

of a virgin, as a teacher of pure morality, as raised again by His Father from the dead in order that, in His own person, He might afford an illustrious precedent of the resurrection,—both these, however one may in its clearness and its approach to truth far surpass the other, yet both fall short, very short of the apostle's estimate. It is not enough to acknowledge that He was the Son of God, unless we confess also that He came “by water.” It is not enough to say that He baptized us to repentance, unless we add that He came with His own most precious blood, both to purchase for us a power to repent and to make our imperfect repentance acceptable. Nor, lastly, would it be sufficient to acknowledge the sacrifice of His blood alone, unless we acknowledged that our further sanctification depends on Him from whose torn side the blessed stream flowed forth to the cleansing of the nations.

To this doctrine the Spirit of God bare witness from the mouth of the apostles and in the many mighty works which showed forth themselves in them. To this doctrine the Spirit yet bears witness in those writings of the New Testament where its truth is described, as with a sun-beam, in language which the wilfully blind alone cannot see, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the Epistle to the Romans, and in the passage which I have this day, to the best of my power, explained to you. To this doctrine the water and blood bear witness; the water in which we are baptized in Christ's name,

and the cup in which is a symbol of His sufferings; of which both the one and the other would be altogether unmeaning or unintelligible unless we desired, in the one, to be “buried with Him by baptism into death¹,” and, in the other, to be made partakers in the benefits of His cross and passion.

The victory then, whereby we overcome the world, is a faith in the atonement for sin by our humbled and crucified Saviour. But, on the other hand, if our faith falls short of this illustrious victory, it is plain that our faith is imperfect, or that, from some fault in ourselves, it has failed to produce its proper effect on us. To those for whom Christ’s blood was shed, to them from His side the waters of regeneration flowed. Those whom He saves, He also sanctifies. If we believe that His death has obtained pardon for our sins, we must also believe that His grace has quickened us to a life of holiness. And, if our actions do not show forth our faith, if our hearts be not right before Him, we may be sure that, so far as we are concerned, His sacrifice hath not yet taken effect, and that the curse of God is in force against our souls, pronounced against all them that work iniquity.

How greatly, then, does it concern those who detect in their own consciences the stain of unrepented and habitual transgressions, instead of flattering themselves with vain hopes of safety through a Saviour whom they put by their evil deeds to

¹ Rom. vi. 4.

open shame, to cry out for mercy while mercy may yet be found, and to seek by earnest prayer and diligent endeavours after righteousness, that purifying grace of the Most High which must quicken us, in the life which now is, before we can reasonably expect in the life to come, to be quickened from death to glory.

Nor do I know any way in which Christ and Christian holiness may more effectually be sought after, than by a constant recurrence to those solemn witnesses which He has left us of Himself, those Scriptures which are the express dictates of the Spirit of life and truth ; those Sacraments which are so many renewed and repeated images of His death, His atonement, and His resurrection.

In our infancy we bare witness, by water, to the necessity of a new birth from sin ; in our riper years, and more particularly in the last most solemn season of the Christian passover, we have most of us, I will hope, renewed our covenant with the Lord, and offered up to His service our bodies and souls, as redeemed by His blood from pangs unutterable and endless.

What now remains but a constant and earnest recollection, that the privileges and the duties of a Christian go always hand in hand ; that the greater the mercies received, the more need is there of showing forth our thankfulness ; that we do not cease to be the servants of God, when we are admitted to the privileges of His children ; but that from these last, on the other hand, a more illustrious

obedience is expected, the service of love, the free-will offering of the heart, the ardour which endeavouring to do all, thinks all too little to repay the benefits received, and express the affection felt, and which, after a life spent in the service of its Lord, lays down at length its tranquil head to slumber beneath the cross, content to possess no other merit than His blood, and presuming to expect no further reward than His mercy !

SERMON III.

CHARACTER OF CHRIST AND HIS RELIGION.

[Preached at Madras, March 12, 1826.]

ST. MARK viii. 9.

And He sent them away.

It is with these words that St. Mark concludes his account of the second occasion in which our Lord displayed His Almighty power, by multiplying a very small quantity of food into nourishment for many thousand persons. He had before, with five loaves and two fishes, satisfied the hunger of five thousand men ; He now, with seven loaves and a few small fishes, afforded a sufficient meal for four thousand. And, having thus by a miracle relieved their bodily necessities, as He had by His preaching nourished and strengthened their souls with the bread of life, the evangelist informs us that “He sent them away ;” a circumstance which I have chosen as the subject of our morning’s contemplation, because, simple as it may seem, we may draw from it, by God’s help, in the first place, a very important confirmation of the dignity and

disinterestedness of our Saviour's character, and of the truth of His Gospel ; secondly, a striking illustration of the spirit and principles of that religion which He brought into the world ; and, thirdly, a useful guide to our behaviour in the daily course of our lives, and an additional motive to the diligent practice of those duties, the discharge of which is the end and object of all religious knowledge.

“ In those days the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat ; and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far. And His disciples answered Him, from whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness ? And He asked them, how many loaves have ye ? And they said seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground, and He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them, and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes, and He blessed and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat and were filled ; and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away.”

I have repeated to you the whole history that you may be the better able to judge of the meekness

and moderation of our Saviour, and how greatly His conduct differed from that which would have been pursued by a fanatic or an imposter. Supposing it, for the sake of argument, to have been possible that in these miracles of loaves and fishes, He could have been Himself deceived by enthusiasm or credulity, or, could by subtlety or magical arts, have deceived the enthusiasm and ignorance of His followers; supposing, I say, this to have been possible, which few men in their senses will suppose, yet is such a supposition in the present case rendered absurd by the total and evident absence of any interested or ambitious design which could have led Him to deceive others, or of any pride or vanity by which He Himself could have been deluded. If He had either designed, as His enemies accused Him of designing, to make Himself a worldly king, or if He had derived a vain and selfish pleasure from the number of His disciples, and the hosannas of a surrounding multitude, how little would He have been disposed to send that multitude away, instead of taking advantage of the favourable moments while their hearts were yet warm with the recollection of the miracle, to have secured the zeal and active services of those whom He had the power of thus strangely feeding. A leader who either possessed, or was believed to possess such a power might have filled his ranks with all the idle and needy of the land; and the multitude would have flocked into the wilderness for the bread which he distributed. But the views

of Christ were different ; to His views His conduct was answerable ; nor were either the one or the other different from what we should have expected in a Being superior to man ; a Being trusting in Himself and in His Father alone, whom neither the blame nor praise of man could reach, alike above the mark of his hatred and his services. So far from priding Himself on the number and greatness of the miracles which He wrought, He does those miracles as things of course, and with the same degree of unaffected indifference with which a service of the most trifling kind is rendered by one man to another ; He displays, almost uniformly, His Divine Power in works of mercy and loving kindness ; and instead of collecting an army among His followers, and causing Himself, as He well might have done, to be proclaimed king over Israel, He actually dismissed two armies, one after the other, who were not only flushed with hope and inspired with the fullest confidence in Him, but were actually inclined, as we read in another chapter, to make Him king whether He would or no. Such a conduct as this is what no deceiver would have followed in his own person ; nay, it may be pronounced with equal certainty, that our Saviour's character and behaviour, as described by the four Evangelists, are such as, if the Evangelists had been deceivers, they could not possibly have described or imagined. His is, in fact, a character of such perfect excellence and purity as no writer has elsewhere described either in history or fable,

and which it is absolutely absurd to suppose, that the Evangelists, being, as they were, unlearned men, and writing, as they did, separately and without collusion, could have conceived or painted, if the same original had not been before them all. If, then, the history which has been read to you be true, it is certain that Christ was, what He professed, the Son of God Most High ; and that it is true we may be sure from the want of power in the Evangelists to describe such a person as our Lord from fancy, or to agree in imputing to Him a conduct so consistent with itself in every part, and in every part so different from that of other men. And this is the first observation which may be grounded on the words which I have read to you, namely, that they confirm our belief that Jesus was the Son of God, that all things which He hath spoken unto us from the Father are true, and that in Himself there is no falsehood at all.

The second observation relates to the tendency and character of the religion which He taught. That religion, above all others, which have been at any time offered to the world, is distinguished by its peculiarly practical nature ; by its not drawing men away from the interests, the charities, nor, when used within due bounds, the enjoyments and pleasures of the present life ; but by being a system of which it is the leading object not to take us out of the world, but to fit us for lives of innocence and usefulness in the world. It was the boast of ancient philosophy, and it has been the

boast of false religion and of the power of Antichrist, under whatever disguise presented to mankind, to withdraw men as much as possible from the cares and duties of a worldly and industrious life ; to teach them to place their ideas of perfection and their hopes of salvation in a total retirement from mankind, or in an inactive and unprofitable round of ceremonies and superstitions, commanding to abstain from labour, which is the common condition of our kind ; from marriage, whereby we contribute to the common stock of happiness and of productive labour, the enjoyments and toils of our children ; from meats, which God Himself hath given to be received with thankfulness ; from conversation, whereby the bonds of charity are kept alive, and the common fund of religious and useful knowledge extended and preserved. But the religion of Christ, as taught by Christ Himself, and the apostles who were inspired by Him, not only does not command, but expressly discourages all heedless singularity or solitude. If He calls us into the desert for a time to hear the words of life, He calls us only that we may return to the world better qualified to perform our parts in it ; the more industrious in our lawful business, in proportion as we are the more fervent in spirit ; and so much the better sons, the better parents, the better husbands, brethren, subjects, fellow-citizens, or friends, by how much we are the better Christians. It is in this manner that the connexion so often spoken of between faith and works is made abundantly cer-

tain and manifest ; because in the Christian religion there is no single article of faith which does not immediately lead us to a necessity of some answerable practice. We believe in God, but this faith is not to be shown forth by us, as by many of the pretended wise men among the Indians, by sitting still, day after day, in the silent and fixed contemplation of that glorious Being, whose essence and attributes surpass the utmost reach of our minds. Our faith in God is an active faith, which leads us to pray to Him, and strive to please Him. Our faith in Christ is to be shown forth by loving Him, and, for His sake, loving each other ; our faith in the atonement, which He has made for sin, is to be proved by our honouring His name not only with our lips but with our lives ; our faith in a judgment to come is to be proved by being such men in all godly soberness as we desire the Lord of all things to find us at His return. We have promised, indeed, in our baptism, to renounce the sins and vanities of the world, but to renounce a due and temperate use of the world itself is neither desirable nor possible. Our business is to pass through its temptations and engagements like air through water, whose bubbles, though buried in the mass, still rise rapidly upwards, and keep themselves distinct from the surrounding element, till they find that Heaven to which they are tending. But to leave the world is not ours till death has set us free, and to each regenerate Christian, Christ seems to say in His Gospel, as He said of old to the restored

lunatic of Gadara, "Canst thou hope that thy new religion is to set thee free from thine ancient duties? Tarry not here under an idle pretext of serving me more entirely, but return to thine own city and thine own house, and by a diligent discharge of thy duties there, show forth how great things God hath done for thee¹."

In a certain sense, then, the words which St. Mark applies to that mighty multitude whom Christ, after miraculously supporting their feeble natures, "sent away" to their respective cities, will apply to the situation of us all, when dismissed from the house of God, to put in practice the lessons which we have there learnt, in the bosom of our families, and amid the larger or smaller circles of our kindred, our friends, our neighbourhood. Each of us may consider himself as having repaired to this holy place to learn the will of the Most High, and to obtain His saving help towards its performance, and each of us, when he retires from the temple, is returning, it may be hoped, with an increased knowledge of his duty, and an increased power of performing it, to those familiar scenes where the course of his duty lies, and wherein his behaviour must determine whether he has truly profited or not, by his visit to God's house.

Let me entreat you, then, my brethren, to suppose yourselves for a moment in the situation of those persons who had been instructed by the

¹ St. Luke viii. 39.

preaching of Christ, and miraculously fed by His bounty, and whom, having thus imprinted on their minds the sense of their own duty and His own divinity, He “sent away” to their respective habitations. With what feelings, think you, would you, under such circumstances, have left the presence of the Son of God? Would the marvellous things which you had heard and seen, the proofs of power, the lessons of holiness, have been dismissed from your minds as a mere awful spectacle to please the eye, a most sweet sound of the harp or the organ which, though pleasant for a time, left no instruction behind it? Would you have allowed your former sinful habits immediately to renew their sway, and have deferred all serious thoughts, all holy words, all actions of faith or prayer, till the time of solemn worship should again come round, and you should again meet Christ in the wilderness? Or would not your consciences have rather told you, that now the time was come to show forth the progress which you had made in His lessons; that as you hoped for His future preaching, it became you to prove that you had profited by that help which you had already received, and that it would have been better never to have consulted the Heavenly Physician, than, having affected outwardly to do so, to act contrary to all the directions which He gave.

