

have therefore opportunity," are the words of the apostle, "let us do good unto all men ¹!"

But, secondly, we must not show our love in common expressions of pity, or excuse ourselves from doing nothing on the pretence that little is in our power. Some men will tell us gravely, that they cannot give to every beggar that asks, and therefore they shut their hearts against all. But if this Samaritan, because he could not build a hospital, because he could not give up his time to watch on that dangerous road for the many other wretches who were stripped and wounded there; if on these pretences, for I cannot call them reasons, he had left this man to perish, whom it was in his power to save, what should we have said or thought of such cruel prudence? Be not deceived; impossibilities are not required of us, but as far as we can, we must be merciful; and that our means of doing good may reach the farther, we must learn from this kind traveller. He went himself on foot that he might assist the dying man with his horse; he with his own hands bound up his wounds, and laid out on him the oil and wine which he had prepared for his own journey. In like manner we should keep a watch over our little useless expences, and deny ourselves some unnecessary luxuries or comforts, that we may have to give to them that need. Blessed is he who is frugal, for he is able to be generous.

¹ Gal. vi. 10.

Thirdly, we may draw from this parable very useful instruction as to the duty both of the clergy and of those committed to their care. We see that the wounded traveller, who represents mankind, was not immediately restored to health and vigour, but was to remain under cure till the second coming of his deliverer. And during this time, the ministers of the Gospel, as hosts of Christ's inn, and distributors of His Sacraments, are to view themselves in no other light than as patient nurses of a sick and feeble world.

Happy are they among our number, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing; and woe, everlasting woe to those who neglect their duty! But you, my friends, you are also called upon to shew your gratitude to our good Samaritan, the Redeemer of our souls, by submitting to the advice and government of those in whose care He has left you. You must not murmur uncharitably at our imperfections, or seek unadvisedly after new doctrines, or new spiritual medicines. You must not leave the sound word of God to pamper your appetites with change; nor wander lightly from the shelter of the Church into the howling wilderness which surrounds it. It is your business and your duty, by a patient use of the regular means of grace, by devout hearing of the word of God, and diligent and faithful attendance on His Sacraments, to perfect the cure which Christ has begun in your hearts; and it is the business and duty of all, in whatever station they

may be placed, by praying for each other, helping each other and bearing each other's burdens to fulfill the law of Christ. This is His first and His last commandment, the beginning and the end of the Christian faith, that as He has loved us so should we love one another. To Him we can give no worthy honour ; our praise, our service, our gratitude are without power to reward the Almighty ; but all He asks and all He requires as a return for His help and mercy, is that we should " Go and do likewise ! "

SERMON X.

LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD.

[Preached at Bombay, May 22, 1825.]

ST. MATT. xx. 16.

*So the last shall be first, and the first last ; for many be called,
but few chosen.*

THE parable which these words conclude, was spoken by our Lord in correction of a little natural vanity in which St. Peter had indulged, when contemplating the sacrifices which he and his brother apostles had made in the cause of the Messiah. A certain young man of ample property, and of dispositions favourable to religion, had been honoured by Christ, either as a test of his faith, or as a mark of approbation of his virtues, with a call to His ministry, and to the number of His chosen disciples. Dismayed, however, at the danger and self-denial by which such a life was menaced, encumbered by his affection for the world, and by the comforts and luxuries of his present condition, he shrunk back, though sadly and unwillingly, from

the offered boon, and “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions¹.” On this our Lord took occasion to remark, as may be seen in the preceding chapter, on the fascinating nature of worldly wealth, and the absolute necessity of a more than common dispensation of celestial grace, to enable the rich man to break the chain of pleasure and of pride, to resist the many and peculiar temptations with which his path in life is strewn, and to resign, if it should become his duty, his rank, his fortune, and his ease, in the service of that God from whom he has received them.

While He was thus speaking, and thus, as it should seem, lamenting the dangerous wealth of the young man who had just gone away, it is easy to perceive what was passing in St. Peter’s mind. “If the sacrifice of wealth would have been so precious in the eyes of God, then, surely, the self-devotion of the poor must, at least, be equally well pleasing to Him. I and my fellows had, indeed, somewhat less to resign, but what we had, we gave up for Christ; the comfort of a settled home, the security of peaceful labour, the endearments of our kindred, the implements of our toil, and all those numberless and nameless ties which bind the poor man, even more than the rich, to the scenes of his childish sports, the recollections of his earliest love, the limits of his humble ambition,—all these we resigned, and we resigned them cheerfully.”

¹ St. Matt. xix. 22.

“ Behold we have forsaken all and followed Thee ! what shall we have therefore ? ”

The answer of our Lord is more than usually impressive and beautiful. While assuring His ardent and affectionate disciple of an ample and overflowing recompense, He replies to his thoughts as well as to his words, and cautions him against supposing that all who now seemed comparatively backward in the cause of the Gospel, should remain for ever idle and indifferent ; or that none but those who were the first and immediate companions of the Messiah, should be admitted to their proportionate share in the toils and honours of His kingdom. “ I say unto you,” are His words, “ that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first ¹. ”

As if He had said, “ Doubt not, Peter, that thou and thy companions will receive from a bountiful God a rich return for all your labours in His cause ; doubt not that whatever sacrifices are made, for my sake, of present ease, of present possession, of present and worldly affections, will be all no less duly

¹ St. Matt. xix. 28—30.

and mercifully appreciated by Him, who will not suffer even a cup of water given in His name to pass without its recompence. But deem not yourselves so secure of my love by the sacrifices which you *have* made as to relax in your future services. Judge not those who stand idle now, for the time of their labouring may come. Of you who have been my earliest followers there is one who shall betray his Lord; and another, even thou thyself, shalt basely and shamelessly deny me. And there is one whose name ye know not, and who is now my bitter enemy, one Saul of Tarsus, to whom I shall, hereafter, make myself known, who, having received my faith, shall labour more abundantly than you all, and come not a whit behind the chiefest of my earlier Apostles." "For the kingdom of Heaven," our Lord proceeds to say, "the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man which is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard; and when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them, go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you; and they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, because no man hath hired us. He

saith unto them, go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the Lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, call the labourers and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, these last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a penny? take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first and the first last, for many be called but few chosen."

Is there any here who can impugn the justice of such an expostulation? Is there any who does not perceive that, when the earliest labourers had received their stipulated hire, they had no colourable ground of murmuring against their employer for giving an equal sum to any other whom he chose to favour? Can we fail to recollect that of all these labourers the necessities were the same, though their opportunities of earning a supply had

not been equal; that the same kindness which called them in when so little remained to be done, might naturally be expected to prompt a liberal employer to proportion his bounty to their wants rather than to their merits; and that he who might unblamed have relieved those wants without exacting any labour at all, was equally justified in exacting no more labour than the approach of night enabled them to apply effectually?

Though, therefore, (as we have seen from the circumstances under which the parable was spoken) its primary application was plainly to the hope and reward of the Christian ministry, and its intention was to rebuke the self-exaltation of Peter, and to prepare both himself and his fellow apostles for the reception of future teachers of the Gospel and future participants in glory; though this was, I say, its primary meaning, yet its principle is obviously capable of a far wider and more important application, as illustrative of the general dealings of the Almighty with mankind, and of the manner, more particularly, in which, under the Gospel, mankind in general are admitted to mercy and salvation.

I do not mean, as some have mistakenly supposed, I do not mean, that this parable can be fairly said to convey the doctrine (which is not very consonant with reason, and which is directly opposed to many positive assertions of Scripture) that the condition of the blessed in another world is to be alike to all; and that, whatever their ex-

ertions in the cause of God, they are not to differ from each other in glory. Such a supposition is opposed to the express declaration of our Lord that in His "Father's house are many mansions;" it is opposed in a no less striking manner to the memorable parable of the talents¹; it is opposed by all which we are told in Scripture of that celestial hierarchy of angels, whose fellow citizens we ourselves hope to become; it is opposed by the specific promise which our Lord had just made to His twelve that *they* should sit on twelve thrones, in sovereignty as well as in dignity, exalted over the tribes of believing Israelites.

But, in truth, those enquirers may do worse than lose their labour, who seek in the illustrations and parables of Scripture a detailed as well as a general likeness of the objects which they are intended to explain, and are discontented with the portrait if they miss the minutest feature of the original. For no purpose of instruction can such an accuracy of circumstances be required; on no principle of poetry or eloquence is such servility of adaptation desirable. When a lion is held up to the imitation of a warrior fighting for his native land, shall this be gravely received as a recommendation to contend, like the lion, with the weapons only which nature has furnished? When the sluggard is sent to the anthill for instruction, did the wise king of Israel intend him to scoop his dwelling in the ground?

¹ St. John xiv. 2. St. Matt. xxv. 14—30.

What would become of Esop and Bidpai, if their apologues were expounded by the same minuteness of allegory ? Or what renders it necessary to suppose in the present instance, that the rewards of Heaven will, necessarily, be all on an equality, while we refuse at the same time, which we must refuse, to suppose that envy, murmuring, and an evil eye will be found among the spirits of just men made perfect ?

All, therefore, which the spirit of the parable necessarily implies, and all which it can be supposed to imply, (when coupled with the circumstances under which it was spoken, and compared with other passages of Scripture) is an assertion of the absolute sovereignty of God over His works, and the absolute freedom of His bounties to them ; a declaration that the rewards of another state of existence are not a matter of debt, but of grace and mercy, and that, in the distribution of these rewards the Almighty will be guided by a reference to the necessities of mankind as much as to their virtues ; and more particularly that those virtues so far as, for Christ's sake and in His name, they can be taken account of at all, will be sometimes estimated by proportions entirely distinct from the length of our Christian course, and the amount of opportunities afforded to us.

I will endeavour to explain myself, and in so doing to vindicate, by His help, the mercy and justice of the Most High. It is, in the first place, certain from the whole tenour of the Gospel, and if

direct testimonies were wanting, it might be inferred from the present parable, that no man can either enter into a state of grace, or work out the salvation once begun by God's Spirit, in his heart, except by the preventing and supporting grace of that blessed Spirit alone. It is God's gift that he is called. It is God's vineyard in which he is privileged to labour; and the power and opportunities of doing good are, like tools for the day, supplied to him by God alone.

In thus maintaining God's absolute sovereignty, I am not maintaining the doctrine of absolute decrees. I cannot conceive that God ever uses His sovereignty in that manner; though grace is free, it will not follow that it is employed irresistibly; and, for all which appears to the contrary in the present parable, the labourers who were sent into the vineyard might, as well as the guests who were invited to the marriage supper, have refused to go, and have preferred their previous idleness, or the service of a different master. But with such as accept the call, with such as persevere in their labours, with such as, on account of these labours, have reason to expect everlasting life from their Heavenly Father, with all such the calling has been of God; and for that calling, and all its blessed consequences, they owe to God unbounded thankfulness, and have reason to ascribe to His goodness alone even the covenanted rewards which they receive from Him. But it is obvious that His goodness to them, being thus free, cannot be lessened

by the fact that He shows to certain of their brethren a greater goodness still ; they are, themselves, paid beyond their deserts ; and it is envy alone, of all evil passions the worst and basest, which can find pain in the happiness of another. Yet even in this dispensation of our God, as represented to us in the present parable, is nothing capricious or unintelligible, inasmuch as other considerations innumerable, besides the duration, or even outward success of our Christian course, must have their weight with the Alljust and Allwise.

One believer, for instance, is placed by His providence in a distinguished and, outwardly, an arduous station of duty. He bears the burthen and the heat of the day ; he rides in the foremost ranks of the armies of His invincible Lord ; he carries the banner of the cross where it is assailed by the potentates of earth, and the princes of the power of the air ; and he fights, through a long life, the good fight of faith successfully, being encouraged and supported, in part it may be, by the very conspicuousness of the sphere in which he moves, and still more and more, undoubtedly, by that secret influence of the Most High, which hath girded his loins with strength, and covered his head in the day of battle.

The pilgrimage of another is of an obscurer kind ; his walk is through the secret paths of life, unknown, unpraised, perhaps reprov'd and slighted. He has no converts to show ; he has had no splendid opportunities of evincing his love of God and

his dauntless faith in his Redeemer. His warfare has been within ; and in weakness and fear, in solitude and silence, he has struggled with the defects of an imperfect education, with the discouragement of unsuccessful labours, with the infirmities of a peevish and distrustful temper, with the unkindness or neglect of men, and with the indescribable terrors of those powers of darkness which are most potent with the weak and melancholy. Yet, though he has trembled, he has not yielded ; yet, though he has done little, he has endeavoured all he could ; yet, though he has been encompassed with darkness and dismay, from the deeps he hath called upon God ; and his eye, from the midst of the valley of the shadow of death, has been bent on the heavenly Sion ! And of these two candidates, these martyrs of different descriptions, which best may claim the palm ? I know not ; who but God can know ! But the men are both gone to their reward ; and I am convinced that the more illustrious and distinguished servant of Christ would be neither surprised nor grieved to find his weaker brother set beside him !

It is the same with every exercise of the graces and virtues of Christianity. A man is judged, and if judged then surely recompensed, according to that which he hath, not according to that which he hath not. This man, we will suppose, has an ample fortune, and uses that fortune nobly. He supports missions, he founds hospitals, he relieves the bodily and spiritual wants of hundreds. This

other is himself but little, if at all, elevated above the condition of an object of charity ; yet he steals from his own repose to watch by the sick-bed of a neighbour ; he defrauds his own scanty meal to share it with those who are yet more necessitous. The one is a mighty river, which bears wealth and fertility to many provinces ; the other is a little mountain spring, whose rills are but sufficient to nourish a drooping flower, or to offer a cup of cold water to a fainting traveller. But is the widow's mite forgotten ? or who shall doubt that, under circumstances of which God alone is the fitting judge, it may be, when the river and the spring have alike rolled their waters to the ocean of eternity, that the one may, in proportion to its course and its quantity, have been as valuable as the other !

The same observation will apply to a longer and a shorter life, or, to approach more closely to the particular circumstances of the parable, to the strongest case of all, of an earlier or later conversion to the faith and practice of Christianity. It is a great and blessed thing when a man has, from his youth up, been faithful ; neither transgressed in any considerable respect, the will of his Heavenly Father. For such a one a crown of glory is laid up ; for such a one the promise abideth sure that he shall dwell in the presence of God for ever ! How many dangers does he not escape who, from the beginning of his course, has never widely wandered ! How many fears, how many bitter sorrows,

how many struggles against habits of lengthened evil, how many agonies unspeakable of repentance, of shame, of doubt, of terrour and despair, has he escaped, which must be assuredly undergone by him who at the third, the sixth, or, still more, at the eleventh hour, is awakened to a sense of his condition. Yet even of this last, whose day is drawing to a close, the case, though most perilous, is not altogether desperate. His heart may yet be touched ; he may yet seek the face of the Lord sincerely, humbly, penitently ; and that gracious Lord, before whose angels there is joy on the conversion of a single sinner, that Lord who bare with Him from the cross the spirit of the penitent thief to Paradise, will not disdain even the offering of a single and a last hour, nor shut the gates of Heaven against repentance under any circumstances. But can he regain his lost ground in the race ? Can he, beginning late, yet equal his earlier competitors ? that must depend on ten thousand different circumstances ; but it must, under all circumstances to a certain degree, depend on himself. His task will be the harder, too hard I own for a dying man ; and for an old man, unassisted by an extraordinary measure of Divine grace, beyond the reach of possibility ; yet much may, in the strength of the Most High, be done ; and if he sanctifies his few remaining years to the service of God, with a livelier faith in proportion as his end is nearer, a deeper sorrow in proportion as his sense of guilt is keener, a holier fear in proportion as his danger is great, and an

unbounded love in proportion as the mercy shown to him is unbounded, it may be that some of those who have in past life accounted him reprobate, may to their surprise, but in Heaven surely not to their envy, hear the sentence, "I will give unto this last even as unto thee!"

The sum of all is this, that the most experienced Christian has great need to fly from confidence; and the most dispirited penitent no reason for indulging in despair. The first, even in his most prosperous course, will do well to take heed, lest those, whom he has left far behind, should, through his carelessness, be gaining ground on him; and he should learn to think more comfortably and hopefully of many whose present condition appears most estranged from God, inasmuch as we know not but an acceptable time may yet be found, in which they may be called of God, and hear His voice, and gladly and successfully become His labourers. The second may be emboldened to a more excellent zeal and a warmer piety, to improve to the best advantage whatever time remains to them, by the assurance that for those who labour well even a single hour, a reward may be in store, at which even their associates in glory may be astonished. But let all men beware how they suffer precedents of this sort to withdraw them from a timely care of their salvation, as knowing that whenever they are last called is the eleventh hour to them, that the later our repentance is deferred, it must needs be the more arduous and sorrowful;

that neither youth nor middle age are exempt from the accidents of mortality ; that though life should be granted, it does not follow that grace will return ; and that he who commits his soul to the chance of an evening which may never arrive, and a warning which may never be granted to him, may learn too late the consequence of his unspeakable folly, when the vintage is ended and the night is come, and the steward of the vineyard shall descend in His Father's name to recompense their deserts alike to the profitable and unprofitable servant !

SERMON XI¹.

THE CONVERSION OF THE HEATHEN.

[Preached at Bombay, on Whitsunday, May 22; at Colombo, September 18; and at Calcutta, on Advent Sunday, November 27, 1825; in aid of the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.]

ACTS ii. 38, 39.

The promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

ON the nature and certainty of that illustrious event which we are assembled this day to commemorate; on the personality and divinity of that mighty Spirit whose advent has been now re-

¹ This Sermon is published agreeably to a promise made by his Lordship to the several Archidiaconal Committees formed upon its delivery. It is printed exactly as it was originally preached at Bombay. The body of the Discourse was substantially the same when delivered at Colombo and Calcutta, the introduction only, which relates to the day of Pentecost, being altered as the several occasions required. It was the intention of the Bishop to deliver it again at Madras on his return from his visitation of the Peninsula. It is unnecessary to relate the sad event by which this intention was frustrated.—*Calcutta Editor.*

corded ; of the manner in which His testimony confirmed the truth of our Saviour's mission from the Father ; and on the blessed support, consolation, and protection, which the universal Church, and each individual member of it have since continued to receive from Him ; on these natural and usual topics of discussion on the day of Pentecost, on which it is reasonable to suppose the majority of Christians informed, and on which I have abundant reason to believe my present audience well instructed, it is not now my intention to address you. There is another consideration, less obvious, or less frequently insisted on, but which arises no less naturally from the circumstances under which the Holy Ghost was given ; and which, in connection with those circumstances, I shall endeavour to impress on your conviction ; I mean the diffusive and universal character of the revelation of God's will through His Son ; the interest which every nation under Heaven possesses in the Christian covenant ; and the obligation which rests upon every believer to assist and forward, in his station and according to his ability, the extension of that knowledge whereby he is himself made wise unto salvation, the communication of those spiritual riches which he has himself received so freely.

That the message of mercy brought by Christ to mankind was the common heritage of all who partake in our human nature ; that to the Shiloh who should come, the gathering of the nations was to be ; and that, in the promised descendant of Abra-

ham's loins all the tribes of the earth were to be called blessed, are truths so broadly stated in Scripture, and so universally received by those who defer to scriptural authority, that it seems needless, at this time of day, and among those who are not professed unbelievers, to prove that the religion of His Son was designed by God as the religion of all mankind; that it was the will of the Most High that His knowledge should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; and that the false systems and false divinities of former ages should be consigned, by the disclosure of a holier and sublimer creed, to the custody of oblivion, of neglect and scorn; to the moles of their consecrated grottos, and the bats of their dark and deserted temples.

