφθοράν*, while in the former, as is well known, it is *ἰδεῖν διαφθοράν*. The Hebrew word is derived by Parkhurst from the root שָׁחַת, "He destroyed;" by Gesenius from שׁוּחַ, "He sank or settled down," in the sense of "a pit or sunken place," and thence metaphorically of "the grave." In the passage in Job xvii. 14, שַׁחַת in one member of the verse, answers to רִמָּה, "a worm," in the other: the Septuagint, however, translate the first by *θάνατον*, and the second by *σαπρίαν*. But be the origin of the word in the present passage what it may, the sense is manifestly the same; expressing, whether under the

kiah's prayer, and of many other parts of the Old Testament; a language which was and might well be uttered by those who thought not of its full import; an expression of confidence that God would deliver from evil and from death those who trusted in Him.

But here again, if we put this Psalm into the mouth, not of *a good man* simply, but of *the One perfectly good man*, then its language will become literally true, with none of those qualifications and abatements which it necessarily requires, when spoken only by one good imperfectly. In the mouth of a good man, with a full Christian's hope, the language already becomes far truer than when used by one who thought only of the life which now is. "Deliverance from death," "enjoyment of life and happiness," acquire in a Christian's mouth a meaning more adequate to their full literal import. But when spoken by Him in whom was no sin, then, and then only, they are true to the uttermost, without any abatement at all. He was not left in the grave for death to work his will upon; He saw not destruction, not so much even as the destruction of this mortal body, which happens to all besides Him. He alone rose from the grave as He had lain down in it; the same in body, the same in spirit; or, if changed in body, changed only from life to immortality, without ever having known the change from life to decay. He entered into the grave only to show that it had no power over Him, not as yielding to it, but as proving that He had conquered it.

The 22d Psalm is still more remarkable, because it expresses that mixture of suffering and of hope, which, however, fulfilled in an inferior degree in the person of the human author, or of other good men, has found its complete and adequate fulfilment only in the Person of Jesus Christ.

The writer, the date, and the occasion of this Psalm, in its human meaning, are quite unknown. It seems to be the

term "grave," or under that of "destruction," exactly the same idea; namely, that wasting, destroying, and deadly power of the grave, which makes it an object of horror to mankind, but which Christ did not experience, either in His body or in His Spirit.

language of one who, being in a manner the representative of Israel, whether as king or prophet, had been subjected to captivity and insult of every kind at the hands of his enemies. It contains, along with an earnest call upon God for help, a confident expression of hope that he should one day be restored to join in the praises of God, together with his countrymen; and that his country itself, instead of being despised and brought low, should be greatly increased by an accession of other nations to it, who would crave to be permitted to worship the God of Israel. It is manifest that this language claims the sympathy of all good men of all ages, in its sense of actual evil, and in its hope of future good. They all feel that a deliverance is needed, that a better state of things, morally speaking, a greater triumph of God's kingdom, is earnestly to be desired. Now, humanly speaking, this is merely the language and feeling of hope; but when One came into the world to embody and fulfil this language, to be a perfectly good man, to undergo the extremest measure of suffering, to cherish unshaken hope under it, and lastly, to obtain for himself and for God's cause the most complete triumph; then what would otherwise have been no more than hope comes justly to be considered as prophecy.

The human and historical meaning of the Psalm is obscure. We know not what are the facts alluded to when the writer complains of his garments being taken from him, and his hands and feet being galled and wounded.[1] The latter expression

[1] I am perhaps hardly justified in referring to this part of the Psalm, on account of the great uncertainty of the meaning, and as some say, even of the text. The present Hebrew text runs thus: עֲדַת מְרֵעִים הַקִּיפוּנִי כָּאֲרִי יָדַי וְרַגְלָי, "A company of the wicked, [or, of companions,] surrounded me like a lion, hands and feet." But many versions, the Septuagint amongst the number, translate what now appears to be כָּאֲרִי, "like a lion," as if they had read כָּרוּ, the third plural of כָּרָה, "he dug or pierced." It seems impossible to decide this question, although even according to the present Hebrew text, "the besetting like a lion the hands and the feet," would be as literally applicable to Christ's crucifixion as to the original circumstances, whatever they were, to which the Psalm in its historical meaning refers. But after all, such minute and

probably means that he was a captive, and that the chains with which he was bound pressed him heavily. [Compare Ps. cv. 18.] But if we make this Psalm also the language, not of some unknown good man under the Jewish dispensation, but of the perfectly good man, Christ Jesus, then we can understand all its allusions. The scorn, the taking His garments, the wounding His hands and His feet, are all perfectly clear to us, for the facts are all recorded in the Gospel history. The fulfilment of the deliverance prayed for, that He who had so suffered should be raised up again, to praise God in the land of the living; that a countless multitude should be joined to Him from every corner of the earth; that a new people of God should be thus created, the true spiritual seed of Him who had been once brought so low; this is no less matter of history, and shows that if this Psalm be regarded as breathing the language of a true child of God, He in whom this language was in all its parts fulfilled, must be the child of God perfectly.

The 40th Psalm may next be noticed. Now here we meet with an instance of the necessity of paying a critical attention to the text of the Old Testament. The feelings of the first and last parts of this Psalm, as it now stands, do not agree together: the former expresses sentiments of thankfulness and rejoicing; the latter is the language of distress, and earnest prayer for deliverance. But the last five verses, 13—17, occur again as a distinct psalm, Ps. lxx., and it is probable that they were added to the 40th Psalm to suit its language to the circumstances of the Jewish people after their return from the captivity. I should be tempted to think also, that the Psalm originally ended with the 11th verse, and that the 12th verse was also an addition, adapted to other circumstances, and made up in great part from the language of Psalm xxxviii. 4, and

particular allusions to the details of Christ's life, do not seem necessary to the force of the prophecy; the essence of which, so to speak, appears to me to consist in combining so often in the same character the notions of great goodness, of extreme distress, and of confident hope of a most complete final triumph; all which points meet perfectly in Christ, and in Him only.

other similar passages. If this be so, the Psalm will be found to have one uniform character, that of thankfulness and devotion. But its date and occasion, as is so often the case in the Psalms, cannot be determined. The language might well be that of a king, who felt that the outward service of God was of little value when compared with the inward; that his keeping up the sacrifices of the Temple service was of small importance, in comparison with his doing God's will. But it is plain that this language, when ascribed to the great King of Israel, the Messiah, gains a propriety greater than it could ever have had before. Messiah, the King, could truly say that God had delivered Him from the pit, and had put a new song in His mouth, even praise unto His God. He could say that many should see it and fear, and should trust in Jehovah; that the tidings of His resurrection should bring thousands and thousands to draw near to God through Him. He could express the insufficiency of common sacrifice, knowing that He had done it away for ever by the sacrifice of Himself. He could say that God had opened His ears; had forced, as it were, a way into them, that He should not be deaf to His words, but hear them and do them; for it was His meat to do the will of Him who sent Him, and in all things He was a perfect pattern of obedience. So, again, how truly was it written concerning Him[1] in the volume of the book of the law, inasmuch as the earliest Scripture records prophecies of Him, and the law itself, by its practices, as well as by its words, had reference to Him. And who, as He did, has ever so declared God's righteousness to the great congregation, when it was His last command that His

[1] בִּמְגִלַּת־סֵפֶר כָּתוּב עָלָי. "In the Roll of the Book it is written on me;" or, as Gesenius interprets it, comparing 2 Kings xxii. 13, "Commands are laid on me,"—"I am the object of the writing, its meaning falls on me, that I may do it." If the Psalm was written by a king, the passage would have especial reference to the part of the law which enforced the duties of a King of Israel, Deuteronomy xvii. 18—20. But if it were written by a private person, it would then relate only to the general commands to obedience which it contains. The same notion of the superiority of obedience over sacrifice is brought forth in 1 Samuel xv. 22

disciples should go into every land, to declare the tidings of God's forgiveness of all sins for His name's sake? It appears then, that here also, whilst we are ignorant of the name, age, and circumstances of the human writer of the Psalm, we can fully understand the mind of its Divine Author, and can see that by whomsoever and on whatsoever it was first written, it is now the thanksgiving of the triumphant Messiah, who is declaring His Father's name to the heathen, and who to the end of the world will still declare it.

Examples might be multiplied from the Book of Psalms; but those already given will be sufficient to explain the general principle. Let us now proceed to notice some of the prophecies of Isaiah. The fifty-third chapter will immediately occur to every reader. Here the Christian meaning is so clear and so complete, that it has been doubted whether the passage has any other sense than this. Yet it seems to me, that as the language of so many of the Psalms which, in its fulness, is applicable only to Christ, had yet a subordinate and human meaning referring to some lower persons and events; such is likewise the case with most, if not all, of the prophecies of the Book of Isaiah.

The latter part of Isaiah, however, from the fortieth chapter to the end, deserves a more particular consideration, because it seems one of the most complete exemplifications of St. Peter's statement, where he describes the Prophets as "searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." It is precisely with regard to the *time* of the fulfilment of his prophecies, that we may conceive the Prophet to have been most left to his own impressions. All the things of which he speaks are connected in his mind with the immediate event which is the nearest object in his view, namely, the return of Israel from captivity in Babylon. But the language which he uses goes to such a high measure of blessing, that he may well have doubted whether there was not some greater deliverance behind than that which more immediately engrossed his attention.

In this case, then, the human and historical meaning of the words of the prophecy may have appeared insufficient even to their human author. Even he may have felt that his language required a higher fulfilment than that deliverance of Israel from the power of Babylon, to which, according to the usual economy of prophecy, his predictions were in their form and outward construction limited.

Still it cannot be denied that the first and obvious subject of the whole prophecy, is the return of Israel from his captivity in Babylon. The point, so to speak, from which the whole picture is taken, is the period of the captivity. From thence the Prophet looks forward to the deliverance and return of Israel, to the utter overthrow of his conqueror; and then when the enemy should be put down, and Israel restored to his own land, his after state should be more worthy of his title of God's chosen people; his portion should be one of greater holiness, and therefore of greater prosperity and happiness than he had ever before known. In the midst of this view one distinct particular object presents itself to the Prophet's mind;—an Israel, so to speak, within Israel,—a servant of God afflicted like the people of God, and destined like them to be finally delivered and triumphant; but differing from the people of God in this, that whereas their suffering was the consequence of their own sin, His was not so; He suffered not only with them, but for them,—innocent himself, but bearing in His own person the iniquities of the people. In what degree the Prophet had here a distinct image before his mind, it is impossible for us to know; whether he thought of any individual prophet, or rather personified the whole prophetic order; representing their faithful remonstrances with their countrymen, their sharing the common exile and captivity, and their greater authority hereafter in the restored Israel, under the image of one single man disregarded at first by the people, suffering for their fault only, and in their behalf, and at length rewarded with the highest success and glory. As Israel was to the rest of the world, long a disregarded witness to God's truth, innocent as far as other nations were concerned, yet suffering at

their hands, and his sufferings designed by God to work out good both for them and for himself,—such exactly was the relation in which the Prophet, or the order of Prophets, described in the fifty-second and fifty-third chapters, was to stand towards Israel itself.

Now the actual evil, for the comfort of which this prospect of the future was vouchsafed, was, it should be remembered, the captivity in Babylon; and therefore the whole tone of the prophecy bears in its obvious form upon the relief of this evil; that is, on the destruction of Babylon, and on the restoration and prosperity of Israel. But if God's people have any worse enemy than Babylon, any worse captivity than that in Mesopotamia, any better home than that of Jerusalem in Palestine, then the full language of comfort and of hope will relate to this worse enemy, to this more grievous captivity, to this better and dearer country.

Accordingly, while the return of Israel to his own land, and the greater honours paid outwardly at least to God's Prophets, was a fulfilment of more than the ordinary hopes which a captive Jew in Babylon could, humanly speaking, have ventured to entertain for his country; yet inasmuch as the Prophet's language, while speaking of the return from Babylon, had risen far higher than the measure of earthly prosperity dealt to any earthly people compassed about with so much sin, so it was provided that this language should find its fulfilment in a manner that could not be foreseen in the writer's own time; that the real abiding objects of the highest hope and fear should come into the place of such as were merely earthly, local, and temporary; and contrary to the almost proverbial issue of the prophecies of human fraud or folly, the word of promise should be kept not to the ear, but to the hope; not according to the letter of an earthly Israelite's expectation, but according to the spirit of the expectation of an Israelite of God.

And then that Prophet or personification of the Prophetic order, who had been described as suffering for the sins of the people, and afterwards exalted with complete triumph, finds

in a most extraordinary manner his exact antitype in Him who, though man, was not man merely. The Prophet of the earthly Israel was a man with the sins of our common nature, the imperfect minister of an imperfect Church. But the Prophet of the spiritual Israel is the perfect minister of a perfect Church, standing between God and the people not partially, typically, and in a certain degree, but completely and really. He was, what that Church was to become through Him, entirely holy and without blemish. He suffered for the Church not only as man may suffer for man, by being involved in evils through the fault of another, and by His example awakening in others a spirit of like patience and self-devotion; but in a higher and more complete sense, as suffering for them, the just for the unjust, that they for His sake should be regarded by God as innocent. He Himself, and not the personification of an order which in one generation may be in distress, and in the next may rise to prosperity, but He Himself, after being cut off out of the land of the living, was in His own proper person, raised again to taste of His own victory.