My Christian friends, you have this day attended the worship of Christ, and have heard His Gospel read, and, so far as His ministers have been able,

sincerely and faithfully expounded to you. You have heard the solemn commandment of the Most High, and joined in prayer for strength to keep His laws. And I am persuaded that such as have asked faithfully and humbly for that merciful support and guidance, have obtained as really, though not so perceivably, the help and nourishment and comfort of God's grace, as the multitude, of whom you have heard this day, had their bodily wants assisted. All this has been done for you by Christ Himself, who, according to His promise, has been no less truly present in the midst of us, than if we had beheld Him seated on His rocky throne, dispensing, as to this multitude in the wilderness, the precious manna of the Gospel. We shall shortly, as His ministers, and in His name, pronounce His blessing on you, and "send you away." But is this all? does your duty end here? Oh no! We send you away that you may ponder in your hearts the truths which you have heard, and improve, by daily prayer and watchfulness, the grace which you have received. We send you away that you may show forth in your lives those principles which we have endeavoured to impress on your memory; we send you away as it were soldiers from their review, to prepare yourselves for actual service, and for a vigorous and victorious battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. We send you away, but in the hope that you may return again, after a week spent in the upright and persevering discharge of your different duties of parents, masters, children,

servants, friends, neighbours, husbands and wives ; that you may return again with joy to renew your spiritual strength at the fountain of all power and godliness ; and to bless that God who hath preserved you from a lost captivity to the power of sin, and hath covered your head in the day when you sustained the assaults of your ghostly enemies. We send you away, that by a daily practice of every good gift you may improve your principles and confirm your habits of holiness, that the work of salvation which you now begin in much weakness and trembling, may be brought to perfection by Him who mightily worketh in our infirmity, and who knoweth, even from the mouth of babes and sucklings to still the enemy and the avenger. Depart then in peace, and in the favour of the Lord ; and that these our hopes may be realized, return not at once into the bustle and burden of life till, either publicly or privately, you have renewed your vows and your petitions. Give up some little space of this sabbath afternoon to the serious consideration of your condition, your hopes, your fears, your duties ; into the examination of what sins they are to which you are most inclined, and against which you should, therefore, be on your guard more particularly ; what company, what pursuits you have found most injurious to your souls, and how best they may be avoided or rendered harmless, giving up, in earnest prayer, yourselves, your interests, and affections to the service of God, and entreating Him that this coming week, at least, may be spent

without offending Him. So shall the dawn of each returning day bring increase of knowledge ; so, when another Sabbath shall call you to these holy walls, you shall return in the increased favour of God and the clearer light of His countenance ; and so, at length, when the last great Sabbath of nature is arrived, and He, who once fed the poor of the flock in the wilderness, shall return in His Father's glory to rule over Heaven and earth, He shall "send you away" no more, but cause you, world without end, to dwell in His Tabernacle, and before His face, that where He is, you may be also !

SERMON IV.

CHRIST PREACHING TO SINNERS.

[Preached at Dacca, July 4, 1824.]

ST. LUKE xv. 10.

I say unto you, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

IT was an accusation very frequently brought against our Saviour by the ruling party of the Jewish nation, that He showed in His preaching and daily habits an undue indulgence to sinners; that many of His disciples were taken from among men of this description; and that in meals and in conversation, He did not disdain the society of those whom the more rigid Pharisees condemned as impure and unholy. It does not, indeed, appear, however they might by loose and injurious revilings, attempt to stigmatize His character, that they ever brought against Him any definite charge of having partaken with sinners in their evil ways. The practice to which they objected was the simple intercourse, the act of conversing and breaking bread with sinners; and, in order to understand

the force and nature of their objection, it is necessary to take into account some of the peculiar prejudices of the Jews as to the touch or society of particular persons, as also who those persons were against whom these prejudices were directed.

In this country, I need scarcely mention, that it is a custom with those who pretend to any degree of holiness, to shrink from the touch of persons of a different religion, or of a character less devoted to the practice of contemplation and piety. Among the Mahommedan fakirs there are few who will willingly suffer their hands or their garments to be approached by a Christian, while the institution of castes is, with the Hindoos, carried to the height of absurdity, superstition, and inhumanity. Even the Jews, oppressed and degraded as they are in outward circumstances, show still, in all parts of the east, a considerable anxiety to withdraw from such contact or salutation.

The generality of this prejudice forbids our ascribing its origin to a source so circumscribed as the ceremonial law of Moses ; nor, indeed, with all the precision of that law in declaring certain objects unclean, and prescribing a certain form of purification as necessary to every one who came in contact with them, is there any hint in the Pentateuch of such rules being applicable to opinions or moral habits, nor any justification of that intolerant fancy which led Simon the pharisee to doubt our Lord's prophetic character because He suffered a penitent sinner to embrace His feet and moisten His garment

with her tears ¹. The name of unclean is applied in Leviticus exclusively to objects in themselves disgusting, or which, for the sake of health, it was convenient to esteem so ; the practice of the ancient Israelites, as displayed in the books of Kings and Chronicles, was very far from erring on the side of too great aversion from their idolatrous neighbours ; and the custom of which I speak may be suspected to be of a later and far less holy origin ; to have returned with the Jews from their captivity, and to have been strengthened during the Macedonian persecution ; to have been borrowed from the semi-Indian creed of their Persian and Chaldean sovereigns, or to have been a natural consequence of that gloomy period of their history when, under the rod of Antiochus, and ill-treated by all mankind, the names of enemy and foreigner became to them, in the strictest sense of the word, synonymous. It is evident, however, that with persons who boasted their abhorrence of sin, it was by no means unnatural to apply to moral those rules which had been given for cases of physical pollution ; to cry out to their fellow-creatures, “ come not near, I am holier than thou,” and to apprehend that the approach of a wicked, like that of a leprous person, made them unfit, for a time, to enter into a place of worship, or to offer up, even in private, acceptable devotions to the God of purity. Nor need we wonder that the Pharisees, in a tradi-

¹ St. Luke vii. 38.

tionary precept quoted by Drusius, are said not to have allowed "the people of the world to touch them," or that the disciples of the wise are forbidden in the Mechilta, to enter into the company of a sinner, even in order to pray with him or to study the Scriptures together ¹.

Nor was it only to persons of notoriously immoral lives that this name of sinner was appropriated. The Heathen, the Samaritan, partook in the same opprobrium, and any transgression either of the law or of the traditions of the elders, which drew down on the individual so transgressing the penalty of being excommunicated, drew down on him at the same time the name of sinner, and an exclusion from the touch and fellowship of the godly. The publicans too, or collectors of the Roman taxes, were not only hated as the agents of a foreign tyrant, but accounted unclean from their habits of intercourse with the heathen ; and every Israelite who had not joined himself to some particular sect or religious party, who had not, to use their own expressions, wallowed in the dust of the schools, and been initiated into those refinements on the Mosaic religion which the Essenes or the Pharisees inculcated, was regarded by both these sects with an intolerant pride, as "the people of the earth," and, as in the present instance "sinners."

It followed as a necessary consequence that, as other causes besides immorality might produce

¹ Drusius de iii. sectis. L. ii. p. 83. Mechilta, f. 37. 2.

ecclesiastical censures, as though many of the publicans were unjust and impious, that character did not necessarily or universally belong to them ; and as the simplicity of the secular and unlearned Jew might be perfectly compatible with the most essential duties of industry, integrity, and piety ; it followed that many were thus branded with an opprobrious epithet, who were, possibly, better men than those who affected to despise them. And it is certain that this description of persons contributed more than any other among the Jews to the number of our Saviour's followers. Such as were already cut off from the synagogues and people of Israel, had nothing to hold them back from embracing the truth whenever and by whomsoever offered to their acceptance. Those who surrendered no privilege, who broke no ancient tie, who deserted no long loved society, had a lighter cross to bear in the Messiah's kingdom, and found the narrow gate far wider than they who were folded gorgeously and warm in the trappings of self-love, and the distinctive mantle of a sect or a party. They who were unused to any notice from persons of a religious character, and who were abandoned, by the uncharitable contempt of their graver countrymen, to infamy, impenitence and despair,—it was likely that they would flock with joy to any door which should be opened to their restoration, and be willing to recover their lost self-esteem by any sacrifice which the Messiah might enjoin them. And our Lord, whose errand it was to reconcile the differences

and heal the intestine feuds of the house of Israel, appears to have taken delight in displaying His superiority to these unfounded traditions, and in kindly extending His charitable notice to those who needed it most and received it most gladly.

When taunted by the Pharisees for this line of conduct, He sometimes replies that He came "to save that which was lost," and that "they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick¹." Sometimes, as in the case of Zaccheus, He reminds them that these sinners and publicans were children of Abraham as well as themselves, and partakers with them in God's promises. And sometimes, as in the parable of the prodigal son, and in that from which my text is taken, He lays down the broad, and to the Jews, the unusual principle, that not only is the penitent prodigal accepted by His Almighty Parent, but that he is accepted with joy; not only that he is admitted on his return, but that he is sought for during his wanderings; and that when found, there is more joy in Heaven on account of his repentance, than over the salvation of very many just persons to whom repentance was comparatively needless.

He appeals to the natural feelings and daily experience of every man, whether that which is lost does not, on that account, acquire an additional value in our hearts; and whether that which is recovered is not many times more dear to us than

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 11. St. Luke v. 31.

if we had always continued its possessors. “What man of you,” are His words, “having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing; and when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbours saying, rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost! I say unto you that, likewise, joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance¹.”

The instruction contained in this parable is of two kinds, and addressed to two different classes of hearers.

The first are those happy characters whom our Lord designates by the name of the righteous, “the just persons who need no repentance.” Not that any have existed, save Christ alone, to whom in some sense or other, and that a very cogent one, repentance has not been necessary. But they who have escaped the greater and more glaring crimes, who have, through good education or timely repentance, overpowered, in some considerable degree, the principle of evil within them; whom the habit of successful resistance has rendered superior to the ordinary assaults of Satan; and whom the grace of God, both prompting and helping their endeavours, has marked out, amid the wickedness of the

¹ St. Luke xv. 4, 5, 6, 7.

multitude, as faithful, at least, though not perfect followers of their Saviour; these just persons, so happy in their good name and their good conscience, may learn from the present parable and the occasion on which it was spoken, to cherish new feelings, and to observe a new conduct towards those unfortunate wanderers from the fold of virtue and happiness who are described as lost sheep, and the objects, on that account, of an especial solicitude on the part of their owner. They will learn from His conduct, who is our hope, our example, and our God, that far from shunning such persons as unclean, or abhorring them as heirs of perdition, it is their duty, as servants of Christ, to exert their utmost influence to snatch them from the intolerable dangers by which they are at present surrounded; and that they can no better prove their love for Him by whom they are redeemed, than by forwarding His gracious purposes concerning those whom it was the main object of His coming into the world, to enable to an effectual repentance.

Nor is this a task confined to any peculiar order or profession. It is the duty of the layman as well as of the priest, of the catechumen as well as of the teacher; and all who can supply a word of private warning against sin, or of private encouragement to repentance; all who have a prayer or a tear to give for the soul of a wicked neighbour, are as much bound to do their best to snatch that neighbour from sin and its consequences, as they

would be called on to pluck him out of the fire, or to prevent his walking down a precipice.

It is not, indeed, the prevailing fault of the present times, that the contact of sinners of a common degree is abhorred or shunned by those who think themselves righteous. Yet there is a smooth insincerity which carries itself alike with all ; there is an indifference as to the moral condition of those with whom we live ; and there is a readiness to desert and despair of those who have advanced beyond a certain point in the broad and beaten track which leads to perdition, as distinctive, perhaps, of the present day, as the superstitions which I have noticed were of the later Jewish republic ; and as hurtful to the souls of men, and as opposite to the obligations of Christian charity, as the intolerance of the modern Turk, and the stiffness of the ancient pharisee.

We see our neighbour wasting his goods, impoverishing his family, destroying his health, and flinging himself, body and soul, into intolerable and everlasting misery, without a word or a look which can show we disapprove of his conduct, or a single entreaty to consider what he is doing and retrace his steps in time. We smile on his progress as he wades further in sin and ruin, and when, at length, he plunges out of his depth, and the stream hurries him away beyond those bounds of vice which the custom of the world has marked out as tolerable, then those who sport in the shallows of the torrent, and they that linger by its side,

alike grow zealous in the cause of morality and of insulted Heaven, alike begin to “shake their heads and whisper much, and change their countenances¹,” and call all mankind to witness their indignation against vice, and thank their God that they are not such as this man is, who went, if the truth should be told, but a few paces further in wickedness than themselves.