In conformity with these principles, and with innumerable passages in the ancient prophetic writings, in which these principles are developed and confirmed, we find our Lord, while on earth, announcing to his Jewish disciples His anticipation of other sheep of a different and distant fold; we find the same Lord, when already risen from the dead, sending forth His disciples, so soon as they should have received power from on high, to preach the Gospel to every creature; we find the promised Comforter, in the miraculous glory which He shed forth, and the miraculous gifts which He communicated, assuming a form and confirming a faculty, of which the one was without meaning, and the other without utility, except as symbols and instruments of diffusive light and knowledge; and

we find, lastly, in the counsel given by St. Peter to his alarmed and conscience-smitten countrymen, that the promise, consequent on baptism, of remission of sins, and the gifts and comforts of God's Spirit, was not only to them and to their children, but to as many as God should call from the furthest regions of the earth, and the nations previously most estranged from the knowledge and worship of Jehovah.

It may be thought, indeed, that on this avowed intention, and these repeated injunctions of the Most High, the duty of endeavouring the conversion of the heathen might rest with sufficient security even abstracted from every other consideration of charity to the heathen themselves, and the desire, which is natural to every well constituted mind, of imparting to others those blessings which we ourselves most value.

That man would be no dutiful servant, that man would be any thing but an affectionate son, who, even without a positive command, and with no more than a bare intimation of the wishes of his father or his lord, should hesitate to employ the best exertions in his power to fulfil his blameless desires, and perform his righteous pleasure; and still less are the express injunctions of a parent or a superior to be slighted, because we ourselves do not at once perceive the expediency of an order, or apprehend, without having made the trial, its entire success impossible. When David expressed, though it were but a transient wish, to drink of the

fountain which welled up beside the gate of Bethlehem, his valiant men rushed forward, at once, sword in hand, to forestall his commands, and brought back from the thickest of the enemy, in their helmets, that blood-bought water which their sovereign had barely longed after. And the history of every age is full of illustrious examples of obedience and loyalty, in which the severest labours have been undergone, and the most appalling dangers encountered, in execution of commands, the motives of which have been but imperfectly known, or the policy of which has been even more than doubted. Let but the professed followers of God and His Son entertain the same desire to please their Lord which was displayed by Abishai and his comrades ; let but the professed believers in Christ exhibit the same trust in His wisdom and deference to His authority, which is claimed by every public man from his soldiers and subordinate functionaries, and we may be assured that the attempt to communicate a knowledge of the truth to the Gentiles will be no longer neglected or opposed as an unauthorised or chimerical labour.

If, indeed, that be true, which no professing Christian will gainsay ; if the religion of Christ be acknowledged as that form of doctrine which most of all represents God as He is, and in that sublime and amiable character which the awful Judge, the mighty King, the most merciful Father of all, maintains with His subjects and His offspring ; if it

teaches men to reject all erroneous and degrading notions of God, and to serve Him in the manner most worthy of and most acceptable to Him ; it is really hard to say, by what process of self-deception a man can be led to suppose that he himself loves and honours the Almighty, who yet is indifferent or averse to the vindication of His name and attributes among his fellow-creatures. Of this feeling we are all abundantly sensible where our own honour, or the honour of any person whom we really value is implicated. And I appeal to all who hear me, whether, if even a tenth part of those absurdities and abominations were asserted of an earthly friend, an earthly parent, an earthly sovereign or benefactor, which the heathen around us, in their ignorance and superstition, assert and believe of God Most High, our best and most persevering endeavours would not be employed to do justice to the misrepresented friend, and undeceive the blinded calumniator.

Nor is this obligation weakened by the objection which is frequently brought forward, (sometimes against the truth of the Christian doctrine itself, and sometimes against the necessity of proclaiming that doctrine to the Gentiles), that if God were really displeased with the varieties of religious faith which exist among mankind, or if He were really so desirous as we suppose Him to be, for the universal adoption of any one religious system, He has means in His hand for at once accomplishing

His purpose, without waiting for the tardy feet of those human agents, whose office it is to bear the good tidings of salvation.

Of this objection, as employed against the truth of Christianity itself, I know not that, in the present place, I am bound to take any notice. It is not my present business to discuss the evidences of our faith; and, while addressing a congregation of Christians, I am justified in reasoning on Christian principles only, and taking for granted the data on which all Christians are agreed, that our religion is true, and that it is the best and most perfect which the Almighty has ever made known to His creatures. But as the notion to which I have alluded is at the bottom of very much of the avowed or lurking infidelity which we meet with, I may be excused for observing, that the objection against the Divine origin of the Gospel, which is taken from the pretended narrow limits within which the Gospel has been yet received, is alike unfortunate both in the facts which it assumes and in the arguments which it founds on them.

The adducers have, in the first place, misrepresented or misconceived the general purport of our Saviour's prophecies, in which, though the final triumph of His cause is often foretold, its immediate reception or rapid progress among men is never so much as intimated. The direct contrary is, indeed, implied in all comparisons of His Church and its privileges, to treasure hid in the ground which escapes the search of careless or superficial en-

quirers ; to leaven buried in a bushel of meal, whose secret and pervading influence should make itself felt at length, and by degrees, through the whole of the mass which concealed it ; of corn sown in a field, over which many moons must wax and wane ere first its green and tender shoots, its golden ears next, and lastly, its overflowing and manifold harvest, alleviate the anxiety and reward the labours of the husbandman. The contrary is, lastly, implied in the many predictions of our Lord while on earth, which prepare His disciples to encounter opposition, persecution, and contempt from the world in which they were to labour ; and that many generations of offence, of dissension, of opposition, yea, and of apostacy, were to intervene before the Tabernacle of God was to be finally erected among His people, and the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Nor can it be accounted reasonable to object to the claims of a prophet to Divine inspiration, that the sect which He founded has not met with a more favourable fortune upon earth than He Himself, in the first instance, promised and foretold.

Nor is this the only fact connected with Christianity which has been ignorantly or wilfully misrepresented. Its actual progress among men, and the number of its external professors have been almost systematically depreciated and diminished, while, by an opposite mistake, the probable amount of the Mussulman and Gentile inhabitants of our

planet have been exaggerated in a five-fold proportion. But, if assuming the latest and most accurate estimate which I have met with, (and that from no friendly hand) of the comparative population of the different sects among mankind, we estimate the amount of those who at present are called by the name of Christ at 200,000,000, or a fourth part of mankind; if we recollect that, within these limits are included all the most improved and improving portion of the world, the most powerful in arms, the most skilful in arts, the most distinguished in every branch of moral and natural philosophy, the most industrious, the wealthiest and the wisest among the sons of men; if we bear in mind that to them the entire old world is immediately or indirectly tributary; and that, in the new world, to which their genius has led the way, they have found an almost vacant, and a little less than boundless field for the occupation and dominion of an innumerable and believing posterity; if we consider that, however slow the progress of Christianity may have been, it is now and has been always progressive; it may seem that the enemies of our creed have been somewhat rash in their exultations over its failure. It may require no mighty measure of faith to believe that “the Lord is not slack as men, count slackness;” that the word which hath gone forth from His mouth shall in no wise return unto Him empty; and that He who hath thus far conquered will go on to fresh conquests still; till the kingdoms of this world shall become

the kingdom of God and His Christ ; till His Church, afflicted first and militant still, shall become universal, and at length triumphant ; and till the material world itself shall make way for a nobler and happier creation, and a great voice shall be heard of much people in Heaven, saying, “ Alleluja, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.”

Those objectors, indeed, who would revile the Christian faith, because in the course of 1800 years it has not yet converted the world, have forgotten the analogy between the moral and material universe, and how universally, in the latter, those changes which are beneficial, are, in comparison, slow and gradual. The desolation of a province by an earthquake or a volcano, may be the work of a single hour ; but months, and years, and ages have been necessary, ere the gradual deposition of alluvial soil has clothed the rocky valley of the Nile with the harvests and fertility of Egypt, or produced Bengal from its parent Ganges. And those who infer that God does not will the eventual triumph of His name, and the eventual and complete felicity of His creatures, because His providence works by the agency of secondary causes, and through the imperfection of human labourers, may as well reason from the existence of vice that God does not delight in virtue, and are blasphemers against the religion of nature, as well as against that of revelation and prophecy.

The honour, then, of God, and His will as declared in Scripture, are of themselves sufficient

reasons to engage the zeal, the affections, the faith, and energies of Christians in the endeavour to disseminate His truth among those who still sit in darkness. Now, if much remains to be done ere the victory of the cross shall attain its full completion, if many nations still dishonour, by superstition, the glory of Him who made us all, and if the mightiest, and wisest, and best of beings is still unknown or misrepresented among the greater proportion of those who bear His image, the result on our minds should be no other than a greater ardour of exertion, in proportion as its necessity is greater, a more exalted zeal for His name, in proportion as that name is ignorantly dishonoured.

But it is not our duty to our Maker and Redeemer alone which should urge us to the dissemination of His Gospel; our love of man no less constraineth us to communicate to our neighbours and brethren the same inestimable blessings, which we have ourselves freely received from the Giver of all good things. It was not for the glory of God alone that the Son of God descended from on high, but in order that peace and good will to man might be manifested in that illustrious condescension. And it must be, to say the least of it, either a very inadequate notion of the nature and extent of the benefits conferred on mankind by a knowledge of and belief in Christianity, or a very lamentable coldness and indifference to the happiness or misery of our fellow creatures, which can make us backward, much more averse, to lend our aid, to

our power and in our proper station, to the progress of the true religion among the heathen.

For, let us recollect, that it is not wisdom alone, it is not the more perfect knowledge of God and His nature and attributes, it is not a mere freedom from idle or injurious superstitions, it is not a pure and holy law of life and morals only ; nor yet the many and various advantages of a civil and political character, the improvement of the human intellect, the extension of secular knowledge, the acquisition of fresh fields of enterprise and mental enjoyment, and the perfection of those many arts and sciences which an enlargement of the understanding brings with it ; it is not the advancement of social life, the more enlarged and accurate notions of truth and justice, the corroboration of every civil and every domestic tie, the restoration of the other sex to their natural place in society, and the many blessed effects which flow to our own sex, from that restored society and influence ; not the wisdom, the wealth, the peace, the civil liberty, which, wherever Christianity has appeared, have uniformly followed in her train, and which every nation has enjoyed more purely and perfectly in proportion as the system of Christianity which it has received has been purer and more perfect ; these are not the only, nor the greatest blessings which our backwardness or indifference would deny to our uninstructed fellow creatures. These, or any one of them, would be an object worthy of the utmost exertions and ardent desires of a benevolent mind ;

and to accomplish which, in any considerable degree, the labour of a man's whole life would be a cheap and easy sacrifice. Who is there among us who would not rejoice, by all safe and peaceable means, to introduce a greater reverence for truth, a greater purity of language, a better founded and more consistent veneration for the obligations of justice and integrity among those with whom we dwell, to whom is entrusted the daily care of our persons, our property, and our children, and through whose agency and evidence alone, those among us who bear rule must provide for the public peace and security? Who is there who calls to mind the wretched follies by which men, naturally as acute and intelligent as ourselves, attempt to escape from the burden of sin, and to appease the anger of offended Heaven, without desiring to substitute repentance and a faith in that great Victim who died for the sins of the world, in place of the vain washings, the unprofitable self-mortifications, the abominable obscenity, the hideous cruelty, the ashes, the torturing irons, and the torturing flame, which engross the time, and delude the understanding, and destroy the happiness of the Indian aspirant after holiness? Who, lastly, that has either witnessed or heard but a small part of the wonderful and horrible things which, in the name of religion, are perpetrated and daily perpetrating around us, but must desire, (by the same mild and persuasive arguments which only suit our cause) to quench those funeral flames to which love,

strong as death, is now consigned by interested priestcraft; to abate those murders which pollute the stream of Ganges, and add a darker horror to the hideous features of Juggernâth; and to still those innocent cries and dry up that infant blood, which day and night mount up from Central and Western India, as a witness against us, to the God and Parent of all men?

But more is yet behind! These are not the only nor the most awful considerations which impel us to labour in the dissemination of the Christian faith. The souls of men are implicated! It is not, indeed, necessary for my argument, and it is far, very far, from my inclination, to determine rashly of the final state of those that are without, and who must stand or fall to that great Master only, whose throne is established in righteousness and judgement. But whatever mercy may be shown to those that offend in ignorance; whatever benefits may emanate (through the uncovenanted bounties of our God) from the death of Christ, towards those on whom the light of the Gospel has not shined; yet, doubtless, (if we would not resolve the privileges of the Gospel into a nullity,) a faith in Christ must be the entrance to a more certain and excellent salvation; the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which the regenerate obtain, must not only enable them to a more genuine holiness, but conduct them to a brighter glory; and, in whatever sense the Living God is the Saviour of all men, the same text, on which we ground this hope, assures

us, that, in a more pre-eminent and particular sense, He is the Saviour of them which believe. Nor is this all; for if murder, if uncleanness, if fraud, if falsehood, be breaches of that law which is written in the heart of every man, and that natural light whereby even the heathen are left inexcusable; yea, if idolatry itself be a practice, (as we find it described both in the prophetic and the apostolic writings), no less offensive in itself to God, no less subversive of the morals of men, and no less a criminal breach of the law of nature, than it is inconsistent with the dictates of natural reason, and with those notions of the Almighty which even the visible creation inculcates; it is impossible to contemplate the spiritual state, and spiritual prospects of very many of those by whom we are surrounded, without a painful apprehension of the issue of such errors, and a very earnest wish and prayer that the knowledge and sanctifying grace of the Gospel may be in time communicated to them.

Nor can it be maintained with reason that feelings like these, and the exertions consequent on such feelings, are exclusively incumbent on a peculiar order of men, on the ministers or missionaries of Christianity. On us, no doubt, there is an additional and awful obligation; a woe is laid on us if we preach not the Gospel; and He who hath sent us forth into the world to proclaim His truth to every creature, requireth of us, beyond a doubt, our utmost endeavours,—where means of

personal exertion are afforded—and our utmost liberality, where we have to aid the personal exertions of our brethren. But to all, and not to the clergy only, the honour of God should be dear. On all, and not on a small minority of God's servants, the obligation is imposed of desiring the happiness and promoting the salvation of their brethren. And it is as much the duty of every Christian, in his proper sphere, and according to the means which he possesses, to lend his help in turning the sinner from the error of his ways, and delivering the blinded Gentile from the accumulated danger of his condition, as it would be to pluck his brother out of the fire, or to prevent him, by timely warning, from walking down a precipice.

“ Still,” it has been said, “ for such feelings and exertions there is ample scope at home. There are thousands in our native land who, no less than the heathen, need instructing and reclaiming, and on whom it were wiser and better to expend our missionary energies, than to intrude them on a race with whom we have no concern, and who may resent the intrusion in a manner dangerous to the dearest political interests of our nation.”

For the first of these objections there might perhaps be more plausibility, if the promoters of missionary exertions abroad were indifferent to the condition of their erring countrymen, or if they did not also labour, at least as diligently as their opponents, in the support of schools, in the distribution of the Scriptures, and in every other channel of

benevolent exertion and expenditure, which can reclaim the wretched from the error of his ways, and instruct the ignorant in his duty. But to maintain that the danger of those who are already in possession of the means of grace, is to occupy our mind so entirely that we can spare no pity to those who have no means of grace at all, that the progress of God's kingdom is to be suspended so long as there remains, in those countries over which it has a general empire, a perverse and unbelieving remnant, is to maintain that which, if it had been held by the apostles, would have excluded us, who are now assembled, for ever from the knowledge and blessings of which we are partakers; inasmuch as while a single Jew remained unconverted, it would have been an offence, on this principle, to offer the kingdom of God to any single Gentile. And who does not see, that the existence of misery and vice, and ignorance in our own land, is no argument whatever against endeavouring, in other lands, to diminish the amount of vice and ignorance, and misery, and that we are bound by every tie of reason, and compassion, and piety, to render honour to God's name wherever we may ourselves be thrown, and, as far as we have means and opportunity, to do good to all men without distinction.

But can it really be maintained, with any semblance of truth, or reason, or humanity, that the nations of this country, our neighbours, our domestics, our fellow-subjects, our fellow soldiers, who toil for us; who shed their blood in our defence;

whose wealth contributes so largely to the prosperity of Britain, and their valour (their faithful and invincible valour and allegiance,) so essentially promotes our security and renown; that these men, with whom we live and converse, distinguished by so many estimable and amiable qualities of intelligence, of bravery, of courteous and gentle demeanour, are devoid of a claim on all the good which we can render or obtain for them, on our affections, our bounties, our services, and, I will add, our prayers? Can we petition their Father and our's that His glorious kingdom may come, without desiring, if we think of them at all, that they may be partakers in it with us? or can we forget that such prayers and desires are no other than a mockery of God, unless our actions follow our lips, and we endeavour, in God's strength and help, to forward that triumph of His mercy for which we profess ourselves solicitous.

To the plea of political danger I must not be supposed insensible. We have no right, as Christians, to attempt a good work in a manner which is likely to be attended with an immediate and preponderant evil; we are bound, as Christian subjects and citizens, so to temper our zeal with discretion, as not to disturb the peace of the land wherein we dwell, and the government from whom we receive protection. And even setting aside all secular considerations and secular duties, we shall err most grossly against that pure and peaceable wisdom, whereby only we can attain the conversion of the heathen,

if we assail their errors with any other weapon than mild and courteous and unobtrusive argument, or do any thing which can array their angry passions against those opinions which we seek to recommend to their acceptance.

But in the system which only has been tried by the members of our communion, and which only, so far as my advice or authority can reach, shall ever, by God's blessing, be attempted in India ; a system studiously distinguished from and unconnected with government, yet studiously kept within those limits of prudence and moderation which a wise and liberal government has prescribed ; a system which, while it offers our faith to the acceptance of the heathen on the ground of its spiritual blessings, disqualifies no man, on account of his contrary opinions, from any civil or political advantage ; a system which, by the communication of general instruction and general morality, imparts a knowledge and feeling which, whether they become Christians or no, must be highly valuable to them ; a system which puts them in fair possession of the evidences of our creed, leaving it to themselves and their own unbiassed choice to determine between light and darkness ; in such a system, so long as it is steadily adhered to, and patiently and wisely pursued, there is not, there cannot be danger.

They are their own learned men who are our teachers, our correctors of the press, our fellow-labourers in the work of instruction ; they are their

own countrymen, yea, and they themselves who are benefited by the large expenditure which our system occasions amongst them; and even our missionaries, as associating with them more, and speaking their language better, and occupying themselves with their concerns and the promotion of their real or apprehended interests, are, (I have reason to believe, by what I have myself seen and heard in no inconsiderable part of India,) among the most popular Europeans who are to be found in their respective neighbourhoods. Yea more, I have had the happiness of witnessing, both in the number of converts which have already been made in Hindustan, in the general good conduct of those converts, and in the good terms on which they in general appear to live with their Gentile neighbours, both how much good may be done, and how little offence will be occasioned by a course of well-meant and well-directed efforts to enlighten the inhabitants of India.