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APPENDIX B.

SERMONS

ON

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

APPENDIX B.

SERMON I.

ROMANS I.—V.

ROMANS v. 7, 8.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

WHEN I said, some time since, in speaking of the Epistles of St. Paul, that we might be surprised that they were not more difficult,—I meant of course to say, that they were easier than we might have expected to those who take pains to study them. And in studying them, we must go through them from beginning to end if we wish to understand their true meaning. A single text taken by itself may give me a quite different notion from that which I should have, if I were to know what came

before and what followed it; and even a whole chapter, if read alone, may seem hard, and may be understood in a wrong sense; when, if we had read the whole Epistle, we should have found the sense easy. Now as there is not time in the church to read a whole epistle through at one time, it is very much to be desired that we all were so familiar with the Scriptures as to know what had gone before and what came after the chapter which was read as the lesson for the day, that so we might fully understand what it was about, and see what was the particular object of the writer. In this way, if we were to hear the fourth, or fifth, or sixth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans read separately, without knowing or remembering what had been said in the beginning of the Epistle, some of the language used in them might doubtless appear strange, and the Apostle's object might be greatly mistaken; whereas, if we bore in mind what he had said before, we should see at once at what he was aiming, and his language would seem plain and natural.

Let me therefore just repeat, that St. Paul begins his Epistle by declaring to the Romans the Gospel, or great message of God, that he had revealed a way of acquitting men of the guilt of their sins, if they threw themselves entirely upon His mercy and His guidance; and that after stating this, he says that this acquittal ought to be highly valued, because

they who were found guilty in God's judgment, would be visited with the heaviest punishment: and then he goes on to say, that as the world then was, all classes of men, whether Jews or Gentiles, were in danger of being found guilty. This he declares in the nineteenth verse of the third chapter, where he speaks of all the world becoming guilty before God; and then very naturally adds, that as such was the state of mankind, they had no chance of being acquitted upon the merits of their case; that the possession and knowledge of the law, of which the Jews boasted, was indeed a great advantage, but one which they had not chosen to use; and that now, like all other opportunities when neglected, it only made them the more inexcusable, as it had given them a knowledge of right and wrong, and yet they had not become the better for their knowledge.

Again, then, in the twenty-first verse, does St. Paul repeat the Gospel or good tidings, which he was sent everywhere to preach. This Gospel is, that God in His mercy will acquit those who have no right to be acquitted, if they feel that it is a matter of grace, not of right, and are willing to throw themselves before Him, to receive His pardon on His own terms. And here, what he had before described simply as "faith," he now explains further, by calling it "faith in Jesus Christ," or "faith in the blood of Jesus Christ." "We are acquitted,"

he says, "freely, as a pure mercy, by God's kindness, through the redemption by Christ Jesus," by which redemption God has declared that He is at once a God of justice, and a God of mercy; that He is just, and yet will justify or acquit those who have no right to be acquitted, if they accept of His forgiveness through Jesus Christ. This Gospel, then, at once destroys all boastings, or claim of right in any one. It professes to acquit those who deserve nothing but condemnation; so that in order to avail himself of it, a man must have a quick conscience to know his own sin, and a humble mind to confess and lament it. He must come to God with humility and penitence to accept a favour, not with confidence and self satisfaction as to claim a right. Those, then, may be acquitted by God's mercy through Christ, who according to the law, or the merits of their case, would have been condemned. But does this weaken or destroy the law? Far otherwise: since it is expressly declared, that they are acquitted only out of mercy, and if they receive their acquittal in the proper spirit. Nay, the authority and sacredness of the law is most highly magnified, since those whom it would have condemned are not only acquitted upon their humble submission out of mere grace; but in order to show that their acquittal could not be lightly purchased, nor their breach of the law easily passed over, it is declared that their forfeited souls were ransomed at a price

whose value no created being can rightly estimate, —the blood of the Son of God.

Every word here might be the text of a sermon; might lead to thoughts and to prayers such as would most fit us for the kingdom of God. I know that to the most pious minds, this matter of fact statement of truths, on which our state throughout all eternity depends, may seem cold and hard, almost to profaneness. To talk of our sinfulness, of our being condemned according to justice in the sight of God, or our being acquitted only through His grace and mercy, through the redemption by Christ Jesus; to speak of these things merely in the way of explanation, without stopping to dwell more fully on the thoughts and feelings which they ought to awaken, may seem almost to encourage that dangerous habit, of listening unconcernedly and with unmoved consciences to truths which should be most humbling and most awakening. This is not the least evil of religious controversy; that it accustoms us to consider as a matter of reasoning and an exercise of the understanding, subjects which we ought to think of on our knees, with the deepest sense of their infinite importance, and the sincerest desire to bring them home to our own hearts and lives. But if I could hope that what I have said, or am going to say, may assist any one to understand clearly one of the most important parts of the Scripture, it would then be only furnishing him with the

means of reading it for the future with the very benefit that is most desirable. It must be by the very nature of the case, that while we are reading any thing which we do not entirely understand, our minds should be more engaged in it than our hearts: we must be more trying to find out the sense, than we can have it as yet in our power to profit by it. But let this difficulty be removed, and the sense made plain to us, then we can, and often do begin to meditate upon it, and to derive good from it; and thus it is well known that what to some persons are mere difficult passages, incapable of yielding them any advantage, are to others most delightful and most improving, because they fully understand them. Again, therefore, let us proceed to the *explanation* of this part of the Scripture; and for this purpose, let me go on in the way that I have begun, and endeavour to state simply what it is that St. Paul means to say, well conscious how much there is in his words for the improvement of myself and others, when we have once been enabled to perceive their meaning clearly.

We are now come to the end of the third chapter; and in beginning the fourth, we meet with one of those places in the Epistles which belong rather more to other times than to ours; and on which, therefore, we need not dwell so fully. Amongst those to whom St. Paul was writing, a great number, probably the largest part of the

whole, were Jews by birth or descent, and had very high notions of their privileges as such. It is to them, therefore, in particular, that the fourth chapter is addressed. St. Paul tells them, that the very founder of their nation, Abraham, had received his acquittal and his promises of blessing from God exactly on the same terms that they were now offered to all mankind; that is, not as a right, but as an act of mercy, shown to those who threw themselves entirely upon God, to do with them whatever He saw best. Abraham was called by God to go out into a strange country, far from his home and kindred, with a promise, if he thus put himself under God's direction, in entire trust and faith in Him, that He would make of him a great nation, that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed; and afterwards that he should have a son to be his heir, when it seemed impossible in the course of nature. Abraham did throw himself entirely upon God; he left his own country, he went to live amongst strangers, leading a roving life like a shepherd, he found himself in his own person by no means bettered by his change,—yet still he trusted in God that it would be all right sooner or later, and that what God had told him must be true. And therefore he was acquitted or accepted, not because his life had been perfect in all its parts of duty, but because he put himself in a manner entirely upon God, receiving His promises

as a matter of pure grace and favour, and willing to please Him to the best of his knowledge and of his imperfect service. And again, as all these promises were made to him before he was circumcised, that is, before the particular national covenant of the Jews began, so God's promises now have nothing to do with circumcision, or with any one particular nation. And as Abraham was acquitted before God without circumcision, because of the devotion and resignation of his heart to God; so other men as well as the Jews should be acquitted now, if they, in like manner with Abraham, should give themselves up entirely to God's mercy and guidance, and accept His promises of everlasting life through Christ, as a gift of His love which their lives had been far from good enough to deserve.

But from this turning off from his main subject in the fourth chapter, to speak about Abraham, St. Paul comes back again, in the fifth, to his own case, and that of all other Christians both of those times and of ours. Being thus acquitted, upon our throwing ourselves on God's mercy, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have been allowed, through Him, to draw near unto God, and are standing before Him as creatures cleared of all guilt, restored to His perfect favour, acknowledged as His children, and as such the heirs of all those blessings which flow from Him, in whose presence is the fulness of joy. In this state, says St. Paul, all

the crosses and troubles of life are even a matter of rejoicing; and why?—not in themselves, for the present they are not joyous, but grievous,—but because they try our patience and stedfastness; and if we have borne long and patiently, then we may feel to have stood our trial happily, and this gives us a more confident hope for the time to come. The hope is confident, because it judges from the past and from the present; from the past, because while we were yet sinners Christ died for us;—from the present, because we feel the love of God towards us in that aid of His Holy Spirit, which is day by day supporting us amidst every cross and care, which keeps our trust in God strong, and our love to Him and to man ever lively. Well, then, says the Apostle, "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by His life." By His life?—how? because having died as man, He lives for ever as God,—because He visits us not as man, but as God. Not showing Himself to our eyes, but touching our hearts and enlightening our minds,—being thus with us according to His promise to the end of the world; and His presence thus by His Spirit being, as He said Himself, more expedient for us than when He was present on earth in the flesh.

But, perhaps, this acquittal, this full mercy, these abundant promises of God, are to be confined to a

certain portion of mankind only, as was the covenant made by God with Israel. It is, I think, to a supposed doubt of this kind, that the remaining verses of the fifth chapter, from the twelfth verse to the end, are meant to be an answer. "You see," he says, "how far the mischief has spread; be sure that God wishes the cure to be no less general. We see that since the first transgression of Adam, all men die. Even those have died, who, either by reason of their tender age, or of their extreme ignorance of right and wrong, have not sinned as Adam did. Yet over all has the triumph of death been equal. Doubt not, then, that God designs the triumph of everlasting life to be no less wide; that as many died who had not sinned like Adam, so shall many not only live, but live for ever in glory, whose righteousness has been far unlike that of Christ. Those who by reason of age have had no means of showing their new and changed hearts, those whom ignorance has kept in an imperfect state of moral principle and practice, far short of Christ's perfection, these are acquitted, and eternal life is given them, for the obedience unto death of one man, Jesus Christ." And look over the world, amidst those who form the great mass of mankind, those who sin against knowledge, or because they carelessly refuse to gain it, are condemned indeed, and justly; but to those who have sinned much, and do sin much still, yet, if their

hearts be sincere, and their desire to please God, and to become daily more like Him, be real and earnest, all their many transgressions are forgiven. And whilst on the one side we see only the punishment of obstinate guilt, we see on the other not the reward of innocence—for where is the innocent man to be found?—but the pardon and the blessing of guilt as soon as it ceased to be obstinate, and with humility and shame, and true contrition, threw itself on the mercy of the Judge. So, then, where sin abounded, grace, or the free goodness of God, did much more abound. If the law, whether of reason or of God's word,—if the growing knowledge of mankind, from the times of Adam onward, served to make the offences of each new generation darker than those of the former one, yet God by promising His free pardon, by speaking to the heart and feelings, and teaching us by His Spirit not only to know good, but to love it, has taken away the sting and the condemnation of the law, and has made the full knowledge of the world's riper manhood only serve the purpose that it ought to do, in guiding the willing heart to a more full and Christlike perfection.

LALEHAM,
September 16th, 1827.

NOTE, added in 1833.—ROMANS v. 12, *ad fin.*

The Apostle's object seems to be, to urge that the Gospel must fitly be universal, because the evil which it was to remedy was universal; that as those who were not Jews had shared in the consequences of Adam's sin, so those who were not Jews would fitly share in the consequences of Christ's righteousness.

I think with Origen, that the eighteenth verse is properly the apodosis to the twelfth, and that all between is parenthetical; one parenthesis, after St. Paul's manner, growing out of another. The main proposition, then, is this:—

Therefore, because we are reconciled to God, we see, that just as one man brought sin into the world, and death came by sin, and this death extended to all, because all sinned, even so by one Man righteousness has come into the world, and life by righteousness, and this life has extended to all, because all will be righteous.

[Compare this with the words in 1 Cor. xv. 22: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Words which had been written about a year before the present passage.]

But to this statement, it may be objected that sin is a breach of the law, and its punishment belongs only to those who had the law; and that, in like manner, righteousness and its reward can belong only to those who keep the law.

In answer to this implied objection, St. Paul maintains his original statement thus:—

All have sinned, and therefore all have died, before the law was given, no less than since. For it is a clear matter of fact, that from the Creation to the time of Moses death reigned even over those who never sinned like Adam; and Adam in this is a pattern of Christ. (But sin is not reckoned to any man's account unless there is a law.)

[That is, sin is not exclusively a breach of the law, for there was moral evil in the world before the law; and unless there be some law there can be no guilt. But here there was guilt, for not only was there evil, but there was also death, and that shows that there was sin; and those died who had not sinned like Adam, *i. e.* had never broken a positive revealed command, so that there is sin apparently without a breach of the law of Moses. And thus there being sin without a breach of the law of Moses, so also may there be righteousness without keeping the law of Moses.]