Many a man whom the neglect or flattery of his neighbours has consigned to incurable destruction, might, if those neighbours had, in the beginning of his wanderings, stepped in with their advice, their entreaties, their prayers, have been preserved for ever in the sheepfold. And many a man, and still more, many a deceived and miserable woman, who had been given up by her former, and, perhaps, less strongly tempted associates, to infamy and to perdition, might yet have been recalled, when their situation appeared most desperate. A little unexpected notice from persons of unblemished character, a little advice conveyed with meekness and affection, a little confidence shown, and some little help or countenance given to enable them to begin their lives anew; these, or less than these, if administered with prudence and good will, and in a manner of which the motives admitted of no doubtful interpretation, would have opened many a heart which unkindness and despair had dried up and withered, and (unless they were entirely hardened and for-

¹ Eccles. xii. 18.

saken by God as well as by men) would, under His blessing and with His assistance, have preserved a member to society, delivered the soul of a fellow-creature from torment unspeakable, recovered a servant to his Lord and ours, and occasioned a day of joy in Heaven.

If any of those who hear me have an opportunity to try their generous zeal in such a task as I have now marked out for them, let me express an earnest hope that no unreasonable timidity, no culpable indifference will be allowed to interfere with a work so holy ! Suffer not, I would say to a person thus situated, suffer not your unhappy brother to perish if your advice can save him. I do not call on you to become a public teacher, an intrusive and unauthorized censor of other men, occupied in detecting their faults, and vexing society with morose and needless admonition. But, in the moments of private intercourse, amid the confidence of private intimacy, there are times to be found, by whoever looks for them in sincerity, when the honest and affectionate counsels of a friend are worth more than many sermons. And do not, above all, when a wretched fellow-creature is given up as irreclaimable and not to be endured by that very world whose example first led him into transgression, when his heart is sick and can find no physician, and they who might help him lift up their voices against him, or pass by on the other side, do not, if you have any chance of re-

claiming such a creature, do not be hasty to abandon him.

St. Paul the apostle, during his abode as a prisoner at large in Rome, is related in ecclesiastical story to have met with the runaway slave of one of his friends who had robbed his master. Instead of giving up this unfortunate man immediately to justice, instead of hardening him by reproaches, or shunning him as pestilential or dangerous, the apostle undertook, it is said, the care and conversion of the reprobate ; he received him into his house, and by the counsels and comforts of the Gospel, awakened in him a sense of his errours, and a faith in the great Redeemer of mankind. He did more ; he persuaded him, as a proof of his sincerity, to return to his injured master, whom he, at the same time, induced to receive him again by that letter which is read in our Churches under the name of the Epistle to Philemon.

Onesimus, for this was the fugitive's name, did not disgrace his recommendation ; he became a sincere Christian and a faithful servant, and in process of time, for his distinguished piety, was chosen a minister of the Church ; he died a bishop and a martyr.

The means and language to be employed in the holy work which I have been recommending, must naturally vary according to a thousand various circumstances. Some may be " saved with fear, pulling them out of the fire¹ ;" over some a winning

¹ St. Jude 23.

softness may possess greater influence ; continued admonitions and patient discussion may be necessary to subdue a third ; while even the apparent displeasure and expressive silence of a respected and holy person may, with a fourth, be sufficient evidence of his danger. In general, however, it may be laid down as a rule, that gentle means and gentle language are much more likely to save a soul than menaces or harshness. These rather serve to harden men in sin than to draw their steps aside from it ; they may provoke, they may terrify, but they seldom work an effectual or lasting change in any one. Better is it to imitate the conduct of the Heavenly Shepherd who, while He was found in likeness as a man, did not spurn the sinner at His feet, or reproach the publican at His table ; who describes Himself as seeking His lost sheep diligently, but without anger or clamour ; and as not driving, but affectionately carrying it on His shoulders to the sheepfold.

Do not, however, mistake me ; when I recommend gentle means, I do not recommend guilty compliances. We must not humour our brethren in their sins, nor deceive them by the hope that their state is more secure than the truth will warrant. Far less must we, in order to gain their good opinion, become the companions of their evil deeds, or, even in appearance, countenance their false principles. By acting thus, we shall be so far from saving a soul, that we shall be the occasion of two souls perishing ; our neighbour's, by confirming him

in his bad habits, and blinding him to the greatness of his danger; our own, by our deceitful flattery, and the infection of his sinful example. So long as the sheep is a wanderer it cannot be in favour with its shepherd; till it is found, there can be no rejoicing.

We should also be religiously careful lest our own conduct should bring our sincerity into question, since the sight of all mankind is keen to detect inconsistency in their monitors; and since, if our actions belie our words, it is vain to hope that our advice will be heard with conviction. And more than all, and for the sake not of our friend only, but of our own salvation, we should use the utmost care and diligence lest, while we give instruction to others, we ourselves should be cast away; and lest, while we boast ourselves the instructors of the weak, the dispensers of spiritual wealth to the needy, and the guide to them that sit in darkness, our own eyes may labour under a greater infirmity than that of which we undertake to heal our brother; and while we say we are rich and in need of nothing, we may find ourselves too soon in the presence of our Judge, both "poor and miserable, and blind and naked."

Of the instruction which the same parable conveys to sinners, a very few observations may be sufficient. The first which I shall offer is the great danger of sin, and the exceeding terrour of its natural consequences, which can so excite the pity of the Most High, and the sympathy of the holy and

happy inhabitants of another and a superior state of existence. That must be no common misery to rescue us from which the Almighty did not withhold His only Son ; those effects of our wanderings must be strange and terrible, which can draw down on us the attention of the armies of Heaven, and call forth their lively joy at the rescue of a lost fellow-creature. The glory of the Most High might well spare the children of the world from the hallelujahs of Paradise ; the happiness of angels is already complete without the addition of such beings as ourselves to their glorious company. It is only our misery which leads them to think of us at all ; it is only our danger which makes our escape a subject of rejoicing. And if, with them who best know the value of a soul, our souls are thus valued ; if to them who best know the fruits of sin, those fruits appear so terrible, how great is our infatuation who slumber on the brink of a precipice at which the far-seeing cherubims shudder, who defy the threats, who despise the warnings, who render vain the indulgence, the sufferings, the gracious influences, the patient and persevering kindness of the Almighty.

Nor are they our fears alone which are thus embattled against our continuance in sin ; our hopes and our kindlier feelings are, at the same time, encouraged to a speedy and effectual repentance from the interest which the angels take in our success, and from the merciful solicitude which the God of angels and of men has Himself expressed

for our safety. For our race, when we had wandered aside from the paths of peace and happiness, for our race the Heavenly Shepherd left His ancient and faithful flock, the spirits who kept their first estate, the sons who were ever with Him. It was us whom He sought in the wilderness of the world ; it was our nature, our infirmities, the punishment of sins which dwelt in our bodies, which He bore on His shoulders through the valley of the shadow of death, that He might bring us back to His Father's kingdom. And think you there will not be joy in the presence of His angels hereafter, when His toils shall receive their full reward in the restoration of countless millions, and when the sheep who have been lost and found again, shall return under His care to that fold from whence they never more shall wander ? Or do we shrink back in hopeless despair of a prize so much beyond the limits of our natural weakness ? “ Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom¹. ” That repentance of a sinner in which the angels rejoice, that repentance which God Himself delighteth to behold, God, we may be sure, well knows how to bring to pass, and He will bring it to pass, unless the sinner refuses to be healed.

Day by day He calls us, saying, why will ye die ? Day by day His Spirit is at hand, and to be found of all that diligently seek Him. Day by day He

¹ St. Luke xii. 32.

prompts the desire which leads us to His mercy-seat, the effectual prayer whereby we seek Him. Let us but fan that holy flame, which the breath of the Lord hath kindled ; let us but seek His help where it hourly solicits our acceptance ; let us but endeavour to forsake those evil ways of which death is the appointed issue, and that which the angels desire, and that which the Lord desireth, shall be surely and speedily accomplished, if we will but add our hearty desires to theirs, and meet, by our fervent prayers and penitent resolutions, the hopes and promises, and helps and consolation of Heaven.

SERMON V.

THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

[Preached at Calcutta, November 30th, 1823.]

GAL. iii. 19.

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made.

THE main scope and purpose of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, has been by many men so greatly misunderstood, and so dangerously perverted to purposes entirely foreign to the apostle's intention, that we cannot too closely bear in mind that the dispute between them was, whether the law of Moses was of perpetual obligation or no, and whether the observance of its ceremonies and sacrifices was necessary to obtain pardon for the sins of mankind? The Galatians and the great body of Jewish Christians, supposed that circumcision, that the refraining from swine's flesh, that the wearing their beards long, and a blue fringe on their garments, were observances with which, as they had been once commanded by God, no man had power to dispense with; and that expiation and forgiveness of the sins of the world were to be sought for

universally, through the means of the sacrifice ordained by Moses.

St. Paul, on the other hand, was taught by the Holy Ghost, that the laws of Moses were calculated only for a certain space of time and a particular race of mankind ; that the distinctions which had formerly served to separate them from the Gentiles, became of no use whatsoever so soon as the Gentiles and the Jews were united in the bands of Christianity as “one fold” under “one Shepherd¹ ;” and that the sacrifices and ceremonies, which were only shadows of good things to come, became void and without obligation or effect when the One most pure Lamb of God had been offered for the sins of the world.

The nature of the dispute is grievously misunderstood by those who apply it to the value of good works in their modern and more exalted acceptation. The Jews were not weak enough, in general, to believe (though some vain and conceited pharisees among their number might have fancied it,) but the great body of the nation had not so extravagant notions of themselves as to believe that their own good works, or their observances of the moral law, were either so valuable in themselves, or so perfectly and steadily performed, as to purchase for them the inheritance of Heaven, or even a freedom from the anger of the Almighty. They had been taught by their own prophets that

¹ St. John x. 16.

“there is no man that sinneth not¹,” and they only erred in supposing that pardon for their sins might be procured by a diligent observance of the various ceremonies which Moses ordained, without regarding, or, at least, without fixing their entire attention on the One great and all sufficient sacrifice for sin through the blood of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

In answer to this mistake St. Paul was earnest in his endeavours to convince them, both from the nature of the law itself (which had, plainly, no value of its own, since the blood of bulls and goats had no natural power to remove sin,) and from the curses against disobedience contained in the law, (which the weakness of our unassisted nature could not escape, inasmuch as without some further divine help than the law afforded, no man could hope to keep the entire law unbroken,) and from the plain and undoubted reference which the ceremonies of the law possessed to a future Redeemer, that the law had, in itself, no power to save any man except through the imputed merits of a Saviour. And, on the other hand, that as Abraham himself had been declared righteous by God, through the same merits, before the law was given, it was plain not only that without those merits the law could not save, but that with those merits the law was not needed to save us. And it followed not only that the Jew had, no less than the Gentile, great need of the Christian atonement,

¹ 1 Kings viii, 46.

but that the Gentile, through Christ's atonement, might be in a state of salvation though he were altogether regardless of those ceremonies and sacrifices of the law on which the ancient Jew relied for pardon and acceptance.

But to this argument a natural objection was raised. "If the law be unnecessary, why was it given at all? If the promise to Abraham had reference to Christ and was sufficiently answered, both to Jew and Gentile, in His birth, sufferings, and resurrection, why did God think fit to publish the law to the children of Israel, and to publish it under circumstances of such exceeding majesty and terrour as are related in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of Exodus? God doth nothing in vain; an unmeaning or useless law He certainly would not have laid on us. Wherefore then serveth the law?"

To this St. Paul makes answer, that the law "was added on account of transgression until the seed should come to whom the promise was made." This is an answer which may seem to require explanation, and which will be found very amply to repay the pains of the most attentive enquiry that can be bestowed on it. It contains, as you will observe, two implied assertions: first, that the law was, in some way or other, called for by the transgressions of mankind; and, secondly, that it was only thus called for during the time which passed before the coming of our Lord, from whom, when He came, the offences complained of were to re-

ceive a better and sufficient remedy. Both these points I shall now endeavour to explain to you ; and, first, in what manner was the law of Moses added “ on account of transgressions.”

There are three respects in which it may be said to have been thus appointed. First, as a rule of life and additional sanction of duty. Secondly, as a sacramental means of grace, whereby the former generations of faithful Israelites might be made partakers of that salvation which, in after times, the Almighty purposed to raise up to their children. Thirdly, as a looking-glass wherein our human nature might see reflected its own weakness and deformity, and so be brought, with deeper humility and warmer and stronger love, to lay hold on the merits of the Redeemer. All these I shall notice in their order.

First, the law of Moses was “ added ” to the world “ on account of their transgressions,” as a rule of life and an additional sanction of duty. The first men and early patriarchs appear, indeed, to have received repeated revelations from God of His being, His nature, and His attributes ; and in the institution of sacrifices, and the prophecy that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent, they were not left altogether without some knowledge of the means whereby sin was to be, in after times, subdued and expiated. But, except in two instances, that of eating the blood of living animals, and that of murder of their own species, no rule that we know of was given for their conduct in life,

except that law of nature, that moral sense of right and wrong, that inward voice of conscience and of reason by which the heathen are, even now, as St. Paul expresses it, “a law unto themselves,” and by which whoever is guided may learn “to do as he would be done by,” and to govern his lusts and passions.