Of all the various bodies of professing Christians, who, with more or less of light, and with greater or lesser zeal and providence, have been our precursors, or are about to be our emulators in this great and illustrious enterprise, it becomes me to speak with respect, and if I know my own heart, I shall never think of them with hostility. Every sect will naturally seek to diffuse those religious notions which they themselves esteem most agreeable to reason and religion; and any mode of Christianity, even the modes least distinguished by its peculiar

and most blessed characteristics, must be in itself, so far as it extends, a happy change from idolatry. But, while we rejoice that Christ is preached, even by those who hold not His faith in our own unity of fellowship ; while we are content that the morality of the Gospel should be disseminated, even by those who rob Christ of His Godhead and mediatorial attributes ; it is surely our duty to be no less anxious than they for the support and preaching of those forms which are associated with every recollection of early and ancestral reverence, those doctrines which we feel and know to be our surest sanction of morality in this world, and our only ground of hope in worlds beyond the grave. Every man, and every sect, must act for themselves, and according to the lights which they have received ; but let no man teach a doctrine which he does not believe, because it is likely to be popular, or suppress a truth which he holds most sacred, because he fears that it will not be well received by those whom he seeks to benefit. God, we may be sure, has revealed nothing to men which it is not highly desirable for men to know ; and the man who encourages the circulation of an imperfect creed, in the hope that its adoption may lead the enemy to that which he himself professes, is at once dealing untruly with himself, his neighbour, and the Most High ; with himself as seeking after God's glory by means which God has not sanctioned ; with his heathen neighbour, as offering him a religion of which he holds back the most essential portion ;

and with his God, as concealing the honour which God has given to His Son, and being ashamed, (for what else is it but shame or cowardice which withholds a truth through fear of offending?) being ashamed before men of the divinity and cross of his Saviour. In what I have said, I seek to dissuade no man from propagating the truth which he proposes, but I desire to impress on those who profess the same truth with myself, that on the support and munificence of the members of the Church of England, the institutions of that Church have a paramount claim, beyond those of any other sect or society.

Of that Society, and that particular Institution for which I am now anxious to interest your bounty, it may be said in few words, that the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, has, since its establishment in the year 1701, been sedulously and successfully labouring, with the approbation and under the guidance of the venerable fathers of our Church, and of some of our most distinguished statesmen and philosophers, in supporting a line of missionary stations, (above 100 in number), in some of the wildest and most neglected portions of the British empire, in the Scilly Islands, in New South Wales, in the wildernesses of Africa and America. Having been encouraged by recent events, and by an increase of funds derived from the contributions of a liberal public, it has extended, within the last ten years, the range of its labours into Bengal, where it now maintains three episcopally

ordained missionaries, (one more is on his way hither), and is the chief contributor to an institution in which all the three presidencies are equally interested, the establishment of Bishop's College, Calcutta,—of which the avowed and appropriate objects are to superintend and forward the translation and publication of the Scriptures in the languages of India, the education of youth, both native and European, (and selected in equal proportions from Bengal, Madras, Ceylon, and Bombay), in such a manner as to qualify them, as schoolmasters, for the diffusion of general knowledge among the natives, and, as missionaries, to impart that saving knowledge, without which the value of human acquirements is small indeed. It is on these grounds, and with a more immediate view to the present unfinished state of this establishment especially, (as an institution of no foreign or distant interest to those whom I am addressing, but which only wants your bounty to enable its conductors to do that of which they are most desirous, and extend its operations to this very neighbourhood, and to every part of the Western as well as the Eastern coast of this vast peninsula), that I respectfully but with confidence appeal to a bounty, to which appeal has never yet been made in vain.

And, as you desire the glory of God, and that the truth of His Son should be made known to every creature under Heaven; as you covet the happiness of mankind, and that innocent blood should be no longer shed amongst us; as you long

for the salvation of souls, and that those who serve and love you here should feel a yet purer and stronger affection for you in Paradise ; as you love your own souls, and would manifest the sincerity of your grateful faith in that Saviour by whom you are redeemed, I exhort, I advise, I entreat, yea, in the name of my Master and yours, in the name of Jesus, Son of God Most High, I demand, in this cause, your assistance and your offerings.

The Son of God, indeed, must reign, be the people never so unquiet ! The Gospel will finally triumph, let us neglect or oppose it as we may ! But woe be in that day of God's power to those who have set themselves against His Church's infant weakness ! and woe be to those minor or more timid sinners who have not lent their hand to His harvest ! “ Curse ye Meroz,” said the angel of the Lord, “ curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they went not forth to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty !” But of you, my brethren, I am persuaded better things ; and, both as knowing your liberality, and as desiring that your bounty may be made beneficial to your own souls and to those interests which you seek to forward, let me entreat you to devote those good works to God and His Son alone, by a lively faith, by a more excellent repentance, by a fervent prayer—that while you build an ark for others, you may not yourselves be shut forth and perish—and by a participation, let me add, in the blessed body and blood of Him by whose merit

alone we obtain, either that our alms-deeds or prayers can be remembered or accepted before His Father.

And, O Merciful God, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit, grant us, by the same Spirit, to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort, through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth, with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XII*.

THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

[Preached August 5, 1825, on the Consecration of the Church of Secrole, near Benares.]

GEN. xxviii. 16, 17.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, how dreadful is this place! this is none other than the House of God, and this the gate of Heaven.

THIS was the natural and touching exclamation of the patriarch Jacob, when, in his lonely and perilous journey from Canaan to the land of the Chaldees, the God of his fathers appeared to him in a dream

* This Sermon was published at Calcutta, with the following dedication:

TO WILLIAM AUGUSTUS BROOKE, ESQUIRE, SENIOR JUDGE, &c. &c. &c., SIR FREDERIC HAMILTON, BART. COLLECTOR, WILLIAM JOHN SANDS, ESQUIRE, SECOND JUDGE, AND THE OTHER CIVIL AND MILITARY OFFICERS OF THE CITY AND DISTRICT OF BENARES, THE FOLLOWING SERMON, PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST, IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED, AS AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THEIR MUNIFICENT ZEAL FOR THE INTERESTS OF TRUE RELIGION, AND THEIR FRIENDLY AND GRATIFYING ATTENTIONS TO THEIR MUCH OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL HUMBLE SERVANT, THE AUTHOR.

to confirm him in his faith and service, and to encourage him in his wanderings with the assurance of an unseen and Almighty Protector.

At that time an outcast, in some degree, from the tents of his father Isaac, and a fugitive from the anger of a justly offended brother ; a forlorn and needy wanderer, he had laid him to sleep on the sands of the wilderness, his head supported on a pillow of stone, and his staff and scrip his only riches. But in his dream he saw Heaven opened, and “ behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven, and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord, the God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac ; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed ; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south ; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land ; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that of which I have spoken to thee. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not ! and he said, how dreadful is this place ! this is none other but the house of God, and this the gate of Heaven ! ”

In this memorable history are many circum-

stances which might afford us useful lessons, and any one of which would be a sufficient and copious subject for our morning's meditation. The first and most striking, perhaps, is the strange and awful difference which frequently is found between the manners in which the same persons are accounted of by man and by God; and how little the Lord seeth as man seeth, in His estimate and choice of those whom He delights to favour. Who that had seen the forlorn son of Isaac in his journey over that desolate land, unsheltered, unattended, on foot, and struggling with fatigue and hunger, "a Syrian ready to perish" in the waste howling wilderness, would have guessed in this unhappy wanderer the founder of a mighty nation? Who that had known the circumstances of fraud and meanness which had compelled his flight would have expected to find in the supplanter Jacob, an Israel, "the prince of God," to whose descendants, above all the earth, the knowledge of the true God should be entrusted; and from whose loins that Saviour was, in His mortal nature, to arise, in whom not the tribes of Israel alone, but all the nations of the world were, in after days, to be pronounced blessed?

Yet thus it is that the wisdom of the wise is often put to shame; that God, even in the affairs of this world, should seem, on certain occasions, to delight in lowering the mighty and raising the humble on high; and that the riches of His grace are, sometimes, most abundantly shown in calling

sinners to repentance, and choosing out for great and glorious ends, the most contemptible and unworthy instruments. These things should make the proud man humble, and they should keep the humble man from despair. They should warn the first on how slender a thread his own power or eminence depends; and how little reason he has to think those beneath him, who, notwithstanding their present and outward inferiority, may be, in truth, of higher estimation in the eyes of God than himself, and designed by God to far greater usefulness here, and hereafter to far more exalted glory. The second may learn from them, that however insignificant he may feel himself in the eyes of men, however unable to render God worthy service, or to contribute, in any perceivable degree, to the amendment or happiness of His creatures, yet, if he perform with good will what little is in his power, that little may, by God's blessing, in its effects be infinitely multiplied; while, at all events, so far as he himself is concerned, the very least of his endeavours is not lost in the sight or memory of the Most High, nor will be forgotten in that day when the widow's mite and the believer's cup of water shall in no wise lose their reward, and when he "who has been faithful in a few things," shall, by the Judge of Heaven and Earth, be "made ruler over many things."

Another observation which we shall be naturally led to make in considering this passage of Scripture, is the constant reference and connexion, which the

promises of the Old Testament maintain with that great and glorious event, to bring us to which the Old Testament itself is only, as it were, “a School-master.” To a wanderer like Jacob, it would have been a promise sufficiently comfortable to have been assured, by a heavenly vision, of the protection of God in his journey, and of a safe and prosperous return to the land which he left against his will, and constrainedly. It would have seemed an almost superfluous blessing to be told of the future greatness to which his descendants should be advanced, or to be reminded of the grant to the seed of Abraham of the land which he was now forsaking. But with neither of these points is the Heavenly promise terminated; not only is his family to become as numerous as the stars of Heaven, but through one of their number, all the nations of the earth are to be blessed; and for his seed is reserved the glory of reconciling God to man, and opening to penitent sinners the gates of a better Paradise than that which Adam had forfeited.

Nor need we wonder that this constant connexion should be found between worldly and spiritual privileges in the promises made by God to the family of Abraham. It had the effect of serving three very important purposes. In the first place, the prophecies of the Messiah were more listened to and better remembered by a gross and carnal people, from being thus, as it were, inseparably bound up and linked with promises of earthly power and greatness. Secondly, when the former

part of the prophecy was fulfilled by the increased multitude and extended power of Jacob's descendants, those descendants were naturally inclined to pay greater attention to and place more trust in the remainder, of whose fulfilment in the course of time they had thus received, as it were, the earnest. And above all, amid whatever disappointments and adversities might in the present life befall them, the constant and recorded renewal of such promises, together with all the different manifestations of God's power and protection, would serve to remind the pious Israelites that, however the possession of an earthly Canaan had failed to preserve them free from those calamities which are the common inheritance of mortals, there remained yet another and a better rest for the people of God, to which the Saviour who was promised to arise from the seed of Abraham, when He came, should open the way.

Nor can we, "on whom the ends of the world are come," whose lot is fallen to play our parts in the last great scene of nature, the concluding mystery of redemption, fail to perceive from this constant reference to the coming of Christ in the older records of God's Providence, how noble and excellent are the privileges which we enjoy; how important in the eyes of God are those blessings, the knowledge of which is now opened to our gratitude; and how great a necessity is laid on us to employ, to the furtherance of God's glory and our own salvation, those lights which the patriarchs saw dimly

and from far, those mysteries which so many prophets desired to understand, but desired in vain!

Nor is this all. For, secondly, we may learn, from the union which I have noticed as universally observable in Scripture between the promise of worldly blessings and the opportunity of Heavenly graces, that the former of these are, in the eyes of the Allwise, only so far valuable as they are means of conducing to the latter; and that whatever wealth, whatever power, whatever personal or mental or worldly advantages the Most High may in His wisdom extend to us, are not blessings in themselves, but as a way to greater blessedness,—as gifts by the use and improvement of which we are required by our God to serve the cause of His Son, and entitle ourselves, (if I may venture to use the expression,) entitle ourselves, through faith, to a more illustrious reward hereafter.

If the Israelites were endowed beyond the nations of mankind, with wise and righteous laws, with a fertile and almost impregnable territory, with a race of valiant and victorious kings, and a God who, (while they kept His ways) was a wall of fire against their enemies round about them; if the kings of the wilderness did them homage, and the lion banner of David and Solomon was reflected at once from the Mediterranean and the Euphrates; it was, that the way of the Lord might be made known by their means upon earth, and that the saving health of the Messiah might become conspicuous to all nations.

My brethren, it has pleased the Almighty that the great nation to which we ourselves belong, is a great, a valiant, and an understanding nation : it has pleased Him to give us an empire in which the sun never sets, a commerce by which the remotest nations of the earth are become our allies, our tributaries, I had almost said our neighbours ; and, by means (when regarded as human means, and distinct from His mysterious providence,) so inadequate, as to excite our alarm as well as our wonder, the sovereignty over these wide and populous heathen lands.

But is it for our sakes that He has given us these good gifts, and wrought these great marvels in our favour ? Are we not rather set up on high in the earth, that we may show forth the light by which we are guided, and be the honoured instruments of diffusing these blessings which we ourselves enjoy, through every land where our will is law, through every tribe where our wisdom is held in reverence, and in every distant isle which our winged vessels visit ?

If we value then (as who does not value ?) our renown among mankind ; if we exult (as who can help exulting ?) in the privileges which the providence of God has conferred on the British nation ; if we are thankful (and God forbid we should be otherwise) for the means of usefulness in our power ; and if we love (as who does not love ?) our native land, its greatness and prosperity ; let us see that we, each of us in our station, are promot-

ing to the best of our power, by example, by exertion, by liberality, by the practice of every Christian justice and virtue, the extension of God's truth among men, and the honour of that holy name whereby we are called.

There have been realms as famous as our own, and, (in relation to the then extent and riches of the civilized world,) as powerful and as wealthy, of which the traveller sees nothing now but ruins in the midst of a wilderness, or where the mariner only finds a rock for fishers to spread their nets. Nineveh once reigned over the east; but where is Nineveh now? Tyre had once the commerce of the world; but what is become of Tyre? But if the repentance of Nineveh had been persevered in, her towers would have stood to this day. Had the daughter of Tyre brought her gifts to the Temple of God, she would have continued a queen for ever.

There is yet a third lesson to be drawn from the vision of God at Bethel, and the exclamation which I have noticed of the patriarch Jacob; I mean the unseen and pervading presence of the Most High, "who is about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways;" of whom, not in the field of Luz alone, but wherever our footsteps carry us, it may be said, that "surely God is in this place;" to whom the whole firmament of the skies is as a tent to dwell in, and the universal earth His footstool; and in whose sight and through whose favour it is, let our pilgrimage lie where it will, that *every where* is the gate of Heaven!

This notion of God as an Almighty, All-present, All-seeing and Unseen Existence, who “is not far from any of us, and in whom we live and move and have our being,” is, unquestionably, a strange and awful subject of thought, and one which cannot be agitated in our minds without a deep and almost a painful and terrifying sense of our own weakness and dependance. Even to a good man, and to one who is, on good grounds, assured of the protection and favour of his Maker, this presence not to be shunned, this power not to be resisted, this awful eye for ever bent on our ways is, at times, oppressive as well as surprising. “Whither,” said the Psalmist, “shall I go then from Thy spirit, or whither shall I go then from Thy presence? If I climb up into Heaven Thou art there. If I go down into hell Thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned to day. Yea, the darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear as the day ; the darkness and light to Thee are both alike !”

We are lost in the meditation of such greatness. In this sea of glory our powers, our wisdom, our life, appear to sink into nothing. What is man, (we are apt to say) that God should condescend to regard him ? and what are the thoughts, the words, and works of man, that they should be able to en-

dure the constant inspection of a Judge so wise, so great, so terrible ?

But if even good men, if even the best of men, must be thus at times affected by the sense of God's unseen and continual presence ; if they too must, at times, find the place dreadful where they thus stand before Him ; how grievous must this recollection be to those who live without God in the world ; who are conscious that by their daily sins they have drawn on themselves His heaviest anger, and that they have done before His face, and under the beam of His indignant eye, such actions as they would have been afraid or ashamed to have fallen into in the presence of a mere mortal bystander ?

It is a dreadful thing, when conscience reckons up her catalogue of secret guilt, to remember that every one of those crimes which were most hateful to God and to man were done with the knowledge, and in the presence, of the Judge, the severe and upright Judge of men and angels. A dreadful thing it is to know that He from whom nothing is hidden while doing, and by whom nothing is forgotten when done, was there in the midst of our foulest lurking-place, in the assembly of our guilty friends and accomplices, His eye bent on our deeds, His anger kindled by our wickedness, and His arm, perhaps, upraised to strike us down to death and hell, if His mercy had not interfered to afford us a little longer time for repentance. A dreadful thing it is to say, “ surely God was in this place, when I cast my eyes so carefully around and flat-

tered myself that my uncleanness, my robbery, or my fraud was hid in darkness and solitude. God was in this place, when I deformed His image with drunkenness, and when my mouth was filled with the words of lust and blasphemy. God was in this place, when I called on His holy name to obtain credit for my falsehood, and challenged His power to punish me if I dealt untruly with my neighbour. And God is in this place, and beholds my present hardness and impenitent heart; He knows and sees my lingering fondness for the sins which I am pretending to abandon; and He is waiting, perhaps, even now, for the conduct which I shall now adopt, the resolution which I shall now follow, to determine whether my lot shall be hereafter among the children of light, or whether His Spirit shall be withdrawn from me, (it may be,) for ever!"

Surely, my friends, the presence of our Creator, our Saviour, our Judge, and our King, is to all of us a matter of deep and serious concernment! If the Almighty were at this moment to make Himself visible to our eyes; if we beheld, like the Israelites in Horeb, His glory as it were a consuming fire, shining forth from amid the darkness of the cloudy firmament; if we beheld Him, like Isaiah, on His throne exceeding high, with the many winged seraphin around, exclaiming Holy, Holy, Holy; if we were caught up, like St. John in the Revelation, to the open gates of Heaven, and beheld in the midst of its sea of glass, and beneath

its rainbow canopy, that seat on which He who sitteth is in brightness as a jasper and a sardine stone ; or if that vision were shown to us which came to Daniel, when the Ancient of Days did sit on the cloud with His ten thousand times ten thousand angels, when the fiery stream went forth before Him, when the judgement was begun, and the books of life were opened ;—should we not be led in this case to cry out with the Israelites, let not God speak with us lest we die !—should we not say, with Isaiah, woe is me for I have seen the Lord the God of Israel !—or what posture of body should we think sufficiently humble ; what form of behaviour too strict, too cautious, too reverent, in such a presence ? How should we endeavour to restrain our lips from evil, our thoughts from wandering, and our inclinations from whatever might offend Him ?

Alas, have we forgotten how thin a screen that is which separates us from this glorious and awful spectacle of Jehovah's Majesty ! Let but the word go forth from His mouth, let but one of His innumerable ministers cut the thread of our days, and set our spirit free from the curtains of this bodily tabernacle, and in a moment we should perhaps be introduced to that very scene of which the thought is so dreadful to us. In a moment our soul would find itself introduced to the vast world of invisible beings ; would behold, it may be, the angels of God ascending and descending as ministers of His will between Heaven and earth ! and our Maker

Himself in His boundless glory, and our Redeemer standing at His right hand ! This moment, while I speak, this prospect is offered for the first time to many who, in the different nations of the world, are passing from life into eternity ; this moment it may be offered to any of us who are here assembled. Surely the Lord is in this place, and we know it not, how dreadful is this place ! This place may to each of us become, according as we are prepared for the passage, the gate of hell or Heaven !

The practical effects which considerations like these should produce in our lives and actions, are too plain to need my pointing out to you. If these things are true, (and their truth is proved, not only from revealed but natural religion) what manner of persons ought we to be in holiness and pureness of living ? But if there be one time or place more than another where the feeling of this presence of God should possess and govern us, it must be when we are avowedly assembled for the purpose of acknowledging His presence by prayer and praise in these holy buildings which are called after His name, and which the usual and decent reverence of mankind has concurred to set apart from profane and secular purposes.

This separation, indeed, by some outward mark of reverence, of things devoted to the service of God from those which serve the ordinary uses of the present life, is a practice, which seems enjoined by nature itself, and which has been observed

by all nations and by almost all religious sects or parties.