But[1] now is not the gift of the same extent as the offence? For if, without respect of the law or of revelation, men died because of sin, and that sin came from their corrupt nature,—not that nature which God made, but which Adam marred,—much more may we be sure that God's mercy has reached to all without respect of the law also, and that men shall live because of righteousness, and they will be righteous because of their regenerate nature, not that nature with which they were born, but that better nature which Christ has given, because He died for their sins, and rose again that they might rise also to righteousness and life through that same Spirit by which He had risen.

And as the evil of one man's sin came upon all, does not so also the gift? For as by one sin of one man, the world was condemned, so now after many offences of many men the world is pardoned. For if it were not so, God's severity would go farther than His love; for if one man's sin made all to die, can one Man's righteousness, and that one JESUS CHRIST, be less effectual to make all men live?

So it is, then, as I said, All shall be restored, even as all fell; one man's righteousness cannot do its work less extensively than one man's sin had done.

As for the law, that came but to make sin worse. Gŭilt was aggravated by greater knowledge; yet God's grace is mightier to save than the law, through sin, to kill. Sin reigned while men only knew their duty, and so death reigned also; but God's Spirit, pointing to Christ crucified, will make men not only know their duty, but love it; so shall righteousness reign unto eternal life, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

[1] It will be observed, that here and in the following paragraph, by a different punctuation, a negative sentence has been changed into an interrogation.

SERMON II.[1]

ROMANS V.

ROMANS v. 7, 8.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for

WE have now carried on the Epistle to the Romans as far as the end of the fifth chapter; so far, that is, as to have endeavoured to state, as clearly as possible, the sense and the connexion of the Apostle's words. In doing so we necessarily passed over much that was of the greatest practical use, without doing more than briefly mentioning it; for had we dwelt fully on every subject that it might have been useful to enlarge upon, we should have been stopped at almost every verse. In particular, it is in the early

[1] This Sermon, as will be seen, treats only of one part of the subject, which is spoken of as a whole in the 24th Sermon in the fourth volume.

chapters of the Epistle to the Romans that the great truth of the Atonement is mentioned most fully as the foundation of the Christian system. Let us then, before we go on with our explanation of the Epistle, stop a little to consider more at large this one subject; taking it particularly in that point of view in which the text places it, namely, as a proof, the greatest that could be given, of the love of God towards His creatures.

I have said, on a former occasion, that nothing is so difficult as to speak of heavenly things, of God's revelations of Himself to man, and His dealings with them, in any other words than those of the Scripture itself. No man hath ascended up into heaven, no man hath seen God at any time; we can know therefore nothing of Himself, and nothing of His counsels, but what He has Himself been pleased to tell us. Now if I wish to describe to any one some particular view which I know only from the accounts of others, I may mislead my hearer if I depart ever so slightly from the words of my informer, even in mentioning such features in the scenery as I may fancy are naturally united with those which I am told do exist in this particular spot. A word or an epithet added may give a false impression of the whole; and this in merely describing another part of our own earth, of which we know something in general from our own experience, and are only ignorant of the details,

the particular objects which are grouped together in this or that portion of it. How much more then may we give false impressions in matters of which our own experience can tell us nothing at all, but all our knowledge must be gained merely from the description or report of others, that is, from the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists! And thus it is, that what are called the doctrines of the Gospel wear a different aspect when studied in the Word of God itself, and when collected from the writings even of very good and well meaning men.

If we examine piece by piece, we shall see the main facts, and even the very words used in books of divinity, to be faithfully taken from the Scriptures; but because the words are taken from some parts only, without attending to those other parts which present to us the same subject in a different point of view; or because too much weight is given to what is borrowed from one place, and too little to what is borrowed from another; or most of all, because men have ventured to go beyond what they found written, thinking to argue from it to what appears to them a just conclusion, but which in truth they have no right to advance to; because they have added something which seemed to them quite fair or even necessary to be added; the effect of the whole is spoiled, the impression is different, and the exact notions and feelings which the Holy

Spirit designed to be conveyed, are conveyed no longer.

Now to apply this to the subject in the text, to the great truth of Christ dying for sinners. I am afraid that many of us are misled sometimes by human writings upon this subject, so as to lose some of the great benefits to be derived from the Scripture way of representing it. In human affairs, if we were to be told of a king who had resolved to punish some offenders to the utmost rigour of the law, but who was prevailed upon to pardon them because his son had offered himself to die in their stead, it is quite clear that the gratitude of the men thus pardoned would be directed justly rather towards the son than towards the father; because however near the relationship may be between the two, and however much the father may suffer in the loss of his son, yet they cannot be so entirely one but that the sacrifice of his own life in the one must seem a kindness more deserving of our gratitude than the forgiving us for the sake of that sacrifice in the other. Now men have ventured to represent the Atonement of Christ as something of the same sort with this supposed case of the father and his son; and have therefore, as was to be expected, felt differently, if we may judge from their language, towards the Father and towards Christ: the one has been represented as only being prevailed upon by the Atonement of His Son to receive us into His

mercy; and therefore the especial love and gratitude of Christians has been directed towards Christ, while the Father, it is not too much to say, has been regarded more coldly, and with more of awe than of love. The opposite error to this again, which, considering this view of God as unworthy, has rejected the notion of Christ's propitiation for sin altogether, and has lowered men's feelings towards their Redeemer as the first mentioned error lowered them towards their Maker, is so generally felt to be at variance with the Scriptures, that I need not now do more than thus allude to it. But let us observe how the Scripture represents the Atonement in the words of our text. Observe, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." You see it is "God commends His love towards us, because Christ died for us." It is not said, "Christ commends His love towards us because He died for us," although that might be said truly; nor yet, "God commends His love towards us because He Himself died for us;" though that might be said truly too; but it is, "God commends His love towards us, because Christ died for us;" that we might neither think unworthily of the Godhead, as if that could be subject to death; nor yet confine our love to Him who was manifested in the flesh,

as if our salvation were not God's work: nor yet separate God our Maker and God our Saviour in our notions, as if the love of the one was not in all its intenseness the love of the other. Now compare with the words of the text those of our Lord Himself to Nicodemus, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son;" and again those of St. John in his first Epistle, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." In all these places it is the love of God that is spoken of as shown in the sacrifice of Christ His Son. And this is done, I think, on purpose to show us, that that same feeling which would be just in the supposed case of the human father and son which I just mentioned, has no place here, because God and Christ are one and the same, in a manner that the human father and son are not; and the difficulty is merely this, that of the nature of God we can understand nothing at all, and cannot therefore conceive how He can exist in two different relations at once, any more than we can conceive how He is everywhere at every moment, and how the past and the future are to Him eternally present.

These remarks will, of course, seem minute and of little consequence to many hearers, because they have never been accustomed to consider the great doctrine of the Atonement as the most perfect representation of what God feels towards us, in order

to teach us how we ought to feel towards Him. If, therefore, we alter, or do not properly catch the true impression which God meant us to receive of Himself, we cannot feel towards Him as we ought to do; and I hardly need add, that when I speak of our feelings towards God, it is but another name for our principles of conduct through life; and it is from the common imperfection of these principles that the practice of mankind is commonly so imperfect also. We should consider then, that the Atonement of Christ was revealed to us in order to convey to us in the most forcible manner, notions of God's perfect holiness and His perfect love; the very two points which it most concerns our character to know and to feel most deeply. Now to express qualities by action, is, of course, to convey them in the most forcible manner; just as I should entertain a more lively opinion of a man's goodness, if I heard some story told in which his goodness had shown itself in his practice, than if I were merely told that he was a good man. So then, we can feel more strongly that God is just and merciful by seeing how His justice and mercy have been shown, if I may use such a word, in His practice, than by hearing it said merely, that He keepeth mercy for thousands, though He will by no means clear the guilty.

Now the death of Christ shows us the justice and purity of God, and how dreadful a thing it is to do

wrong, more strongly than any thing else could have shown it to us. But how does this concern our practice? In this way: that the many faults of our practice chiefly arise from this opposite feeling in us, that we do not consider it as very dreadful to do wrong. We think it bad certainly, but we do not think it nearly as bad as it is in reality; it does not shock us or concern us enough, and our past faults especially soon sink into nothing in our recollection: time seems to have wiped them out, and we feel, except in cases of the greatest sins, almost as if we had never been guilty of them. Now while we thus regard doing wrong, and are, therefore, less careful than we ought to be to avoid it, as the lives of every one of us can bear witness, would it not be good for us to turn our thoughts for a moment to the cross of Christ? Why was such a sacrifice offered, or why could not God have declared that He forgave us all upon our repentance alone, without the death of His Son? It is, in fact, the very question that Mahometans have been known to ask of Christians, and I doubt not that many Christians, or many who call themselves so, would in their hearts think that the question was not easy to answer.

But if the holiness of God be thus shown forth in the death of Christ, in order to make us holy, His love is no less declared in it, to make us full of love to Him and to one another. To show us that it

was no little thing to break God's laws, a penalty, we are told, must be paid, and that so vast a one, that all the world would be unable to pay it. But He, whose justice could not remit it, lest we should be encouraged to offend, Himself undertook to pay it, that He might so fulfil all His love towards us. Himself undertook to pay it: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself;" or, in order to show the same thing as fully as possible, and yet keep out of sight the notion of the Godhead being capable of suffering, it is said, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son,"—that is, the most precious thing that a human father could give, supposing it were impossible for him to give himself. Let us then fully look to God as at once our Maker and Redeemer, as on our Father who so loved us that He would give any price for our souls, rather than not redeem us; who designed to draw us to Himself by the strongest and best affections of the heart, confidence, gratitude, hope, and love. This is the very object for which the revelation was made to us, that our sense of God's goodness as well as of His holiness might be infinite; that those qualities, which imperfectly and in our low measure united, are the happiest character which an earthly father can possess, and the best fitted to form aright the minds and hearts of his children; an entire hatred of their faults, and an entire love of them themselves; that these same

qualities we might see and feel to be united in their most entire perfection in our heavenly Father, and that our hearts and minds might be formed accordingly. The words of the text lead me to one thing more, and that is, the effect which the death of Christ should have on us, in making us love one another. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." How completely these words should stop our mouths for very shame, when we talk of the ingratitude of those whom we have relieved, or of their unworthiness, which makes it an irksome and a thankless task to labour for them. Can we, the purest of us all, feel any proportion of that entire abhorrence of sin and hardness of heart which Christ, the All-pure and All-perfect felt; can we say, with any portion of the justice with which He could say it, "O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" At least, if we do feel with Christ thus weary and sick at heart of the wickedness of those about us, let us also remember with what words and what actions Christ immediately followed up His complaint of man's unworthiness. "Bring thy son hither," he said to the father of the lunatic child, and He rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. So if the sense of the evil and hardness of heart that was in the world oppressed Him in the garden

of Gethsemane even to agony, yet from that agony He arose calmly and resolutely to go and complete the object of His coming, and die for those who were so evil and so hard hearted. Well, then, may St. Paul say to us, "Be ye full of meekness and long suffering; forbearing one another and forgiving one another, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye;" for "God commendeth His love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

LALEHAM,
September 24th, 1827.

SERMON III.

ROMANS VI.—VIII.

ROMANS viii. 8.

They that are in the flesh cannot please God.

WE are now arrived at the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. In the five former ones, the Apostle had declared his message of acquittal through Christ, had said how much all men needed this acquittal; that none had been so good as to have deserved it from their innocence; that Abraham, the Father of the Jewish nation, was himself acquitted, not because he was free from sin, but because he had thrown himself entirely on God's direction and mercy; that the state of those who had obtained their pardon through Christ, was one of entire confidence and peace with God, and that His love in the redemption of mankind was as universal, and was more remarkable, than the mischief which had followed from Adam's sin. Here,

then, we are pausing, as it were, after our first entrance into the Christian faith. We are now at this moment fully forgiven, we are humbled before God, and thankful to Him; we are at peace with Him, and the heirs of His glorious promises. But will this sunshine last till the end of our lives? Will there be no clouds of sin, small at first, perhaps, like a man's hand, which yet may arise slowly, and shut out from us the face of heaven, and leave us in a worse darkness than that from which we at first had been rescued? Does it, in short, clearly follow, that having been justified or acquitted by God, we shall also at last be glorified?

The three chapters, then, which follow concern ourselves most directly: they speak of men in that state in which we are all now standing, men who have heard and received the Gospel message, and are accounted heirs of the Gospel promises. So far, then, we have come safely. We have been delivered out of Egypt, and are set on the way to our land of rest, with the promise that it is prepared for us. Shall we ever reach it? Or shall we be like the Israelites of old, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and to whom God sware in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest? Let us now hear what the Apostle says with respect to this middle point of our pilgrimage, this midway between hell and heaven.