But that both the revelations which God had made of His own nature, and the feelings which He had implanted in the bosom of man, were insufficient to subdue the unruly wills and affections of our species, or to keep them from adding vanity and will-worship to the pure religion which they had, at first, received from their Maker, is certain both from the sin and misery which, in every heathen country, abound to a far greater degree than is suspected by Christians; and, secondly, from the fact that, so early as the time of Abraham, not only the greater part of mankind, but even the father of the faithful himself, before God had called him, were given up to the worship of false gods besides the True, and honoured the sun, the moon, the stars, and other creatures, instead of and more than the Almighty and ever blessed Creator.

For all these sins and for all this darkness of ignorance, God had, indeed, provided a cure in that blessed Mediator who was the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world, and in the light of that glorious Gospel which He was, in the fulness of time, to reveal. But in the mean time, and while the wheels of salvation tarried in their course, it

pleased Him to abate at least, if not entirely to remove the nuisance, by giving a law which, though not perfect in itself, was well suited to the manners and circumstances of that age and nation for whose use it was principally intended; and, if it did not effect that which it was reserved for Christianity to accomplish, the purifying of “a peculiar people zealous of good works¹,” yet separated, at least, one nation from the grossest and most grievous of those sins and errors into which the Gentiles had fallen; and sanctified them to Himself as guardians of His name, and the depositories of those promises and prophecies which were, to the universal world, the charters of future salvation. As purifying, then, the Israelites from idolatry; as keeping them if not free from sin, yet comparatively free from the worst and most hateful practices of their neighbours; and as supplying a somewhat stronger ground of virtue than the law of nature could supply, the law of Moses may be truly said to have been “added because of transgressions,” and to have answered the object of God as a temporary check to the overflowing of the offences of mankind.

Again, the law was added “on account of transgressions” as a sacramental means of grace, and a pledge of that great atonement whereby all the repeated transgressions of men were, at length, to obtain their pardon. We believe indeed that, from

¹ Titus ii. 14.

the first martyr, Abel, down to the good old Simeon, who prayed for his release from life on the birth of his Lord, and thirty years, at least, before the sacrifice for sin was offered on Mount Calvary, we believe that the blood of Christ had power to cleanse from sin those who looked forward to it, in faith, beforehand, as well as those who now, in faith, look back to it. And it is equally true that the sacrifices and purifications of the law had, in themselves, no power to put away sin, nor any value but what they obtained by a reference to the blood of the Messiah. But still they were seals and pledges of that mercy; still they were tokens whereby God assured the penitent sinner of His resolution to wipe away the guilt of the world; and the mercy of God which had determined Him to pardon such a sinner, led Him also to comfort and support him beforehand with the assurance of future pardon. Nor is this all, for as God hath ordained that the grace whereby Christians forsake sin should be sought for and received by them through certain actions, as baptism and the Lord's Supper, commemorative of Christ's death; so He also thought fit that the same necessary spiritual aid should be obtained by the house of Israel through ceremonies and sacrifices whereby that great sacrifice was prefigured. Thus it was then that the ceremonies of the law were to the Jew what the sacraments of the Gospel are to the Christian, a public expression of his faith in Christ's blood, "a means of grace and a pledge to assure

him thereof;" and this grace and this pledge were rendered necessary "because of transgressions."

Thirdly, the law of Moses was given "because of transgressions," as a looking-glass wherein our human nature might see its own weakness and deformity, and thus be brought, with deeper lowliness and warmer love, to lay hold on the offered merits of the Redeemer. In the law was shown forth the anger of God against sin ; in the law were exhibited the purity and holiness which were necessary to purchase His approbation ; and the difference which every man felt between his own character and this perfect model ; and the impossibility which he could not but feel in himself to equal or resemble it, while they were sufficient to have driven him to despair if no atonement had been provided for sin, made him cling with ten thousand fold more of joy, and love, and thankfulness to that wonderful and precious atonement which God had prepared in His Son. The Jew, on looking on the law, perceived its spiritual nature, and that he himself was carnal, sold to sin. He felt another love in his members warring against the law in his mind¹ ; he felt that he was unable of himself to merit Heaven or to escape the wrath of God ; and when he was now ready to cry out, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death²?" he found on a sudden his condemnation withdrawn, his ransom paid, his chain of sin unloosed by the

¹ Rom. vi. 23.

² Rom. vii. 24.

meritorious life, the redeeming sufferings, and the sanctifying grace of Jesus Christ our Lord ! Well might his thankfulness be proportioned to the dangers from which he was set free, and blessed was that knowledge of himself and his condition which the law supplied “because of transgressions.”

But all these ends which the law so excellently answered, these ends were temporary only, and lasted no longer than “till the seed should come to whom the promise was made” that in Him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. The assurance and certainty of everlasting life and of a just and equal judgement after death which Christ declared to all men, and of which He gave an ample proof by His own resurrection, are a far more powerful sanction to the law of nature and conscience, and the purity of Christ's example is a far more perfect rule of life than any which were supplied by the law of Moses. The sacrifices for sin, which were “a shadow of things to come¹,” faded away at once when those realities were present which they only prefigured ; and the forms which were proper as types of an expected Saviour were fitly replaced by that feast of thanksgiving, which became those who rejoiced in an atonement already offered.

The anger, lastly, of God against sin, and the purity which were required to please Him, were shown forth more strongly than ever in the dread-

¹ Col. ii. 17.

ful expiation which the sins of the world required, and the awful fact that it was His own beloved Son, in whom *only* He was well pleased.

If then, we are asked, why the law of Moses was given by God? the answer will be, “ It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” If we are asked, whether we are bound to keep that law? we should reply that it was not given to us nor to our fathers, and that we live under a better covenant, and have, in the example of Christ, a better rule of life before us. If it should be further enquired, why, then, do we read the Scriptures of the Old Testament? we may answer, that we read them to confirm our faith in Christ by learning all that wonderful chain of prophecy which, from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to Malachi, fixed the attention of the world on Him before His coming; that we read it to increase our thankfulness, by comparing the glorious light which we now enjoy, with the dim and blunted rays which were cast from the veiled countenance of Moses; that we read it to quicken our godly jealousy, and make us more active in the service of the Lord, by observing the zeal which, with far less advantages than ourselves, the ancient patriarchs exhibited. If, lastly, the enquirer should ask what obligation we have, since the law of Moses has no weight with us, to the practice of moral and religious duties? let our answer be given, not only with our lips but in our lives, that the greater the benefits bestowed, the

more we are bound to show forth our thankfulness by doing, to the utmost of our feeble power, whatever may please our Benefactor ; that the greater the pardon which we have received, the more should we fear to fall again into those sins which rendered it necessary ; that the greater the salvation offered, the more offence and peril there must necessarily be in neglecting it. There is no privilege conferred in Scripture which does not carry along with it its corresponding duty. Christ only made the law of Moses unnecessary by furnishing us with stronger motives of hope and fear to the practice of the law of nature ; He died for our salvation that He might, by the example of His love and the privileges which He has purchased, purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, and while He has given, both in His life and in His preaching, a perfect pattern of Christian holiness, He hath declared that not those who say Lord, Lord, but those who do the will of His Heavenly Father, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven !

SERMON VI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S FAITH AND FEAR.

[Preached at Dum Dum, Dec. 4, 1825.]

ISAIAH li. 12, 13.

I, even I, am He that comforteth you. Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched out the Heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?

THE chapter from which these words are taken, is part of a prophecy intended to support and comfort the faithful worshippers of God in the kingdom of Judah, under the weight of those calamities from which, on account of the many sins and provocations wherewith the greater number of their countrymen had offended the Almighty, the nation at large, and even the few righteous among the many wicked, were to suffer. It is this small minority of humble and holy men whom the prophet calls upon in the first verse of the chapter. "Hearken to me ye that follow after righteousness!" whom he exhorts to take example by the unconquerable faith of their great forefather Abraham,

from whose loins, as from a quarry in an everlasting rock, their city and their nation had been upbuilded; who, (when the Lord had promised to make him, in his old age, the father of a mighty nation, and to give him for his inheritance a land wherein, while yet living, he only possessed ground enough for a grave) yet, having received these promises, believed against probability, hoped against hope; and disregarding all which man might reckon difficult or impossible, fixed his attention, his faith, and his earnest thankfulness on His power only who had spoken the word, and who both could and would, undoubtedly, bring to pass the thing which He had declared.

In like manner Isaiah encourages the faithful Israelites, in the midst of those most grievous calamities which, as he himself foretold, were about to overtake their nation,—however great and hopeless those calamities might seem, however unlikely or impossible the world might think it that the kingdom should ever again be restored to Israel, or Jerusalem be again raised from its ruins, or the people who had been carried into captivity be again brought back from their prison-house in the land of Shinar; yet, not for all these discouraging circumstances,—to be cast down or dismayed, but to believe and be persuaded that the Lord would still comfort Sion, that He would still make her waste places to be inhabited, and the courts of her ruined temple to ring once more with thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Nor is it only this restora-

tion of their people and political freedom, of which he bids them be thus confidently hopeful. He goes on to assure them that, in the restoration of Judah to their own land, there are other nations besides Judah concerned, that it was in the city, and among the people thus to be rebuilt and brought back again, that the Lord would bring forth to light that great salvation of the Messiah, the Son of David, (whose kingdom is so gloriously described in the seventy-second psalm) whose power was to extend to the most distant islands of the sea, to whom prayer and daily praises were to be offered up by all nations, on whose arm the Gentiles were to trust, and whom the Almighty had hid in the hollow of His hand, (or His mysterious and secret providence) as an instrument wherewith He was to renew His covenant with Sion, and to plant (as we read in the sixteenth verse,) on the ruins of a worn out and sinful world, a new Heaven and earth wherein righteousness should dwell for ever.

These are the gracious and glorious promises which the prophet Isaiah, by the command of God, intermixes with his threatenings against the people of Judah. With these he would have them comforted though desolation and destruction, and the famine and the sword should come unto them; though their sons should faint and lie at the head of their streets like wild bulls in a net; though their nation should be afflicted and drunken, with a worse drunkenness than wine, with evil passions,

with political fury, and the dregs of that cup of infatuation, trembling, and astonishment, which Divine justice pours forth to all those whose ruin is determined.

Notwithstanding these things he bids them hope for eventual deliverance. Notwithstanding these things he assures them "I, even I, am he that comforteth you!" And he gently chides them in the words of my text, "who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker that hath stretched forth the Heavens and laid the foundations of the earth?"

Having thus explained the connexion of my text with the rest of the chapter in which it is found, as well as the general meaning of that chapter, the first observation which I am desirous of making on it is, that the grace of God is never so far withdrawn from mankind as that, in any nation or great body of men, however the wicked may exceed the good among them in number, in power, and in forwardness; and however far gone this numerous, and powerful, and active majority may be in wickedness and defiance of God, there will not still remain a certain number of sincerely pious and faithful worshippers shining forth as a light in a dark place, and, however despised or overlooked by the worldling's eye, yet neither forgotten nor forsaken by Him who seeth in secret, and who hears the whispered prayers, and reckons up the

secret alms of those who seek to please Him only. It is thus that, when in a time of what appeared a universal abandonment of God, the prophet Elijah complained that he only was left alive of Jehovah's worshippers, he was told by that still small voice which visited him in Horeb, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him¹." It is thus that Isaiah allows that in the land of Judah, amid the multitude that went astray, "the Lord of Hosts had left a very small remnant²;" and that he now addresses this remnant with words of comfort, as "ye that follow after righteousness." And it is thus that Christ has promised that, amid the different offences, divisions, and apostacies by which the Christian world has been and is still to be afflicted, He will still keep to Himself a faithful Church with whom His Spirit shall to the end of the world abide, and against whom, however small in number or humble in circumstances, "the gates of hell shall not prevail³."

A due consideration of this truth will be, in many respects, most useful to us. It will give us a better and more comfortable trust in the goodness and protection of Providence to know that, however to mortal apprehensions "the whole world lieth in wickedness⁴;" however the tares which the enemy hath sown may overspread and overshadow the

¹ 1 Kings xix. 18.

² Isaiah i. 9.

³ St. Matt. xvi. 18.

⁴ 1 John v. 19.

fields, there still is good corn there which is known to the Lord of the harvest, for whose sake His dews may still fall, and His suns still shine, till the day of harvest be come, and the wheat and the weeds shall be separated from each other everlastingly.

It will teach us, also, a more comfortable and more charitable opinion of our fellow-creatures and fellow-servants, of whom, even under the most unfavourable circumstances, we learn that a certain proportion is always favourably regarded by the Most High ; and instead of looking, as good men are sometimes tempted to do, on our neighbours and fellow-countrymen as profane, as worldly, as outcasts from grace, to hope the best of every man, and to regard every man either already a child of God, though we may not know it, or as one who may yet be made so by our kindness, our advice, our good example, and our prayers. And, above all, the reflection that we are not alone or friendless in the great battle which we are called on to wage against the powers of evil, that there are others who strive by our side, though the darkness of our present condition may prevent our discovering their numbers, that the same afflictions which we pass through are also “accomplished of our brethren that are in the world¹ ;” this reflection, I say, may strengthen our feeble hands, and confirm our weary resolutions ; and we may feel

¹ 1 Peter v. 9.

ashamed to shrink from temptations and trials which others around us, with no more advantages than ourselves, have felt and are feeling, have endured and are enduring, have conquered and are conquering.