It is, indeed, most true, (and I have laboured in vain if I have not brought the conviction home to your minds,) it is true that the earth is the Lord's and all that is therein; that the open field, the private dwelling, the ship, the house of merchandize, the highway, the forest and the fell, are, each of them, on proper occasions, a suitable scene of prayer; and each and all of them, as scenes of God's pervading presence, should be hallowed by our unending duty, by our aspirations ever bent on Heaven, our innocency of heart and of life, our submission of every word and thought to the governance and glory of the Most High. But such is the weakness of our mortal state, that a religion thus widely diffused would infallibly become weakened and diluted, unless there were some certain rallying points of attention and of reverence, in which our hearts should be more closely drawn to God, and our thoughts composed to a stricter sense of His neighbourhood.

We find it in the institution of the Sabbath, (an institution which, if it were of human authority alone, would, for its practical wisdom and utility, deserve the praise and imitation of all who give laws or set examples to mankind,) we find how needful it is that the love and service which we ought to render every day, should, if we would have them paid at all, be on some days paid more strictly. And, if we desire to remember God on the ocean

and in the field, if we desire to bear His image with us through the crowded and busy walks of life, and to recollect effectually that the universe is His temple, it is well that some portions of this vast whole should be divided and set apart in our ideas, as associated with customary piety, and unprofaned by secular mixtures.

Accordingly, even in the heathen world, "*secernere sacra profanis*," was accounted the duty of a king, while kings were yet the priests as well as leaders of their people. The rude stone altars of the ancient patriarchs, yea the very pillar of Luz, which this Jacob reared in memory of his glorious vision, were, by solemn prayer and by the pouring on of oil and wine, devoted to the thoughts of an invisible world and the service of the God of Abraham. The tabernacle first, and afterwards either temple, had their solemn feasts of dedication ; and even in the latter days of the Jewish covenant, and when the temple of God in Jerusalem was so soon to be given up by its Heavenly King to that common destruction which chastised His rebellious subjects, we still see the Son of God, all gentle and gracious as was His usual character, aroused to a sense of wrath by the indignities offered to His Father's shrine ; and on this provocation, and in this quarrel only, assuming to Himself the power of an earthly king, and inflicting on the corrupt guardians of the sanctuary the terrors of an earthly chastisement.

The God of the ancient patriarchs, the God of

the Jews, the God and Father of Him whose name we bear, is the God of the Christians still ; human nature is still the same, and in us, no less than in them, it requires these outward appliances and associations, which attune the mind to a solemn and serious harmony, and enlist the senses on the side of the soul and its everlasting interests. The temple of God, which was soon to perish, was holy notwithstanding ; and, while it lasted, the house of prayer, and of prayer only. The Church of God, which is to endure for ever, does this demand a less reverence at our hands ? or is it not meet that these buildings, where that Church assembles to plume her wings and prepare her flight for her everlasting and Heavenly habitation, should, as the instruments of a more illustrious covenant than that of bulls and goats, receive at our hands a still humbler and more constant reverence ?

It is for this cause, and fortified by this great example, that in the primitive Church, and in the humble but golden days of Christian zeal and courage, the tombs, the caves, the lowly and secret cells where the scattered congregations assembled to sing hymns to Christ, bear witness by their inscriptions, remaining at the present day, with how deep reverence they were approached, and with how solemn services they were appropriated to the honour of the Lamb, and to the memory of His saints and martyrs. It is for this cause, and encouraged by so vast a cloud of witnesses, that the more recent Church of Christ has continued to call down an

appropriate blessing on those temples which national or individual piety has reared to such holy purposes ; and for this cause it is, and to no superstitious end, and, as we trust, from no presumptuous principle of will-worship, that we have this day offered the work of your munificence, in a public and solemn manner, to Him from whom we have received all things !

Let not him assume the name of Christian who is wilfully or willingly wanting in his token of respect to even the building thus hallowed by its destination ; let not him lay claim to the character of a devout and rational worshipper, who forgets that, though God is every where, His blessing may be more largely given in one place than in another ; and that no places can with greater propriety have hope of such a privilege, than those temples which are called after His name, and which have been repeatedly distinguished as the scene of His mercies !

Yea, rather, let the sense of the high privileges of which we are or may be partakers here ; the communion with God which we here enjoy ; the union with His Son, which through His body and blood we are not afraid to aspire to ; the gift of the Holy Ghost, which our accepted though imperfect prayers may here obtain from the Giver of every good thing ; inspire us to a reverence not only of the body but of the mind, a submission of ourselves to His holy will and pleasure, and an ardent longing after those celestial habitations where, not

through the dark glass of faith, or the long and dim perspective of hope deferred, but in the flesh shall we see that Lord, who now, though unseen by mortal eyes, is present to reward or punish us.

Where two or three, said Christ, are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them! “ Surely God is in this place, though we behold Him not! How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this the gate of Heaven!”

SERMON XIII.

SIN AND GRACE.

[Preached at St. Mary's, Madras, March 4, 1826.]

ROMANS vii. 24, 25.

Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

A VERY touching and natural complaint is expressed, and a very seasonable and efficacious consolation afforded in the former and latter parts of this passage of Scripture, which contains, indeed, in very few words, a comprehensive and forcible view of the necessities and the hopes of a Christian. The natural misery of man is expressed in the heaviness of that sorrow which, when abstracted from the consideration of redemption through Christ, made St. Paul declare himself most wretched; and the merciful deliverance of man is no less warmly and gratefully acknowledged in that noble burst of rapture wherein he magnifies the favour bestowed on him, and thanks his God for his escape, through his crucified Lord and Saviour, from the body of death.

Without these distinct yet blended feelings; with-

out a sense, and a mournful sense, of the natural weakness and forlorn condition of mankind, and more particularly of his own condition; and without an earnest and thankful hope of God's help and mercy through His Son, it is hardly too much to say that no man can be a genuine Christian. If he is deficient in the former of these feelings; if, not acknowledging his own helplessness, he trusts in himself that he is strong, he cannot ask the aid of Christ, nor will that blessed and mighty aid be offered to him. If he is deficient in the latter, he must also want that love for his Redeemer which arises from a sense of His benefits; he must want that reliance on his God, which only can save us from despair. It shall, therefore, be the aim of my present discourse to lay before you, shortly and clearly, the nature and the grounds of both these mental habits; and, at the same time, to point out and illustrate the tenour of the apostle's reasoning in that remarkable passage of Scripture from which the words of my text are taken.

The Epistle to the Romans, it is always necessary to bear in mind, was addressed, in the first instance, to individuals of the Jewish nation, who, though they had so far believed in Christ as to acknowledge Him for their Messiah, were very far from a right understanding of the nature of His errand among men, or of the blessed and wonderful effects of His merits, His intercession, and His sufferings. They denied, in fact, that truth in which the main secret of the Christian system lay,

the forgiveness of sins by His one sacrifice of Himself once offered ; or at best they confined the necessity of such an atonement to the blinded Gentiles alone, without admitting that the race of Israel required any further aid than was supplied by the law of Moses.

To those who were led by that glorious light which, in the wilderness, rested on the mercy-seat of the ark, and in subsequent ages shone with a different, but not less clear and miraculous illumination, in the writings of so many prophets, what room, they argued, was left for further knowledge ? By those who had the divinely imposed seal of circumcision, and were themselves the kindred of Christ, what further proof of God's favour was required or could be looked for ? And, by those who walk after the whole and perfect rule of God's commandments, could any condemnation be feared, could any further atonement be needed ?

To cure this lofty opinion of themselves is St. Paul's scope through the greater part of this Epistle ; and the principles on which he reasons are, perhaps, of matchless ingenuity and clearness. He begins by proving that which, indeed, the best informed among the Jews have themselves allowed, and of which the experience of the world affords abundant and melancholy evidence, that the Gentile and the Jew were alike transgressors before God. He shows that the circumcision on which they so much relied, was in itself a badge of their profession, a distinctive mark of God's favour to

those who kept the law, but no more to be pleaded as an atonement for the breach of the law, than the uniform of a soldier is an excuse for his transgression of those articles of war, which that very uniform enhances his obligation to keep inviolate. The question of the law itself he treats in a more elaborate manner, by urging, both that the publication of a law contains in itself no atonement for its transgression ; and still further, that such a law could do no more than show men their danger, without furnishing the means of escape, and thus would leave them more wretched than it found them.

The argument thus brought forward is obscure, perhaps, though just and subtle. A familiar illustration may explain it. If I see my neighbour riding furiously towards the brink of a precipice, I do well, indeed, to cry to him to stop his horse ; but if his horse have the mastery, no benefit will arise from my warning. If I tell a man who is tempted to commit adultery, that the consequences of such a crime will be infamy here and everlasting ruin hereafter, I tell him, indeed, a sad and dismal truth ; but, if his passions so enslave him, that, while acknowledging the goodness of my counsel, he professes himself unable to follow it, it is plain that such advice has only the effect of enhancing his folly, and rendering his sin more exceedingly sinful.

Now this was the case with the law of Moses ; and it must, from the constitution of our nature, be

the case with every law and every rule of conduct which can be given, unless there be given at the same time a power of keeping the law; a mastery over those passions, the indulgence of which is prohibited; and a pardon and atonement for the transgressions of which we have been previously guilty. Now as the former of these was in no degree supplied, and the latter in a very imperfect manner supplied, by the moral and ceremonial law of Moses; it followed that the law of Moses by itself fell short of our necessities, and that neither the Gentile nor the Jew could stand upright in the sight of God, without the preventing grace and atoning sacrifice which our Lord brought to light in His Gospel.

It is thus that St. Paul, with admirable precision of dexterity, avoids the necessity of ascribing to the law an efficacy which it did not possess, while he admits, in the fullest terms, that praise and excellence of the law for which the Jew was chiefly anxious; its Divine original, its inherent purity, its adaptation to the happiness and virtue of mankind.

Every commandment of God, he allows, was just and holy. But those commandments (which were, in truth, only declarations of God's displeasure against particular sins) gave their hearers, indeed, a sufficient warning as to the danger of indulging in those sins, but conferred no power to overcome the force of passion, no opening of escape from the temptations by which they were surrounded. "We know," observes St. Paul, "that

the law is spiritual, but I am carnal. I am a mere fleshly being, weak and easily tempted, sold unto sin, the bondsman of my evil passions and my evil habits." "For," he adds, shortly afterwards, "I delight in the law of God after my inward man." My reason, my soul, the spiritual part of me acknowledges the excellence of the commandments of God; and, as a rational being, I sincerely desire to conform to them. "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law that is in my mind." I perceive my mere animal propensities contending against, and overpowering that line of conduct which reason acknowledges to be the best, and "bringing me into captivity to that law which is in my members, those sinful habits which are inherent in my body, and in the indulgence of which alone my animal nature finds delight. "Oh, wretched," therefore, "wretched man, that I am! who will deliver me from the body of this death," this mortal and deadly nature which thus presses down my soul to sin and to the grave, and clogs her flight to that Heaven which is her proper habitation?

This, doubtless, is a state of exceeding terror and misery, and one which fully justifies the passionate exclamation of St. Paul, inasmuch as no danger is so dreadful as that which we incur with our eyes open; no sufferings so keen as those which we bring on ourselves, no state so degrading as subjection to the blind caprice of a madman, or an irrational animal.

It is related of a bloody tyrant in ancient times, or it was the fiction of the poets to describe the excess of tyranny, that it was his frequent and horrible pleasure to bind the living to the dead, to condemn his lingering victims to endure for days and nights the cold embrace and loathsome touch of some swollen and rotting carcase, which they themselves were ere long to resemble, and with whose wretched dust their own was to moulder away. Such may be thought the bitterest dregs of human misery; yet hardly inferior, perhaps, to the reasonable soul of man, is the bondage and burthen of that mass of fleshly appetites, whose earthly bands restrain its every nobler aspiration; whose increasing corruptions pollute while they destroy; whose propensities tend downwards to their native clay, and whose heritage are the grave and hell!

Nor must this hideous picture be regarded as the creature of imagination; nor is it of his own case only that St. Paul is speaking; though he, like other men, had felt the bondage which he mourns, and, happier than many men, had been greatly and gloriously rescued. It is a complaint in which every man must sympathize, who has examined seriously his own heart and conscience, who has ever sought to forsake a single sinful practice, or attempted to cleanse his soul from the stain of a single unholy desire. Wickedness is often called blindness, and, as it should seem at first, with sufficient reason; since a course of wickedness is so

utterly contrary to the visible interest of man, that none but the blind, it might be thought, would court their ruin. But if wickedness proceeded from blindness only, should we so often find, as we are unhappily doomed to do, that they who have eaten most largely of the tree of knowledge, are often the furthest removed from the tree of life? And that they who, of all men, best know their duty and interest, are often of all others the most backward to follow either? The profligate whose vices are dragging him to an early grave, will tell you, perhaps with tears, that he knows but cannot escape his danger; and many a man of lofty spirit and lofty understanding has mourned in secret over those pursuits by which his outward attention was engrossed, and exclaimed with one of our poets,

“ Why was I born with such a sense of virtue,
With such keen horror of debasing guilt,
And yet a slave to such impetuous passion?”

The complaint, I repeat, is as old as the world itself, and as familiar as our daily rest and nourishment; nor is it a misfortune of which the Jew or the Christian have alone been rendered sensible. “ It may seem,” said Araspes to Cyrus king of Persia, “ that there are at once two souls, an evil and a good, within me, between whose opposite counsels my will hangs wavering and irresolute, and which, as either gets the better, determine me to vice or to goodness¹ ;” but of these alas! how

¹ Xenophon Cyrop. vi. 1. 41.

greatly is the evil spirit superior in natural strength to that which is wise and holy !

The enquiry would be too long and too metaphysical ; it is, perhaps, too hopeless to attempt, with our imperfect knowledge of the ways of God, to give a reason why things are suffered thus to be, or to trace to its source that mighty strife between good and evil which is coeval with all created things, in which the angels first, and afterwards our parents fell ; and which, crushed as the serpent's head has been by Christ, continues still, and, till the final triumph of our Redeemer, must continue to shake with its convulsive struggles the pillars of the universe. It is enough for us to know that we are by nature sick unto death, but that we have a great Physician at hand to heal us. It is sufficient for us to recollect that we must not complain of evils for which a remedy is provided ; and that the apostle himself, who would seem to plunge us in despair by the picture which he draws of our natural condition, bursts forth, immediately after, into a noble exclamation of thankfulness to that God who hath delivered us through Jesus Christ our Lord !

Of the means whereby this great deliverance was effected ; of the dreadful ransom which the Son of God has paid for our souls ; and how, by His own dying agonies, He stopped the jaws of that death which else had gaped insatiably for all, I need not, as I am addressing Christians I surely need not, proceed to treat more largely. I shall, therefore,

only observe, that the two points in which that deliverance consisted were, precisely, those which, according to St. Paul's argument, could not be supplied by any human code of morality, nor even by the Jewish law itself and the commandments given from Mount Sinai. These points are pardon and grace ; pardon for past offences, grace to enable us to lead new lives, and to make us less unworthy inhabitants of that Heaven whither Christ is gone before. The one restores us to the same degree of favour with God which our nature possessed before its fall ; the other supports us against those temptations under which we must else, of necessity, again have fallen ; and thus, by the Christian covenant, are boasting and despair alike excluded ; boasting by the sense of our natural inability to please the Most High, and despair by the knowledge that the Most High Himself is on our side, and that if we fall not away from Him, we may in security look on the assaults of our spiritual and fleshly enemies.

From all which I have said, the following practical conclusions may be drawn. First, since our condition is by nature so perilous ; since our passions are so strong, and our flesh so frail and prone to evil, what constant vigilance do those passions and propensities require, of which St. Paul complains so heavily ? If we were shut up in the same den with a wild beast ; if we were opposed to an armed enemy ; if we were steering a vessel through an unknown sea, amid the dash of waves and the

glimmering of breakers, we should need, I apprehend, no admonition to be watchful and diligent. Alas! my friends, our own hearts are wilder than the savage of the woods; our own hearts, uncontrouled, are more formidable than the deadliest adversary; our own hearts are more changeable and deceitful than the winds, the waves, the depths, and shallows of the ocean. Watch, then, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. Watch and pray! Without prayer to God “the watchman waketh but in vain¹,” and without an answerable watchfulness and care for our souls, displayed in the usual tenour of our lives and actions, our idle prayers will be only an offence to God.

Nor should the difficulty of the task hold us excused from attempting it; seeing that what is necessary to be done, it becomes us, at least, to try to do; and what God commands, we may be sure that He will also give us strength to accomplish. Of ourselves we can do nothing, but we can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us; and the same glorious Being who commanded the lame to walk, gave his limbs, at the same time, ability to perform His bidding! So far indeed from the weakness of the flesh being able to destroy the hope of the sincere and industrious Christian, “My grace,” saith Christ, “is sufficient for thee²,” and the triumph of that grace is shown, not only in enabling the reasonable soul to subdue

¹ Psalm cxxvii. 1.

² 2 Cor. xii. 19.

the body wherein it dwells, but in sanctifying that body into a temple of the Holy Ghost, and raising it hereafter from the grave to be a palace of unspeakable glory, wherein the pure and spotless soul shall, through all eternity, reside, to the praise of Him “who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself¹.”

But in the promise thus held out of this gracious gift to men (the gift, as the beloved disciple has stated it, “of power to become the sons of God²;”) in that promise itself is implied a due recurrence to the external means of grace, those instruments, if I may so speak, of God’s overflowing bounty to man, whereby we draw near to our Maker’s throne, and lay hold, like Esther in the Jewish annals, on the golden sceptre of His pardon, His support and favour. It is needful not only to believe in Christ with our hearts, but to confess Him with our lips unto salvation; not only to endeavour to glorify Him in our lives, but devoutly to seek, through the channels of prayer, of hearing the word and of study of the Scripture, and through the ordinances which He has left behind, that help from on High by which alone we are more than conquerors. To such of you as have not yet renewed, in your own persons, that solemn and blessed covenant, which in your infancy was contracted for you by your

¹ Philip. iii. 21.

² St. John i. 12.

sureties, an opportunity will be on Thursday next held out both to profess before men, in express and solemn terms, your faith in your crucified Saviour, and to solicit for His sake, and in the manner which His holy apostles have appointed, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

And all who are religiously and devoutly disposed, all who feel the burden of their sins, and desire in future to live less unworthy of their calling, all who seek for help and life through the blood of Christ alone, and all who are in charity with their neighbours, forgiving those who have done them wrong, and desirous to make amends, so far as their power shall reach, to all those, if such there are, whom they have injured, all such are invited on the next Lord's Day, to partake with us in the solemn commemoration of the greatest and saddest mercy which ever was shown to man, and to draw forth life and health to their souls from the body and blood of their broken and bleeding Saviour.

May the days which intervene be to all of you, my brethren, a period of diligent self-examination, of frequent study of the Scriptures, of frequent and earnest prayer. And not for yourselves only let those holy prayers be offered; but for us who watch for your salvation; for those young plants, of faith whom we are seeking to train up in the ways of peace and pardon; and for those heathen multitudes, whose eyes are bent on us for good or evil, in all the dealings of our lives, and all the cere-

monies of our religion, and of whose souls one day a strict account must be rendered by all whose example has made the way of truth be evil spoken of, and all who have not employed to the good of their fellow men, and to the glory of the Most High, the abilities, the influence, the leisure, and the abundance which the wise and good God has entrusted to them.

SERMON XIV.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

[Preached at Cawnpoor, October 11, 1824.]