The first danger which he supposes may threaten

us is one which would, indeed, be impossible to all those who were Christians in earnest, and which bears with it so much of baseness that it might seem almost too bad to be injurious to any one. It is an abuse of the mercy of God, because He has shown Himself so merciful. Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Such a question shows how little many of those in every age, who have called themselves Christians, have known in reality what a Christian was. Observe, that this question seems very shocking when put before us in this plain form. Yet it is very much the same feeling in reality which many entertain now, when they look upon Christ's death as affording an allowance for a more imperfect life than would formerly have been required; when they think of the Gospel as laying down a less strict rule of conduct than the law. Is not this really to ask, Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Since Christ has died for us, and God has so declared His mercy towards us, may we not safely be less perfect than if He had not thus shown forth His readiness to pardon us? Now it is plain, that any one who thus feels must be very far from the condition of those, who, having been reconciled to God by the death of His Son, are saved through His life; that is, through His Holy Spirit new making their hearts to fit them for His kingdom. Of this salvation by the Spirit of Christ they can know

nothing at all. Yet this work of the Spirit is the most important thing in the whole matter. Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein? The Apostle answers for himself, and for all true Christians: When we received our pardon for sins past, through Christ, we understood at once that we stood bound in receiving it not to commit any fresh offences. God declares all the past forgotten. Shall we, then, bring it again before His remembrance, by doing again the very same things for which we were once before condemned in justice, and forgiven only in mercy? Shall we not strive to forget it too, to put it utterly out of our sight, to be, as it were, dead to it? Let all the evil of our past lives be buried in the grave with Christ. He has arisen, and a new day has dawned upon us, and our lives should be new also to become it. We are unfit to walk with Him in the light of the Sun of righteousness, if we still long for the excesses of the past night. If they are buried to rise no more, then we ourselves, freed from their weight, may rise with Christ ourselves lightly and happily. If we be dead with Christ, if we have laid aside all the sins of our nature, as He did its mere bodily weaknesses and temptations when He died once for all, then we may safely believe that we shall live with Him, the spiritual with the spiritual, the immortal with the immortal, freed

from the evils and sufferings of this earth, as we have put off its sin, and living only to God, and therefore destined of necessity to live for ever, and to live in perfect happiness.

Before our redemption we were the slaves of sin; that is, that though we knew right from wrong, and though our reason approved of the one and condemned the other, or, in other words, though we were living under a law, whether of reason or of God's word, yet still that principle in us, whatever we call it, which makes us act, was not in agreement with reason and conscience; our desires, lusts, inclinations, call them by what name we choose, were turned towards evil; and what we like, that in the long run we are sure to do. This, then, the Apostle calls being the slaves of sin; that is, liking and doing things which we would rather not do and like, being in a manner in a diseased state, when our appetite for those things which best nourish a healthy body, was lost and gone. From this condition the Gospel message was intended to deliver us; and our difficulty in understanding this part of the Epistle consists very much in this, that we look upon ourselves as Christians, and yet find ourselves very much in the same state now as mankind are described to have been before the coming of Christ. But in truth, as far as regards a very large proportion of mankind, they are redeemed and yet not redeemed; they are redeemed so far as

this, that nothing is wanting to complete their redemption but their own taking part in it. But they are not redeemed in fact, because they have not taken part in it, and therefore they are still actually the slaves of sin, and living under the law; that is, constantly needing the restraints of the laws of men, and the laws of God, requiring to be kept from some things by the fear of earthly punishment, whether of the laws or of public opinion, and from other things by the fear of God's judgment; that is, by the fear of hell. Therefore when St. Paul speaks of Christians as being freed from sin, and dead to the law, he speaks of those who are redeemed actually; of those who are not the slaves of sin, because their tastes, their inclinations, their affections, are really turned to what is good; their appetite is become sound and healthy;—of those who are dead to the law, because they have no need of it, but are a law unto themselves; for who needs to be threatened with punishment for doing that which he has no wish or inclination to do, or for leaving that undone which it is the great pleasure of his life to be engaged in?

Such a state is clearly one of entire freedom from sin, a state of grace and of happiness, a state in which the spirit is willing, and the flesh is obedient; in which the body and soul and spirit are all at peace and harmony with one another, and with the Spirit of God. And into a state so blessed it was

the object of Christ's death to bring us. This, perhaps, may seem not at first sight easy to understand, and the less so, because, as I said before, Christ has died and we profess our belief in Him, and yet do not find ourselves in this happy condition. But it always seems to me one of the most useful things in the study of the Scriptures, to contemplate those bright pictures of perfection which they hold out to us; because, though far brighter than any thing which is or ever has been realized in the world, they are not brighter than what may be realized; and because, most assuredly, the more habitually we place them before our eyes, and strive to come up to them, the nearer we shall come to realizing them.

We must never forget that with the death and resurrection of Christ the gift of the Holy Ghost is essentially connected. We are reconciled to God by the first, but we are saved by the latter. "If, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by His life;" that is, as I said before, by His ever living and acting upon our hearts by His Spirit. By the former all past sins are wiped away, we are considered as men fresh born, with a new life before us, for which new hopes, new principles, and new desires are needed. These the Holy Spirit gives, the Spirit of Christ, as it is written, "the last Adam was made a

quickening spirit." But if we are not visited by this quickening spirit, if we gain no new hopes nor new principles, our new life is but the old one acted over again; we build again the things that were destroyed; we are living as heretofore under the law; that is, serving God through fear or with a painful effort, not because it is our delight to serve Him; and the law as heretofore worketh death; for the principles which it supplies, those of fear, and an approbation of good without a relish for it, are too weak to struggle with success against temptation, and our practice is in fact evil, and thus we are enslaved by sin, and the fruit of it is our ruin.

The whole of the seventh chapter, then, is taken up with this part of the subject, the insufficiency, namely, of a knowledge of right and wrong, which the Apostle calls the law, to make us good in our practice; it does not furnish us with motives powerful enough to make us throw off the yoke of sin and lead a life of goodness; it points out to us the bad state in which we are placed, but it does not deliver us out of it. And it is to this condition, of a knowledge of right and wrong without a love of the one and a hatred and distaste for the other, that in his forcible language he says we are now dead through the death of Christ: we have nothing farther to do with it, it is no longer the system under which we are placed; God has done what the

knowledge of right and wrong could not do; He has not only enlightened our understandings, but turned and enlivened our hearts; His Spirit has given us the victory, and enabled us not only to approve of what is right, but to act according to it; we are delivered from sin and death, because we walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. This is what the eighth chapter begins with, and it goes on very naturally to say, that here is the proof of our being really redeemed, if we are delivered from sin, and walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; whereas, on the other hand, if we are not freed from sin, but still walk according to it, it is plain that we are not redeemed; that we are just in our old state, that we are living under the law as before, and that to us Christ is dead in vain.

But now how is it that the Spirit of Christ does give us the victory? It is not by any miraculous change of our former nature, but by acting upon our minds through their common feelings and affections, by striking, if I may use the expression, the true key to which our inmost souls most readily answer. "He shall glorify me," said Christ, when speaking of the Holy Spirit; "for He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." And to the same purpose are the words of St. Paul: "We all beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." And so again

he says at the end of this very eighth chapter to the Romans, that "neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall ever separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." So, then, it is the life and death of Christ which the Holy Spirit presents to our hearts, as that which shall so powerfully influence our affections and feelings that it will ensure us a victory over sin, and we shall walk according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh. Why will a child obey his parents more readily than he will his schoolmaster, but because he loves them better? why then will the true Christian be more like to God in all things than other men are, but because he has better learnt what great reason he has to love Him? He looks at God in Jesus Christ, he sees in the redemption an assurance of God's infinite love towards him; he reads in the resurrection a proof of the far more exceeding weight of glory, of the overpayment for every labour and suffering, that God is ready to give him. He looks also at God in the Holy Spirit, he reads in the promise that God will dwell in our hearts and enlighten our understandings, that he listens to every prayer, and supports us against every temptation, he reads in this, a declaration of more than forgiveness; it is the language of love, of affection for our souls, of an earnest wish on the part of his Maker to purify him into His own image, which fills his own heart in return with confidence

and boldness, and entire affection towards God. Who then is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?—but he who has learnt all that God has done for him in Christ, who has learnt to love God his Saviour, and to hold daily communion with God his Sanctifier? Against the affections which this knowledge of God has enkindled, against the feelings with which we now address Him, saying, Abba, Father, vain are all the efforts of the devil to abuse the weakness of our flesh; and empty are all the terrors of the law, which warned us to fly from evil, now that our hearts have drawn us without thinking of those terrors to cling naturally to what is good. But am I speaking now of what is really the case? Where shall we find these holy affections, these confident and happy feelings towards God, this easy and natural walking after the Spirit, in all love for good, and abhorrence of evil? Alas! where indeed? And where do we think that St. Paul, even when he was writing this very Epistle to the Romans, could have found them either? In some few, some happy few, he could have found them, and did find them. Wisdom is justified by her children, and the Gospel has ever been received by a sufficient number to show what it could really do if the world at large would receive it also; to justify its Almighty Author and those His servants, who were its earliest preachers, from the charge of requiring things

impossible, of holding up a picture of perfection and of happiness, which must ever be an unattainable dream. I have but explained the words of the Apostle, and though I may seem to have spoken of a state of things too fair to be ever reached by man, yet such is the state to which the inspired servant of God invites us, and into which God Himself, who knows what we can do, and what is too hard for us, has exhorted, has implored us to enter. It is the state, indeed, of the kingdom of God; and though we may refuse to enter into it, still we may be sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come unto us, that it is amongst us every hour, and that its doors are continually open, however much we may shut our eyes in wilful blindness, and deceive ourselves by saying that to go into them is impossible.

LALEHAM,
September 30th, 1827.

SERMON IV.

ROMANS VIII.

ROMANS viii. 9.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you: but if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

AT the conclusion of what I said last Sunday, I endeavoured briefly to show how it was that true Christians were enabled by the Gospel to walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. I said that certainly the state in which we were actually living, was one very different from that described by St. Paul; but that so in all probability was the state of Christians in general, even at the time when he wrote it, yet that he had still thought it right to describe the true and just effect of the Gospel means of grace, when fairly used, rather than the faint effect produced by them when they are scarcely used

at all. That St. Paul did not suppose in point of fact that all men who had embraced the Gospel would really enter into the spirit of it, the words of the text sufficiently show: "Ye are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwelleth in you: but if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." So again, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, he says, "I declare unto you the Gospel, which also you received, and in which you stand; and by which you are also saved, if you keep in memory the word which I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain." It seems, then, that he was fully aware of the possibility of their believing in vain; that is, of their not having the Spirit of Christ, and walking according to the Spirit. This must be kept in mind when we read that warm and rapturous language in which he concludes the eighth chapter, and in which he seems to judge of others by himself,—or rather to say that they must feel and act so and so,—to show how monstrous a thing it would be if they felt and acted otherwise. So in that famous passage which has been called the golden chain of God's mercy, where he says, that "those whom God foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed unto the image of His Son; and whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom he justified, them He also glorified;" and to which he adds directly, "What then shall we say to these things?

If God be for us, who shall be against us?"—in this passage, so full of the most lively faith, and thankfulness, and joy, it were indeed most fatally to misinterpret it, if we were to suppose St. Paul to mean that this chain would of necessity always remain unbroken, and that all those who were called and once acquitted, would certainly enter at last into glory. But he does regard it as something so shocking that it should be otherwise, that he is willing to look upon it as impossible. And we should do better to regard it in this light, and therefore to be careful not to let it happen in our own case, than to rest in any fond notions that God's word has pronounced it to be impossible, while our evil lives and low and selfish affections declare aloud that it is not only possible, but has actually befallen us.

The sum of the latter part of the eighth chapter is in short no other than this: that God's love to us in Christ must produce such an answering love of Him in our minds, that nothing will be strong enough to overpower it. In all things, he concludes, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us: and then at last he expresses his assurance that no dangers, or sufferings, or labours, how great soever, will ever be able to *shake* his deep-rooted love and devotion to God, which had been excited by the mercies displayed in his redemption. It is very true that where this love has once taken root in the heart, it is almost impossible

to shake it; but our misfortune is, that with too many of us it has never taken root in us at all. And therefore that rejoicing and triumphant tone which finishes the chapter is to many of us altogether inapplicable: it speaks of a state of mind to which we are utterly strangers. Now, then, let us inquire why this is so? Why is it, that having received the glorious message of salvation, it seems to affect us so slightly? Why are so many of us now proposing to turn their backs in a few minutes on the table of the Lord, and thus declaring that they do not wish to be Christians in earnest, that they cannot make up their minds to count the cost, whether they have sufficient to build and finish their tower or no?