That the world then, bad as it may seem, and bad as it would be if left to the consequences of its natural corruption, has yet, through grace, been never left without a certain proportion of those, who, if not sinless, were yet faithful and accepted by God, is the first consideration which arises from the perusal of this chapter of Isaiah. Another is the fact that, however this small number of righteous persons are sharers, to a certain extent, in the general calamities which the sins of the many draw down on the communities to which they belong, they are not less the beloved of the Lord, and have, from Him, their many peculiar comforts in which the world does not partake, and with which, as a stranger to their hopes and principles, the world does not intermeddle.

It is probable, indeed, (and this is the reason of my saying that the righteous are only to a certain extent sharers in the general calamity of a wicked nation) it is probable that in very many instances the calamities themselves are tempered, as they fall, by God's providence in their particular cases ; that His blows when they seem most undistinguishing, nevertheless strike those the hardest whose sins cry loudest for punishment, and that the sword of the destroying angel, though it does not spare

entirely, yet passes more lightly over the houses of the humble and the penitent. Thus Jeremiah, and thus Daniel, still more, though captives like the rest of their countrymen, found favour in the eyes of their conquerors, and thus when Jerusalem, after Christ's decease, fell a sacrifice to the sword of the Romans, the Christians who were in the place were so wonderfully delivered that not a hair of their heads perished. And thus in the greatest danger of our life of every day, the angel of the Lord is said to encamp about those who fear Him, to preserve them, if not from every evil, yet from the worst of those evils to which, without His help, they are liable.

But besides this greater share of God's mercy and protection in this life, (which is then of most value when the judgements of God are visibly walking abroad), besides this private and personal ground of comfort, the righteous have a still more blessed consciousness in the season of public distress and danger, inasmuch as their example, their prayers, and the acceptable service which they render to the Almighty, is often useful to others besides themselves, and may contribute in no small degree to the preservation of their families, their friends, and their country. If there had been ten such in Sodom the city would have been spared; and in the greatest and most terrible calamity that ever befell, or ever will befall a nation, the siege and ruin of Jerusalem, already mentioned, we know from Him who cannot lie, that not only the Christians

were themselves preserved, but their unbelieving countrymen, for their sakes, were punished with a less enduring misery. “Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elects’ sake whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened those days¹.” Nor can a stronger inducement, in its class of motives, be offered to any man who loves his friends and country to apply himself to lead such a life as God approves of, than the hope that his earnest endeavours after holiness may give his prayers for them a value in the sight of that pure and holy Being, with whom the “fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much² ;” who gave a favourable answer to Daniel on the banks of Ulai, and who granted to St. Paul the lives of all them that were shipwrecked with him.

There is yet a consideration which must naturally tend to give courage and hope to the righteous in a season of general calamity, the recollection, namely, that all things which befall them are ordained by a wise and most merciful God, who knoweth what is best for His creatures, and can at any time, when He sees good, deliver them from the troubles by which they are now surrounded, or make those troubles themselves work to them for good, and to the bringing forth of an exceeding weight of future happiness and glory. Nor is this all; for as the faithful Israelite looked forwards, in

¹ St. Mark xiii. 20.

² James v. 16.

the labours of his Babylonian slavery, not only to that appointed deliverance and return to their native land which God had promised to his tribes, but to the still more glorious deliverance which the Almighty should accomplish for his nation and all other nations of the world in the coming and triumph of the Redeemer, so has the faithful Christian, whose ransom from sin is already paid, and who awaits but the second coming of the Lord for his full and perfect release, so has he abundant reason to count all things as nothing which he may in this world endure, in comparison with that glorious hope which the Gospel holds out to him of “a treasure in the heavens that faileth not¹.”

It was this second life, indeed, to which, though with a dimmer light and a hope less sure and certain, the ancient Jew looked forwards,—as well as ourselves,—when, under the calamities of his nation, he fled to the promises of God for comfort. Without this hope the very promise which was held out of deliverance from captivity and of the glories of a future Messiah, would have little power in comparison to support the afflicted under the present burthens of his lot, or make the just rejoice on his death-bed.

I do not deny that the lover of his country might be glad to learn that her slavery was not to be perpetual; that the father of a family might feel considerable comfort on finding that, though he and his

¹ Luke xii. 33.

sons were to live and die in bondage, the chains of his grand-children would be broken ; that the lover of mankind would be happy in the prospect of a Saviour to be born in after-times from the nation of the Jews and the family of David, who should undeceive those millions who had, till then, been fettered with the errors of a false religion, and the ceremonies of a foul and bloody idolatry. But there is evidently something more personal, something closer to the heart, and more immediately interesting to the feelings in that hope which Isaiah holds out as arising from the consideration of Christ's coming, and which was to support the righteous under the severest weight of national misfortune. And what could this be but the expectation that, lay down their lives in God's cause when they might, they should not lay them down for ever ; that whether their bones were laid to rest in the distant land of their captivity, or consumed to dust amid the ashes of their burning temple, those bones should be clothed anew with flesh, and that dust should wake into life at the call of the promised Messiah ; that fall where they might, their spirits should rest in peace, and that they should see their Redeemer for themselves, and " stand in their lot at the end of the days¹."

But, if such was their hope on the promise of God alone, a promise less declared, less explicit, less positive and clear by far than those assurances which

¹ Dan. xii. 13.

are made to us in the Gospel, how much more should we depend on those stronger and clearer revelations of a life after death which the Gospel contains, supported as they are by the greatest proof which God could give of His power and will to perform them, in giving up His Son Jesus to death, that the debt of our nature might be paid in His blood, and in raising Him up from the dead as a proof that His atonement was accepted?

There is only one observation more which I shall make on the present chapter, and that is the moral consequence which, in the words of my text, is drawn from all the considerations of God's power and promises wherewith the prophet comforted his countrymen. I mean the fitness of an unshaken faith in God, and a fearless discharge of our duty under whatsoever calamities and against whatsoever opposition. It is a glorious thing to have a courage independent of chance or change; a breast from which the arrows of danger fall blunted, and which neither the rage of the people nor the frown of the mighty can turn from the line of wisdom and of duty. But this is, on every ground both of reason and Scripture, most likely to be the portion of him whose heart is right with God, who is firmly persuaded that all things are governed by Divine Providence, and who extends an humble but reasonable hope that his own life, his own best interests, his only happiness in this world and in the world to come, are the objects of Divine protection. "I fear God," it was the noble saying of a foreign

writer, "and I have, therefore, no other fear¹." Such a courage indeed is often laid claim to in Scripture as the usual and distinguishing privilege of the truly religious. Of the wicked it is said in the book of Proverbs, that they "flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion²." "Are not two sparrows," saith our Lord, "sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." "Why are ye fearful, Oh ye of little faith?" were the words of the same Divine Person to His disciples in the tempest³. "I, even I am He that comforteth you," said God through His prophet to the pious Israelites. "Who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?"

Still, however, "fear," it will be said, "is a natural and unavoidable passion. The protection of Heaven, though it is doubtless promised to the righteous in such a degree and such a manner as that all things shall eventually work for their good, and that they may be delivered from many evils which must otherwise befall, or supported in many which must otherwise overwhelm them, yet are they no where promised an exemption from all miseries, from their fair proportion of the natural evils of mortality, from pain, from poverty, from oppres-

¹ Racine, *Athalie*, Acte i. scene 1. "Je crains Dieu, cher Abner, et n'ai point d'autre crainte."

² Prov. xxviii. 1.

³ St. Matt. x. 29. 31. viii. 26.

sion, or from death. There are some sufferings, in themselves sufficiently terrible, to which the righteous in their present state of mortal imperfection are exposed as well as other men ; there are some, if Christ's words be true, to which, even more than other men, and out of their very righteousness, and for the sake of Christ and His Gospel, the righteous are liable. And so long as God gives power to the oppressor to kill, diseases to vex, and hunger and cold to torment us, the mere present suffering which will arise from such causes is, in itself, a sufficient ground for fear in the breast of every one whose body is sensible to pain and privation."

I allow the reasonableness of the objection ; I am ready to admit that it is only comparatively and not absolutely that the religious man can hope to be free from fear of worldly evils, and that the degree of his fear must in a great measure depend not only on the strength or weakness of his religious principles, but on the state of his nerves, and the degree to which he has been already accustomed to danger and suffering. But, if he cannot hope to get rid entirely of his fear of worldly calamities, he may make that very fear an argument for a still greater fear of Him by whom all good or evil are, in this life, ordained, and on whom depend the far greater and everlasting good or evil of the life which is to follow. Are we by our nature or habits so sensible to the loss of worldly comforts, that the dread of approaching poverty is enough to

make us melancholy, the dread of approaching disgrace to drive us mad? let us reflect how we shall one day endure the want of a drop of water to cool our tongues; with what patience we shall one day bear the scoffs and mockery of devils, and the eyes of the whole world and of all the angels of God, when our secret sins are made known in the day of judgement!

Are we so sensible of pain that we tremble at the bare apprehension of its infliction now? Let us ask ourselves how we shall like to dwell with everlasting burnings? Let us consider whether it be not an inconsistency, a madness even beyond the madness of Bedlam, to be thus alarmed at the smaller and so indifferent to the greater danger, to be "afraid of a man that shall die, of the son of man which shall be made as grass, and forget the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched out the Heavens and laid the foundations of the earth?" "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do!" but if ye must fear these, forget not that there *is* One who is more terrible than them all. "I will forewarn ye whom ye shall fear! fear Him which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell! Yea, I say unto you, fear Him¹!"

¹ St. Luke xii. 4, 5.

SERMON VII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S TREATMENT ON EARTH.

[Preached at Calcutta, Nov. 1825.]

1 ST. PETER iii. 13, 14.

Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye!

THIS epistle was addressed by St. Peter to men under great tribulation, the converted Jews in different parts of the east, "the strangers," he calls them, "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia¹." Strangers indeed they were, as dwelling in foreign lands and remote from their beloved Jerusalem; strangers they were, still more, to whom the world was an uneasy pilgrimage, who were the objects, if Tacitus is to be believed, of the common hatred of the human race, shut out in no small degree from the defence of the laws, and exposed on the slightest pretences, or on no pretence at all, to the heaviest lash of their severity.

Of the dangers and distresses to which the pri-

¹ 1 St. Peter i. 2.

mitive Christians were liable, it would be long, and with my present audience it would be needless to enter into a detail. But this notice of them was required to put you in possession of the general drift and tendency of St. Peter's arguments, which were directed, through a considerable part of both the Epistles which bear his name, to counteract and conquer the peculiar temptation to which a community thus situated were liable. For such men it was, in the first instance, a just and natural apprehension that their faith would fail under the weariness of hope deferred; that their courage would yield, and their spiritual sight grow dim, amid the calamities to which they were exposed, and the dangers which threatened their progress. Secondly, since every thing they did was taken in a bad sense by those around them, it might be feared, lest this want of a good name should make them careless of their actual behaviour; lest they should begin to neglect appearances in utter despair of persuading mankind to think well of them, and be tempted really to become the wretches they were accused of being. But, in the third place, the probability perhaps was greater still that, though their morals might remain unimpaired, their tempers might be soured and rendered churlish; that they whom the world hated, might begin, at length, to hate the world; and that they might endeavour to revenge their own sufferings on all around them, either by a general moroseness and peevishness, or by availing themselves of some of those opportuni-

ties which the disorderly state of the remoter Roman provinces supplied, to break forth in violence and rebellion.

The two former of these temptations St. Peter opposes in by far the greater part of his Epistles, where he encourages the converts to steadiness in their calling by pointing out the greatness and certainty of the promised recompence ; where he extolls the blessedness of that celestial aid which the grace of the Most High affords to all that daily seek it ; and where he reminds them, that their hope was for ever rendered vain unless the daily tenour of their lives refuted the calumnies of their adversaries.

The third temptation is that which he chiefly combats in the present chapter ; wherein he exhorts them not only to be courteous and kind to men of the same persuasion with themselves, but to be gentle and forgiving even towards their worst and bitterest persecutors, in the confidence that they would thus not only secure the protection of the Almighty, but that, in very many instances, the hearts of their enemies themselves would be subdued by their persevering virtue and gentleness. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers ; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good ? But, and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye ; and be not afraid of their terrour, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."

In this latter argument it is plain that there are two distinct but not inconsistent propositions ; first, that, even in this world, the probability is that the faithful and peaceable follower of Christ will not be molested ; secondly, that if it should so happen that we are molested for the sake of our righteousness, we have, on this very account, an additional reason for gratitude to God, and for reliance on His help and blessing.