ST. MATT. xxii. 37—40.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

THIS beautiful summary of duty, even before the time of Christ, appears to have been proverbial among the Jews, as the statement of those objects which the law of Moses was intended to secure and illustrate. But whoever was its original author, (something like it, though not the very words themselves, may be found in the Psalms, and in the prophet Micah a still nearer approach to its import¹) yet as thus solemnly adopted by Christ it becomes entitled to the acceptance and obedience of every Christian, and an adherence to its rule as among the surest pledges which any Christian can

¹ Micah vi. 8.

offer of his continuance in the faith, and that his faith is such as may hereafter profit him. A sense, indeed, of God's goodness, and a desire to render ourselves acceptable to Him, is the only principle of action which a wise and gracious God can be supposed to regard with pleasure. We are God's children, not His slaves; and it is our love which He requires, as much as, and still more than, our obedience. If this last were all which He sought for, He might have compelled it by an overruling necessity, or have accompanied His commands with such resistless and miraculous influence, as should prevent even the possibility of rebellion. But He demands a reasonable service, a warm and affectionate energy which shall urge us, not only to fly from hell, but to evince our gratitude for the hopes of Heaven; by kindness, therefore, and long suffering, He endeavours to excite our love; and even when His menaces or His judgements rouse us to a necessary perception of our weakness, our guilt and our danger, His assurances of mercy never fail to accompany His terms.

Accordingly, though in the nature of the Mosaic law, and in the leading circumstances of its promulgation, His immediate purpose was rather to display His justice than His mercy; to set forth in fiery characters His anger against sin; and, by a wholesome and searching severity, to prepare men's hearts for the healing dispensation of the Gospel; yet, even here we find, through the Scriptures of the elder covenant, the mercy of God more fre-

quently insisted on than either His justice, His might, or His majesty. We find ourselves invited to “praise the Lord for His goodness;” “to taste and see how good the Lord is, and how great are His tender mercies on them that call upon Him¹.” Jehovah too sometimes condescends to reason with His unthankful people, and to appeal to the men of Judah themselves, whether more could have been done than He had done for His vineyard²? And in that dreadful moment when God Himself came down to give forth His laws to men, and by a discovery of that holiness which He requires from His servants, to open men’s eyes to their own guilt and their need of the promised Intercessor; even then, from the midst of thunderings and darkness, and surrounded with every circumstance of majesty and terroure, the Almighty makes His strongest appeal to their love, and not to their weakness, and He lays claim to their obedience as their Deliverer and their Friend, “the God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage³.”

And since, by the Jews themselves, the principle of love and thankfulness, the love of God, and, for God’s sake, the love of our neighbour, were recognised as the sum and substance of the law; since these were the two commandments which its other precepts, and its external ceremonies, served only to defend and illustrate; and since these were in a still more conspicuous manner enforced and con-

¹ Psalm cvii. 8. xxxiv. 8.

² Isaiah v. 3, 4.

³ Exod. xix. 16—19. xx. 2.

firmed by the Messiah, we might, perhaps, from this admitted truth alone, establish the truth of our Lord's declaration, that He came to fulfill and not to change the precepts of the ancient covenant ; to make its promises more blessed and its duties more easy by a clearer discovery of those hopes and privileges which were dimly shadowed out before ; and by replacing with stronger motives and more powerful spiritual assistance, those sacrifices and ceremonies on which the ancient Israelite relied for the expiation of his sins, and the constant recollection of his duties. Yet still, and now more than ever, the claims of God are founded on our love and thankfulness. He expects them, indeed, no longer from a single favoured race, as the God who had broken their chains, who had led them from a land of slavery, and loaded them with many temporal advantages ; but He has laid on all the nations of mankind a more precious and extensive obligation, as their Maker, their Redeemer, and their Sanctifier, their Deliverer from that fear of death under which all nature, till His coming, had languished ; and from that bondage of sin which is ten thousand fold more terrible than the fetters of an earthly tyrant.

It is thus that the message which the Only Begotten brought into the world was proclaimed both by Himself and His angels to be " good tidings of great joy¹." It is thus that the nature of the Al-

¹ St. Luke xi. 10.

mighty is described in the New Testament as love, in its fountain and original; and that we are called on to behold and return that regard which He has shown to mankind in that, while we were yet sinners, He gave His only Son to die for our salvation.

This obedience, indeed, of affection, this free-will offering of ourselves is, so far as we are able to judge, the most material distinction between the best and the worst, the happiest and most miserable among the creatures of God, the angels who have kept their first estate, and those spirits for whom everlasting fire is prepared. Those guilty and most unhappy beings have faith, we know, for they “believe and tremble¹.” We know likewise that, when in the exercise of their malice towards mankind, they were checked by the commanding voice of the Messiah, they too could pray to Him for a little longer forbearance of punishment; they too made haste to relinquish their victims at a word, and yielded to the injunctions of their conqueror an immediate and terrified obedience.

But they are not prayers like these, they are not services of this description which, in the nature of things, can be well pleasing or acceptable to the Almighty. Which of you would choose such obedience in a servant? In a son, which of you would endure it? The fear of God is indeed, in the words of Solomon, “the beginning of wisdom².” Of

¹ St. James ii. 19.

² Prov. i. 7.

knowledge and of faith it is the first fruit, and the primary foundation of active and habitual holiness. But if our knowledge and our faith bring forth no further increase ; if our holiness advances no higher in its Heavenward progress, so far will be such a faith from availing to our salvation, that better had it been for our souls had we never known nor believed !

Nor is it only as affording a noble and more acceptable principle of action than fear, that the love of God is thus valuable in God's eyes, and thus indispensable to those who call themselves His servants. Those actions which proceed from love, however powerless in themselves (as powerless all our actions must be) to contribute to the happiness, or augment the glories of Him whom the angels serve, and whose praise all creation shouts forth with her ten thousand voices, have yet in the nature of things, and judging from the analogy of the visible world, a claim on Him to whom they are offered. We feel ourselves that the affection of a servant or a child, endears to us and renders valuable in our eyes, even the poorest and humblest effort by which that affection is expressed or manifested. Nor can we doubt that infinite as is the distance between man and his Maker, yet by Him to whom all His works are known, the love even of His weakest servant must be regarded with a similar complacency, and that the affection which we feel within ourselves towards our unseen and Almighty Benefactor is reflected back from Him towards

ourselves with an intenseness so much greater than our own, as God excells us in the clearness of His views and the benevolence of His nature. It is faith which enables us to contemplate God, but it is love which diminishes the distance between God and ourselves; and it is love alone which, under Christ, can bring us to Heaven, or, when we are entered there, can make Heaven a place of happiness.

But enough has been said to show the necessity and value of a genuine love for God; and I would now proceed to point out, to the best of my ability, the most probable and efficacious means of awakening such a love within ourselves; as well as the effects which it may be expected to produce on our thoughts, our tempers, and our daily and hourly actions. And to obtain a knowledge of these, little more, perhaps, is necessary than to examine the causes which produce and increase in us an affection for earthly objects; inasmuch as, notwithstanding the mysterious nature of many of God's dealings with us, and more particularly of that spiritual and sanctifying influence which He exerts over our minds, and without which, it must never be forgotten, no amiable or holy principle can be generated in our breasts; yet in this love, whenever derived, there is in truth nothing mysterious; and the love which we feel for God can differ from the love which we feel for an earthly parent in nothing but the intensity of its obligation, and the infinite worthiness of its object.

Examine then your hearts, all you that have parents, and ask them why you love your father and your mother ? why you delight to serve and please them ? why you obey their wishes from affection, not from fear ? why you esteem all which you can do but too little to promote their happiness, and rejoice to incur inconvenience yourselves so it may evince your attachment towards them !

You love them, you will doubtless answer, because they have first loved you ; because from them you derive your life and all its chequered series of interest and enjoyment ; because they nursed you when you were weak, instructed you when you were ignorant, endured you when you were froward, trained you up, it may be, to distinction and prosperity in the life which now is, and taught you to look forward to everlasting happiness in the life to come. For these and similar reasons you love your father and your mother. You do well ! Continue to love them more and more, for they well deserve your best affection ! But know, children of God, your Heavenly Father hath done for you greater things than these ! But do you not also find that this feeling of filial love is increased and strengthened by a frequent recollection of the benefits which you have received from your parents ; and that your hearts have grown warmer towards them the more you lived in their society ; the longer and oftener you conversed together ; and the more and greater the acts and evidences of mutual kindness which passed

between you ? Is it not, unhappily, most true, that long absence and habitual disregard will always greatly damp and often entirely extinguish that affection which ought to exist, and under other circumstances, would naturally have existed between the members of the same family ? Beware, then, how you neglect that species and degree of intercourse with your Heavenly Father, to maintain which His mercy permits and His word invites, and His grace, if you make use of it, enables you ! Beware lest, by thinking of Him but seldom, but seldom addressing Him in prayer, and seldom hearing His voice in His Holy Scriptures and His public ordinances, you estrange yourself, by degrees, entirely from His love, and allow the pursuits and pleasures of the world to establish an empire in your heart left empty of holier affections ! It is by daily prayer and daily thanksgiving, by patient study of God's word, and by patient meditation on our own condition, and on all which God has done and will do for us, that a genuine and rational love for Him is kindled in our hearts ; and that we become unfeignedly attached to the Friend of whose kindness we have had so much experience.

It is, indeed, to be expected, and it therefore should by no means be allowed to discourage the inexperienced Christian, that at first, and in the earlier stages of our approach to God, we should experience but little of that ardour of devotion, those pleasures of earnest piety which are, in this world, the reward of love as well as its most con-

vincing evidence. Our prayers at first will often be constrained ; our thanksgivings cold and formal ; our thoughts will wander from our closets to the world, and we shall have too frequent occasion to acknowledge with shame and sorrow the imperfection of those offerings which we as yet can make to our Benefactor. A religious feeling, like every other mental habit, is slowly and gradually acquired. A strong and lasting affection is not ordinarily the growth of a day ; but to have begun at all is, in religion, no trifling progress ; and a steady perseverance in prayer and praise will, not only, by degrees, enlist the strength of habit on the side of holiness, but will call down, moreover, and preserve to us that spiritual support and influence, without which all human efforts must be vain, but which no one will seek in vain, who seeks for it in sincerity and by the appointed channels.

But though the absence of fervour be not 'the produce of permitted and habitual sin, undoubtedly it must be ruinous to every well-founded hope of acquiring a genuine love for Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. In disputes between men we are taught by every day's experience that it is hard to love those whom we have injured ; and that the more we feel ourselves in the wrong, the more inclined we are to view with dislike as well as apprehension, the person who has cause to be offended with us. And thus it is that every additional act of transgression indisposes our hearts the more to a faith in the gracious offers of our

King, and to an acceptance of them ; and the more impossible it seems that we should be pardoned, the more sturdily and desperately do we proceed in courses of which we know that the end is death, but the dereliction of which, as we apprehend, would be now altogether fruitless.

Such a state of mind, of all others to which a sinner can be reduced on this side the grave, is surely the most terrible. It is one, however, which is more common among men than the generality of mankind imagine ; and it is a danger which cannot be too often or too earnestly represented to all those who dwell carelessly, lest their habitual offences should shut the door against reconciliation ; and not only so grieve the Holy Spirit as to deter Him from returning, but, even if He should vouchsafe to return, render their hearts insensible to all the ordinary methods of His mercy.

An amendment of life, indeed, and a conduct conformable to the will and word of the Most High, is the only mark I know of to distinguish a genuine love of Him from those vain and enthusiastic flights of fancy which have their origin in the fancy alone ; which are consistent with indulgences the most impure, and passions the most unrestrained and unconverted ; in which the devil would gladly persuade the sinner to rest contented through life, but the vanity of which will be made apparent in that season when the axe will be laid to the root of all false pretences and unfounded hopes, in the hour of death and in the day of judgement. And it

is happy for us that a point of such importance is one on which the sincere enquirer can scarcely by possibility deceive himself, inasmuch as the effects of a genuine love are such as can hardly be counterfeited, and are such, indeed, as without the inspiration and assistance of Him whose name is love, the nature of man is unable to bring forth to perfection. And among these the following are some of the most conspicuous.

In the first place, he who really loves God, will be content to depend on Him, and acquiesce with cheerfulness in all His dispensations of severity or mercy. That we do, in fact, depend on God for all which we receive, and all which we hope for, will be recognized by the decision of reason alone ; and it is a truth which even an unregenerate heart may admit with fear and trembling. But a contented and hopeful dependance on God, a cheerful acquiescence in all which He determines, a frame of mind which converts into an unceasing source of pleasure our recollection of that strength on which we rely, that wisdom which is conspicuous alike in every instance of good or evil fortune ; such a feeling as I have described can proceed from love alone, and I can hardly admit the existence of a genuine love of God without it.

A sense of weakness and dependance without love is always miserable. But where love is, even in the imperfect attachments of the nether world, the recollection of such dependance is never oppressive or melancholy. It is any thing but painful for a

child to cling to the embrace, the support, the comfort and provident kindness of a tender and most dear parent. It is any thing but painful to unbosom our griefs, our trials, and our difficulties to a kind and experienced and powerful friend, who shares our thoughts, who sympathizes with our sorrows, and whose hand we trace in all the more conspicuous comforts and advantages of our situation. By the favours of those whom we love and venerate we are elated, not humiliated. We are proud, not ashamed, of the obligations laid on us by a gracious sovereign, or a wise and discriminating patron, because we delight in his benefits as evidences of his regard, and identify ourselves, in a certain degree, with the excellencies of him who honours us with such a friendship. And even so in the child-like leaning of a Christian on his God, not only is fear in a great measure cast out as knowing on whom we depend, but enjoyment is enhanced for His sake, by whom all our enjoyments are bestowed; and all which we love becomes more lovely in our eyes when we say in our hearts, "And this also is my Father's bounty!"

If, on the other hand, He who hath given should take away, however we may feel the smart (and there is certainly no charm in religion which can make us impassive or insensible) a real love for God will be our best and most efficacious comfort. It will recall to our minds all the blessings which we have received, and all the far greater blessings we look for; it will silence complaint by the recol-

lection of past kindness ; and withdraw our attention from present suffering by the anticipation of future and more abundant mercy. We shall deduce from our own love for God a confidence that this love is mutual, an assurance that His chastisements are mercies in disguise, and that the clouds under which our nature shudders, will, ere long, burst over our heads in blessing. "Perfect love," said he who of all men most loved Christ, and whom more than all other men, Christ in the time of His humiliation loved. "Perfect love casteth out fear¹;" or if this painful but wholesome and necessary intruder must yet at times return, and be our occasional companion through our earthly pilgrimage, it will be a distrust of ourselves, not a doubt of God ; it will be mingled with a trembling joy for the continued sense of His mercy and forbearance ; by the recollection of our weakness it will bind us closer to His strength, and make the blessing of His presence more precious in our eyes, by the possibility that we may, hereafter, by our own faults, deprive ourselves of that blessing.

Such lives as these are, in themselves, a continued act of prayer and thanksgiving ; yet even such a life as this would not excuse us from that which is another evidence of the love, for whose good all things are made to work together, "a frequency and regularity of private and public prayer, and a diligent perusal of the Holy Scriptures." It is in

¹ 1 St. John iv. 18.

such acts as these that the soul draws nearer to its Maker ; it is then that we speak to Him and hear His voice again ; and that love would be a mere mockery of the name which should shun the conversation and neglect the correspondence of the person whom we most affected to esteem and honour. As the practice then of prayer, of praise, and the study of the Scriptures is the most availing and necessary course to kindle a love of God in our hearts ; so is, on the other hand, a cheerful continuance in the same habitual piety the certain effect and the necessary evidence that the flame thus excited is alive and yet glowing within us.

Another necessary proof of this love is the light in which we look on sin. I need not repeat what I have already urged against the incompatibility of any gross and habitual transgression with the existence of genuine love for the Almighty. But if we take pleasure in the recollection of foregone, or the imagination of future or possible evil ; if we feed our fancies with acts which we dare not perform, and witness with indifference or with unholy pleasure the transgressions of those who live around us ; if we feel a regret for the indulgences which we are, by our situation in life, compelled to forego, and condemn as fanatical or enthusiastic all endeavours after a more rigid and excellent piety, a moment's consideration will show how little the love of God can dwell in us ! It is a necessary part of affection to like and dislike the same objects with the person to whom we are united ; and in truth, in that

particular species of affection which I am now discussing, it is scarcely possible for any one, with a true conception of the causes which led to Christ's death, to read once attentively the details of that awful sacrifice, without experiencing, for the time at least, a loathing and horror of those sins which it was necessary to visit so severely on the guiltless ; and something like a bitter indignation against himself as one whose offences, amid the great mass of the foreseen offences of mankind, added sharpness to the thorny crown of Him who died to save us !

The last, however, and of all others the most decisive symptom of God's love residing in our hearts is, that the love of our neighbour also holds its dwelling there. It would occupy too much time (indeed I feel that I have already encroached too largely on your patience) were I to go through all the different bearings and details of this second great commandment : I would therefore merely direct your thoughts to the close connection which exists between the two, and to the utter impossibility of keeping the one while we transgress or neglect the other.

Though it were possible, (and it is a possibility which can only be supposed for the sake of argument) though it were possible, that all the other proofs of loving God should be found apart from this last and greatest, yet would this one deficiency give all the rest the lie : " He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God

whom he hath not seen ¹?" Where our affections are so selfish and so cold as not to throw a kindly warmth around the little circle of our friends and neighbours, the kindred of our blood, and the poor who are always with us, how can their feeble rays extend to the depth and heighth and breadth of invisible and infinite existence, of Him who is seen by the eye of faith alone, and who reveals Himself only to the pure in heart and to the merciful? How can we love our Father while we hate His children? How can we love our Redeemer, while we are indifferent to the welfare of those whom He died to save, and lives again to intercede for?

He then who loveth not his neighbour as himself is never, whatever may be his other pretensions to sanctity, a sincere and genuine lover of God. But the opposite assertion is also strictly true, and he who loveth not God most of all, will never love his neighbour as he ought to do. He wants, as we have seen, the only motive of action which is either acceptable with God, or availing against the snares of our mortal condition, the only principle which can encourage us to look for the further gracious assistance of that Spirit through whom we are conquerors.

It is, indeed, no difficult task to be liberal of fair words to others. It is, thank God, no uncommon thing where wealth is abundant, and avarice despised, and liberality held in honour, to find men

¹ 1 St. John iv. 20.

who, by no stretch of charity, can be supposed to care seriously for God, who yet are not insensible to the calls of kindness and of pity, and not unwilling to dispense some portion of their superfluities for the relief of their necessitous brethren. But of that charity which is self-denying as well as kind; of that charity which is solicitous for the souls as well as for the bodies of men; of that charity which can labour long and suffer much, as well as contribute largely; of that charity which “is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly,—hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things¹.” I wish to God the instances were more frequent than my experience leads me to believe them; and I am sure, so far forth as that experience extends, that no single instance has been found in which the philanthropy was not engrafted on some species of religious feeling.

The truth is, that our practice of the two great commandments can only be effectual and progressive where they reciprocally foster and increase one another. The more we grow in love to God, the more love we shall feel for His children; and the greater real kindness we cherish and practise towards mankind, the greater and warmer thankfulness we shall be inspired with towards Him, by whom the world has been created, preserved and pardoned; to whose goodness we owe the comforts of society, the endearments of kindred and the blessings of

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 7.

friendship ; who hath in His mercy ordained men to be helpful one to another, and who has graciously made the discharge of this most necessary duty a source of the purest earthly happiness.

But of these two commandments, the love of God stands first ; first in order, first in object, first in dignity ; where this is really found, the other parts of holiness will, almost of necessity, follow ; but where this is not sought after, their progress must be small who stumble on the threshold of religion.

Be it then your endeavour, brethren, to acquaint yourselves with all which God has done for you, with your own undeservings and His great and un-failing mercies. Be it your business to wait on Him in prayer, to converse with Him in the Scriptures, to renounce in your thoughts and actions whatever is displeasing to Him, and to practice towards His creatures, and for His sake, that mercy and meekness, that forgiveness and bounty which you hope yourselves to find from Him.