The first and chief cause is doubtless their unbelief; their unbelief at least in the Scripture sense of the term; although in another sense they may be said to possess belief. But Christ's words are here exceedingly to be remembered: "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and it should obey you." If you had faith, the temptations which surround you would be removed and cast down, and should not be able to overpower you. We do not believe enough in our own badness, nor in God's goodness; and therefore we cannot feel towards Him as we should do, if we believed in each of these things aright. Why, when

Christ was dining in the Pharisee's house, did the Pharisee who entertained Him sit at the table unmoved, and even neglect to show some of the ordinary courtesies of hospitality to his guest, while the woman who had come in, fell down at His feet, and washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head? Because she believed that she herself was very unworthy, and that God was very merciful to her, and therefore she loved God much; while the Pharisee, on the contrary, did not believe either the one or the other, and therefore he loved God little. It is all very easy to say the Creed, and to believe as a matter of history that "Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried;" but this is very different from what the Scripture calls faith; that is, a strong sense of our own faults and unworthiness, and of God's infinite holiness and mercy. Now it is very evident that too many persons, while they talk very much of God's mercy, seem to take it as a thing of course, and therefore as something which does not excite in them much gratitude. They say that God is merciful to the infirmities of His frail creatures; but instead of feeling that, because there is mercy with Him, therefore He is to be feared and loved; they seem to think that because He is merciful, He may safely be disregarded: they literally go on in sin, because they think that grace abounds. How different is this view of God's mercy from that

which God Himself holds out to us in the redemption by Christ Jesus! This view neither makes men fear God nor love Him, nor suspect and watch over their ownselves; it leads merely to carelessness, a temper of mind which is favourable to no good affection, and to no good work, but which is the merest selfishness in the world, both in principle and practice. And this carelessness arises from men's not believing the representation of Himself and of them which God has given in the Scriptures, but from their making out to themselves a notion of both which is at once equally false and mischievous.

Nor, again, do we believe aright concerning that state of everlasting glory which God has promised us through Christ Jesus. It is astonishing how very much of heathenism is mixed up with the notions of many about the life to come. People seem to think that eternal glory is a sort of natural end of their existence here, unless they are guilty of some remarkable wickedness; that the passage from the grave to heaven is as sure and easy as that from life to the grave. If you were to ask any one, indeed, whether he did think so, he would probably be startled, and say no; but if you look at his life, and hear his language upon the death of any friend or relation, it is plain that he does think so in his heart. It is the common language used after the death of friends, that they are now happy, and that they are in heaven. This is not all mere affectionate

partiality; we do not think our friends handsome or clever when they are not so, because we better know what beauty and what cleverness are, than we understand any thing about holiness. But men judge of themselves and of their friends by the same rule; what they say has been a good life in their friend, they evidently are satisfied with in their own case, for they are not trying to mend it; and the fact is, that they really have no notion of what the real state of the matter is, with regard to our prospects of eternal life. We, with our low notions of God's perfection, and our careless notions about our own faults, think that heaven is easily won, and talk of it as a matter of course, that such a place is prepared for the good. But God tells us, that to dwell with Him for ever in a happiness like His own, is a thing which none could expect, and none could attain unto; but that it is the greatest and most extraordinary gift of His love, to be purchased only by the blood of Christ, to be enjoyed only by those whom His Holy Spirit has now made to fit them for it. What men's fitness for heaven is, may be well learned from their common language; they talk of the blessing of being again with those friends whom they have loved on earth, but they do not talk of the blessing of being with God, because it is one which they do not greatly desire, as they do not love *Him*. So then we hope to enter into the kingdom of God, with as little wish to be with God,

as we have now while living on earth. What is it then, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption?" But as well could this decaying flesh, with all its weaknesses and diseases, as well could the most corrupted body that ever died of pestilence, enter into that everlasting and incorruptible dwelling, as they who carried with them to their graves the thoughts and desires of the flesh unmortified, who are full of a worse corruption of heart than any that can befal our mere mortal body. We must, indeed, all be changed; once, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; and once also before that, not in a moment, but during the threescore and ten years of our pilgrimage; not in the twinkling of an eye, but through a long period of prayer and watchfulness; labouring slowly and with difficulty to get rid of our original evil nature. But one of these changes is as necessary as the other; we must be born again on earth, or we shall never be born again in heaven. This is what we do not believe, and therefore not feeling how vast is the mercy and love of God in taking us to dwell with Himself for ever, nor how much we must be changed in order to fit us for such a state, or before we could even at all enjoy it, the prospect of the life to come is not so powerful in enabling us to overcome the temptations of the world and the flesh, as St. Paul supposed that it must be.

But now, if these motives, the most powerful that can be applied to the mind of man, have been applied in vain; if that which St. Paul describes as sure to give us the victory over our sins, is found to be as powerless as the motives given to the Heathen or to the Jews; if that love of Christ from which the Apostle felt that nothing could drive him, is with us too weak to overcome any temptation, what remains for us, and what must be our end when our time of trial is over? Of the fate of the heathen, we know nothing; of the fate of those who lived before the coming of Christ, we know nothing; but of the fate of those who having had every means of grace offered to them are improved by none, of that indeed we are informed fully and strongly. To them, indeed, God is a consuming fire, and far above all other misery will be the misery of those who trample under foot the Son of God, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace. It is true that the Apostle, in many of his epistles, cannot bear to think that any who have heard the name of Christ can fall so fearfully; he will not believe it to be possible that any can hear the call of his Saviour in vain. Yet, when the fact was presented to his mind, that any had thus fallen, then his language is decided enough. "Ye are fallen away from Christ, whosoever ye are who are trying to be acquitted by the law, ye are fallen from grace," he says to the Galatians; and again, when describing

the conduct and feelings common amongst them as amongst the heathen, because they had not put on the Spirit of Christ, he adds, " of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." And what are those apostasies or great fallings away, those perilous times of the latter days, which he more than once foretels as about to visit the Christian society? It is almost shocking to my mind to see men turn these solemn warnings, and at the same time these lively descriptions of what actually exists among ourselves, into a subject of controversy, and a weapon with which to attack their neighbours; to hear them saying, this applies to the Roman Catholics, or this to the Socinians, instead of looking home and saying that it applies to the Church of England, to the Church of Rome, to the Socinians, and to all alike, who, holding the form of godliness, deny the power of it; who, naming the name of Christ, do not depart from iniquity; whose lives are no better, and whose principles nothing stronger than those of other men who are living under the law, in name as well as in reality. Or if we wish in the fewest words to have the liveliest image of the state of our church, that is, of the state of ourselves in this nation, and members of the Church of England; then let us turn to our Lord's comparison of the salt. " Ye are the salt of the

earth, ye who are named after my name, and say that you are my servants; ye are the one living mighty principle of good to reform and purify the corrupted world, by the holy influence of heavenly minds, heavenly tempers, and heavenly lives, each of you being born again into the image of Christ, that is, the image of God. But if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith shall it be salted? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out." If we are not become like God and Christ, if we are become like the world, instead of reforming it, there can be nothing done to mend us, no more powerful motives can be supplied to us than we have already in the love of Christ; if that has not turned and softened our souls, then indeed they must remain hard for ever. And our Lord then adds, " He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." " It is a warning that most concerns all my disciples, now and to the end of the world; they who heed any thing, will do well to heed this, and they who do not, must be left for ever in their folly, once they shall see Me, and once shall every knee bow before Me, and even those who have pierced Me by their evil and careless lives, shall look upon Me and own that I am Lord. But I am not their Lord, nor is My Father their God; we have given them up for ever; they cannot dwell with us, for into our kingdom nothing unclean or evil can enter; they must be shut out from

our presence; shut out from Him who is the only light, and therefore dwelling in darkness; shut out from Him who is the only good, and therefore dwelling in everlasting restlessness and misery, amidst wailing and gnashing of teeth."

LALEHAM,
October 7th, 1827.

SERMON V.[1]

ROMANS IX.—XI.

ROMANS ix. 18.

Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.

I SAID that some parts of the Epistle to the Romans related more particularly to the times and circumstances under which they were written, and concerned us now far less nearly. This remark especially applies to the three chapters at which we are now arrived,—the ninth, tenth, and eleventh. When St. Paul wrote, the fact of a new church or people of God being established, to which the Gentiles were admitted, and from which the greatest part of the Jews were shut out, was to all the Jews, whether believers in Christ or not, a matter of the greatest astonishment, and as far as regarded the

[1] Two sermons were here, at a later time, united into one. The parts in brackets are substitutions of the later date.—The notes are from the earlier sermons.

exclusion of their own nation, a matter of the greatest regret. Now after the lapse of nearly eighteen hundred years, when the Jews are only a small and scattered handful, and the Church of God has long been made up of Gentiles only, it is impossible for us, who are ourselves Gentiles, to feel either the wonder or the grief expressed by St. Paul for the case of his countrymen; nor are we very anxious to hear a defence of the Providence of God for a dispensation which, to our minds, seems far more to deserve our thankfulness than our complaints.

Besides the general nature of the subject, there is another reason which might make us regard these chapters as less useful than the other parts of the Epistle. It is on them chiefly that have been raised up some of the most unprofitable speculations, and some of the most mischievous disputes that have ever exercised the faculties of men. One can scarcely read these chapters without being haunted by the thorny questions of God's foreknowledge, and election, and reprobation, and man's free will, which have so distracted the peace of the Christian Church, and have led to so great and so many evil consequences. Surely these foolish and unlearned questions which gender strife, can be no fit subject for the Christian minister, who, for his own sake and for that of his hearers, should dwell on nothing from this place but what may be profitable for

godliness. If indeed I might judge of others by myself, I might safely leave this matter at rest, as one which has never disturbed my mind, and which I trust, by God's grace, will never do so. But I know that with many persons, of every age and of every condition, it is one which does disturb them; and which rises above all, in the moment of temptation, as one of the Devil's most successful arguments to make them rush into sin with less resistance, and to lull their consciences to sleep after they have committed it. It will not be, therefore, to bring forward a difficult and vexing question, which might never have harassed the minds of my hearers, if I had not dwelt upon it; it will be rather, with God's assistance, to endeavour, not indeed to explain what cannot be explained, but to show how the practical mischief, and the disturbance of mind arising from it, may be most effectually removed.

[Never could there be a better instance of the mischief of taking the chapters of our present Bibles separately from one another. The ninth chapter never should be read apart from the tenth and eleventh. The three, in fact, are properly one chapter,—one part of the whole Epistle, standing distinct from what goes before and what follows it,—a part interrupting the general subject of the Epistle, and put in from peculiar circumstances existing at the time when it was written. "Put in from peculiar circumstances," and therefore not only

of no use to us, but absolutely mischievous, if we take it simply as applicable to ourselves, in the same sense in which the general part of the Epistle is applicable.

But when I speak of this or other portions of Scripture, not being simply applicable to us, I am very far from meaning that they are of no use to us, except as a matter of mere curiosity. I mean, that it takes more trouble, and requires more thought and knowledge to apply it, because it applies not literally, but by analogy. For instance, our Lord's parable of the good Samaritan is literally applicable to us now just as much as to those who first heard it; it teaches to all ages one simple lesson, that every man in his need has a claim upon our kindness. But the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, having respect to the particular state of the Jews at that time, is applicable to us only by analogy. It becomes mischievous if we take it simply to ourselves, and say that if we turn to God at the eleventh hour, that is, in our old age, we shall receive the same reward as if we had served Him all our lives. For the parable was spoken, not about individuals, but about nations; not about rewards in heaven, but about certain privileges on earth; not as furnishing a general rule of God's government, but as illustrating his dealings in one particular and extraordinary case. What it teaches us is, not to conclude any thing from it as to God's

rules of rewarding men, but not to murmur at these rules, whatever they are; never to complain that our neighbour is as well off as we, though less deserving: for we know not how God deals out His earthly good things; we must leave it to His wisdom to do as He wills with His own.

I have not idly referred to this parable of the labourers; for the likeness between it and these chapters of the Romans is very considerable. They, like it, speak not about individuals, but about nations; not about rewards in heaven, but privileges on earth; not as teaching us a general rule of God's spiritual government, but removing beyond question his dealings, when it is plain, by the evidence of facts, that so and so He has dealt. And the lesson conveyed to us is nearly the same also; not, when others are blessed, to murmur that they have not laboured sufficiently; not, when we are punished, to lay the blame upon God, saying that our sins were His doing,—for that we are but the creatures of His hand, and act but as He has decreed that we should act.

These chapters, then, relate, not to individuals, but nations; not to rewards in heaven, but to privileges on earth; not as teaching us that God always acts in a particular manner, but as showing that when others are raised to our level, or we are made to suffer, we may not, in either case, impeach God's justice, and least of all may we lay our sins

to His charge, and say, " Why doth He yet find fault, for who hath resisted His will?"

First they relate to a national question, not to the salvation of individual souls; to the Jews and Gentiles respectively as a body, and as in some measure opposed to one another: not to particular Gentiles now, in the concerns of their own souls with God.]