The first of these assertions (so far as the mere abstract probability of the case extends) might seem at first sight to be a thing so clear as to require very little argument to prove it. Few, even in comparison, are found of a temper so utterly devilish as to desire to injure their neighbour without some received or fancied provocation. But as the consistent follower of righteousness gives no just ground of provocation to any ; as, on the contrary, his life, so far as his means extend, is occupied in doing good to all, it might be reasonably hoped that his innocence would, amid the strifes and ambuscades of the world, be his helmet, his sword, and his shield ; and that he who was the friend of all would, at least, have no one for his enemy. It is plain, however, from the words of St. Peter himself, that this statement of the case must be taken with very considerable exceptions ; since, even while he asks the question, “ who is he that shall harm you ? ” he hypothetically subjoins, “ but and if ye be persecuted.” Nay more, when he adds, “ if ye be persecuted for righteousness sake,” he admits that

they, to whom he was writing, might be exposed to violence and injustice, not only in spite of their innocence, but actually in consequence of it.

It is, indeed, not more strange than true, that there is a principle in every man's nature, which induces him to dislike whatever differs from himself; and that this dislike is stronger in proportion as we doubt the wisdom of our own choice, and suspect that we are wrong in those circumstances, whereby we are distinguished from such as are of a contrary opinion. It is this which has made many men intolerant towards other and new religions, who all the while have been conspicuously and glaringly negligent of their own; it is this which, even where the forms of belief have been the same, has continually led the worldly man to revile and detest the superior strictness of his pious neighbour, and to exclaim, in the words of the eloquent author of the apocryphal book of Wisdom, "He is not for our turn;" he is grievous "unto us even to behold, for his life is not like other men's; his ways are of another fashion¹." "If ye were of the world," said He who well knew what was in man, "if ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you²." Nor can it be a subject of wonder, that from these and other similar passages in the Holy Scriptures, very many have been led to believe that every sincere Chris-

¹ Wisdom ii. 12. 15.

² St. John xv. 19.

tian is inevitably exposed to the scorn and malice of his unconverted neighbours, and have consequently been compelled to explain away, in a most unsatisfactory manner, the expectation expressed by St. Peter, that, even in the present life, and in the present evil world, our following that which is good, is likely to preserve us from injury.

This belief, however, when entertained without due qualification, is, I am convinced, not only a mistaken but a mischievous one. It has led some good and humble men to doubt, very causelessly, of their own spiritual state, and their acceptance with the Almighty, because they have not been able to say with truth, that they were either so unhappy or so much hated among mankind as they conceived to be a necessary evidence of their conformity with the Son of God. It has led some of a more sanguine turn to make much of little sorrows, and glorify themselves as martyrs under little or imaginary grievances, while others whose own imprudence or inconsistency have been the cause of the rough treatment they have met with, have been encouraged in their errors, and hardened in their unruly temper, and have appealed to the opposition which they encountered as a proof that they were the genuine followers of the meek and gentle Jesus. And I am anxious, on these accounts, to examine the grounds of an opinion so uncomfortable, and which tends to throw a fresh and unnecessary difficulty in that path of life which is, of itself, sufficiently steep and thorny.

One main part of the error appears to arise from a too strong estimate of the corruption and depravity of mankind. That mankind are, indeed, in a forlorn and fallen condition, that they are, by nature, strangers to God, and very far gone from that glorious likeness of Himself in which He first created them, is, unhappily, most true, and God forbid that we should ever lose sight of it in our sorrowful and daily recollections.

But that, in this depravity of the natural man, no kind or amiable quality remains, that he is so far sunk below the beasts that perish, as that pity cannot move, nor justice awe, nor kindness conciliate him, that he universally, or even usually, delights in evil for evil's sake, and that where no prejudice or interest intervenes, he is unkind, uncourteous, or ungrateful, is certainly that which I find nowhere written in the Book of Truth, and against which, the book of nature and experience appears to bear abundant testimony. The very weakness of man indeed (and his weakness is, in this instance, a blessing) forbids his being consistent and uniform in vice any more than in virtue. And there are many countervailing circumstances, such as the weight of public opinion, the vacillation of men's own opinions, the feelings of worldly prudence, and the approbation, often involuntary, of whatever in other men is disinterested, kind, and lovely, which will very often be the means, under God's providence, of making the enemies of the righteous man his friends, and keeping the followers of that

which is good from being materially harmed by any one.

I say under God's providence, because it must be further borne in mind that, however wicked man may be, and however entirely his heart may be bent on mischief, still that heart is in the hand of the Lord, the same Lord whose eyes are over the righteous, and His ears open unto their prayers, whose defence and shield may well be trusted for the safety and happiness of them that love Him. It is His apostle, it is His Holy Spirit who speaks to us in the words which I have quoted, and, with whatever exceptions these gracious assurances may possibly be qualified, the righteous man may yet find on them a probable hope, even in this life, of seeing good days, and being safe from those that would harm him.

I know it will be answered, that both reason and Scripture are, on the whole, against our conclusion. In private life even the best of men have their enemies, their slanderers, their revilers; and the general history of religion we find to be made up of little else than a series of horrors and cruelties inflicted by the wicked on the righteous; and sometimes on no other account, so far as man can discern, than that silent reproach which their good examples have given to the opposite lives of their persecutors.

The first murder which the world ever saw was occasioned by a difference of this kind. The prophets of ancient times, of whom the world was not

worthy, were scourged, imprisoned, sawn in sunder, and slain with the sword. St. John the Baptist lost his head because he persisted in warning Herod of his wickedness; and the best and wisest of beings, the Son of God Himself, who went about doing good, and against whose pure and perfect character the malice of His enemies could find no colourable aspersion, was taken in His innocence and doomed to a death of torture. Accordingly the same Divine Lord has left as a legacy to His disciples the painful reversion of His stripes, His thorns, His agony, His bitter tears, and commanded each of us, as a pledge of our sincerity in His service, to "take up the cross," before we can presume to account ourselves His followers.

I answer, that these cases of persecution for righteousness sake are exceptions, and very great and awful ones, from the general rule which St. Peter lays down; but still they are exceptions only. They apply to a body of persons numerous, indeed, in themselves, but, thank God! very small in proportion to the total number of that mighty multitude who are redeemed from sin and misery by the blood of the Lamb, and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Of these by far the greater number will be found to have gone down to their graves in peace and in favour with both God and man; too happily obscure for the axe, the sword, or the fire, or protected from such dangers by the prevalence, the nominal prevalence at least, of those very doc-

trines, to plant which their heroic precursors thought their blood a trifling sacrifice.

Even in the age when martyrs were most numerous, a few thousands out of the whole populous family of Christ, afford no very formidable aggregate; and how many ages have since passed away in which martyrdom has been unknown, and the mighty of the earth have, from the oppressors, been transformed into the nursing fathers of Christ's religion! It is, doubtless, true, that Christ speaks of His cross, in general terms, as that condition of His service which we must be all of us prepared to encounter, and bear with us boldly and cheerfully. And it is also true that the uniform manner of our Lord (as it would be the manner and the duty of every experienced person preparing another for the duties and dangers of a new profession) is to state those duties broadly and strongly, to the end that no one might treasure up disappointment for himself by too flattering and easy a picture of the arduous undertaking before him. But if I were preparing a young seaman or soldier for the toils he must expect to undergo, if I were painting to him the various bitter accidents of flood or field, the wounds and the watchings, the hunger and cold, the toil and thirst, the storms, the rencontres, the defeats and the captivities, the

— dura navis,

Dura fugæ mala, dura belli,

would it be fair to understand me that all these or

any of these calamities were necessarily to befall the individual whom I was addressing ; that no seas were ever calm, no voyages ever prosperous, and that no military man was known at any time to descend to his grave in peace, and with his children weeping around him ? Such visitations, like the persecutions foretold in Scripture, are spoken of as impending over all, because they are such as may happen to any, and because all should, therefore, be prepared, if they come, to meet them boldly. But it would be a strange seaman who, during a prosperous voyage over an untroubled sea, should cry out before every ruffle of the elements as if it were St. Paul's euroclydon. And it is, surely, a strange and unthankful trifling with God's mercies and our own experience to talk of afflictions in His cause, when no man, on that account, either makes us afraid or troubles us, and when those lions have, by His Providence, been long since chained, which used, in ancient days, to scare the pilgrims in their journey to the New Jerusalem.

“ But does not,” it will be rejoined, “ in common life, and in those smaller distresses which every day brings forth, and which determine the general character of our journey far more than the greater but less frequent dangers to which you have alluded ; does not experience shew that genuine religion is still, to the generality of mankind, the object of dislike, and, so far as the present circumstances of the world will admit, of persecution ? Is not the child who prays to God, and reverences its parents,

exposed too often to mockery from its idle companions? The young man who is sober and chaste, is he not ridiculed for want of spirit? is not the devout man of riper years too often charged with hypocrisy? and are not many of every age to be found who have been disliked or ill-used on account of their piety?"

I answer that all this is very true, and a treatment like this may very possibly befall any one of us in his journey through the wilderness of the world; but still these are exceptions from St. Peter's general rule, and such exceptions will be found less numerous than they at first appear, if we distinguish those sorrows and vexations which good men endure on account of their religion, from those which they might have experienced whether they were religious or no; and those, still more, which they bring on themselves, not by their religion, but by their imprudence and their failings. Christ's kingdom is not of this world; and no promise that I can find in Scripture has been made to His followers, that they should have less than their share of the common accidents of their nature; that a ruin tottering to its foundation should necessarily remain suspended while a Christian passed beneath; that a Christian should not slip, where another man should break a limb; or that a Christian should not be stripped by robbers, or torn by wild beasts, like any other man who might pass from Jerusalem to Jericho. Christians are men, and sinful men, and they require, no less than their fellow trans-

gressors, that merciful discipline of affliction and sorrow which the Almighty dispenses, more or less, to every man as He sees occasion. But how many are those who, while drinking the cup which sinners partake of at least as plentifully as themselves, are forward to claim the praise of martyrs or confessors, and to reckon up these visitations as parts of that cross which it behoves us to be ready to take up when called on !

Still more must we be careful lest the sorrows under which we groan be brought on us, not by our religion itself, but by our vanity, our ill temper, our want of common prudence, and of that serpent-like wisdom, to join which with the harmlessness of a dove should be the endeavour of every believer. Such defects as these by their nature provoke mockery, dislike, and injustice from all whose hearts are not impressed with a deep sense of their own weakness, and the necessity of bearing with the weakness of their brethren. And when a religious man shews his religion in an injudicious manner, when he makes it the occasion of judging and censuring others, or when he exhausts it in forms and trifles, (overlooking, it may be, in comparison, the weightier matters of the law while he strains out the gnat, and pays tithes of anise and cummin) though his religion might, by itself, have passed through life unnoticed, or respected, or endured, these faults will be reflected on with double severity, because they are at variance with his professed principles, and because the world, it must be

owned, will not be sorry to bring down his character to its own low level.

But do our opponents appeal to the experience of mankind? To that experience let them go! Let them ask themselves whether, among their own acquaintance, their own neighbours, the public men whose lives and circumstances are known to them, there is any considerable appearance of such persecution as they apprehend, such affliction for conscience sake as is implied in their gloomy anticipations? Is the sober, the honest, the religious labourer less employed by his superiors in rank, or less thriving in the world than his godless neighbour? Among merchants, among statesmen, I will add, among the followers of the naval or military profession, will it usually be found, (for some detached and remarkable instances are no sufficient proof of the general rule) that a man's religion has done him any harm? Why, then, should we dress up the confession of our faith with these unreasonable and unnecessary terrors, or doubt that, even in this world, as well as in the world to come, and in the necessities of the present life, as well as in the one thing eternally needful, the Lord of all things may, if we seek His help, make our very enemies to love us, and those, of whom we fear that they should carry us captive, to take pity on us?

As, however, situations may arise, in which we may be called upon, we know not how soon or how suddenly, to prefer our duty to our interest, and to

suffer for righteousness sake, it is fit to keep our hearts in constant readiness for such a trial by the assurance, which should be deeply impressed on them, that such afflictions as, on this account, befall us are, by the concurrent assurances of God's words, among the surest earnest of His favour. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake! Rejoice, and be exceeding glad,—for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you¹!" "Rejoice," saith St. Peter, "inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy²."

And the reason for such joy a little consideration will suggest to us. In the first place, such persecutions, wherever they recur, are so many fulfilments of our Saviour's prophecy that men should thus deal with His followers for His name's sake; and they are, in consequence, so many confirmations of our faith in Him, and so many fresh grounds of hope that, as the sorrows which He foretold have come true, the far greater joys which He has promised, will, in like manner, come true also. No other religion which the world has known was announced with such forebodings. The pretenders to inspiration have usually, if not uniformly, amused their followers with hopes of unmixed success and

¹ St. Matt. v. 11, 12.

² 1 St. Peter iv. 13.

universal extension ; and the failure of their hopes has demonstrated the folly of their assumptions.

Our Lord promised His people affliction first, and weight of glory afterwards. The affliction has arrived, yea, in a great measure, has passed away ; the glory will therefore follow !

Secondly, since God has shown afflictions to be so precious in His sight, as to conduct His only Son through the same thorny passage to His present exaltation of Majesty, we may well feel ourselves honoured in being made to resemble Him, even in the circumstances of His humiliation ; and that we are thought worthy to be His companions in working, by the same means, the same glorious will of His and our Almighty Father. The soldier who sleeps on the bare field of battle, feels elevated in his spirit so that his general lies no softer ; and shall not we in our necessities, sometimes think with a holy joy that, even in these things, God hath made us like His Son ?

Thirdly, when we recollect, that the greater our sufferings are now, and the more courageously we pass through them, the more our faith is proved, our love rendered brighter, and the more exceeding weight of glory and reward is, for Christ's sake, laid up for us hereafter, may we not rejoice in our distress as a pledge of God's gracious designs in our favour, as a gate to greater eminence and far higher seats in His kingdom, than are to be attained by an easier entrance ? Strange things are told in the early Christian writers of the glories

and the nearer and more immediate access to the Lord, which those who were killed for His name's sake should receive from Him. And be these as they may, yet, doubtless, a more than common happiness is laid up, not for the martyr only, but for every one, in proportion to his losses and trials in the cause, who, though he has borne a lighter and less illustrious cross, has still borne cheerfully whatever cross his Master has given him to carry. We know of men in hard and dangerous professions, who rejoice when sent on services of still greater danger and hardship, as knowing that where peril is, promotion may also be found ; and the sufferer for conscience sake may, much more, exult in his trials, as knowing that, in the strength of God's grace, He will come off even more than conqueror.

But, fourthly, lest all these hopes should fail us in the hour of danger, it is wise, nay it is most needful, to accustom ourselves to frequent self-denial, even in lawful indulgences ; to obtain, by frequent exercise, a complete mastery over ourselves ; by a constant study of God's word to store our minds before-hand with a deep sense both of His threats and of His promises, and by daily meditation and prayer to accustom our thoughts to the constant spectacle of Christ on the cross, entreating His grace to frame our minds into the likeness of His Heavenly temper.

So shall we fear God ; and, fearing Him, be fearless of all besides :—so shall we love God ; and, for His sake, count all the world as dross in com-

parison of His services ;—so, amid the changes and chances of this mortal life, shall our hearts be there fixed where unfailing joys are to be found ; and where all which now distresses us shall appear but as a painful dream when we awake from sleep refreshed and thankful, and the light of Heaven's great morning beams in through the windows of the sepulchre ! .

SERMON VIII.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

[Preached at Ghazeepoor, August 29, 1824.]

ST. LUKE xviii. 14.

I tell you that this man went down to his house justified rather than the other : For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

THE parable of which these words form the conclusion, was spoken by our Saviour, as the Holy Scripture itself tells us, in reproof of certain persons who “ trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others ;” and of the persons, accordingly, whom He sets before us, the first is of a class of men who, more than all others among the Jews, enjoyed the reputation of a strict and scrupulous piety ; while the second was from a description of persons, many of whom were, really, of depraved and infamous behaviour, and all of whom, from the prejudices of their countrymen, were regarded, whether justly so or no, as depraved and infamous. “ Two men,” are our Lord’s words, “ went up into the temple to pray ; the one a pharisee, and the other a publican.”

The pharisees, it may be here necessary to observe, were a party among the Jewish nation whose name is taken from a Hebrew word signifying division or separation, because they had divided themselves in many circumstances of dress and manners and society from the generality of their brother Israelites, and of those who worshipped the same God with them in the same temple, on pretence of superior holiness, and of keeping themselves altogether unspotted by the company, the amusements, and even the touch of carnal and worldly persons. They were famous among their countrymen for their dislike of all diversions, however innocent, for the length of their prayers and of their graces both before and after meat, for their rigid observance of the Sabbath and fasting days appointed by the law of Moses, and by the zeal which they showed for not only the slightest observances recommended in that law, but for many other additional rules and restrictions which, though the law said nothing of them, they professed to have received from the tradition of the elders. Thus the law respecting the Sabbath, in itself strict, they straitened still more by forbidding men so much as to heal the sick on that day, to take physic themselves, or to give physic to others. On fasting days they not only refused to eat all food before the appointed hour, but if they took a draught of water took care to strain it through a cloth, lest any thing solid might lurk in it, and be accidentally swallowed. The blue fringe which it was the cus-

tom of the Jews in general to wear on their clothes, the pharisees wore twice as large as other men, in order to prove that they were not ashamed of their religion; and their wrists and foreheads were usually bound round with strips of parchment written over with texts of Scripture, "to keep," as they said, "the law of God before their eyes, and to prevent its ever escaping from their memories."

On the whole, as their manners and appearance were formal, grave, and melancholy, so they chiefly lived among their own members, calling themselves in their books and in their general conversation, "the godly," "the elect," "the wise," and the "disciples of the elders;" and shunning not only the company, but the touch and the neighbourhood of those who did not belong to their own little circle, and of whom they therefore spoke as "the men of the world," "the unclean," and "the vulgar," or "unenlightened."

With all these pretences to piety, many grievous crimes, as it appears from Scripture, prevailed among them. Many of them were extremely covetous; and even made their outward piety a means of obtaining wealth and legacies from their countrymen; "devouring widows' houses under the pretence of long prayers;" and "making clean the outside of the cup and the platter, while the inward part was full of ravening and wickedness¹."

But though such faults were but too common

¹ St. Matt. xxiii. 25. St. Luke xi. 39.

among them, and though our Saviour, therefore, reproveth them perhaps more sharply, and certainly more frequently than any other party among the Jews, (possibly because from their numbers they oftener fell in His way; and possibly because, with all their faults, they were more within the ordinary reach of grace than their wicked and godless rivals the Sadducees,) yet they had, when compared with these last, many favourable circumstances in their character, and many among them were really good and godly men who, when their prejudices were once removed, became sincere and humble followers of the Messiah. They had kept entire the ancient and true doctrine of a resurrection from the dead, which the Sadducees ventured to deny; they were really zealous, though not according unto knowledge, for the honour of God's name and the observance of His Sabbaths; they were commendably anxious in spreading a knowledge of the law of Moses among the heathen and their own ignorant countrymen; and they were accordingly held in great reverence by the common people; and the scribes or teachers of the law of Moses, as well as the rulers or elders of the people, were most frequently of their number.

Of the publicans it is enough to say that they were collectors of taxes for the Romans, who, some time before, had conquered the Jews and held them in the same state of subjection, though of a far less just and gentle kind, than that in which the English now hold the inhabitants of India.

And it is easy to suppose not only that any Jew who undertook such an office would be extremely unpopular among his countrymen ; but that, in fact, the more respectable Jews would, generally speaking, be slow to hold an office which at the same time made them hated by their own brethren, and exposed them to lose caste by living and eating with their heathen masters.

When, therefore, our Lord fixed on two persons of these different descriptions as going together to the House of God to pray, He fixed on characters the most different that His countrymen had seen, the most popular and respected and the least esteemed, the most outwardly careful of their religious interests and the most outwardly and generally neglectful of them ; the class who were supposed in general to be most dear to God (and who certainly supposed themselves so) and those who were considered the greatest strangers to Him. And if we ourselves had been, with the same feelings and prejudices, among the number of our Saviour's hearers, and had been asked by Him, which of these two persons was in our opinion most likely to obtain a favourable answer to his prayers, and to conciliate the mercy of Heaven, we should have probably supposed, as the Jews no doubt supposed, that the advantage was decidedly with the pharisee.

“ The pharisee, (however, the story then proceeds,) the pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even

as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner ! I tell you," adds our Lord, " that this man went down to his house justified rather than the other !"

What, then, is the cause of this difference ? What of the pharisee being rejected, what of the publican being, in comparison, preferred by the Almighty searcher of hearts ? Was the pharisee a hypocrite, who laid claim to virtuous habits to which he had no pretension ? Was it untrue that he was really strict beyond most of his countrymen in the mortification of his appetites, and the payment of a part of his substance to the service of God and the ceremonies of religion ? *That* it would be hard to believe, nor have we any reason to believe it from the words of Scripture. He was, it will be observed, praying, and praying in words which nobody heard—" he prayed thus *with himself*." But no man is weak enough to believe that he can tell a lie to God ; no man, who is not a madman, can dare to insult his Maker by laying claim, when that Maker only hears, to virtuous actions which he knows to be imaginary. Or is God indifferent whether our actions be good or evil ?—are prayers, or fastings, or a careful concern for the decencies of religion offensive to Him, or worthless in His eyes ? On the contrary, our Saviour Himself has laid down rules for His disciples when they fast ;

He has Himself set us an example of religious fasting ; and He has Himself said, when blaming the pharisees for their neglect of the weightier matters of the law, that, while they sinned greatly in leaving these undone, it behoved them also by no means to neglect the others¹.

Or was the publican, in reality, a person of exemplary conduct who afflicted himself unnecessarily on account of his spiritual state, and was, in truth, already a saint while he condemned himself as the worst of sinners. Neither of this is there any appearance. The pharisee, who seems to have known him, probably spoke the truth when he described him as a man of bad character. And it is remarkable, that neither does our Lord, notwithstanding his expressions of repentance, speak of him as of one, at present and absolutely in a justified state, but only that he was justified *rather* than the other, that his character, with all its faults, was less displeasing to God than the vain self praise and uncharitable censure of the pharisee. The publican might be, and probably was, a real sinner ; the publican might be, and probably was, of a character offensive to God ; and yet the pharisee might, in God's eyes, be still less accepted and acceptable. What then was his fault ? He trusted in himself that he was righteous and despised others ; and thus he threw away at a single stroke all the blessings which God might else have had in

¹ St. Matt. xxiii. 23.

store for his abstinence, his purity, his justice, his attention to the religion of his Father ; and by a little foolish self-love, and by a little ill-natured comparison of himself with his neighbour, made vain the endeavours of, perhaps, a long life, and, while he thought that he was standing firmly, made that very flattering thought the occasion of a dismal fall !

Is it necessary that I should go on to explain and vindicate the justice of such a sentence ? Will not the common sense of those who hear me teach them, that for even the best of men to boast himself before his Maker, must be to that Maker most offensive, inasmuch as, however good he may be, it is God to whom he owes it all ? The pharisee himself, indeed, acknowledged this. He was not so vain, he was not so silly as to be ignorant that of himself he was able to do nothing ; and he therefore gives, in words at least, the glory to God, and thanks Him that he was not like other men, an extortioner, unjust, or adulterous. But in this very enumeration of God's favours to him, he shows that he allowed himself to take a pride in them ; that, instead of endeavouring after a further progress, he was idly amusing himself with viewing the progress which he had already made ; unconscious all the while how much ground his rivals in the race were gaining on him. How much more blameable then, how much more ridiculous (if any thing could be a matter of ridicule in which the souls of men are concerned), must their pretensions

be who reckon up their own good deeds, not as reasons for thankfulness to God, but as claims to reward or pardon from Him ; who talk of the good which they have done, or the harm which they have not done, as if, by its own value, it gave them a title to Heaven, and to come into the presence of their Maker not like His servants but His creditors !

Let us examine this matter a little further ! Whoever prides himself on his own good deeds in the sight of God, must suppose one or both of two things ; either that those good deeds have of themselves some power to gratify or benefit God, so as that God *owes* him Heaven in repayment for the advantage which He has received from him, or that those actions for which he expects rewards were, at least, in his own choice to perform or to neglect, and such as if he had neglected them God could have had no reason for punishing him. But how different from the truth are both these suppositions ! In the first instance, so highly exalted is God above all our actions and their consequences, that it is plain He needs none of our services ; that the obedience of such worms as we are is as nothing in His sight, whom all the cherubim and seraphim serve in their bright and burning stations, who “hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hands,” and to whose call the lightnings answer, “here we are ¹.” It is only from His

¹ Isaiah xl. 12. Job xxxviii. 35.

love to us, for our own sakes, and in order to our happiness, that He has made us at all, or has laid any commands upon us. He bids us love each other, and do good to each other, because, by this means, we each of us shall make the other happy or relieve the other's distress. He bids us be sober, be honest, be chaste, be industrious, because it is by an observance of these rules alone that we can keep ourselves in health, in cheerfulness, in plenty, and worldly prosperity. He bids us pray to Him, and give Him thanks, and serve Him, because He thus opens to us a fresh source of strength for the discharge of our duties ; of hope and comfort under our necessary calamities ; of that spirituality of mind and acquaintance with Heavenly things, which is the purest pleasure a man can meet with here, and the necessary introduction to still purer and brighter happiness hereafter. But in Himself God needs us not ! had we never been born, our songs would never be missed in the full chorus of angels ; and, were we all now to perish, He could raise up from the dust beneath our feet a better and a worthier race of creatures than we are. Who then are we, and what are our good deeds, that we should venture to praise them in His presence ?

But further, all these things in the performance of which we pride ourselves are, after all, no more than our duty. We are commanded to do them ; we are threatened most severely if we neglect them. All the good deeds which we have done

are, therefore, in fact, nothing more than so many instances in which we have not done evil ; and who shall say that our not deserving hell, supposing it to be true, would be, in itself an equitable claim on such a vast reward as Heaven : or that our best actions, being such as they are, would not be overpaid by the life and health and happiness of a single day, though we were immediately after to sink into dust and be forgotten ? Who then can hope that such good actions as we can perform can reasonably be placed in the balance against our many evil deeds, or free us from the punishment which these last so loudly call for ?

For this is another and a still more awful reason for disclaiming all human merit, and placing our only hopes of pardon in the great mercy of God, by which also the publican in the parable sought and found it. It is not merely the worthlessness of our good deeds, but the number and greatness of our evil deeds, which should fill us with humility and fear in the presence of God ; and lead us, instead of claiming reward, to acknowledge ourselves worthy of the severest punishment. We have all sinned, it is in vain to seek to hide it from ourselves, we have all sinned most grievously ; if not in those particulars, which the pharisee of whom we have read mentioned, yet in many others which, if less thought of by mankind, are no less strictly forbidden by the Almighty ; we are all God's debtors to an infinite amount ; and being so, it is surely fitter far to cast ourselves on His mercy

altogether, than to set off our own pitiful balance of good deeds, or supposed good deeds, as a reason why judgement should not be passed on us.

But further, it may not be useless to remark the disguises under which pride and self-conceit will sometimes enter into our hearts; and the manner in which men are led to form high thoughts of themselves, while they suppose that they are giving the glory to God alone, and ascribing to Him alone all the work of their salvation. The pharisee was ready enough to confess that it was of God alone that he was less wicked than other men. And I have met with many serious persons who not only acknowledged this, but affected to lay an exceeding stress on the doctrine, who yet were strangely proud of their own supposed place in God's favour as His elect, His chosen, His brands plucked forth from the burning, and no less ready than the pharisee to make comparisons between themselves and other men, and bless God that they were more strict in their lives, more holy in their hearts, than such or such poor lost creature, who never attended church or meeting, or who was altogether uninformed or unconvinced of certain doctrines in which, whether truly or falsely, they placed the sum and substance of Christianity.

How offensive such conduct must be to God, a moment's consideration will convince us. "What hast thou to do with thy neighbour's guilt or innocence?" Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or fall-

eth¹.” “Yea he shall be holden up if he acknowledges his sin and endeavours to forsake it; when thou, with all thy greater advantages and greater proficiency, mayst mourn, perhaps too late, thy own presumption and want of charity.”

There is a history told in one of the eastern writers which, for the moral which it affords, is here not unfit to be mentioned, of a certain youth who gave himself up to severe devotion, and passed whole nights in the study of the Scriptures and in prayer. “Behold,” he said to his father, “how these have forgotten their God, while I alone am waking to His word and to His service!” “Alas, my son,” was that wise father’s reply, “it were better that thou hadst slept till the day of judgement than that thou shouldest thus wake to trust in thyself that thou art righteous, and to speak evil of thy brethren.” He was a Mahometan who spake thus; but from him it were well if very many Christians would learn that, do all they may, it is not for them to institute comparisons with the weakest and most unhappy of God’s creatures.

Yet a few words to the occasion for which we have many of us, I trust, during the last week, been making preparation. Do we come, like this pharisee, trusting in ourselves? Do we come, like this pharisee, inclined to condemn our neighbours? Or do we come in the deep sense of our own weakness, in the sorrowful recollection of our own misdeeds,

¹ Romans xiv. 4.

in the earnest desire to forsake our evil ways, and in the hope, a sure and certain hope, that on us who acknowledge ourselves sinners, the Lord will show abundant mercy ? We have a more painful knowledge than even the publican described by our Lord could possess of the danger of sin, and its great offensiveness in the eyes of our Maker ; inasmuch as we know, which he could not, that to obtain pardon for the sins of the world, it was necessary that God Himself should give us His beloved Son to be offered as a bloody sacrifice. We have a more certain and blessed hope than this penitent publican enjoyed ; inasmuch as that atonement, which he only knew through figures and prophecies, we have known and felt as a historical and spiritual certainty ; so that not only by the blood of bulls and of goats, but by the pure and sinless blood of the blessed Jesus, we look to have our sins done away, and our pardon sealed, and a more blessed strength to be hereafter given us to the forsaking of every evil way, and the purifying of our conscience towards God.

Let us only not be wanting to ourselves ; let us only seek His grace through its appointed channels, and bending low before His altar, and receiving with deep humility the pledges of His peace, let us renounce all hope but in Him alone, and cry out each of us in our hearts to Him who is ready to hear and to save, God be merciful to me a sinner !

SERMON IX.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

[Preached at Delhi, Jan. 2, 1825.]

ST. LUKE x. 36, 37.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

THE discourses which Christ delivered to the people in the form of parables, may be classed under three descriptions. Some of them are short and simple stories intended for our example only, or to explain His doctrine. Such is the parable of the unjust judge, which has no hidden meaning, and is merely introduced to illustrate the force of continued prayer. In some again, such as those where He likens the kingdom of Heaven to a marriage supper, a vineyard let out to husbandmen, and a sower scattering seed, He describes in obscure language, and under the form of an allegory, His own dealings with mankind, and the future fortunes of the Christian Church. Thirdly, there are some which partake of both these kinds; they contain an inward and doctrinal meaning, which refers to the

faith of Christians, and a practical lesson, if they are taken according to the letter, which is a guide and example to their lives. In both these ways the parable of the good Samaritan affords us valuable instruction. If taken according to the letter, it is a beautiful example of charity; and if we go further into its meaning, and see, as I shall presently explain, the Son of God represented by this benevolent traveller, we then are taught to derive our love for mankind from the love which Christ has shown to us, and His example is enforced by our gratitude.

One of the teachers of the law of Moses, the same order of men who are elsewhere called scribes, had endeavoured to ensnare our Saviour by the solemn question, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life¹?" How this question was to ensnare does not immediately appear; it might be to draw from Him something contrary to the law of Moses, or offensive to the prejudices of the people; it might be accompanied by an insulting tone or manner, as if to say, "what are these mighty discoveries which prophets and kings have desired in vain?" At all events, it was asked from motives of ill-will, and in the hope to injure Christ. Our Lord, in His answer, refers him to the passage in Deuteronomy which, from his office, he read publicly every Sabbath. "What is written in the law?" are His words, "How readest thou?" The lawyer replies,

¹ St. Luke x. 19.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself. And He said unto him, thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live¹.”

But though the scribe had answered right, there were reasons why our Lord's reference to this passage of Scripture was very unpleasing to him. Not only was it so wise and so true, and so conformable to the law of Moses, that no accusation or slander could be built on it, and all his malice and insult was retorted on his own head; but his conscience could not but inform him that he was openly condemned by his own law. How could he boast of loving his neighbour, who was even then laying snares for the life of Christ; who with the deepest malice and subtlety was asking a solemn question in the hope of ruining his teacher. He felt, it may well be, that his words had judged himself; and to escape this application of them, (as the Scripture says, “to justify himself,”) he caught at the captious distinctions of the Jewish doctors, and demanded, “who is my neighbour²?” Jesus, instead of answering as He might have done, “I, Jesus, whom thou persecutest,” is contented with a milder method of instruction in the beautiful parable which follows, and which is too well known to need repetition.

The scenery and circumstances of the story

¹ St. Luke x. 26—28.

² Ver. 29.

were familiar to all who heard them, and were such as might happen daily. The road between Jerusalem and Jericho is now, and always has been, dismal and dangerous. It is through a deep and barren valley, without grass, or water, or inhabitants, except savage bands of robbers, whose cruelties were so frequent that the road was generally known by the name of the bloody way. Any Jew, therefore, who heard our Lord's discourse might have fallen, himself, into the peril which is here described, and the story, if we take it in its plainest sense, told them, more forcibly than ten thousand arguments, to do unto others as they would wish that others should act by them. But this was not the only, nor the main intention of the parable, which, as it applied to the lawyer, was to prove the claim which Christ had to his love and gratitude, and to show the total insufficiency of the law of Moses to rescue human nature from its miserable condition. The unfortunate plundered traveller is, then, a representative of all mankind. They, like him, have departed from Jerusalem, the city of God, His favour, or the light of His countenance; and set their face towards the pursuits and pleasures of this world, those temptations which are represented under the name of Jericho, a town which, as you will read in the book of Joshua, was accursed of God, and devoted to everlasting ruin¹. And, like this traveller, by their

¹ Joshua vi. 17.

departure from Jerusalem, they have fallen into a valley of blood, into the power of the worst of thieves, and the most cruel of murderers, the devil and his angels. And now stripped of his raiment of righteousness, wounded to the very death, and his wounds festering in the face of Heaven, man is left in the naked misery of his nature, without hope, or help, or comfort. A certain priest comes down that way ; by him are signified the sacrifices offered for sin in the earlier ages of the world, the offerings of Melchisedek, Noah, and Abraham. But to help this wretched object the blood of bulls and of goats was vain ; it could not cleanse his conscience, nor heal the wounds inflicted by his spiritual enemies ; the sacrifice passes by on the other side. A Levite next appears ; the representative of the Jewish law given by Moses, himself of the tribe of Levi, and administered in all its ceremonies by the Levite family. Moses is, indeed, represented as aware of the extent of the evil, and the miserable condition of mankind ; he approaches, he looks on the sufferer, but will not, or cannot help him ; no ceremonies, no outward form of holiness are here of service ; he passes by on the other side.

But “ a certain Samaritan,” (do you not remember how the Jews had said to Jesus, “ thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil¹ ?”) “ A certain Samaritan,” saith our Lord, using their own lan-

¹ St. John viii. 48.

guage, and the insults which they had thrown out against Him, “ as he journeyed, came where he was ; and when he saw him he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him¹.” Do you not perceive, my Christian friends, do not your own hearts inform you how truly this parable represents our blessed Saviour ? He, when no other help was found, when neither sacrifices nor ceremonies could have saved us from perishing miserably in our sins, He came to us ; He bound up the wounds which the malice of the devil had inflicted ; He expended His own provision, His own life and blood to heal them ; and bore us safely and tenderly to the ark of His holy covenant, which is here represented as an inn, under whose shelter all the sojourners of this world were to be received, of every nation and caste, and however wide had formerly been their wanderings.

Nor does His care stop here ; on the morrow when He departed, for how short alas ! was the stay of God among men ! though He is constrained to leave the sufferer, he commits him to kind and careful hands, with sufficient supplies for his present necessity, and a promise of ample payment at his second coming for all the good that should be done to the least of these his brethren. And so closely do even the smallest circumstances of the parable

¹ St. Luke x. 33, 34.

agree with this explanation, that the ancient doctors and fathers of the Church are of opinion that by the two pieces of silver, (which are in our version rendered pence, though their value was, in fact, much greater) by these two pieces of silver are represented the sacraments which are left for the support of Christians, till their good Samaritan shall return again, and which are committed to the care of the clergy who are represented here as hosts of Christ's inn, and dispensers of His spiritual provision and bounty. "Which now of these three," continues our Saviour, "was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" Was it the priest with the sacrifices of blood? Was it Moses the Levite in whose law thou trustest? Or, lastly, was it I whom the Jews called a Samaritan? "He," the lawyer was compelled to answer, "he that showed mercy on him." Then said Jesus, "As I have loved you, even so do ye also love one another;—as far as the difference between us will admit, imitate my example—go and do thou likewise¹."

The doctrine, then, contained in this parable may be stated in a few words; that mankind by the malice of the devil were robbed of God's grace, and brought into a state of misery, and into the shadow of death, from which neither sacrifices, nor ceremonies, nor any effort which man could make, nor any revelation which God thought proper to

¹ St. Luke x. 36, 37.

declare before the Messiah's coming, were able to recover them; and that (in the words of our Church service,) "there is no other name given to man through whom we may receive salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The practical lessons to be drawn from it are also of the most exceeding consequence to our salvation. First, from the example here given us by Christ, we may learn to "go and do likewise;" to consider all mankind as our neighbours and brethren; and to do them all the good in our power. And that this love and desire to do them service is not to be confined to those only whom we know, or with whom we are connected; for the traveller described in the parable, was a perfect stranger to the Samaritan, and no otherwise connected with him than as he wanted his help. But further, the Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies, hating each other as unclean and unholy. Yet this good man flings from him, at once, we see, all former hate, all remembrance of ancient injuries, and recollects only that the miserable wretch who is bleeding before him is a man and a brother. And shall we presume to let our party feelings, our prejudices, or our own poor resentments interfere with the commands of God, or the duty which we owe to our brethren! When our fellow-creature is perishing for lack of our help, shall we plead that he is a stranger, that he is nothing to us, that he has used us ill formerly, and can expect nothing at our hands? "As we