Nor fear, if you act thus, but that you will soon begin to love ; fear not, if you love thus, but that you will be surely loved in return by Him who is the centre of your hopes, your imitation, and your affection. Yea, if you love thus, be sure that God already loves you ; that the seed which He has sown in your heart is the first pledge and promise of His affection ; and that He has already taken possession of that temple wherein, unless we cast Him forth, He hath purposed to dwell for ever.

“ If a man love me,” said the Son of God, “ he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him ¹.”

Amen, Amen ! Even so, come Lord Jesus. Even so, Father of all, for Thy Son’s sake descend on us, and by Thy Spirit sanctify our hearts, that they may be filled with Thy invisible presence in this dark and evil world, so that, in the world to come, we may see Thee as Thou art, and be in Thee and with Thee everlastingly.

¹ 1 John xiv. 23.

SERMON XV.

[Preached at Calcutta, Christmas Day, 1825.]

ST. LUKE ii. 14.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.

THIS is the hymn with which the angels celebrated the incarnation of our Blessed Saviour, and to us, whom the authority of our national Church, the precedent of early antiquity, and the example of the great majority of believers in every age and country invite, as at this time, to give thanks for the same illustrious display of Divine mercy, no fitter subject of devout meditation can be found than the words in which the spirits of Heaven announced that mercy to mankind.

And of the topics of reflection which the words in question offer to the mind, the following are among the most striking. In the first place, the fact itself of that sympathizing joy which the angels are represented as feeling in the event which they announced with so much celestial pomp and splen-

dour, must needs excite in us a powerful apprehension of the greatness and illustrious nature of the benefit thus extended to our race, and may convince us both that those evils are very grievous from which the coming of the Son of God was to free mankind, and those blessings are even greater than our familiarity with them leaves us always able to estimate, which could move beings, so much superior to ourselves, to express such a lively and unusual interest in them. And the inference, I think, will follow both that, in the birth of the Messiah, the spirits of Heaven recognised something far more remarkable than the birth of a mere earthly prophet, and that something far more valuable than a new and more perfect revelation of God's will was anticipated by them in their song of peace and good will to the sons of Adam.

Of earthly prophets and earthly heroes the birth had been announced, and announced by angels, in former and well-known instances. Isaac and Ishmael had each had his Heavenly harbinger, and the mother of Sampson was comforted in her lonely prayers by the promise of a distinguished offspring¹. But in none of these instances was there the like promise displayed, in none of them was the like ardour of exultation and congratulation manifested which now brake the slumbers of the shepherds on the hill of Bethlehem; and which chaunted, this one time, in mortal ears, that harmony which swells

¹ Gen. xvii. 16. xvi. 11. Judges xiii. 5.

the choirs of Paradise. A celestial visitant, in form as a man, and suspected only to be more than man from the unmoved and terrible beauty of his countenance, a messenger indeed to mortal clay, but a messenger of too high a rank and too far removed from mortal pursuits or passions to mingle sympathies with that which was but the child of a day, or to occupy himself more or longer than his errand required with the fallen inhabitants of our planet, such was the form whose touch consumed to ashes the offering of Manoah and his wife; such he who came to Agar in the wilderness, to Zacharias in the temple; and such the three (though with respect to *one* of these a yet further mystery belongs) who reproved the incredulity of Sarah, and received the homage and hospitality of Abraham beneath the oak of Mamre¹. The time had been when God Himself came down to speak, in the form of God, with man, in might and majesty beyond a doubt, but with no tokens of gratulation, no songs of jubilee. On Sinai was a thick and lonely darkness, a mountain smoking like a furnace, which neither man nor beast could approach, save Moses only, and which Moses himself drew near in exceeding fear and trembling. No angel shapes broke through the gloom, no angel melodies were heard in the pauses of the thunder; but the trumpet alone waxing louder and louder, and the voice of God, of which they who heard it said, "Let not God speak with us lest we

¹ Judges xiii. 20. Gen. xvi. 7. Luke i. 11. Gen. xviii. 1.

die¹!” How different were these sights and sounds from the glory of the Lord, from the herald angel, accompanied by a multitude of the Heavenly host, and the hymn which, while it ascribed fresh glory to the Most High, spake of peace restored between Heaven and earth, and renewed good will from the Creator to His creatures.

If, however, we look back to what the angel had announced to the shepherds, “unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a SAVIOUR ;” if we recollect that this birth was the first thing executed on earth towards reconciling mankind to God ; that it was the first step towards the overturn of that evil spirit, who is the enemy and accuser of angels as well as of men ; that it was the noblest instance of mercy and condescension which even Omnipotence could show, and the more noble in proportion to the wretchedness and manifold demerits of those in whose favour it was exerted, we shall not wonder that the happy and benevolent inhabitants of Heaven felt joy in the extension to other worlds of those blessings in which they themselves partook without measure ; that the far-seeing cherubims beheld with delight and wonder a display of wisdom, of power, and of holiness which surpassed their most elevated contemplations, and that the seraphs loved, with augmented ardour, that good and gracious Lord who had pity on the least worthy of His creatures.

¹ Exod. xx. 19.

² St. Luke ii. 11.

The reason, then, assigned for the exultation of the Heavenly host, is that Christ was born “ a Saviour.” And if we desire to ascertain in what peculiar sense the Lord Jesus was a Saviour beyond all the prophets who went before Him, we shall find, or I am much mistaken, a very considerable difficulty (on every hypothesis of His nature and functions but that which we call the orthodox one) in finding an adequate reason for the eminence and peculiarity of the title thus appropriated to Him ; for the exultation expressed by the angels while thus appropriating it ; and for the vast and lavish display of wonder, of prophecy, of vision, and of miracle, by which the birth, and life, and death, and resurrection, and ascension, and destined return of the Messiah, both have been and will be illustrated. Were these honours paid to Christ as to a mortal man, but taught of God and endued with an unexampled degree of God’s spiritual assistance, the chosen instrument of bringing to light a more perfect and holy law of life and morals, confirmed with stronger sanctions than the law of Moses, and with that strongest sanction of all which arises from the resurrection of the dead and a future life without end ? God forbid that I should underrate the benefits which, even according to this imperfect view of the Christian faith, will appear to have been conferred on man through Jesus of Nazareth. I admit that, though we were to consider Him as a human prophet only, “ He spake

as never man spake¹;" I admit that a fuller stream of grace and wisdom has been poured on Him than on the most favoured sons of Adam, who had gone before or were to succeed Him ; I admit that no dictates of human wisdom, no previous lesson taught by God's prophets to mankind, can equal the simple and sober majesty of the sermon on the mount, the touching softness of the parable of the lost sheep, and the returning prodigal, or the thrilling union of awe and tenderness which is inspired by His picture of the last judgement ; I admit that neither Socrates, nor Moses, nor David, nor Isaiah, have left us any thing which can equal in purity and pathos His conversation during His last supper, and when bidding adieu to His disciples ; I admit that the doctrine of a life after death, though intimated in many passages of the Mosaic law, and more largely dwelt on by the prophets ; though deducible, in a great degree, from the dictates of natural reason, and actually deduced from those dictates by more than one distinguished heathen philosopher ; though forming a part of the popular tradition of almost every nation of mankind, and though received, above all, by the great majority of the Jewish nation in its fullest extent, and with almost all the circumstances of awe and majesty with which even Christians are accustomed to clothe it ; I admit that this life after death, and a

¹ St. John vii. 46.

future state of reward and punishment were never so authoritatively declared, or so forcibly represented, or so experimentally proved, as they have been to us who believe in the doctrine and resurrection of Jesus. But I maintain that all these points of difference between Christ and the preceding prophets are not enough to account for that difference which I have remarked in the honours paid to Him, and the display of Divine power and angelic praise by which His birth and person were, above all other prophets, distinguished ; and I maintain, above all, that in none of these respects, nor in all of them taken together, is His claim made good to that title which, of all prophets, is given to Him alone, and which constituted the specific ground of those congratulations which the angels bore to their fellow-creatures of mankind, the illustrious title of “ Saviour.”

Is it from the fear of death that the world is delivered by our Lord ? And is this end accomplished by the spectacle of His own glorious triumph over the grave, and over them that had the power of it ? Alas, are we ignorant that to the sinner (and who is there among men that sinneth not ?) his fears are but the more increased by the clearness of this discovery ! The same great Moralist who hath taught us by His words, and proved to us by His own example, that the grave is but the gate to a new and eternal state of existence, hath taught us also that there is an everlasting fire prepared for the workers of iniquity,

and we must escape from the burden of our manifold offences before the resurrection of Christ can be to us any other than a savour of death everlasting!

Can, then, a pure and holy law of life be sufficient to save mankind from their sins? Verily, if a law could have been given which was competent to produce this effect, salvation would have been by the law of Moses! But it is evident that so long as we are ourselves carnal and sold unto sin, the more spiritual and pure any rule of life may be, the less likely we shall be to comply with it; and it is no less evident that where Moses and the prophets had failed to produce repentance, not all the terrours and hopes of an invisible world, no nor, if Christ is to be believed, the very spectacle of one returning from the dead would be sufficient, without some further help, to alarm the sinner from the error of his ways, or to confirm the wavering soul when tossed on the storms of temptation.

But be this as it may, and even supposing us in time to come to avoid the crimes of our previous life, yet without some deliverance from the consequences of our former sins, this late repentance, though it might prevent our increasing their number, could not of itself rid us of apprehension. Repentance cannot make the past not to be; that we have not continued to act foolishly is of itself no reason for freeing us from those burdens which our folly has already incurred; and we must find out some atonement for sins past, as well as some pre-

servative against sins future, before the people of God can lay claim to the blessed hope of being saved from those sins whose guilt defiles, and whose consequences terrify them.

Nor is more needful to show the entire conformity of the Messiah's character and office, as understood by the great majority of His disciples, with the name by which He is best known among men, and by which the angels of the Most High proclaimed Him, who was clothed with our nature that He might reconcile us to God, who lived for our instruction, who died for our sins, who rose again for our justification, and who, from His Father's right hand, both intercedes for our infirmities, and sends forth His Spirit of holiness to prompt, and help, and sanctify our sincere, though imperfect services.

What then remains but that, thus mightily delivered, we should show forth in all our words and works a constant and becoming thankfulness; that, thus mightily aided, we should labour more abundantly in promoting our Master's praise; and that, united with the Godhead, as our nature is through Christ, we should the more aspire to emulate in diffusive goodness that God who maketh His sun to shine on the just and the unjust, and is kind to the unthankful and the evil.

The present season is one in which, by a natural and laudable association of ideas and feelings, the great majority of the Christian world have been accustomed to express their thankfulness for the

blessings bestowed on them, by imparting in a fuller measure than at other times the marks of affection and tenderness towards their fellow-creatures, by calling in, either literally or figuratively, their neighbours and brethren to rejoice with them, and by providing that, while they themselves exult in the bounty of the Almighty, the widow's heart should by their means be also made to sing for joy, and the blessings of him who was ready to perish, should mount up on their behalf an acceptable offering to their Maker. And here in Calcutta, in a city which, God be praised, may be honourably distinguished among the cities of the world for the extent and splendour of its public and private charities, the custom has long prevailed, in pursuance of which I yet further crave your attention, while recommending to your bounty the most ancient, and (I may be allowed to say), the most useful and necessary of all our humane institutions, that which alone administers to the pressing wants, alone alleviates the distress, the hunger, the nakedness, and the ignorance of the unhappy Europeans, and descendants of Europeans, who abound in the crowded dwellings and obscurer streets of this great and luxurious city. The necessity of such an institution is too obvious to require enforcement; but that necessity may be, perhaps, less known or less adverted to by those who are only occasional residents here, or who, immersed in public duties, or elevated above the access of petitioners, are but partially aware of the amount to which relief is

given, and the still greater degree in which it is needed.

Of the great body of Europeans of every nation and class of life who come out annually to seek their fortune in the flattering land of India, it is obvious that a small number only can hope to succeed in attaining even a livelihood; and that there are very many who are labouring at this moment under severe distress, and who are only kept here by the same poverty and want of friends which at once prevent their thriving, and prohibit their return. Nor is misfortune confined to these alone; in a country where speculation is so tempting, and where without speculation so little can be accomplished even by industry, not only are many humble but promising fortunes shipwrecked by undertakings which, if not strictly prudent, are under the circumstances of this country rendered almost necessary; but, where a prouder fabric of fortune and enterprise is shipwrecked, there are always many humbler barks whose fate depends on it, and whose industry and talent can rarely find another field till the assaults of famine, and the advances of disease, and the agony of ruined hopes and utter broken-heartedness have made them, even if another situation could be found, too often unfit to discharge its duties.

Nor are they misfortune and disappointment alone which multiply the claimants on the vestry fund, nor are these the most necessitous or the most interesting claimants on our bounty. As in

no land under Heaven is death so sudden and so frequent, so in no land that I have ever heard of is the death of a parent, or a husband, attended with such utter and immediate ruin to those who depend on him, as with the description of persons of whom I speak, it ordinarily is in Calcutta. And when to these we add the multitude of orphans, or worse than orphans, whose existence and distress are alike the evidence and aggravation of their father's crimes ; when we consider that not Calcutta alone, but the poor and populous colonies of Serampoor and Chinsura are included within the natural limit of our care ; and that whatever be the amount of distress in all these districts, it is to Europeans alone, under ordinary circumstances, the sufferer can look for relief or sympathy ; it cannot excite surprise that, large as the funds are which have passed through the hands of those who manage this good work, they are altogether insufficient to the number of claimants who besiege them. Yet if those funds should fail, to what quarter must the poor apply ? Shall private and individual charity suffice to feed so great a multitude ? Let those answer who are already wearied with a daily swarm of petitions, and who may be assured that those petitions would, without this institution, be augmented a hundred fold, and their doors be blocked up by suffering Christians in every hideous shape of hunger, disease, and nakedness, till their time and means were engrossed by giving to those whose cases they could not investigate, or their hearts

hardened against all by the apparent impossibility of relieving many. Nor can further arguments be required to prove the advantage of a common fund under the management of a few benevolent individuals, who are content to give up no small portion of their time to enquire into the cases submitted to them; and who, from their long familiarity with this work of mercy, are really enabled, at a smaller expense of time than would, under any other circumstances, be necessary, to ascertain with tolerable accuracy the character and condition of each individual claimant.

Of the labours of the vestry, and of the effects of those labours, though not myself a member, I have frequent occasion to hear something; and when I mention that I have known instances of females respectably born and educated, soliciting for the monthly allowance of paupers; that I have known strangers who must have perished in the street for lack of friends and shelter, had not the bounty of the institution intervened; and that the free school of Calcutta, which owes its chief support to this fund, has been, under God, the only means of rescuing from an early death, or a life which was worse than death, many thousand children of Christian parents who had either abandoned or could not educate or maintain them; when I state that in the vestry alms, no Christian in distress, of whatever nation or sect, is suffered to go unrelieved; and that in the free-school, though we naturally prefer the religious instructions of our own Church, yet

those instructions are forced on no child whose parents are of a different persuasion; that Armenians, and Greeks, and Romanists, and even Hindoos, may be seen in our classes, their prejudices respected, and their progress and comforts no less attended to than the children of our own people, I shall have said enough, I trust, to establish the claim of the institution, for which I now am pleading, to the support of every man who wishes well to his fellow-creatures, and who, without neglecting the prior claims of "the household of faith," is desirous, according to his power, "to do good to all men."

They were these claims, and claims like these, appreciated by a heart and head, than which few in the history of British India have been so warm and so cool, so ardent in the relief of distress and so calmly judicious in the choice of measures for alleviating it, which procured for this institution a more than common share of the attention and liberality of that great man whose life was cherished still, though his presence and counsels had been withdrawn from these colonies, not by his private friends alone, but by every well wisher to India; by every one who had learnt to honour private worth or public integrity and firmness; by the guests who had drawn delight and improvement from his conversation while they partook in his hospitality; and by the poor against whom his doors, his attention, his indulgence, and his purse had never been for an instant closed. His loss, the in-

stitution which I am now recommending, laments in common with almost every other religious or humane institution in the city ; but it may be well to state, in order to intimate the extent of our misfortune in losing him, and to incite those who hear me to the exercise of a similar liberality, that accessible as Mr. Adam always was to the petitions and personal applications, of the frequency of which I have spoken, there was no charity whose claims he felt so strongly as this the eldest of all ; that, ample as the donations were which the world saw affixed to his name, those donations fell considerably short of the sums which he contributed anonymously ; and that even when he had left India without an idea of seeing it more, he had determined that, while life was spared him, his charities should linger here still. In him, in that other benevolent and virtuous statesman, whom, at a yet more recent date, the will of Providence has called to his reward ; in others of less exalted rank, but of zeal not inferior for God's good cause, and the relief of their suffering fellow-creatures, whom since I last addressed you, a year of unusual mortality has swept from our social circles, the cause of charity has lost much ; but to replace the void is not beyond the scope of our own increased exertions and the exertions of those fresh labourers who have, during that time, been added to the vineyard. Only let it be our endeavour to bestow alms as of the ability which God giveth, and that God may bless our bounty to its objects and to ourselves, let us devote it in humble prayer

at His Altar from whom we have received all things, and from whose grace only it cometh that we can render Him any true or laudable service.

To Him the Father of the fatherless, the Defender of the cause of the widow, to Him who heareth the cry of the destitute, and whose Son is not ashamed to call the poor His brethren, to Him, with that blessed Son, and the Spirit of bounty and love, be accounted all honour, praise, and glory !

SERMON XVI.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

[Preached in the Cathedral, Calcutta, Jan. 1, 1824.]

ST. LUKE ii. 21.

And when eight days were accomplished, for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus.

IN reviewing those circumstances in the life of our Lord, which it is the custom of the Church to commemorate on the first day of every year, there are two observations which would seem to force themselves on our notice ; the one personal and respecting Christ alone, the other of a more general character, and relating to the institution itself to which He thus, in great humility, became subject. The first is the apparent strangeness of the fact that at His earliest entrance into the world, the Son of God should be made liable to suffering ; the other the authority and sanction which, from the analogy of the Jewish covenant, is afforded to the practice of the general Christian Church, in not denying baptism to persons of like tender years.

The first of these is a reflection of no inconsi-

derable importance, as it conduces, or should conduce, to our love and admiration of His goodness who, being throned above all created things, endured the elements of the world to save us ; who, being born before all worlds, became for our sakes a suckling ; whose entrance and exit into life were sprinkled alike with blood ; and who, though Himself spotless and pure, thought it not unworthy of His nature or His character to fulfill even the most revolting forms of legal righteousness. It may teach, too, that even the forms and ceremonies of religion (particularly when those forms and ceremonies have received the sanction of the Most High) are neither to be neglected without abundant cause, nor dispensed with by a less authority than that which imposed them ; but that, in these outward signs, an inward blessing dwells. And that He who Himself condescended to observe that law which was so soon to vanish away, will far less hold them guiltless who neglect or regard as trifling those rites which are to endure till He shall return again ; of which the one was the legacy of His death, and the other the injunction of His triumph ; His “do this in remembrance of me,” and His “go ye baptize all nations¹.” The second is a remark of a more controversial, but of a scarcely less practical nature ; it is a reflection which penetrates into the recesses of every family, and which blends with the earliest affection and the earliest duties which we can feel

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 25. St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

for, or extend to our offspring. And, in this region of India, it is a question the more seasonable, and the more obvious to our consideration from the numbers, the popularity and distinguished learning of those among our Christian brethren who have embraced a contrary opinion and practice. I am anxious, therefore, to offer (with as much brevity as the subject will admit, and I trust with as little violation of mutual charity as the infirmity of our nature suffers) a few of the many reasons which have induced the great body of Christians to apply the analogy of the ancient rite to that rite by which it was superseded, and to bring the first fruit of their infants' days to that merciful Saviour of all, who did not forbid the little children to come unto Him, and who, Himself, when a child, became partaker of the covenant of Israel.

That the intention and advantage of the federal rite of the Jews were in many, nay, in most particulars, very closely answerable to the intention and advantages of baptism, is an assertion which even a moderate acquaintance with the Old Testament and the writings of St. Paul might seem sufficient to convince us. In the first appointment of circumcision by the Almighty, it is represented as an expression of the faith of the person initiated in the power and promises of Jehovah. "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee." "Every man child among you shall be circumcised," "and it shall be a token

of the covenant betwixt me and you." "Abraham," saith St. Paul, "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised¹." Nor was it of faith only in the promises of God that circumcision was expressive. It was expressive also of a controul over men's unruly appetites, a purification of the inward man from every foul and sordid affection, and a renunciation of the superfluities of the world for the service of that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. And it is hard to deny, when reading some of the later prophets, that the same change in the inner man of which baptism is typical, was betokened by and confirmed in circumcision; that "the circumcision of the heart" must have been something very like in its import to our term of "regeneration;" and that to them who, under affliction and persecution, kept the law, "circumcision verily profiteth²" in the only way by which it could profit them, by purchasing the praise not of men but of God, and a participation in the benefits of those promises, the fulfilment of which they did not in life receive, but in which they died stedfastly believing.

Nor am I aware that any thing further or greater is expressed or received by the Christian in baptism than is attributed by St. Paul to circumcision in the Jew; a declaration of faith, an assurance of mercy, an admission into the privilege of God's

¹ Gen. xvii. 7, 10, 11. Rom. iv. 11.

² Rom. ii. 25.

elect people upon earth, and a renunciation of those sins and vanities which unfit us for that Heaven whither our hopes are tending. Nor can any words, as I conceive, be devised, which, *mutatis mutandis*, more accurately express the obligations and the benefits of a truly Christian baptism, which more strongly depict the danger of holding the faith in unrighteousness, or of resting contented with an outward sign while the inward and spiritual grace is, in our heart, extinct and buried, than the caution that "he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ¹."

And here the question will naturally arise, "at what period of their lives were men conceived fit subjects for such engagements ? how soon or how late were they called on by a public ceremony to receive a seal of that righteousness which was by faith, and whereby they, the Jews, were justified with faithful Abraham ?" And when these enquirers learn that, at eight days' old, the infant Israelite was thus initiated ; that the period of his initiation was thus fixed by God himself ; and that at the same early age the Son of God began in this manner to fulfill the righteousness of the law, they may be led to ask, perhaps with some surprise, what Christians those can be who are insensible to the analogy of

¹ Rom. ii. 28, 29.

such a practice with that of infant baptism, who forbid us to dedicate our children to God at the same age when, by God's own appointment, the children of the Jews were dedicated ; and when the Son of God Himself, in His character of a Jew, undertook the burden and laid claim to the promises which belonged to the seed of Abraham ?

Let us examine the matter a little more closely. God is not mocked, neither is God a mocker of His creatures. He knows our misery too well to trifle with it, and He is as far from giving us the delusive comfort of a useless pageant, as He is from being Himself imposed upon by any pageantry of worthless ceremonies. But, if the baptism of children, as these suppose, is worthless and unmeaning, it is evident that the circumcision of children must fall under an equal censure. But this last is allowed, on all hands, to have been instituted by God Himself, and it will follow that the inconsistencies ascribed to the former practice must be more imaginary than real, and that we may well hope that God favourably alloweth this charitable work of ours in bringing these infants to His holy baptism.

I know it has been urged that circumcision was the seal of admission, not to spiritual, but temporal privileges, the possession of an earthly Canaan, the entrance into the visible sanctuary, the right of being numbered among the descendants of Abraham and the family of the future Messiah. I have already proved, I trust, that its privileges were not confined to these, and that its meaning, if regard

be had to some remarkable expressions both of the prophets and of St. Paul, was exceedingly more extensive and more solemn. But, even if we were to admit the allegation, how would this destroy the analogy? In the first place, it is well known (so well known, indeed, as to admit of no dispute among Christians) that the civil institutions and temporal privileges of the Jews had all, likewise, a typical and mysterious character; that they were shadows of good things to come, and representatives of that spiritual blessedness which we seek after and obtain by a due recourse to the sacrament of baptism. But from the type to the anti-type the inference is fair and obvious, and if a child might, by submitting to a certain ceremony, be made partaker of the advantages of the one, it is, surely, too much to deny that a child being, in another and corresponding ceremony, dedicated by its parents to God, might not, through God's favour, become partaker of the privileges of the other. Is God's arm grown short under the Christian dispensation? Is His mercy chilled and narrowed? or is not the promise of the glorious Gospel given to us and to our children, and to our children's children, no less than was to the house of Israel the promise of those elemental and external blessings which, in comparison with our own, St. Paul is not afraid to designate as "beggarly¹."

But let the privileges conferred by circumcision

¹ Gal. iv. 9.

have been of whatever kind they may, those privileges, it is plain, were conditional on the performance, through life, of certain duties. It was to the Israelite a seal of the faith which he had in the promises and power of the Almighty; it was a pledge on his part of obedience to Jehovah that he should have the Lord for his God, and none other. If he broke this covenant his privileges were forfeited; his circumcision became uncircumcision; he retained neither lot nor part in the federation of the tribes, or was liable only to the indignation and vengeance of their Heavenly Patron and Sovereign. It was in fact a contract, no less than baptism is now, between each individual Israelite and the Most High.

But if the child of Jewish parents were capable of entering into such a contract, who has forbidden, or who shall forbid the Christian infant from, in like manner, entering by his sureties into a similar solemn engagement? Who shall doubt that though the weakness and the tender age be alike in both, the merciful arms of a gracious Lord are as open in the one instance as the other?

And this presumption will gain yet further strength, if we recollect that circumcision is, by God Himself, called "a token of the covenant between Himself and Israel." Now for whose use and instruction was such a token intended? for which of the contracting parties? Did *God* require a memento of His own gracious purposes? Did *God* need that a bodily mark should be imposed on His

people, in order that He might know and distinguish them from the Gentiles among whom they were scattered? Or was it not rather designed for the instruction and comfort of the individual on whom it was affixed, to preserve in his mind the recollection of those hopes which were held out to his continued allegiance to God, those terrors which impended over his departure from the prescribed conditions? Was it not a pledge on the part of the parents and friends, that the infant whom they thus brought into treaty with the Most High should, in after years, be trained up by them in His faith and fear, and that Ishmael and Isaac should be taught, like their father Abraham, to know the Lord their God, and to look forward to his future Messiah? Or which of all these points is there which is not equally supplied to the child of Christian parents by his early dedication to our Great Master's service? He cannot, indeed, in the one any more than in the other instance, himself be at the moment made sensible of his new privileges, or the new obligations which are laid on him; but he has the prayers of his parents and of the Church, offered up in that manner and by that form to which the Almighty has promised a blessing. The ceremony which he undergoes is a pledge on the part of the Church that he shall be admitted to her external means of instruction; it is a petition addressed to the Almighty that those means of instruction may be blessed to his everlasting happiness; it is a solemn claim of that promise from

God, which He has made to all without exception, and which, be it remembered, is a promise of free grace and mercy only, to the fulfilment of which, whether infant or adult, the applicant is alike incapable of contributing any merits or strength of his own, and for which the infant, no less than the adult, has the plea of his natural weakness and his natural misery.

The promise, I repeat, is made to all, and the young as well as the old partake in it. "The child," according to the ancient prophet, was under the Gospel covenant, "to die an hundred years old¹." And who shall deny that those infants of whom Christ himself declared that "of such was the kingdom of Heaven²," have, no less than the most aged saint, their proportional share in its happiness? But, can any enter Heaven without the sanctifying grace of Christ? Or, if infants are fit subjects for this grace, if they are really inheritors of the kingdom of God, and partakers of those spiritual influences in this life, without which our fleshly nature cannot see the Lord, then "can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we³?" Surely, the more we examine it the more reasonable does the practice appear, as a seal of past mercies, as an engagement to future duties, as an admission to the external means of grace which the Church can in this world supply, and as a solemn

¹ Isaiah lxy. 20.

² St. Matt. xix. 14.

³ Acts x. 47.

petition to the Almighty, that His blessing may render those outward means effectual! Suffer, then, the little children to come to Christ and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven!

In this short view of a very interesting and important question, I have not had the opportunity, and circumstanced as I am, at this moment, with regard to books of reference, I have hardly had the means of bringing forward, in the manner which it deserves, the vast body of authority and precedent which the Talmudists and the ancient Fathers supply, both as to the circumstances under which baptism was administered by the ancient Jews, for the Jews had also their baptism, and of the admission of infants in the earliest times of the Church, to the privileges and pledges of Christians. Enough, however, has, I trust, been said to show, that in thus admitting them, we neither act irrationally nor unscripturally; that we neither mock the Lord our God with an empty and unauthorised form, nor mock our helpless offspring with an unavailing remedy for their natural corruption and misery. I will only add that the wisdom of our Church, and the merciful appointment of our Maker have added, in the ceremony of a confirmation subsequent to baptism, the force of a personal engagement to the blessing of an early dedication, and that the regenerate by water may be renewed by the Holy Ghost, if they seek Him in earnest prayer, and at the hands of His appointed ministers.

One observation yet remains as to the occasion which calls us together. It has been the devout and commendable custom of our Indian Church to assemble on the annual return of this day, for the hearing of God's word and of prayer, less, perhaps, with reference to the particular event in our Saviour's history which the service of this day commemorates, than for the sake of offering our thanksgiving to Him who has protected us through another revolution of the sun, and of beginning the new year with an act of solemn prayer, and an offering of ourselves to His service. Such a custom it would most painfully grieve me to see neglected, or passing into oblivion; but that such a custom may be something more than an empty form, let me entreat you, my brethren, to make some part of this day a season of self-examination; of enquiry into the present state of your feelings towards God, and the tenour of your past conduct before Him; of making a solemn resolution for the amendment of your future life, and of earnest private prayer to Him, without whose help and guidance, even our best future resolutions will be as vain as those which have preceded them. The return of days like these are as milestones in our passage through the world, but they differ from such waymarks, inasmuch as they respect the past alone. They tell us how far we have advanced, but they leave uncertain how short a course we may yet have to travel. Yet one thing they teach us, that our journey cannot be long, that we have most of

us already passed too many stages to have many yet behind, while a retrospect of those which we have gone through, may assure us of the exceeding shortness even of those months and years, and tens of years, which, as we advance towards them, appear so interminable.

Under the mildest suns and the most temperate climates of earth, our course must be short, and its termination may, at any time, be immediate. But here, where the lamp of life, even under the most favourable circumstances, must burn so rapidly, surrounded at every step with deaths and diseases, and placed under the constant influence of the most awful and destructive phenomena of nature, can we yet hope to prolong our days for ever? can we yet forget that God who only can defend us against the sun by day, the moon by night, the arrows of the sky, and the hand of the armed enemy? Here, if any where, in the midst of life we are in death! And of whom may we seek for succour, save of Thee, Oh Lord, who, for our sins, art justly displeased! Yet, Oh Lord most Holy, Oh Lord most Mighty, Oh Holy and Merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death! So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom! And, Oh Lord most Holy, Oh God most Mighty, Thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not at our last hour for any pains of death to fall from Thee!

SERMON XVII.

EASTER DAY.

[Preached at Tanjore, March 26, 1826.]

REV. i. 17, 18.

He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not ; I am the first and the last ; I am He that liveth and was dead ; and behold, I am alive for evermore, amen ; and have the keys of Hell and of Death.

THESE were the gracious expressions of our glorified Lord to His faithful and most favoured disciple, when, in the prison of Patmos and amid the solitary devotions of a Christian Sabbath, the apostle St. John was visited by "One like unto the Son of Man." The features yet remained distinguishable to the eye of ancient friendship, of Him whom he had known on earth as the lowly and the poor, whose afflictions he had shared, whose journeyings he had followed, and who with His dying lips had commended to his filial care the desolate old age of His mother ! But He was now arrayed in long and kingly robes, His girdle was of gold, His eyes gleamed as the fire, His limbs were bright as burning brass, His voice as deep and tuneable as the sound of many waters. Seven stars were in His

grasp; before His face a flaming sword went forth; and His countenance was as the sun when its light is strongest. "Fear not," He said, as His ancient follower sank down in terroure at His feet, "I am the first and the last, I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death."

In these few words are expressed or implied all the several and peculiar doctrines on which the Christian builds his hope of a life to come; and I have selected the passage for our devout consideration this day, because I know few other passages in Scripture which so concisely, so forcibly, and so majestically express the belief by which we are distinguished from the Jews, the Mussulmans, and the Heathen. The eternity of Christ, with which His Divinity is closely connected, is expressly stated in the opening member of the sentence. His death and resurrection are no less explicitly laid down in the assertion that He "liveth and was dead;" and the concluding proposition, that "He hath the keys of hell and of death," would be unintelligible on any other principle than that it is by His power, and through His merits only, that we are ourselves, in like manner, to burst the prison-house of the grave; that it is by His power, and through His merits only, that the resurrection thus obtained for us can be a subject of hope and thankfulness.

Each of these distinct topics would afford abundant and useful matter for a sermon; but it shall be my endeavour at present to point out, so far as

the time allows, how they materially confirm and illustrate each other, and more particularly connected with the blessed event which we are this day assembled to celebrate, how much both of probability, of reasonableness, of religious and moral consistency is derived, from a faith in the Divinity and atonement of our Lord, to the doctrine of His resurrection and our own.

It is certain that, unless the resurrection of Christ be true, His religion is itself a lie. This is the alternative expressly admitted by St. Paul; “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished¹.” The prophets had foretold, not only that the Messiah should die a bloody and painful death, but also that His soul should not remain in hell, neither should His holy person see corruption². To this resurrection within three days Jesus had repeatedly appealed, as the fullest testimony of His divine commission, the crowning and consummating evidence of His religion. If, therefore, Jesus had not actually risen again, the conclusion must have followed, both that He had failed in one most essential and striking characteristic of the predicted Christ, whose character He assumed; and that, in expressly foretelling so remarkable an event, and foretelling it in vain, He had proved Himself, beyond all shadow of defence, to be either deceived or a deceiver. It

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 17, 18.

² Psalm xiv. 10.

followed, that such who had grounded their hope of a future life on His promise, had but reared a baseless fabric ; and that such as hoped for pardon of their sins in confidence of His intercession, had been treasuring up for themselves the bitterest disappointment, if there were indeed another world and a day of dreadful retribution. Accordingly it shall be my endeavour, in the first place, to lay before you, in the least possible compass, some few of those arguments which appear to me most convincing for the reality of that extraordinary event which the apostles witnessed to the world, and for the sincerity of those persons who so boldly and constantly proclaimed it.

It is on this latter foundation, indeed, that the faith of Christians reposes. The reality of Christ's resurrection we receive on their testimony alone, and a moment's consideration may convince us that it is their sincerity only which can be called in question. It was a point on which they could not be mistaken. If their account be true, it was no single nor transient visit which their crucified Master paid them after His resurrection. He was in their company, at short and uncertain intervals, during forty days ; He ate and drank in their presence ; He allowed them to examine His person and His wounds ; He discoursed with them in His usual manner ; and, when He departed from them at length, He departed in the broad light of day, ascending upwards before their eyes till the intervening clouds prevented them from observing His

further progress. To say that they were unlearned and superstitious persons, is to speak very widely from the purpose. Unlearned and credulous persons are as competent judges of the facts for which the apostles vouched, as the most skilful and cautious naturalist. It needs no physical knowledge to use the hands and eyes; it is not necessary that a man should be acquainted with the laws of refraction or electricity to enable him to swear to his having seen, in broad day-light, the person of a friend whom he had for three years together continually attended; and the circumstances under which our Lord exhibited Himself were such, if they are rightly described, as to render vain and impracticable all kinds of phantasmagoric illusion.

Let us see, then, what arguments the apostles were enabled to advance to convince mankind that they were not the preachers of a cunningly devised fable, and to gain credit for a fact so extraordinary as that a person, confessedly put to a public and shameful death, had resumed His life, had returned from His grave, and was at that time, under God, the invisible Governor of all things.

And here it must not be forgotten that the very improbability of this story, paradoxical as the assertion may seem, is, to a certain extent, a presumption of its truth. It is not like the invention of a religious cheat, or of a man or body of men (some of them, to judge from their writings of no inconsiderable talent and attainment) who were anxious, by a ready lie, to sustain the credit of a

ruined cause, and to save themselves from sinking into that insignificance from which the eloquence and renown of their Master had originally raised them. A less daring forgery might have been sufficient for such a purpose ; nor is it likely that, had they been impostors, and been anxious in the name of Jesus to carry on the imposture which He began, they would have ventured on a tale so wild as that of His actual re-appearance in the body, when a pretended interview with His ghost would have better suited the prejudices both of their own countrymen, and of the Gentiles. Nor is this all, since, as neither their countrymen nor the Gentiles had any pre-disposition in favour of their story ; since, on the other hand, the attributing such honour to a crucified man was the greatest stumbling-block which the new religion offered to the house of Israel ; and since the bare mention of a resurrection from the dead was enough to excite the mockery of the Athenians, and to extort from Festus the exclamation that the preacher of such a doctrine was beside himself¹ ; we might be, *à priori*, sure that such an assertion would never have been received as true by the many thousands who, on the apostle's preaching, did receive it, unless their testimony had been confirmed by some very remarkable proofs both of their sincerity, their sanity, and their divine commission..

We know ourselves, there is, perhaps, no country

¹ Acts xxvi. 24.

in the world where we have so good reason to know it as in India, we know that it is no easy matter even for the most popular talents and the most persevering zeal to persuade men into a new religion. We know that this very article of Christ's resurrection from the dead is uniformly, at first sight, by the heathen now, as by the heathen of old, regarded as folly and madness; and we may well perceive the argument of Origen to be founded in reason and probability, that those miracles must have been great indeed, those arguments must have been of a most convincing potency, which could have obtained, in the first instance, even hearers, far less believers for such a tale in the streets of Rome, of Athens, and of Alexandria. Accordingly, though beyond a doubt the apparent disinterestedness of the first teachers of Christianity, the absence of all worldly gains which might prompt them to the continuance of such an imposture, and the undaunted patience and constancy which, even in death itself, distinguished the witnesses of the resurrection, though all these must have had on their contemporaries, as they still have on ourselves, a powerful effect in gaining credit to their narration, they are the marvels still more which they wrought in Christ's name, and in attestation of His religion to which, in their writings, the apostles themselves appeal, and which they adduce as proofs of their having been actuated by the Spirit of God. And it is more remarkable still that neither of Christ nor His apostles are the miraculous actions denied

in those attacks on our faith which have come down to us from the earliest ages. The article of miracles was met by the Antichristian disputant with the allegation, not that the miracles were false, but that they might possibly be magical; and when driven from this strong hold, they appear to have had no excuse nor evasion but the pretence that, in their own temples, wonders of the same kind were not unknown, and an attempt to counterbalance the miracles of Peter and of John, by the tales of Vespasian with his blind man, and Apollonius of Tyana with his fountain genii.

The resurrection, then, of our Lord, as it stands on the testimony of the apostles, is confirmed by the impossibility that they could be themselves deceived; by the absence of any adequate motive which could induce them to impose on others; by the simplicity of their lives, their constancy in death, and the miraculous powers which, in the greatest and least credulous cities of the Roman world, obtained them hosts of auditors and converts. But one objection will yet remain both to the fact which they proclaimed, and to the miraculous facts by which they chiefly strengthened their testimony; an objection which has more influence among men than, I believe, is generally suspected, and which is at the bottom of much of that practical or professed infidelity which, in the present day, and in our native land, so frequently surprises and shocks us; I mean the doctrine of Hume, that no evidence can establish a miracle, inasmuch as

there is more probability that the witnesses should deceive or be deceived, than that the ordinary laws of nature should be transgressed by the Almighty.

In this argument it is apparent that there is more than one *petitio principii*. The sophist assumes the existence of certain definite laws by which nature is tied ; (which code, nevertheless, if he had been called to produce, it would have been very easy to anticipate his perplexity). He assumes that supposing such laws to exist, what we call miracles are breaches of them, whereas, for all he knew or could know, such visible interpositions of a superior intelligence may be, as indeed they are represented in Scripture, foreseen and necessary events in the great work of God's Providence, and no less constituent parts of a regular system than the movements of the comet, the hurricane, or the earthquake. But above all, he forgets that, if a sufficient reason can be assigned, the visible interference of the Maker of the world becomes no more than might be reasonably expected from His usual and provident care of His creatures ; while the discovery and attestation of truths infinitely important to mankind, can scarcely be denied to be a reason which might make a display of Almighty power expedient and natural.

And here it is that the great mystery of Christian redemption comes forward with irresistible force to overturn the sceptic's argument, and to convince every candid reasoner that no ordinary rules of probability will apply, where the analogy

is so completely broken and dissolved by the greatness of the interests concerned, and the dignity of the persons implicated. The resuscitation of a corpse, if it were alleged to have taken place without any reason at all, or for a reason of minor expediency, might demand, indeed, a rigid enquiry into its circumstances, and a suspension of our belief, even if we failed to detect imposture. It is one of the many reasons which persuade me to withhold my faith from the pretended miracles of the Romish Church, that the interests of a convent, the honour of a shrine, nay the truth or falsehood of those minor differences, which have for so many ages disturbed the peace of those who acknowledge the same Creator and Redeemer, do not appear to me such sufficient grounds of miraculous interposition, as to induce me to expect that God would make bare His arm, or that the thunders of Heaven would muster in such a quarrel. And if the Socinian hypothesis with regard to Christianity were true ; if Christ had been, indeed, a mere man of men, possessed of no further dignity than a prophetic commission from on high, and with no more awful secret to disclose than that future life after death, which the majority of mankind believed already, I might, perhaps, have wondered at the strange prodigality of miracles with which His short continuance on earth was adorned and illustrated. I might have doubted the fitness of darkening the sun, because an innocent man was brought to an untimely end, and have

apprehended that it was hardly necessary to bring back our Teacher from the grave to establish, by that greatest of prodigies, the truth of the doctrine which He had delivered. But when I learn that the seeming man of sorrows was actually an incarnation of the Deity, I can understand at once, and without difficulty, the reason and fitness that so many and so mighty works should have shown forth themselves in Him. When I learn that His death was the ransom of a guilty world, I can appreciate the sympathy which made the inanimate creation tremble, which obscured the face of day, and made the dead burst untimely from the womb of their sepulchres.

I cease to wonder at His return from the grave, when I know that it was "impossible that He could be holden of it," that "He had power to lay down His life and power to take it up again," and that He who was, for a time, "obedient to the death on the cross," had life in Himself co-eternal with the eternal Father. I cease to wonder at the high exaltation to God's right hand, which He who "was found in fashion as a man," has attained to, when I know that the glory which adorns Him now, is but the same with that which He had before the world was¹; but my hope is increased, and my deep thankfulness ten thousand fold augmented, when assured that it was the First and the Last who condescended to die for me; that

¹ Acts ii. 24. St. John x. 18. Phil. ii. 8.

He is faithful who hath promised to send the Holy Ghost to quicken us to a perpetual remembrance ; and that the keys of death and hell are in the merciful and mighty hands of Him who hath poured out His blood to save us from the one, and hath made the other the gate of immortality !

ADDRESS ON CONFIRMATION.

[Delivered at Trichinopoly, April 3, 1826.]

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD !

You have been engaged this day in one of the most awful and important transactions in which a created being can bear a part ; the solemn renewal of your former covenant with your Maker, and the no less solemn claim of the stipulated mercies of that great Creator towards yourselves. In Christ's name you have drawn near to the Most High to tender to His service, in the terms of your baptismal engagement, the bodies which He has framed, the lives which He has given, the immortal souls which, through His Son, He has redeemed from misery unspeakable.

For God's acceptance of these offered services ; for the spiritual strength which only can enable you to render them ; for the merciful indulgence which, even when they are most diligently performed, they must still need at God's hand ; and for the unbounded and eternal reward which His free bounty has promised to even the weakest efforts

to please Him, when made in His Son's name, you have pleaded the merits of that blessed Son, by the confession of your faith in Him, and by the solemn prayer which we offered up together to the Throne of Grace, for the gift of the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

In reliance on these merits and on the precious promises of our Redeemer, I, lastly, as His servant and in His name, have prayed for you that your faith fail not. In His name and as His servant, and in imitation of His holy apostles, I have laid my hands on you and blessed you, as a sure token that our prayers would not return empty from the Lord of life, but that ye might receive the Holy Ghost whom ye had desired, and might partake henceforward, in a larger measure and by a daily increase, of that Heavenly grace which was, in part, bestowed on you in baptism.

And I doubt not, that so many of you as with faith unfeigned and fitting preparation of heart, have repaired to this holy ordinance, have been as truly and effectually, though not so conspicuously, sharers in that unspeakable gift whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption, as when the Heaven was opened over the congregations of the primitive Church, and He whose temples we are, came down in cloven flames, and hovered over the heads of His servants.

I doubt it not, because I dare not doubt the strength of prayer, and the promise of the Son of God, that His Father and ours, (for, by the spirit of adoption,

we have permission to call Him so) that His Heavenly Father and ours will not refuse the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him! I doubt it not, because I dare not doubt the efficacy of an apostolic injunction, or that the petitions which we offer in the manner which those dearest to God enjoined and practised, will be acceptable with God and with His Son; and to us, as to those from whom we have received them, be the fountain and pledge of Heavenly strength and blessing. I doubt it not, because I dare not doubt the last words of our Lord upon earth, when He sent forth His ministers with a like commission to that which He had Himself received of His Father, and when, though foreseeing, as what did He not foresee, the lamentable degeneracy of those who should bear His name, He promised, nevertheless, to His Church, His invisible protection and presence till the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdom of the Lamb, and this same Jesus, which was then taken up from us into Heaven, should so come in like manner as He was seen going into Heaven.

Oh Master, Oh Saviour, Oh Judge and King, Oh God faithful and true! Thy word is sure, though our sinful eyes may not witness its fulfilment! Surely Thou art in this place and in every place where thine ordinances are revered, and Thy name is duly called on! Thy treasures are in earthen vessels, but they are Thy treasures still! Though prophecies may fail and tongues may cease, Thy truth remains the same; and

though prophecies have failed and tongues have ceased, and though the Heaven and the earth are grown old and ready to vanish away, yet it is impossible but that when two or three are gathered together in Thy name, Thou also shouldst be in the midst of them! So continue with us Lord evermore, and let the Spirit, the Angel of Thy presence, be with us all our days, even as He hath this day been at hand to help, to deliver and to sanctify all who came to receive Him.

In assurance, then, my brethren, that our prayers have not been in vain, and that an effectual power to become the sons of God has been, even now, according to Christ's holy promise, communicated to those who sought it faithfully, it is my duty to call on you to give hearty and humble thanks to the Father and Giver of all good things, to the Son whose blood has bought for us these spiritual treasures, and to that Good Spirit who hath not disdained to dwell with men, and of whose indwelling and inspiration it cometh that we can either think or do such things as please Him. And that your hearts may be better fitted to retain this Heavenly guest, and that you may not, by a relapse into sin, resist and grieve the Holy Ghost as Israel did of old, and so increase your damnation by erring against a greater light, and flinging away a greater mercy, receive a few plain instructions by way of caution for the management of your hearts, and the improvement of that time and

those opportunities of His service, which God may hereafter vouchsafe to you.

I will not do so much injustice to the well-known zeal and ability of your spiritual instructors, on the present occasion ; I will not do so much injustice to the seriousness of deportment and apparent earnestness of prayer, which I have, with pleasure, remarked in most of you, as to doubt that you have been duly taught the nature and necessity of those baptismal engagements which you have now renewed ; or that you are really sincere in the desire which you have expressed to be enabled to serve and please your God hereafter. Nor need I do more than recall to your recollections that truth, which is implied and acknowledged in the whole of this solemn ceremony, that this power to serve and please God is given us by His Spirit only ; that in ourselves, that is in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing ; and that we are utterly unequal to strive with the many temptations which surround us, unless a Greater and Mightier than we vouchsafes to go forth with us to battle. The promise of this visitation and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, has, we trust, been now fulfilled to us ; and it remains to enquire in what manner our hearts may best entertain their Heavenly Inhabitant, and how we may most surely keep, enjoy, and profit by the inestimable privileges to which we are become entitled, the favour, the fellowship, the help, and comfort of the Most High.

Of the things most conducive and requisite to this desirable end, the first is, evidently, a firm and lively faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the redemption which He has wrought for us. That you are, at present, actuated by such a faith, that you are persuaded that the things contained in the Gospel are true, and that relying on their truth, you have come hither to ask a blessing, I should grieve if I were not persuaded. But be it borne in mind that a faith which is to save us must be in our recollection as well as in our knowledge; that it must be positively as well as potentially in our minds; that we cannot be said to believe in the God of whom we are not thinking, inasmuch as faith necessarily implies thought exercised upon an unseen object. And this may show the manner in which our faith may fail, and fail most ruinously for ourselves, without our ever actually entertaining a doubt of the truth of those things in which we have been instructed, inasmuch as if we do not believe them, or, which amounts to the same thing, do not think of them when the time of temptation arrives, it is of very little use that in Church, or when by some similar circumstance they are brought back to our memory, we again receive them with unabated conviction. Accordingly, not only the absolutely wicked are turned into hell, but the people who forget God lie under the same awful menace¹. And we have the authority of God's

¹ Psalm ix. 17.

holy word for maintaining that all the errors, all the superstition, all the hateful and hideous idolatry which the world has seen, arose from this single source, inasmuch as because men did not like to retain God in their thoughts, He gave them up to a strong delusion that they should believe a lie! So necessary is it by daily recollections of God, by daily study of the Holy Scriptures, and by a frequent reference to those works of devotion and instruction which the Church supplies, to avoid this dangerous and deadly downfall, and to keep the blessed Trinity in our minds, if we would have God to dwell in our hearts for ever.

The next thing requisite to a constant faith in God is a total dependance on Him, through the merits of His Son. This is, indeed, implied in a right faith, but it is a particular part of our faith which many are apt to feel and cherish but imperfectly. By a total dependance on God I mean a perfect sense of our own weakness; an entire renunciation of our own merits; a childlike leaning on the hand and help of the Most High, which claims to receive nothing but from free mercy, and hopes to perform nothing but in His name and by His power alone. So long as we resolve in our own strength, our resolutions will be worse than idle; so long as we are not daily and continually sensible of our own utter weakness, God will not help us and our prayers will be rendered vain.

Be careful, then, to accustom yourselves to this lowliness of heart; and that you may feel your own

weakness the more readily as it respects your Maker, be the more careful to bear yourself humbly and meekly towards those who are your fellow-sinners and fellow-servants. If we love not our brother whom we have seen, we know who has told us that we cannot love God whom we have not seen; and he, in like manner, who indulges himself in haughtiness towards those with whom he dwells, will seldom, if ever, be able to feel sufficient meekness towards Him who is visible by the eye of faith alone.

A third and a still more important instrument in preparing our hearts for the reception of the Holy Ghost, is a habit of prayer. "Ask and ye shall have," "Seek and ye shall find," is the constant language of Scripture¹. Without asking we shall not obtain; without continuing to ask, what we have obtained will not be prolonged to us. Your hearts, as we trust, are now the temple of the Holy Ghost. But a temple is a house of prayer; and if we omit to serve the Deity we cannot hope that He will continue in His shrine.

But woe be to us, then, when He, the Spirit of God, forsakes us! Woe be to our wretched souls when that voice is heard concerning them, which, when the measure of Israel's guilt was full, in the dead of night resounded through the courts of their sanctuary, "Let us depart hence," as from our polluted dwelling. The Spirit of God, I re-

¹ St. Matt. vii. 7.

peat, will not always strive with man; and if His accepted time is despised or suffered to pass by unimproved, the time may come in the which we shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and it shall not be shown unto us¹!

A neglect of prayer, then, of morning and evening prayer, (I name these times because a short prayer, at least, is then in every body's power, and because no times are so proper, none so natural for devotion as the moments at which we are about to commit ourselves to a temporary death, or at which we have just undergone a lively image of the resurrection,) a neglect of morning and evening prayer, as it is always one of the earliest symptoms of our falling away from God, so it is the certain means of estranging ourselves entirely from Him, and provoking Him to give us up to still farther guilt, and to withdraw from us, it may be, even the opportunity and power of repentance.

But even this daily prayer will of itself be insufficient, unless we honour the Lord our God in public as well as in private, and on those solemn and stated Sabbaths above all, which the practice of the whole Church, the authority of the inspired apostles, the sanction of the Lord Jesus Himself, when risen from the dead, and after His reception into glory, have combined to consecrate from worldly and ordinary purposes to the examination of our hearts, the improvement of our minds, the rest of

¹ St. Luke xvii. 22.

those who toil for us, and a union with our brethren and fellow-servants in a more solemn and conspicuous piety. I am but too well aware of the difficulties which, in India, under many circumstances of life, oppose themselves to the due observation of Sunday. I know but too well the influence exerted by the surrounding heathen ; I know but too well the necessities which are sometimes felt, but oftener fancied, for invading the sanctity and repose of an institution which, even if it were a political institution only, would, from its wisdom and mercy, well deserve the imitation of every law-giver, and the observation of every friend to mankind. I know but too well that the habits of the country are against us, and that of some of those who hear me, the time may really not be altogether at their own disposal. But in India there are many hours in every day which are at the disposal of every one of us. These at least, if no more can be obtained, let the servant, the soldier, and the mariner hallow from each succeeding Sunday to the service of Him who only can prosper or forgive his labours ; and let all others, even the busiest, but make the trial, and they will find, or I am greatly mistaken, that they need leave no lawful business undone by resting one day in seven ; and that it is amusement after all, not duty, which leaves them no time to spare for private and public devotion.

Sir Matthew Hale, himself no less a rare model of successful diligence in a laborious profession, than of exalted talents and distinguished attach-

ment to the liberties of his country, has left on record that, in the course of a long and active life, he never failed to find that his weekly business had been best and most prosperously performed when he had begun the week by a more than usually careful observation of the Lord's day. Under the safeguard of his authority I shall hardly be suspected of superstition; and I confess, it seems to me a thing very far from incredible or unlikely, that our labours may indeed be then most prosperous, when our minds have been refreshed and strengthened by one day devoted to the most composing and encouraging of all meditations; and that we may look, without presumption, for an additional blessing from the Lord on those lawful pursuits which we have not suffered to interfere with His service.

One instrument of blessing yet remains, the mightiest of all, and that to which the ceremony you have now undergone is a fitting and necessary introduction; the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. Of the value of this institution as a means of grace; of its natural, I had almost said, its necessary effect on the human heart, to compose, to purify and strengthen it; of the refreshment which our souls derive from duly receiving it, and of the evident peril of neglecting one of the last and most solemn, as well as most easy and delightful commands which He who died for us has left us, I need not now speak, as I trust the instructions which you have received are still fresh

in your memory. One thing, however, I would earnestly press upon you all, that your attendance on the table of the Lord be not only frequent hereafter, but that your first visit to it be delayed as short a time as possible. That is a strange reluctance, and one for which it is by no means easy to account on any rational or human motives, which keeps back young persons, on the pretext of their youth, from this comfortable and blessed ordinance; as if their being young and comparatively innocent were a reason which could make their prayers less acceptable to God, or as if the strength of their passions and the temptations to which they are exposed, were not an additional and most forcible reason for their seeking after spiritual help in that way which is, of all others, the most prevailing. But, let me entreat you, my young friends, to consider earnestly with yourselves that there is no text in Scripture which confines the necessity of the rite in question to those who are advanced in life, or sinking down with weakness and infirmity; that youth has no privilege, any more than age, which exempts it from sudden death; that if we are unfit to receive the Sacrament, we must be still more unfit to die and stand before the judgement seat of the Almighty; and that, however imperfect our lives may be now, yet if we never employ the helps which God in His bounty has furnished, we cannot reasonably hope that they will ever become better! You fear your own unworthiness. And I know you to be most unworthy, unworthy so much

as to gather up the crumbs under the Lord's table. But it is not in your own worthiness that you are invited thither, but in the worthiness of Christ, in the mercy of God, and in the marriage garment which His grace will supply to all that do not wilfully reject it. You fear your own weakness, and I know you to be most weak. I know that you are unable of yourselves to do even the least part of those things to which you stand engaged. I know that your present good resolutions, if left to themselves, will vanish like a morning dream; and therefore it is that I so earnestly call on you to seek for spiritual strength where best it may be found, and to renew these gracious impressions, both speedily and often, in the temple of the Lord, and kneeling on the footstep of His Altar! Let, then, the time which intervenes between the present day and the next opportunity of receiving the Sacrament in your respective Churches, be to you a time of frequent serious thought, of prayer, and study of the Scriptures; and let not, I beseech you, that first opportunity pass away without returning to the Mercy Seat of God, without renewing the free-will offerings of yourselves, your souls and bodies, to His holy will and pleasure, and intreating the continuance and increase of the grace and comfort which has been now held out to you.

Finally, holy brethren! partakers of the spiritual gift! Let this day be to you a day remembered much and often thought upon in the stillness of the night, in the languor of noon, in the loneliness

and inactivity of an eastern journey, whenever your soul retires upon itself, and finds food in the recollection of past scenes and past impressions. Bind the promises which you have made, and the hopes which have been held out to you as a crown on your heads, and as a bracelet on your arms, that they may never pass from your recollection, but occur to you then when all holy recollections are most needed, when the world menaces or the flesh entices, or when the tempter whispers dark things in your souls, and seeks to draw you from that strength in which only you can stand safely. Write down this day as a date to be much observed, as a new æra in your spiritual existence, in some one or more of those books of devotion which you have studied, or with which, on asking for them, you will be supplied most cheerfully. And remember, above all, that the great and proper use of days like this is, not to sanction or counterbalance your sins, but to enable you to leave off sinning; that for this cause we call on you to pray; for this cause to be baptized; for this cause to frequent the Church; for this cause to receive the Holy Ghost; for this cause to become partakers in the Communion, that your hearts may be changed and renewed from the corruption of a fallen to the holiness of a Heavenly condition; that you may be purified to Christ, a peculiar people zealous of good works; that you may imitate, so far as He enables you, His blameless life in whatever sphere of action His Providence may have allotted you, and

lay down at length your tranquil heads in death in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life, beloved and regretted by those who have witnessed your demeanour on earth, and welcomed by those angels who shall then convey your souls to the land of rest and thankfulness ! And now farewell ! depart in the faith and favour of the Lord ; and if what you have learned and heard this day has been so far blessed as to produce a serious and lasting effect on you, let me entreat you to remember sometimes in your prayers those ministers of Christ who now have laboured for your instruction, that we who have preached to you may not ourselves be cast away, but that it may be given to us also to walk in this life present according to the words of the Gospel which we have received of our Lord, and to rejoice hereafter with you the children of our care, in that land where the weary shall find repose, and the wicked cease from troubling ; where we shall behold God as He is, and be ourselves made like unto God in innocence, and happiness, and immortality !

THE END.

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