There is a proof of this, I think—a proof that the Apostle is speaking of the Jews as a nation—to be found in the eleventh chapter. After mentioning the blindness and hardness of heart that had befallen them, he adds, " Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid; but rather through their fall, salvation is come to the Gentiles, to excite them to jealousy." And he then goes on to speak of a time when all Israel should be brought back again; or, in his own words, when all Israel should be saved. Now if he is speaking here of a nation, we can easily understand the force of this consolation: nations do not die, but go on through many generations of individuals; and in the consideration of this their long life, their blessings in one age may be looked upon as making up for their misfortunes in another. But if St. Paul were speaking of the rejection of individuals from the hope of eternal life, what he says would be no longer applicable. What comfort or what compensation can it be to one man who is cast into hell, to be told that his countrymen in some future age shall be redeemed to everlasting life? In this matter, each man's fortune, whether for good or for bad, is fixed by his own personal fate, and the happiness or misery of his posterity can do nothing to alter it. The question which St. Paul asks, " Have they stumbled that they might fall?" would, in fact, require a different answer, according as we suppose him to be speaking of the nation of the Jews, or of the particular persons who make up that nation. If the former, then, as a nation never dies, its stumbling in one generation might be abundantly made up by its recovery in another; and so it may be said to have stumbled only for a time, not that it might fall, but that it might rise again the brighter. But if he speaks of particular persons being rejected, then they must have stumbled in order to fall; for how could they be raised up by the redemption of their posterity? Their stumbling must have been final, as they died in their blindness, and could not derive any benefit from the light which was to be vouchsafed after many centuries, to a distant generation of their people.

But if the Apostle is speaking of the Jews as a body, and of the Gentiles as a body, it is clear that he is not speaking of election and rejection with respect to heavenly rewards, but to earthly advantages or privileges, which may be either improved or forfeited by misuse. And thus in the eleventh

chapter, it is said expressly to the Gentiles who were elected, "Thou standest by faith, be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." And of the Jews who were rejected, it is said no less plainly, "If they continue not in unbelief they shall be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again." It is quite plain, then, that he is not speaking of election to that glory from which none can afterwards fall; or of being cast out to that darkness from which none can again recover.

Such, then, is the direct subject of these chapters; —not universal, but relating to particular circumstances;—not speaking of the present, but of the past. Yet for us, and for our children after us, it contains an eternal lesson; and that lesson it now remains that I endeavour to develope.

First, that we murmur not when we see others endowed with our advantages who, we think, deserve them less. In these things God is above our questioning; and if we question Him we shall receive no other answer than this: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" Not that His will is arbitrary, but that the reasons on which He acts are not made known to us; "the Judge of all the earth will surely do right:" but we must take His dealings now as those of the Lord of all the earth, satisfied that if we humble ourselves before Him as such now, we shall hereafter be convinced of His righteousness, when with His power He will also reveal the secret things of his judgments to those whom He receives into glory.

Secondly, that when we suffer, whether in mind or body, we complain not as though we were hardly treated;—above all, that we do not charge God with our sins, and say, that we were fated by His foreknowledge to do as we have done. To him who makes such an excuse there is no answer given, but one most decisive and authoritative, as if it were an excuse too foolish or too wicked to be reasoned with. "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Or hath not the potter power over his clay, out of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another unto dishonour?"

We can always tell by the style of the answer in the Scripture, whether the question was one of a just and reasonable desire of knowledge, and of a fair and honest mind perplexed by a real difficulty; or whether it was one put in dishonesty, or arising from an ignorance that had been wilfully left unenlightened. It is by no means true, that all inquiry concerning the dealings of God with man is at once to be stopped by the question, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" On the contrary, the Scripture contains frequent statements of these dealings, laying them in a manner before

our eyes, for the very purpose of satisfying our minds as to their justice. When the Psalmist tells us that he was greatly perplexed by the sight of the prosperity of the wicked, that he thought to understand it, but it was too hard for him, he adds, that when he went into the sanctuary of God, then understood he the end of these men. God did not repel him by telling him that he ought not to be perplexed; but He held up the veil, in part at least, to show him what would remove his perplexity. But He, who explained all things to His own disciples, would speak to the multitude only in parables. He, who was full of mercy to His active and faithful servants, was pleased to be considered as a hard Master by the wicked and slothful one. So, then, the very tone of the Apostle's answer seems to argue to one familiar with the language of the Scripture, that the question proceeded only out of a dishonest heart, and that he who found it a difficulty must remain without any explanation of it. "Thou knewest that I was an hard man, reaping where I had not sown, and gathering where I had not strown: thou oughtest, therefore, to have given my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury." "Thou sayest that I should not find fault with thy wickedness, because I fixed it by my decree that thou shouldst be wicked. Well, then, I made thee a

vessel for dishonour, a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction; and to the end for which thou wast made, even to that shalt thou come." "Thou chargest thy sins upon me, and therefore I say to thee, who darest thus to reply to thy Maker, that by thine own confession thou art a vessel formed for dishonour; and if I made thee wicked, be sure that I made thee to be miserable also; for sin, so long as God lives and reigns, must ever be accompanied with misery." Such appears to me to be the spirit of the Apostle's language, as if God would vouchsafe no other answer to those who insulted Him with a doctrine so blasphemous;—as if, in the strong language of the Psalmist, with the froward He would use frowardness;—as if He would answer the man according to his idols, just as He told Balaam to go with the princes of Moab, when He found that his false and covetous spirit longed to seek an excuse for following its own desires, and for disobeying the will of God.

Let us regard, then, these memorable verses not in the sense in which some have taken them, as bidding defiance to our reason and our inmost feelings of right and wrong, and charging us with rebellion to God if we did not think of Him in a manner most opposite to that in which His own revealed word, agreeing with His natural word of reason, has told us to regard Him. Let us look at these verses, not as some have strangely done, as a

defence of fatalism, but, if I may use the expression, as an indignant expression of abhorrence at it, which, far from removing the difficulty to him who brings forward a doctrine so monstrous, answers him rather according to his idols, so as to confound him more and more. Whatever be the excuse with which we strive to cloak our sin, the word of God constantly treats it in the same manner. It will hold no communion with it; it answers it always according to its wickedness;—not a ray of light, not a gleam of comfort or hope is vouchsafed to it. He has blinded our eyes, and hardened our heart, lest we should be converted, and he should heal us. Such, I say, is the dealing of God with those who come before Him, not to confess their sin, and to forsake it, but to make excuses for themselves for keeping it,—to plead the strong temptation, or the weakness of their nature; or, as in the case in the text, to say more boldly that God Himself was the author of their wickedness, for they had but acted as they were destined to act;—and who has resisted God's will? Nor, indeed, do I know that a better or more salutary answer could be given to those, who so belie their nature to support their sins, as to say that they were fated to do wickedly. If there is a fate, it is one that will not do its work by halves;—if they are fated to sin, so assuredly are they fated to hell;—if they cannot help the one, so neither can they escape the other. It is for them to

see, indeed, whether they cannot help their own actions; but, most certainly, if those actions are wicked, whether they think they can help it or not, the vessel fitted for dishonour, and most unfit for its Master's use, cannot possibly meet with any other end than destruction.

Between sin and misery then, as I have said before, God has fixed a connexion which nothing can sever:—whosoever is wicked must be miserable. This being fixed beyond all possibility of moving, if indeed we are wicked we shall not and cannot escape the suffering which follows it; but it remains with ourselves to see whether we cannot help being wicked. We would fain believe that our actions may be fated, yet that their consequence may be avoidable; God declares that their consequence is fixed as sure as that we live, but that our actions lie in our own power: which think we is the truer doctrine? or what is the case with bodily sickness, which is to the body what sin is to the soul. If we are sick can we help suffering? or what matters it whether the sickness was occasioned by our own fault or not? if we are sick the pain and uncomfortableness follows necessarily. And because we do know this, all sane men do their best to keep themselves from sickness and accidents, even though they know that their utmost care may not always avail them. Here then is a confirmation of God's doctrine; and according to this, all sane men would

strive to keep themselves from sin, even if it were true that they might sometimes fall into it whether they will or no. But, God be thanked, the care which will not always save the body from sickness or accidents, will always save the soul from sin; a sudden change of weather, an infected person accidentally met with, the fall of a horse, the sinking of a vessel, may in a moment baffle the pains of the most careful or most timid man alive; but he who watches over his own heart, who is timid of sin, and careful of his soul's health, his pains and watchfulness shall never be disappointed, he is protected by a power too strong for men and devils to contend with; it is not the will of our Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Thus much for those who seek to justify their sins by pleading that they were fated to commit them; they had best see whether it is so certain that they were fated to commit them; because if they were, then it is certain that they are fated to everlasting destruction: between sin and destruction they cannot break the chain, between themselves and sin perhaps they may. But now for those who are not yet come to talk of fate as an excuse for their evil doings, but are perplexed merely with what seems to them a general difficulty, whether all things are not fixed by fate equally; if they are really sincere, and it is a difficulty only, and they do not wish to urge it as an excuse, then they should

remember that this is no difficulty of revelation, nor one in any way connected with these chapters of the Romans,[1] it is only a difficulty of the sort with all those which concern the nature of God; and that it

[1] If Christ had never come, or if we could all forget this moment that we had ever heard of such a book as the Bible, the question of fatalism, or of our being fated to do this or that, would remain just as it is now. It is therefore no way fair to lay the mischiefs that it has occasioned to the charge of the Gospel, which no more created it or meddles with it than with the other similar question of the origin of evil. The belief in fate indeed arises partly out of the weakness of man and partly out of his wickedness; but not at all out of his knowledge or fear of God. Men of feeble minds and scanty knowledge, seeing their own purposes often thwarted by causes which they could not control or understand, were led to think that all things were directed by some dark power called fate, in the same feeling of superstitious fear that made them dread the malice of witches, or magicians, or ghosts; while men, who were unscrupulous in wickedness, and who found themselves sinning on greedily in defiance of the checks which conscience would sometimes give them, loved to believe that their evil lives were the effect of a destiny which they could not strive against, and which therefore freed them from any guilt. Now when we recollect how many wicked men there are in the world, and how many more there are who are weak and ignorant, we cannot wonder that the doctrine of fate has been always common, since it is so well suited to wickedness and ignorance.

Thus much then for its origin, with which the Revelation of God has nothing at all to do. Nor indeed does that Revelation much notice it, as if it were a doctrine which common sense and common honesty could answer sufficiently for all purposes of practice, without any express declaration from God.—[Extract from the Sermon of 1827.]

is as wise to trouble ourselves with trying to conceive how God can be everywhere at once, or how all things past and future can be at once present to Him, as with striving to understand how He can foresee things which yet rest in our own choice to do or not to do. Certainly we cannot understand this at all, any more than we can conceive the other; and for the same plain reason, that we can know nothing at all of God's nature as He is in himself, and can only know what He is towards us, that is, what He wishes us to do, and what He will do to us. These things cannot be understood till that day when we shall see God face to face, and know even as we are known. Here, therefore, is a difficulty certainly, but one which concerns us no further than as it may excite our curiosity, in the same manner as a great many things in the constitution of nature, which we may be curious to know, but about which we do not trouble ourselves, because we feel that it is impossible that we should know them. But if any man thinks that it follows, because God can foresee all things, that therefore he has himself no choice in his actions, there he only gets out of a difficulty into a palpable falsehood, and a falsehood so manifest, that in common life he who were to maintain it would justly be accounted mad. If a man were gravely to say, that he had no choice whether he would put out his hand or no, whether he would come into this church, whether he would sit or stand, whether

he would go to his neighbour's house or no, whether if he were sick he would take medicine or no, I do not know that I could prove by argument that such a man was wrong, but I am sure that everybody who knew him would think that his mind was not sound, and if he were to commit any crime, it is clear that his friends would attempt to save him from the sentence of the law, by bringing forward such opinions as a proof of his insanity. But now if a man is mad for denying his own choice in little things, there is no more reason for his denying it in the weightiest concerns of life: God can foresee as clearly whether I will lift up my hand or no, as whether I shall choose to keep His commandments or no. How He can foresee it, when I know that it is in my own will to lift it up or no, I cannot tell; but that it is my own will which decides the act is as sure as that we live. But enough of this; and let me only add one word more, to give a caution to those who even in honesty allow themselves to think that their actions may be fated one way or another. It is at present perhaps only a difficulty to them, but if they tamper with it for a moment, it is very likely to become a snare and an instrument of the devil to lead them to destruction. When they do wrong, this feeling will come in to stop the wholesome sorrow of repentance; they will try to persuade themselves that they could not help acting as they have done; they will flatter themselves that

they cannot be punished for doing what necessity forced them to do. Then indeed they become vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and with whatever long-suffering God may endure them for a time, yet assuredly their end will be according to their deeds; and if they then ask, "Why doth He yet find fault, for who hath resisted His will?" they will receive no other answer than that of the Apostle, "Who art thou that repliest against God? Hath not the potter power over his clay, out of the same lump to fashion one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?"

Note on Page 504. *From the Sermon of* 1827.

It may be said, that whether the fate threatened be for this life only, or for the next, still when we are told that God has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth, it must seem as if our being good or evil depended not on ourselves; and that our characters were formed according to the arbitrary will of our Maker. I use the word arbitrary on purpose; because here it is, I think, that one great cause of our false impressions of the matter is to be found. *We* are so much the slaves of passion, that when we speak of the fate of others depending on our mere will, we think directly that it must depend on an arbitrary will; that is, a will which decides one way or another, without being able to give a better reason for its choice than because it likes to choose so. It was such an arbitrary will which the disciples James and John ascribed to our Lord, when they begged of Him that they might sit, the one on His right hand and the other on His left, in His kingdom. That is, because they seemed to be more intimate and familiar with Him than His other Disciples, they thought that they might ask a favour of Him, just as the friends or favourites of an earthly king get

preferment from him, without deserving it better than others. But what was our Lord's answer? "To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, except to those for whom it is prepared of my Father." That is, "I give such things, not according to the arbitrary will of my human nature, but according to the perfect and righteous will of my divine nature; not as man, but as God." All things are done according to God's will; nothing according to His arbitrary will; that is, nothing according to a capricious or unreasonable will; for how can such be ascribed for a moment without blasphemy to the All-wise and All-righteous God? So then, when it is said that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth, it is only saying in other words, that there are just reasons according to which He has mercy upon some, and hardens others. But who are they that He thus hardens? and if God hardens any how can they help it; for who hath resisted His will? They cannot help it certainly: it is impossible that they should repent; it is impossible, according to any thing that man can see, that they should be saved. Awful indeed it is to think that any man should be in such a condition; but it would not be awful, but horrible, revolting, and contrary to those sure and simple notions of right and wrong which nothing can drive out of any sane mind, if this hardening came arbitrarily, that is, without any just reason, upon one man or upon another; if the earnest struggles of the penitent soul, or the constant labour and prayers of the watchful one, were liable to be damped, and rendered of none effect, because God might take away out of us the heart of flesh, and put into us an heart of stone. No; whom He will He hardeneth, it is most true; but they whom He does will to harden, are those who love evil rather than good, who turn aside from advice hardly or carelessly, who in their lightness throw aside every good resolution as soon as made, or in their wickedness do evil with open eyes, because they hope that they shall live long enough to repent hereafter. Let such indeed tremble as they hear the words, "Whom He will He hardeneth." The laws

by which our nature is governed, those laws by which God made us, have so ordered it, that although up to a certain point we may correct our bad habits, and gain good ones, yet that beyond that point we are hardened beyond our own recovery; and that if we are recovered at all, it is by some extraordinary causes acting upon the mind, which we cannot put in motion, and on which we have no right to depend. Here, then, "God has mercy on whom He will have mercy;" some He does save out of a state that is naturally desperate, and leads them to repentance; just as some men recover from diseases that are commonly fatal: "and whom He will He hardeneth;" others He leaves subject to the general laws of His Providence, by which sin is made to strengthen itself by our carelessness, till it gains a hold which we cannot shake off. And they who, being thus left to their natural fate, complain of God for being subject to punishment while others are restored and redeemed,—what do they but murmur at Him, like the labourers in the vineyard, for doing what He will with His own? "Friend, I do thee no wrong," was the answer of the owner of the vineyard; "Didst thou not agree with me for a penny?" So God does no wrong to those who having gone on long in sin, are hardened in it beyond repentance; because such is the well-known law of our being, which the experience of a thousand generations has confirmed, that habits are more easily formed than broken; that there is a season for sowing the seed, which if we neglect, it is vain afterwards to look for the harvest. Such is the manner of God's dealings with us as individuals: He hardens whom He will, but His will is to harden those only who have neglected the means of grace, who have laughed, or played, or sinned away their time, till the good affections and the high desires, and the pure conscience that become a Christian, are lost in them as completely as in the beasts that perish. So He declares that there are some on whom He will send strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; but who are these? They who loved not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. There are some whom He has given over to a

reprobate mind; but they are those who did not like to retain Him in their knowledge. Awful indeed, and hopeless it is to be thus reprobate of God; wherefore, let us beware of becoming so. He who has declared, that "whom He will He hardens," has said also, that He will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask it, more surely than an earthly father will provide food for his children. Let us take the promise and the threat together, and we shall gather that our free will is like every other talent or faculty of our nature, strong enough to serve us to eternal life, if used rightly and in time; but not so strong as to save us from the consequences of our folly, if we long continue to abuse it.

Rugby Chapel,
Sept. 8th, 1833.

SERMON VI.

ROMANS XII.

ROMANS xii. 1.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

HOWEVER useful it may be sometimes to dwell upon the more difficult subjects connected with Holy Scripture, (such as those which I considered in my last sermons,) yet one cannot, I think, feel otherwise than rejoiced to be able at length to leave those thorny points, and to return to the simple and wholesome words which more immediately concern our daily living. Of this last kind is all the latter part of the Epistle to the Romans:—it is so easy, that he who runs may read; it is so beautiful and so useful, that no fairer or better pasture has been provided for the hungry soul by its good Shepherd. Here, too, is nothing about extinct ceremonies and

forgotten distinctions; nothing about the Jews in particular; but all concerns all men of all times equally; it is a perfect manual of heavenly wisdom for every man who is on his way to heaven.

The Apostle connects what he is going to say with the former part of his Epistle. "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God,"—by those mercies of which I have spoken so largely,—"that you present your bodies a living sacrifice to God." "I have told you," he might say, "how you are God's redeemed people; acquitted through faith in His Son; with those most powerful motives of hope, and confidence, and gratitude, and love, presented to your minds by the Holy Spirit, which can alone give you the victory over sin and the devil, and enable you to serve God in perfect freedom. See then what has been done for you: God declares His love to you more strongly than He ever did to man before, for you know that Christ has died for you; He is nearer to you than ever He was to patriarch or prophet, for He has written His will in your minds, and made your hearts His temple; He has spoken not to your eyes or to your ears, but to your inmost feelings; He has communed directly with your spirits, enlarging your views, ennobling your desires, and awakening your best affections; and finally, He has taken away the veil that hung over the grave, and while He tells you of Jesus risen, He promises that where Jesus is there shall you be

also. Thus elected, thus called, thus justified or acquitted,—by all these abundant mercies bestowed on you, I beseech you break not the golden chain with which God would fain draw you from earth to heaven. May it be true in your case as it should be in every case, that those whom God has once acquitted, those He may also finally glorify."

"Therefore, my brethren, I beseech you to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." And first, "Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed in the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." In all things look forward, and never backward; turn not back to the world that you have left, but press ever forward, learning and loving the will of God every day more and more fully, till you are perfect even as He is perfect. For, my brethren, even the glorious revelation of the Gospel does not at once reveal to us all that God intended us to learn. When it is said, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, we should go on to perfection, our high calling as Christians is truly described. There is much more for us to learn than the facts of our redemption through Christ, and of our being the heirs of eternal life;—the Comforter who abides with us for ever, leaves us not where we were at first, but if we follow His guidance, is ever drawing

us on to higher degrees of heavenly knowledge. I am not speaking of the revelation of mysteries, or of that sort of knowledge which might gratify curiosity, but of the knowledge of the will of God. But it may be said, "Is not the will of God already revealed to us in the Scriptures? and how then can we learn it more and more, if we have once read those Scriptures?" To which the best answer which can be given is the simple fact, that all who have read them do not know God's will equally; for many read them who do not study them, and many study them for other views than to learn better and better how they can purify themselves as Christ is pure. Assuredly we can gain no knowledge of God which is not derived originally from the Scriptures; but by comparing one part of the Scriptures with another, by thinking much over it, by accustoming ourselves constantly to judge of life as the Scriptures teach us to regard it, by living according to our present conscience, and striving and praying that it may be more and more enlightened, who can doubt that we shall know much more of the mind of the Spirit than could be gained by a mere careless reading of the letter of God's revelation, with no effort to penetrate below the surface?

But now, in order to attain to these higher points of Christian perfection, observe what follows: "For I say, through the grace of God that is given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of him-

self more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." "He that humbleth himself," said Christ, "he shall be exalted." And so St. Paul to the Corinthians: "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know: but if any man love God, the same is known of him." For it is a natural danger, and one into which the Corinthians in particular seem to have fallen, as appears from several passages in the first Epistle to them, that when we are told of the great mercies shown to us, and are aware of the great openings of knowledge that have been given to us, we should think too much of our advantages, and too little of our own backwardness in improving them, till we thus allow the real benefit which we might have derived from it to escape us. But this is not the way in which we are to gain an advancement of our knowledge of God's will. "Them that are meek will He guide in judgment, and such as are gentle them will he learn His way." It is by thinking soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith; it is by doing steadily and contentedly the duty which falls to our share in life, whether it be a high one or a humble one, (for all members have not the same office,) still exercising our thoughts how to do it better,—that we become really more perfect Christians. "Having then gifts differing

according to the grace that is given us, whether prophesying or preaching, let us preach according to the proportion of faith; or ministering, let us wait on our ministry," and so on. Infinitely different are the gifts given to us, and infinitely different the callings in which they are to be exercised; but all, if properly used and followed without affectation, are capable of leading us onward in our course of goodness and wisdom. It is a great mistake to be longing for a larger or higher field of action, to think that if we were placed in some important station, we might be doing some signal good; and in these proud and foolish dreams, to neglect the little but certain good which we might do in our own proper sphere, and thus forfeit the sure improvement which our character would gain from a perseverance in the path of silent and thoughtful usefulness. The Apostle says to the Corinthians, "Let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God." And to show that he means this to apply to every case, he chooses his example from the very most wretched condition of humanity, and says, "Art thou called, being a slave? care not for it." Thus it is as St. James says, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low." It is the glory of the Gospel to raise and ennoble every condition and employment in life, however humble; none are cut off from a high pitch of Christian

perfection, if they seek for it in their own appointed path. But if they wander from this path, hoping to ascend by a shorter and forbidden road, then they will miss their object; he who thinks that he knows any thing, knows as yet nothing; he who would aspire to a higher duty, neglecting to perform the one placed before him, shall but receive the greater condemnation. To the same purpose St. Paul adds, "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate; be not wise in your own conceits," because, although the Gospel would fix our hearts on the highest heaven, yet it would have our eyes and our thoughts fixed upon the simple business of our lives, not to go out of our calling, but to abide in it with God.

The Apostle therefore goes on to the end of the thirteenth chapter, in mentioning that conduct and those feelings, which, being within the reach of all, will tend to bring all onwards to the height of Christian perfection. "Let love be without dissimulation; abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one toward another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." In the last of these verses, he gives a sentiment very much in agreement with that passage in his Epistle to the Galatians, in which he classes emulations with hatred, wrath, strife, envyings, and those other works of the flesh, which, if a man do, he shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

So here he bids us not to be vying with one another, which shall get the most honour, but in honour to prefer one another. For the highest blessings there can be no emulation; heaven is open to all who try for it, but it may be safely said, that no man whose affections were heavenly, ever wished to be better than his neighbours, that he might obtain a higher place in heaven than they. We know how Christ reproved those who asked to be seated the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, in His kingdom; and how He strove to quell all thoughts of rivalry about such a matter, by saying that he who was most childlike in humility, the same should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. In fact, they who are most labouring to improve themselves in goodness, and are most anxious to win the favour of God, are above all others desirous of bringing others on in the same heavenly road with themselves; the wish of being perfect as God is perfect, is truly noble and inspiring, but that of being more perfect than their brethren, becomes at once low and earthly. And equally low and unchristian is it to wish to be more wise, more distinguished, more learned, or more loved than our brethren, however much the principle may be encouraged by those who are ignorant of the true nobleness of Christ's discipline. It is said that emulation leads to many great works, and so it may, but it does not lead to good ones; it

makes us wise, but not with that wisdom which is descended from above, but with that other which is earthly, sensual, devilish; in other words, it may give us knowledge, but it injures our wisdom. Assuredly the principles of love and duty may be too weak in many minds to urge them to conquer their natural indolence; but one reason why they are so weak is, because from infancy they are so seldom appealed to: because children are constantly taught to act upon lower motives, till their relish for the higher ones is utterly lost. But even the lower motives of fear and the hope of reward, are far preferable to that of emulation; the fear of lawful authority, far from degrading the character, on the contrary sobers and exalts it; it is the fear of unlawful authority that is mean and mischievous, the fear of our equals, the fear of ridicule, the fear of the opinion of the world. Fear of punishment and hope of reward, we may safely use with children, and with all imperfectly formed characters, because God Himself has thought fit to use them. They are not the best motives certainly, but they may and do often lead to the best; they keep our practice right, till the habit of acting is acquired, and then we do good easily, and for the higher motives of love and duty. Whereas emulation, as it is in its very essence a breach of charity, a struggling to obtain a good thing in preference to our neighbour; so it fosters pride in our hearts, and

a spirit of selfishness, the very two feelings which are most at variance with those of heaven, and most congenial with those of hell.

But immediately after he has condemned emulation, he gives us in one short verse, the picture of a Christian acting in the business of life on Christian motives. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Emulation cannot make the most ambitious man alive labour more heartily than the love of Christ will make the Christian. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit." Life is too short, and we have too much to do in it, to allow of our being idle. Our business, indeed, is infinitely various, and some have the privilege of not being bound to any one of necessity, but of choosing for themselves that for which they are most fitted; but woe to him who lives without choosing any, or who is slothful in that which is laid upon him by necessity. Most certainly we may here apply our Lord's words, "If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous Mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" If you have been idle in your earthly stewardship, if you have turned to no profit the time and the faculties lent to you by God for His service, you will assuredly never be allowed to waste in the same manner the never-ending time, and the incorruptible faculties, which are the portion of the just in heaven. Be not slothful then in your daily busi-

ness, but fervent in spirit, not going through it as a heavy drudgery, with your minds fixed on some future enjoyment, but doing it actively and cheerfully, and with your hearts in the work. Yes, I may say with your hearts in the work, if you bear in mind the words that follow,—"Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, *serving the Lord.*" So long as you remember in whose service you are working, and are thus restrained from those sins which often beset the industry of a worldly man, an unscrupulousness in the means of getting rich, and a carefulness and covetousness even when there is no dishonesty; so long as you remember who is your Master, and how long your service to Him will last, not for seventy years only, but for ever and ever, so that your earthly labour is but the smallest and the poorest part of it, the mere cheap materials which are given us to practise on, till we have the skill to use something better; so long as you do this, you may have your hearts in your work, and they will only be the more in heaven. You may be fervent in spirit over the common trade or profession or employment of your every day life, and yet may be offering to God a constant worship too, in that temple of your heart which the Holy Spirit vouchsafes to dwell in.

LALEHAM,
November 11*th*, 1827.

SERMON VII.

ROMANS XIII.

ROMANS xiii. 7.

Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

THE thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a continuation, as I said before, of the subject begun in the twelfth; namely, a most perfect display of the full and varied fruits of Christian principles, in private life and in public. What those principles were which alone could bear such fruit, had been stated at length in the earlier part of the Epistle: these latter chapters give us, in a manner, the glorious harvest of that divine seed,—such as it would yield always, if our soil and climate, our evil nature and manifold temptations, did not so often blight and ruin it.

The Apostle, in these chapters, goes over the

several parts of our common living, to show us how we should live in each as Christians. He dwells, however, chiefly on our duties towards our neighbour, whether in private life or in public; as these form the largest part of what we have to do, and afford perhaps the principal matter of our trial. And we may observe, in what he says on this head, a mixture of the highest virtues with those which we are accustomed to think trifling, but which, from the constant occasion which there is for their exercise, and from the amount of pleasure and comfort which they give, are in reality very important. I mean that just after the command, "Bless them that persecute you, bless and curse not," we find it added, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." The first of these exhorting us to a sort of heroic perfection, such as many men may go through life without finding any occasion to practise; the second calling for an exertion of kindness and good feeling which every man, more or less, must be required to show to his neighbours, as he has intercourse with them in sorrow or in joy.

What is said with great truth of men gradually gaining higher and higher ideas of Christian perfection from a study of the Scriptures, with a view to make them a light to their path, applies very much to passages such as this which I have just now been reading. The broad and principal com-

mandments strike us immediately; or rather we are made familiar with them from our childhood, so that we know them at least, whether we practise them or no. But he who, first honestly labouring to fulfil these, turns over the volume of the Scripture to learn the finer and more minute features of the Christian character, will find something applicable to every part of his daily living, something that will serve as a rule for his temper and manners, no less than a guide to his actions, in the most trifling particulars. It is from the want of this that we see men's avowed principles very often so strange a patchwork: the ground of them perhaps taken from the Gospel, but filled up with pieces of a colour and texture the most opposite that can be conceived; that is, with the low maxims of the world's morality, which are admitted in common cases without scruple. Thus you will hear a man talking perhaps one minute, and very sincerely, of the great importance of religious principle, and then in the next speaking ill of his neighbour, or laughing perhaps at some one who is merely acting consistently with his Christian profession, and showed no desire to grow rich because he really believed what the Scriptures tell him, that riches are a dangerous snare. And thus the complexion of our common conversation is unchristian; we blame a man for not looking keenly after his own interest, and allowing himself to be cheated rather than go to law,

just as much as if we had never heard of St. Paul's remonstrance to the Corinthians, "Why do ye not rather suffer wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be deprived?" We speak with admiration of clever satire, of things said or written with powerful severity, just as much as if they were no breach of the perfect law of Christian charity. So accustomed are we to this low way of judging in common matters, and so confirmed is it by the habits of our youth, during which we are most commonly almost strangers to the spirit of Christ's Gospel, that it takes a long time and great labour to weed out these tares from every part of our mind, and to become consistently Christian in our judgment and practice, in all points, and on all occasions, no less when talking over the contents of a newspaper, than if we should discuss those of a sermon.

It is for this purpose that we should know the Scripture, not loosely and in its great commandments only, but thoroughly, so as to remember its rules, and be influenced by its spirit, naturally and habitually through life. For instance, the command, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep," might save us from a thoughtless inattention to the feelings of others, and teach us to enter into them and gratify them, as far as lies in our power, by conforming our own behaviour to them. This may deserve no higher

name than courtesy or civility; yet every one knows how much of the comfort of life arises from these little things; and even these common things become ennobled when we connect them in our minds with our Master's service, and do them because they are His will. When it is said, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God," or, as it is in another place, "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," the meaning is, that we should thus make the commonest actions virtues by connecting them with the love of Christ, and so be daily and hourly forming in our souls the habits and the feelings of heaven. And we may be sure, too, that he who thinks of pleasing Christ in little things, will not forget Him in the greater actions of life; while, on the other hand, they who keep him out of sight in these matters, and get accustomed to act generally from lower and worldly motives, will be in some danger of letting these motives guide them in great points also, and of never acting as Christians at all.

What has been hitherto said applies exceedingly to those verses of the thirteenth chapter from which the text is taken, and which speak of our duties to our neighbour in public matters; that is, of our duties to our government and the laws. I could not name easily any branch of human conduct from which the influence of the Gospel has been more carefully shut out than this; any one on which

worldly motives are avowed more boldly and more exclusively. In fact, many men seem to have vaguely confounded the Gospel and the clergy in their notions about these matters; and because clergymen, like other men, have often interfered in them in the worst possible spirit, not setting an example of Christian conduct, but plunging into the lowest motives of passion or interest by which other men are actuated, there seems a sort of fear that the Gospel itself will teach something mischievous to the public welfare or liberty. But, indeed, in all moral wisdom, in all duty, whether as private men or as citizens, there is but one Master, even Christ, from whom we can draw nothing but what is pure and upright. "Governments," says the Apostle, "are ordained of God; and whoever resists them resists the ordinance of God; for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil: therefore we must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake." We are accustomed to put conscience very much out of sight in our behaviour towards the government and laws of our country, because any offence against them is visited with a worldly punishment. There is something of a feeling that we are running a fair risk, and that as we shall be punished if detected, so if we are not, there is no harm in breaking the law. In fact, our notions about public duty are low altogether, because we look upon civil

society either as a matter of mutual convenience only between man and man, or else as an injustice and encroachment made by the rich and powerful on the rights and welfare of others. But as Christ has ennobled and sanctified the dearest of our domestic relations, that of marriage, by comparing it to the tender and affectionate care with which He watches over those who are united in one body to Him as their Head, so are our public relations raised by being equally connected with the service of our Lord. Laws and governments, then, are His ordinance, just as marriage is His ordinance, or the relations between parents and their children. They are His ordinance, because He knew that without them we should be in a state hardly better than that of the beasts; because He willed that some image of His own just government, however faint, should exist in the world; some power that should put down the most violent forms of evil, though it could not touch those that lurk within the heart, nor reward the virtue of the good. Such is the general view of human laws which the Gospel holds out to us, representing them as an instrument of God's providence for the holding society together, by restraining those crimes which would tend to pull it to pieces. And it is on this ground, because society cannot exist without laws, and it is God's will that we should live in political societies, and not in a state of savage selfishness,

every man only caring and acting for himself;—that laws are entitled to our obedience, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake; that is, not only because we may incur a penalty if we disobey them, but because, whether we do or no, we are certainly, by disobeying, doing that which is displeasing in the sight of God. And the Apostle extends this duty of conscientious obedience not only to those laws which forbid actions condemned equally by the law of God; as, for instance, most men would allow that we are bound to observe the laws which forbid theft or murder, even if we were sure of escaping detection, supposing we should commit these crimes. The Apostle, I say, goes farther than this, and says, that we should also obey from conscience those laws which one may call the common machinery of government, those which direct the payment of money, whether under the form of direct taxes or of duties, for the purposes of the state. "For, for this cause pay ye tribute also, for they are God's ministers, attending continually on this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom." Nothing can be plainer or stronger than this command, as to the sinfulness of evading either tribute or custom; that is, either taxes or duties; the giving false returns to the tax-gatherer, and thus not paying as much as the laws intend us to pay; and the being guilty of smuggling, or encouraging of smuggling, by which the Government is defrauded of its duties. These things, we know, are constantly done, and I would be far from saying that no good men are ever guilty of them; but I will say that the best men do not commit them; that those who really labour after Christian perfection, who desire to have a conscience enlightened on all points of their duty, to be Christians in their public as well as private relations, that such persons carefully avoid them. And it is to actions of this kind that we may fitly apply the words of our Lord, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, the same shall be the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be counted great in the kingdom of heaven."

But it is said, that to speak thus of the divine authority of human laws, and of our being bound to obey them for conscience' sake, is to encourage tyranny in the Government, and a slavish submission to abuses in the people. It seems rather to me, that he who takes a Christian view of his duty as a citizen must be, above all others, the most active in the removal of abuses. He who looks upon government and law as on the ordinance of God, as intended to put down crime, and to favour our progress in true civilization, that is, in a knowledge and love of all our various duties, must be most

grieved when he sees these institutions degraded to meaner and selfish purposes, for the benefit of some only, rather than that of all. In other times they have been sometimes so far corrupted, as to be actually at variance with the law of God; they have commanded crime in some instances, and forbidden what was a duty. In such cases, of course, there can be no hesitation how we should act. We ought to obey God rather than man; and disobedience to the government is but obedience to Him who is the Lord and Governor of us all. But the far more common case is that in which the laws do not forbid a duty, but restrain a reasonable liberty, or maintain something unreasonable and inexpedient: they do not allow us to perform, not something which we are bound to perform, but which we may fairly wish to perform; so that obedience is not a sin, but an inconvenience. Now in these cases, the common way of acting is to disobey without scruple in our own particular case, and take no further trouble about the matter. The Christian course would be, on the other hand, to obey carefully in our own particular case; but if the law be really a general grievance, to spare no exertion to get it repealed. While it is a law, so long as my obeying it hurts none but myself, I am bound in my practice to comply with it; but because it is unjust, and generally mischievous, I am also bound to do all that is in my power, by lawful and Christian

means, to hinder it from remaining a law any longer. This would be the most effectual way to ensure obedience to laws, and also to ensure that those laws should be just and reasonable. And how much may be done by time and perseverance in a good cause, and upon Christian motives, even by a very humble individual, the efforts of Clarkson to procure the abolition of the slave trade, and the success of those efforts, afford a great and a cheering example. There, indeed, was a crime to be stopped; whereas, in most cases, it is only a grievance which is to be removed. But in the removal of a grievance there is room for much Christian zeal, provided we can assure ourselves by our quiet and conscientious submission to it, in our own individual case, that it is on public and not on selfish grounds that we desire to effect it. It is clear, indeed, that many of the worst laws continue in existence, chiefly because so many people make no scruple of violating them for their own convenience, and thus do not care whether or no they press heavily upon others who may have less opportunity to evade them, or too much principle to allow them to do it if they could. In all cases, therefore, where the violation of the law is not a duty, it is a sin; be the law hard or not, be it reasonable or unreasonable,—so long as it is not wicked, it is our duty in our own cases to obey it; but if it be hard and unreasonable, we may, and if it be greatly and generally so, we ought, to

exert ourselves to effect its repeal. This is the Christian view of our duties to human laws and governments;—that we should be not slavish or superstitious, nor yet selfish and turbulent; but at once high principled, peaceable, self-denying, and charitable; readily and conscientiously obeying, where our own convenience or liberty is the only sacrifice, but eager for the sake of others that obedience should not long be claimed by any enactment that is really unjust and mischievous; holding the mean between the selfishness of indolence and servility, on the one hand, and that of pride and impatience on the other; following after peace, yet not forgetting that the law should be established in righteousness.

LALEHAM,
November 18*th*, 1827.

THE END.

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL.