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BIBLICAL EXPOSITIONS,
LECTURES,
SKETCHES OF SERMONS, &c.

BY THE LATE 
HENRY CRAIK.

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P R E F A C E.

THE contents of the present volume, except the Critical Remarks on the Old Testament, are edited from the papers left behind by Mr. CRAIK. None of them have ever before been printed, though some appear equal to anything published by him during his lifetime. The Critical Remarks on Passages of the Old Testament are from notes taken down in shorthand by Mr. W. PARSONS. They appear to be written with great correctness, and were probably read by Mr. CRAIK, as I have detected slight alterations and additions in the MS. in Mr. CRAIK'S own handwriting.

The lines, *In Memoriam*, at the end, were written at the time of Mr. CRAIK'S decease, by Mr. JOHN WITHEY.

The volume is devoutly commended to the blessing of God.

W. ELFE TAYLER.

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TWO LECTURES

ON

THE VISION OF ELIPHAZ THE TEMANITE.

LECTURE I.

“ Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof, in thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice saying, shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth? They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it. Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom.”—JOB IV. 12—21.

OBJECT of the speaker. He would convict Job of having grievously sinned in the use of such language as implied the charge of unrighteousness against God. He would impress upon the mind of his suffering friend the absolute rectitude and spotless purity of the divine dispensations. He seeks to effect this object by first laying down the principle that suffering is only the righteous infliction of punishment on account of transgression; and he follows up this statement by reference to a vision by which he himself had been visited, and by which the truth of the divine holiness had been impressed on his own mind.

The verses 12—21 contain one of the sublimest descriptions within the compass of ancient or modern writing. Their sublimity has been felt in all ages, and by men of every class. Seldom indeed do we find, in such perfect combination, the weightiest instruction and the most admirable adaptation of language to express the solemn grandeur of the thoughts. Such secondary attractions are not to be despised.

Before entering upon our immediate subject, one

B

preliminary enquiry suggests itself—Is it a fair representation of the Original, or is it rather a paraphrase than a translation? It is indeed no paraphrase, but a translation—exact, clear, idiomatic—almost a perfect counterpart of the words as they stand in the Hebrew. There is hardly a word that the most careful criticism would require to be altered—there is scarcely anything either redundant or defective. In many other passages, modern criticism, however conservative, is constrained to apply correction to our admirable version. Although probably more perfect than any that preceded it, our authorized version is not absolutely free from error. But in the verses that describe the vision of Eliphaz, the English reader may rest satisfied that nothing material need be changed.

Such success is not attained all at once. The process of translation resembles the careful operations of a skilful statuary. The most skilful artist does not, by a few random strokes, at once impart “form and shape” to the lifeless marble. By careful elaboration, by well directed efforts, the *block* is transformed into the *statue*. So the efforts of early translators may be expected to leave much to be effected by their successors, and no passage could be adduced in illustration of this more suitable than the one before us. The early rendering given by the Greek Translators, some two or three centuries before our era, is as inferior to that contained in our ordinary Bible as the unfinished work of art is to the same work when it has received all but the finishing stroke from the artist's hand. It would be most interesting to compare together the rendering of the LXX, the subsequent version of Jerome some six or seven centuries later, and then through the several English versions, from Wicliffe's in 1380, down to that of 1611. The comparison would show that, just as in every other work of human skill or learning, care and labour must be paid as the price of progress; so it is not by a sudden bound, but by gradual effort that we may expect ultimate success.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE VERSIONS OF THE GREEK SEPTUAGINT,
THE LATIN VULGATE, AND THE GENEVA.

THE SEPTUAGINT VERSION.

VERSE

12. But if there had been any truth in thy words, none of these evils would have befallen thee. Shall not mine ear receive excellent *revelations* from Him ?
13. But *as when* terror falls upon men, with dread and a sound in the night,
14. Horror and trembling seized me, and caused all my bones greatly to shake.
15. And a spirit came before my face ; and my hair and flesh quivered.
16. I arose, and perceived it not ; I looked, and there was no form before my eyes : but I only heard a breath and a voice saying
17. What, shall a mortal be pure before the Lord ? or a man be blameless in regard to his works ?
18. Whereas he trusts not in his servants, and perceives perverseness in his angels.
19. *But as for* them that dwell in houses of clay, of whom we also are formed of the same clay, he smites them like a moth.
20. And from morning to evening they no longer exist : they have perished because they cannot help themselves.
21. For He blows upon them and they are withered : they have perished for lack of wisdom.

THE VULGATE VERSION.

VERSE

12. Moreover there was a word spoken to me in secret, and mine ears as if by stealth received the pulsations of its whispers.
13. In the horror of a mighty vision, when deep sleep is wont to lay hold of men,
14. Fear seized me and trembling, and all my bones were affrighted ;
15. And when a spirit passed before me the hair of my flesh stood up.

16. There stood one whose countenance I knew not, an image was before my eyes, and I heard as it were the voice of a gentle breeze,
17. Shall a man be justified in comparison of God, or shall a man be more pure than his Maker ?
18. Behold they that serve Him are not steadfast, and in His angels He hath found pravity ;
19. How much more shall they who dwell in houses of clay, who have an earthly foundation, be consumed as with a moth ?
20. From morning till evening they shall be cut down, and, because no one understandeth, they shall perish for ever.
21. And they that shall be left shall be taken away from them ; they shall die and not in wisdom.

THE GENEVA VERSION. 1560.

VERSE

12. But a thing was brought to me secretly, and mine ear hath received a little thereof.
13. In the thoughts of the visions of the night, when sleep falleth on man,
14. Fear came upon me and dread, which made all my bones to tremble.
15. And the wind passed before me, and made the hairs of my flesh to stand up.
16. There stood one and I knew not his face ; an image was before mine eyes, and in silence heard I a voice, saying,
17. Shall man be more just than God ? or shall a man be more pure than his Maker ?
18. Behold He found no steadfastness in His servants, and laid folly on His angels.
19. How much more in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which shall be destroyed before the moth ?
20. They be destroyed from the morning unto the evening, they perish from without regard.
21. Doth not their dignity go away with them ? Do they not die and that without wisdom ?

The whole passage may be thus divided—

- I. A brief introduction.
- II. The season and the circumstances connected with the vision.
- III. The description of the apparition.
- IV. The oracle it delivered.

I. "Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof."

The term rendered "thing" is frequently rendered "word." It is capable of either sense. Here it seems to imply "an oracle," or "revelation." Of this word he declares that it was secretly brought to him (literally, it came to him by stealth). See as illustrations of the term Gen. xxxi. 20, 26, 27.

It came to him *suddenly, softly, unexpectedly*. Its sound stole upon his ear as a gentle whisper. Truth may come with a voice of thunder—Convictions of one who has been hardened in sin, &c., &c. But to the believer, waiting upon God, it comes sometimes in accordance with the words of Moses—"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew." Seek after quiet seasons with God, &c.

Effect of *dew* upon the grass, the flowers, the trees. So effect of the silent dropping of truth into the heart in the hours of stillness, &c.

II. "In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake" (v. 13, 14).

(1.) Night—time of profoundest repose. To the laboring man the heaviest slumbers are granted at the midnight hour.

Deep Sleep—**תַּרְדֵּמָה**. It occurs Gen. ii. 21—"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;" xv. 12—"And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him."—1 Sam. xxvi. 12—"So David took the

spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster ; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked ; for they were all asleep ; because a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them."—Job xxxiii. 15—"In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed."—Prov. xix. 15—"Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep ; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger."—Isaiah xxix. 10—"For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes : the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered."—Seven times in all, including the passage before us.

(2.) Painful to be awake when the body needs repose. "He giveth to his beloved sleep." Yet sometimes we may profitably spend seasons of wakefulness.

Eliphaz seems to have been exercised with distracting thoughts—thoughts that *divide* the mind. God's dealings with ourselves, with others, with the world ! Awful depth of the divine judgments ! Such thoughts likely to come on amid the stillness of the night. Daylight occupation drives them off. The solitude of midnight invites them to come.

(3.) Before the vision came there were premonitory effects indicating the presence of some supernatural visitant. The *fear*, the *trembling*, the *shaking* of the bones. The first term, פִּחַד, is used to describe both "the fear of godly reverence," and "the fear of terror." Here it may have been a mixture of both. The second term, רָעַדָה, is similar to that which came upon the might of Moab, when they heard of the advancing hosts of Israel coming to avenge their iniquities (Ex. xv. 15). "Made my bones to shake" is literally "affrighted my bones." The term seems to impart feeling and consciousness even to the firmest part of the frame.

(4.) Why this shrinking of a good man from close connexion with a visitant from the unseen world ? Why did even John, who had leant upon the Saviour's bosom, fall at the feet of that same Saviour when He was revealed in the brightness of His majesty ? Flesh and

blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. In the flesh we cannot bear to gaze upon that which belongs to the world of incorruption. Sin still remains in those who have made most advance in holiness. Only when we have put off this mortal shall we fully enjoy that which God hath prepared and promised. If good men feel this, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (Blessed portion in Christ.)

III. "Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying," &c. (v.v. 16, 16).

The apparition; the spirit; (a) Passing or gliding before his face. (b) Effect upon the hair—increase of his terror. (c) It stops and stands before him. (d) Indistinctness of the form. (e) An obscurely visible image.

Such are the several particulars in the description of the vision. Let us dwell briefly upon each of them.

(a) The language seems to imply that the heavenly messenger assumed such an appearance as to be perceptible to the eye of him to whom the communication came. We are not told whether the visitant was an *angelic being* or the *departed spirit* of a saint of God. Both classes of unseen existences are under the control of God.

(b) The effect upon the hair is said to arise from the influence of terror in driving the blood to the heart, and thus chilling the surface of the body. Whatever be its natural cause, it is a well-known result of extreme dread. Both ancient and modern poetry illustrate the fact. It appears here as the very climax of the terror which the extraordinary scene produced.

(c) After gliding perhaps backwards and forwards, the dimly visible figure stands still before his eyes. He does not turn away from it, but strengthened, it may be, by help from on high, he gazes on it in turn.

(d) He tries to make out the lineaments of its form, but there was no distinctness in the outline. "It stood still," but even then "he could not discern its form."

(e) Still he could discern that an image was before his eyes—dimly visible yet sufficiently perceptible to aid the impression of the message which it brought.

Before entering upon the words of that message, consider the sublimity of the circumstances under which it was spoken. It is the midnight hour. Millions of toiling men and careworn women have laid them down to sleep. Eliphaz is alone. Distracting thoughts—the progeny of nightly visions—disturb and exercise his mind. Amidst material and external darkness, he longs for inward and spiritual light. He finds himself tempted to question the perfection of the divine justice. His soul is tossed with disquietude and harassed with anxious doubts. Suddenly there comes upon him a more than mortal dread. It is no mere earthly fear. His frame trembles with the awe produced by some superhuman presence. Terror enters into his bones, and while thus overpowered with dread an apparition glides before his face, and makes the hair of his flesh to stand on end. The spirit stands still as if to give him opportunity to gaze upon its form—but that form is only dimly visible. The servant of God is thus prepared for the reception of the utterance. It were well if, without slavish dread, we always dealt most reverently with the divine communications of Holy Scripture. It were well if we read its pages, more deeply impressed with the thought of Him by whose Spirit its truths were given at first, and by whose power they are made effectual for the ends for which they have been communicated to man.

LECTURE II.

IN speaking on a former occasion from this sublime description of the vision vouchsafed to Eliphaz the Temanite, I noticed that the whole passage comprehended,

- I. A brief introduction.
- II. The season and circumstances of the vision.
- III. The description of the apparition, and
- IV. The oracular utterance.

Having already spoken on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd particulars, I now enter upon the consideration of the 4th.

In directing your attention to the fourth particular, I propose,

- I. To offer a brief exposition of the Oracle.
- II. To notice the doctrines deduced from it.
- III. The application of the doctrines.

I. Exposition of the Oracle.

“Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth? They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever, without any regarding it. Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom” (v.v. 17—21).

The enquiry in the first clause of verse 17 closely resembles, in the form of the expression, the question in chap. ix. 2. But the meaning of the two enquiries is very different. The 2nd verse of the ninth chapter refers to the great subject of a sinner's justification in the sight of God. The 17th verse of this 4th chapter expresses, by an emphatic interrogation, the impossibility of a creature like man being, in any sense, more righteous than the God who made him. Job's language had appeared to Eliphaz as impugning the rectitude of the divine dealings, and thereby implying that God's justice

might be called in question ; and the authority of a supernatural visitant is invoked to expose the folly and blasphemy of such an insinuation. The wise Temanite thought that his suffering friend needed to have his heart and mind more firmly established in the conviction of the infinite moral excellence, the unsullied perfection of the divine character ; and the question suggests the utter absurdity, as well as grievous sin, of maintaining that the condition of any created being can be elevated—in justice or purity, or any conceivable excellency—above the unsullied perfection of the Creator of all. Jehovah Himself is the source—the spring of all *that* in the creation which resembles Himself—and therefore the notion of a man, or even an angel, attaining a position in which he could legitimately find fault with God, is as irrational as it is sinful.

Verse 18. Even angelic beings—far greater in power and might than the children of Adam—if left to themselves, might fall away ; and, in comparison with the divine wisdom, their intelligence is as folly. This does not mean that the elect angels can ever be permitted to fall, or that they are actually guilty of positive transgression ; but that, as the brightest artificial light appears comparatively dim before the full blaze of the sun's refulgence, so the excellencies of the angelic nature are cast into the shade before the unutterable brightness of Him, who dwelleth in light that is inaccessible and full of glory.

Verse 19. But if the angels are infinitely removed, in glory and excellence, from the incommunicable splendour of Jehovah, how much more is the disparity exemplified in the condition of man. Our bodies are formed of the clay : the frail abodes in which our spirits briefly sojourn, are founded not upon the rock, but upon the dust. Like houses built on the shifting sand, a breath of wind is sufficient to overthrow them ; and the *earthly* life of man is as easily extinguished as that of the very meanest insect—"crushed like the moth."

Verse 20, 21. Human beings are continually passing away. Death is so common, that its occurrence fails to affect those who survive. No elevation of outward position, and no superiority of mental excellence, avails aught against the ravages of the universal destroyer; and the saddest thought of all is, that so many are called away from this transitory scene before they have apprehended the true wisdom, or have sought with real earnestness a preparation for eternity.

II. Having thus attempted to furnish a brief exposition of the oracular utterance, let me notice the doctrines fairly deducible from its weighty words. The utterance distinctly teaches (1) *The absolute perfection of the moral attributes of God.* Other passages of the book speak of His resistless might, and marvellous skill, and all pervading energy. Appeals are made to the earth and the heavens—to the ever-heaving ocean—to the secret store-houses of darkness—to the dwelling of the light—to the treasures of the snow—to the paternity of the rain, and to the sources of the dew. The sweet influences of the Pleiades—the bands of Orion—Mazzaroth in his season, and Arcturus with his sons—the rolling thunder and the obedient lightning—all acknowledge His supreme control. But no references to the magnitude of the divine dominion, or the extent of the divine power, can satisfy or sustain the questioning mind, or the fainting spirit. Satisfaction and sustainment must be founded on the practical conviction that the Judge of all the earth *must* do right; and the heart must find repose in the testimony of the beloved disciple—“This is the message which we have heard of Him and declare unto you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”

(2) But we find in this utterance not merely a declaration of the *absolute perfection* of Jehovah's character and ways, but a distinct assertion of the *incompetency* of any mere human or created intellect to advance any charge of injustice against any of His dealings. He who penetrates into the secrets of every heart cannot be

amenable to the judgment of creatures who can only look at the *outward* appearance. He who has all the future, as well as the present and the past, ever before His omniscient gaze, cannot be expected to submit His decisions to the censure of those who are but the creatures of a day. Infidel philosophers and licentious poets may dare to arraign the doings of heaven's high Sovereign; but the very reason of which they insolently boast—*itself the gift of Him whom they blaspheme*—testifies against their folly. As created and dependent beings, our place is to lie low before the excellent glory of Him who is Lord of all—not to contend but to submit, not to dispute but to worship, not to challenge but to adore. His judgments are a great deep, but the period is at hand when they shall be made manifest. Till then, amid the dimness and perplexity of our earthly pilgrimage, it is ours to wait the clearer revelations of the unseen world. The anomalies and perplexities, the difficulties and questionings, which we cannot disentangle or resolve during our sojourn on earth, may be fully explained when looked at in the light of the heavenly city. All things within us and around us are full of mystery. He who pursues his enquiries on any subject connected with the divine government beyond the surface, finds himself face to face with facts which he cannot understand, and problems which he cannot solve. He is tempted to feel disappointed, impatient, desponding, but he thinks of Jehovah's greatness, takes the place of a little child, and is still. Hope displaces the feeling of disappointment—confiding dependence expels impatience and relieves depression. He rests in that which has been *revealed*; he leaves the *secret* things to be made clear in the day of manifestation. He is happy, not because his understanding has penetrated into the *mysterious orderings* of the divine administration, and satisfactorily apprehended the *reasons* of Jehovah's acts, but because he has obtained that knowledge of God, as revealed in Christ, which furnishes a ground of confidence in reference to the *darkest* of the divine dispensations.

Such are some of the doctrines fairly deducible from the words that fell upon the ear of Eliphaz, during the solemn silence of the midnight hour.

III. Let us notice, in the last place, some of the momentous subjects of enquiry to which the above doctrines may be applied.

(1) The truths we have deduced, from the utterance of the oracular vision, may serve to sustain our hearts under the view of the *physical* and *moral* evils which prevail so universally in our world. Why, we are ready to ask, is the volcano commissioned to pour forth showers of desolation on peaceful villages and cultivated fields? Why do earthquakes engulf "towered cities," and instantaneously overwhelm, in silence and death, the "busy hum of men?" Why are the coasts of our seagirt island so frequently covered with the spoils of the storm, and with the memorials of those whose lifeless remains lie entombed under ocean's wave? Why are there such innumerable cases of terrible pain, hopeless disease, and agonizing sorrow? And why, in addition to physical causes of varied suffering, must tyrants be permitted to persecute and destroy, to consign their victims to the loathsome dungeon, or to torture their bodies on the excruciating rack? Why, during nearly six thousand years, has the earth never had rest from the horrors of war, and the carnage of the battle field? Why, in a world of so much sorrow and suffering, arising from causes which no human power or wisdom can prevent, should there be permitted those *additional* evils—incalculable in number and terrible in extent—which spring from the self-will, the cruelty, and the reckless selfishness of man. Surely life's journey were sorrowful enough if disease, and bereavement, and poverty, and pain, with the long catalogue of other ills which humanity inherits, constituted the *sole* instrumentality of its woe. But the gloom is fearfully deepened, and the occasions of distress terribly augmented, by the addition of those heavier calamities in which man himself is the direct

and wilful agent. We need not enlarge on so appalling a contemplation. It is not well that we should overmuch dwell upon it ; but neither is it well that, amidst such demands for thoughtfulness and sympathy, and such liabilities to sorrow, we should pass our lives in unthinking levity or reckless indolence. We cannot, without criminal indifference, resolutely shut our eyes to the manifold aspects in which sorrow and suffering press themselves on our notice ; but we are called upon to mingle the *cheerfulness* of truthful hearts with the *seriousness* of reflecting minds. An infinitely wise, and gracious, and powerful God controls, with all-pervading energy and universal dominion, the conflicting elements of the dark and interminable chaos ; and out of all the evils of the past, the present, and the future, He has assured His people that *for them* light, and order, and enduring blessing shall ultimately be eduved. We regard it as the special exercise of a Christian's faith, the demand made upon us at every turn of our course and under every trial of our pilgrimage, to humble ourselves under His mighty hand, and to learn more and more thoroughly the profound wisdom of the lesson conveyed in that sublime requirement, "Be still and know that I am God."

(2) The truths taught in our text can alone enable us to find repose from endless questionings and unanswerable enquiries. The sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man—fixed predetermination and believing prayer—moral and spiritual results dependent apparently on the relative position of those who become the actual sufferers—the condition and prospects of heathenism—the limited effects of the great propitiatory sacrifice—these and similar subjects of perplexing difficulty have exercised and baffled the mightiest intellects. In the magnitude and vigour of his intellectual powers, Leibnitz, a cotemporary of Sir Isaac Newton, has had scarcely any equals, and perhaps never any superior, among the greatest minds of modern Europe. He intermeddled with all knowledge. On other subjects his success was unprecedented and

unrivalled. The secrets of science, the obscurities of hard questions yielded to his penetrating scrutiny and his untiring efforts. He attempted to grapple with those difficulties to which I have just referred, and to reconcile, according to the limited standard of our reason, the apparent discrepancies they involve. But the task was super-human, and even Leibnitz failed to accomplish it. His work entitled "Theodicea, or a Vindication of the Divine Righteousness," remains to illustrate its author's vast mental resources, to attract, to interest, and to disappoint the enquiring reader. Paul's reply is less ambitious, and yet sublime in its unpretending beauty of expression—"Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth He yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God" (Rom. ix. 19). And again in chap. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

Shall we admit for a moment that there can be the slightest deviation from the absolute perfection of Jehovah's righteousness? No, assuredly. Shall we consent to the allegation that it is possible for God to act unjustly towards any of His creatures? Perish such a thought. The form of the question, "Shall mortal man be more just than God?" implies the *most emphatic assertion* of the contrary.

Shall we, on the other hand, attempt to rid ourselves of difficulties by denying or limiting the extent of the divine control? Shall we allow that God can leave out of His all-comprehending purposes one single event in the universe of being? Shall we explain away His intimate knowledge of unformed plans, or unspoken thoughts, previous to their manifestation in the acts of His creatures? In fine, shall we strip man of his responsibility, that God's sovereignty may be maintained unfettered? or shall we denude Jehovah of His essential prerogatives, in order that the responsibility of man may

be freed from all that would seem to interfere with the spontaneity of his actings? Rather let us, in the attitude becoming our place in the scale of being, embrace and hold fast both aspects of the one great theme of revealed truth. Our place is to believe even when we cannot explain—to trust although we cannot reconcile—to walk by the light we are permitted to possess, and to wait for fuller and clearer discoveries in another stage of our existence. It is well to discriminate between that ignorance which results from our own want of humility and diligence, our deficiency in prayerful waiting upon God for the help of His promised Spirit, and that imperfection of our knowledge which arises from the limitation of our faculties, and the impossibility of the *finite* comprehending the *infinite*. Many eminent theologians, many true Christian teachers, seem to me to have failed in clearly perceiving this important distinction; and have therefore spent their strength and wasted their energies, upon problems which are incapable of being solved. In seeking to make progress in intelligent acquaintance with the things of God, it is most important to draw the line of demarcation correctly between the things that, having been revealed, belong unto us and to our children, and the things which, having been kept secret, belong unto God.

Hitherto I have spoken on subjects either included or implied in the passage I have been endeavouring to elucidate and apply. I cannot happily conclude without referring to the dimness and imperfection of the light granted to the friends of the suffering Patriarch, in comparison with the discoveries made to us through the person, and work, and atoning sacrifice of the Saviour. It is profitable to have our minds habitually impressed with the conviction of our own insignificance, helplessness, and mortality, and of the reverential frame of spirit in which it behoves us to regard the character and actings of the blessed God. But the chief source of strength and consolation is to be derived from that exhibition of

the divine glory which shines in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. The essential dignity of the Son of God—His undertaking to accomplish our redemption—the constitution of His person, as combining the attributes of divinity with the characteristic qualities of humanity—His spotless holiness—His uniform obedience—His perfect righteousness—His gracious teachings—His overpowering sorrows—His propitiatory death—His burial, resurrection, ascension, and intercession—His promised glory and coming kingdom—these and other related truths constitute grounds of consolation, and themes for thoughtful reflection, far more adapted to meet our condition as sinners and our necessities as fallen creatures, that even the important and fundamental instructions which Eliphaz received in the visions of the night and communicated to his sorrow-stricken friend, with the view of restraining the outburst of the sufferer's bitter lamentation.

The leading opponents of our holy faith have recently endeavoured to subvert the authority of Scripture by setting forth in alarming array the difficulties by which they aver that our divine records are encumbered. They substitute nothing in the room of that which they are seeking to destroy. They cannot be ignorant that a similar line of argument would lead not only to the rejection of a Saviour, but to the denial of a God. The standing evidence that the Bible has been given by Him from whom it professes to have been derived, is to be found in its effects upon the hearts and lives of those who heartily receive it. The best security against the assaults of infidelity is *not learning* but *godliness*—not the *power of argument* but the *experimental enjoyment of the life of faith*. For nearly forty years I have more or less diligently studied the scriptures. I was led to choose them as my heritage in early youth, but my hope of holding on to the end is not based upon any long continued study or familiar acquaintance with their contents,

O

but upon the promises of a faithful God, and the experience which I have had that it is no vain thing to wait, in prayerful expectation, at the footstool of His throne.

Critical reading of Scripture has its uses. It is good and profitable for those who are called to it; but experimental reading is requisite for every Christian. Read the Word of God with diligence, humility, prayer, and self-application, and thus will you become enlightened to perceive, and wise to escape the snares of the wicked one. No mere natural faith will stand in the hour of trial. Bend the direction of your desires and the force of your energies so to deal with the Bible as that you may "increase in the knowledge of God." Happy the man who is warranted to apply to himself the words of David in Psalm cxxxi.

"Lord, my heart is not haughty,
Nor mine eyes lofty ;
Neither do I exercise myself in great matters,
Nor in things too high for me.
Surely I have behaved and quieted myself,
As a child that is weaned of his mother :
My soul is even as a weaned child."

AMEN.

A SERMON
ON CHURCH PROSPERITY.

“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”—ACTS IX. 31.

THIS Book of the Acts constitutes not merely the most important Church History in existence, but forms, at the same time, a most interesting and instructive link between the Gospels and Epistles. It records the fulfilment of those promises which the Saviour had bequeathed to His disciples respecting the *presence* and *working* of the blessed Comforter. It answers numerous enquiries relative to the *preaching* of the Apostles,—the *success* of their ministry,—the *constitution* of the early churches, and the marvellous change which the diffusion of Christianity effected, both on individuals and communities. It exhibits principles and examples admirably adapted to animate and instruct the people of God in all succeeding generations; and it furnishes materials for arousing the energies of those churches which may have greatly departed from the freshness of their first love.

The previous portion of this chapter details the history of the most memorable instance of conversion recorded in the annals of the Church; and the form of expression in the original seems to imply that the description given in verse 31 was connected with that remarkable event: “Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified;

and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." We may notice,

- I. The fact here stated.
- II. The result of such a state of things on the internal prosperity of the Church.
- III. Its result upon the world around.

I. It was not a mere ordinary circumstance. It was hardly to be expected that the churches *should* enjoy *outward* tranquility in a world like this. The Lord Jesus had nowhere promised repose to His followers. The enmity of Satan, who is represented as the god of this world, seemed likely to hinder such a state of things being enjoyed by the disciples of the crucified Saviour. Yet, for purposes of blessing—not in anger but, evidently, in mercy—the Lord bestowed the precious boon. When external rest is the portion of the Church, we are thankfully to accept it as from the hands of Him to whom all power, in heaven and earth, belongeth. We may not slight it on the one hand, nor recklessly count upon its continuance on the other. We ought thankfully to avail ourselves of the increased opportunities thereby offered for unhindered service to the Lord.

In reading such a statement, we cannot fail to be reminded that a similar condition of external quiet has long been enjoyed by all Christians in this country. For about 170 years—or for considerably more than a century and a half, there has been little or nothing of *legal* persecution in England—at any rate, no English Sovereign, since 1688, has been a persecutor of the people. During the previous 26 years, embracing the reign of Charles II., and his infatuated brother, our forefathers endured the consequences of rejecting the lessons of experience and restoring one who was utterly unfit to reign. On the 24th August, 1662, now rather more than 196 years ago, two thousand of the best men in England were cast out of their spheres of service, and condemned to refrain from preaching the Gospel,

on pain of severe penal inflictions. The same power that thus denied to our Puritan ancestors the rights of Englishmen, soon made the valleys and mountains of Scotland wet with the blood of martyrs. The worthies of the covenant, misled by reference to the Old Testament principles, sought deliverance by having recourse to the sword; but this, as might have been expected, only tended to increase their sufferings. It was not by successful warfare, but by the unanimity of an oppressed and harassed people, that the cause of freedom, under the good providence of God, obtained in the accession of William of Orange, a bloody victory. Since that period, England has been chief among the nations, for the extent and continuance of her external privileges; and never was this more truly the case than *now*. The measure of external prosperity has lately begun to tell upon the comforts and well-being of the humblest classes of society. The cheapness of food—the revival of trade, and comparative abundance of employment, call for our liveliest acknowledgements to Him who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. The vast population of Great Britain and her dependencies were probably never more loyal, or, on the whole, more contented. No dark treason, nor lurking conspiracies, nor exciting demagogues are heard of now. Never, perhaps, since the days of Alfred the Great, was England blessed with such a Sovereign as Queen Victoria, and never did any one of foreign origin fill such a place in the estimation of Englishmen as her Royal Consort. Christianity is more than patriotism—it is something far higher than loyalty; but, as the greater includes the less, so Christianity implies and sanctifies them both. A patriot may be no Christian; an intelligent and consistent Christian is, necessarily, a patriot. The same may be said of loyalty. He who fears God will, at the same time, honour the king. He will honour the dignity of the *office*, even when he may, unhappily, be unable to respect the *person* of him who fills it; but it will be the delight of a true Christian to

see the throne occupied by one whose whole character comports with the elevated position of a Sovereign ruler, and elicits the spontaneous homage legitimately due to moral excellence. Under the mild government of such a Sovereign; in the enjoyment of equitable laws, and the fullest religious liberty, we have good reason to exclaim, "happy are the people that are in such a case."

In the season of secret retirement; in the family circle; in the social meeting; in the public assembly, WE may enjoy, without any legal hindrance or interruption, the rich privilege of an open Bible. So long as we respect the rights of others, we may preach and teach what we believe to be the truth, no man daring to forbid us. If you lay before you the map of Europe, you will search in vain for any other country so highly favoured. "Now have the churches rest throughout all the dominions of the British Queen." This rest God hath graciously given; He has not promised to continue it unto us. Let us seek so to acknowledge His hand that there may be a lengthening of our tranquility.

II. (1) This verse not only informs us that the churches enjoyed rest, but it records the manner in which that blessing was sought to be improved, so as to promote internal prosperity. "*They were edified.*" The word "*edify*," in its primary meaning, signifies "*to build.*" Thus it is employed in Matt. vii. 24—respecting the man of whom it is said that "he built his house upon a rock." It is also employed by the Lord Jesus in that memorable promise—"On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The word is of frequent occurrence in the Gospel in its literal meaning, but this is the first example, so far as I have noticed, of its figurative application in the New Testament. In the epistles this latter usage is the more frequent one. Thus Paul tells us that knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth or *buildeth up*; he exhorts the Thessalonian converts *to edify*, (*i. e.*) *to build up one another.* These examples may assist our apprehensions

of the exact meaning of the term here employed. It evidently implies *progress, compactness, solidity*. It may either refer to the individual or to the collective body. The Christians here spoken of made a right use of the *rest* they were permitted to enjoy. They turned these privileges to good account. They so availed themselves of them as that they grew in knowledge, in faith, and in all the graces of the Spirit. The means of edification which they possessed are substantially ours, at the present day. We have, in the pages of the Old and New Testaments, the instructions, warnings, and exhortations of prophets and apostles. We have the promise of the Spirit's teaching. We have the throne of grace. We have the blood of Jesus to trust in, and the name of Jesus to plead before God. We may hold converse one with another, in reference to the truths which are contained in Scripture. We may listen to the public exposition of those truths. We may meditate upon them in the stillness of seclusion, and seek that the Lord would open our eyes "to behold wondrous things out of the Book of His law." Are we thus seeking to improve the peace we have so long enjoyed? Let the consciences of each of us dictate the reply; and, if hitherto we have failed to improve our opportunities, let us, from this very hour, seek grace to turn them to profitable account.

(2.) But we are not only informed of the fact that the disciples *were edified*, we are further told in what way this blessed result was outwardly evidenced: "They walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." How beautifully in these words do we find *holiness* and *comfort* blended together. They trusted in God, they revered His authority, they sought to serve Him. They abstained from evil, they cleaved to that which was good. They watched over their spirit, their temper, their frame of mind, their words and their actions. "They lived as seeing Him who is invisible, for they had respect unto the recompense of reward;"

and while, through grace, they were thus careful in their walk, the Lord Jesus fulfilled to them His own gracious promise, touching the presence and consolations of the Blessed Comforter. Their understandings were enlightened by the Spirit of truth, their hearts were cheered by His teachings, and their memories refreshed by His suggestions. He inwardly witnessed unto them the glory of their once crucified but now risen and exalted Saviour. He secretly unfolded unto them the depths of divine love—the surpassing worth of the Great Sacrifice, the efficacy of the ever-prevalent intercession. The page of prophecy gathered brightness from His divine illumination ; and the attractions of the heavenly inheritance cast into the shade the passing vanities of earth. They had meat to eat that the world knew not of ; they had a living spring of consolation whence they could drink, yea drink abundantly, draughts of living joy. How truly happy were the disciples whose character is thus described. How poor, in comparison with their calm and abiding consolations, their substantial bliss, are all the objects that the natural heart seeks for or the most successful worldlying attains. Sensual pleasure, riches, fame, earthly dignity, the proudest attainments in learning and science, are all transient and shadowy, compared with the true satisfaction enjoyed by those who walk “in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.”

But it will avail us little to regard this description as we should gaze upon an attractive picture, or look forth on some scene of natural loveliness. How many amongst us are experimentally acquainted with the elements of that character which is here presented before us? “The fear of the Lord” is the beginning of wisdom. Do we regard the God of revelation as the object of our confidence, our reverence, and our love? Is it the aim of our souls to live under the practical conviction of His presence? Do we strive to keep up the thought of His eye being continually on us? Is our relationship to

Him a living and practical reality? Do we tremble at His word? Do His threatenings cause our hearts to shudder at the prospects of the ungodly; and His exceeding great and precious promises draw out our desires and affections after Him? Is our reverence for God partial and transient, or penetrating and pervading? Are we so affected by the consideration of His purity and holiness that we shrink from the thought of appearing before Him on the ground of our own righteousness; and so convinced of the evil of sin that we strive to keep our garments unspotted from the world, and seek to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God? Are we habitually honouring the blessed Spirit? As we open the inspired page, do we look up for the Spirit's efficacious teaching? As we kneel before the throne of the heavenly grace, do we depend on the aid of Him who has been promised to help our infirmities and to teach us how to pray? Amidst the activities of busy life, do we seek to maintain calmness of temper and quietness of spirit, through the soothing consolations of the divine Comforter?

III. We have thus seen how the enjoyment of external quiet was improved by the early Christians, for their own edification and growth in grace. We come now, in the last place, to consider how the position of the churches was made to bear upon the world around them. During that period of tranquility and internal progress, they also *increased in numbers*. Such intimations of successful effort are frequently given us in this Book of the Acts. We find a similar statement in chap. ii. 41, another, v. 14, another, vi. 1, and *especially* v. 7. The progress of the Gospel in these early days was, *unquestionably*, much more manifest than it is now. An interesting subject of enquiry is thus suggested to our minds. What were the causes that helped on this rapidity of progress? Whence is it that the triumphs of the Gospel are no longer such as they once were?

The difference cannot be referred to any change in the efficacy of the truth—the Gospel is still, as formerly, “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.” It cannot rise from any diminution of power on the part of the great Agent in the conversion of sinners. “He fainteth not, neither is weary.” His arm is not shortened—His hand is not weakened so that He should be less able to save. But God is a God of *means* as well as a God of *grace*. He works by *suited* instrumentality. He acts according to certain righteous principles of government. His sovereignty never degenerates into caprice. His grace does not destroy the responsibility of those who are its subjects. The churches spoken of in the New Testament, had certain spiritual advantages of which modern churches have, through unfaithfulness, been deprived.

(1) With the teachers and the taught, there was a far more manifest presence, and a far more energetic working of the Spirit of God. Their strength of personal conviction—their joyful confidence in Christ—their living apprehension of divine truth—their deadness to the world—their earnestness in prayer—their separation from the ungodly, far exceeded the attainments of any large number of Christians in modern times.

There was then no cumbrous, secular establishment arrogating to itself the sole right to the position of the Christian Church, and at the same time holding out inducements to the ungodly to seek places of preferment within her pale. There was no variety of sects distracting the mind of the enquirer, and giving Satan an advantage over him. There was the heartless world round about, and the Church in the centre, like some verdant and well-watered plain, offering refreshment and repose amid the wastes of the barren wilderness. When the guilty one discovered his iniquity,—and the weary one sought for a place of rest,—and the anxious one longed for quietude of heart,—the Church was an asylum open not only to *receive*, but to *welcome*, him to

its refreshment, and repose. The doors of the Church stood *wide open* to welcome every harrassed spirit to its shelter and security; the Saviour was with His church, and as many as first had come to Him were instinctively attracted to those who were His. The cordial glow of affection that knit together those who were one in Jesus, made their countenances radiant with a delight which the world had never experienced, and which earth had never witnessed before.

This union of heart amongst Christians themselves must have worked very powerfully upon the convictions of those around them. Men, in general, are not led simply by the apprehensions of the understanding, or the decisions of the judgment, but very much by the sympathies and affections of the heart. How powerful are these sentiments even in the low sphere of our earthly existence! What is it that keeps society together? What is it that gives energy and hope to the toiling millions of our race? What is it that sweetens daily labour and incessant cares? What is it that brightens the gloom of winter and adds a richer radiance to the glow of summer? The power of the natural affections. The mysterious gem of wedded love, whence spring

Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, son and brother—

forms at once the origin and the link of all other bonds. Let but a universal blight come over the *affections*—although everything else remained unaltered, the framework of society would burst asunder. *These affections* are *not* spiritual, and yet they are *pre-eminently of God*. What is it that restrains that youth who has just entered upon the engagements of active life, from the grosser evils to which his sensual appetites would lead him? His heart is yet unchanged. He has no taste for spiritual enjoyments. The fear of God has not yet taken

possession of his conscience. He is removed, it may be, from the home of his childhood. The parental eye is no longer guarding him. But his home-affections are not yet withered away. He hears, it may be, the voice of the tempter—he feels the promptings of unholy desires—he fain would drink of the intoxicating draught—he would enjoy *his* share of youthful pleasure, but the recollection of his home and his childhood, forbid the sinful indulgences to which he is tempted to yield. The image of an affectionate father rises before him, and the voice of a tender and yearning mother seems to fall, in accents of warning and entreaty, upon his ear. The cultivation of these home-affections thus becomes a point of deepest moment. They are of the earth, earthy; but, God so over-rules what His wisdom has appointed, that they often serve as restraining checks, until an infinitely higher and holier relation is apprehended. By that higher relation, all other bonds of charity are sanctified, but not superseded.

Now, if in the lower sphere of this sin-wasted world, the *affections* are entrusted with so important a place of service, and are designed to fulfil so high a mission, is it strange that, in the far higher sphere of heavenly fellowship, the knitting together of believing hearts should be the appointed instrumentality for maintaining and extending the triumphs of the truth? A living faith is the foundation of everything, but this faith operates through love. Whosoever believeth in Jesus finds that he is taught of God—outwardly by the word, inwardly by the spirit, to love his brethren.

But while the graces of *faith*, and *love*, and *zeal* were pre-eminently manifested by the members of the early churches, there were other spiritual qualifications by which they were fitted for being instruments in extending the knowledge of the Saviour among their fellow men. In order that the carriages may be borne along on the railway, there must be the suited mechanism and the motive power—in other words, the engine and the

propelling steam. But these would not suffice. There must also be the requisite knowledge and practical skill to guide the machinery and to control the energy of the motive power. So among the early Christians, there were not merely the *foundation graces*, but, likewise, the gifts of *wisdom, knowledge, and utterance*. Those latter gifts subserved the objects to which *faith, and love, and zeal*, directed the efforts of the saints. Not everyone who knows the truth is able clearly to commend that truth to others—not everyone who desires to benefit his fellow-men is rightly instructed as to the best way of seeking to promote their well-being. We need the *graces* of the early Christians. We need also *more abundant gifts*. Knowledge of scripture—fluency of utterance—clearness of expression—orderly arrangement—may all be made subservient to the great end of alarming the careless—of enlightening those who are in darkness—of undeceiving those who are deluded, and of imparting joy and consolation to those who are burdened with the load of unpardoned guilt. Our privileges as English Christians are singularly great; and our opportunities as Nonconformists enhance the value of our privileges. We are not clogged by church canons: we do not need to wait for episcopal ordination; we are not bound to fraternise with those who are evidently belonging to the world, or to cut off ourselves from our brethren in Christ, simply because of some ecclesiastical informality. Let there be the grace of God in the heart, and the testimony of a consistent walk, and the needed qualifications and the inward disposition for service—and our credentials are clear. We need not submit our necks to the yoke of ecclesiastical impositions, nor suffer any *human authority* to step in between us and the commands of our only Master. Our liberties are far more extensive than are enjoyed by those who, for reasons best known to themselves, have consented to the limitation of their freedom in compliance with requirements which Christ

never enjoined, and which His word, as we read it, refuses to sanction.

I have thus endeavoured to bring before you the prominent facts in the verse under consideration. I have spoken of the character of the rest here recorded, and of the circumstances through which such a state of things was brought about. I have compared this description with the position of the churches in our own country. I have shown you, in the *second place*, the way in which the early churches succeeded in turning to the profit of their own souls the repose they were permitted, for a brief period, to enjoy; and suggested, from the example, some hints for our direction, encouragement and guidance. In the *last place*, I have noticed the effects of this season of quiet upon the external increase of the churches, and briefly suggested some of the probable causes for the rapidity with which Christianity advanced in the times of the Apostles.

The points on which we have been dwelling are not to be regarded merely as matters of interesting information. The practical questions to which they are fitted to give rise are of the deepest moment. If any one would, successfully and honorably, carry on a large secular business, it is needful that he periodically examine with accuracy the exact position of his affairs. In a similar way, it is well that Christians should, every now and then, be questioning themselves as to their position, and their capabilities of service—their qualifications on the one hand, and their opportunities on the other.

How may we, each in our own proper sphere, subserve the interests of truth and holiness, in a world so full of error, wickedness, and delusion? If we abound in the good things of this life, are we rich *for ourselves only*, or do we have a lesson from the clouds of heaven, which, when they are full of water, empty themselves upon the earth? Are we seeking to grow in divine knowledge only for our *own* satisfaction, or that we may thereby become fit “to teach others also?” A merely selfish,

isolated Christianity must be devoid of *life, warmth, and enjoyment*. It is impossible for a believer to be happy, apart from aiming after the benefit of the Church and the well-being of his fellow-men. Let us, therefore, brethren, gird up the loins of our minds. Let us give ourselves to prayer. Let us seek to get our souls refreshed and strengthened through feeding on the heavenly manna. Let us set the Lord before us, in secret, in our families, in our business, in our social fellowship, in the whole course of our lives. Let us implore His blessing on all we engage in. Let us cultivate a deep sense of utter helplessness in ourselves, that we may more entirely *depend* upon Him who is mighty to help, to deliver, and to save. Let us dread to be found among those who are laying up treasures on earth. Let our ears be open to the cry of suffering humanity, and let our hearts prompt our hands to aid the cause of the sorrowful and the oppressed. The opportunities for getting good to our own souls, and of ministering to the temporal and spiritual benefit of others, are as large and abundant as the most earnest and liberal-hearted could desire them to be. No *one single individual* can accomplish everything. We must all, from the necessary limitation of human ability, leave many things undone. But we can each of us do something; and we are not to be judging one another as to what we see any fail in effecting, but rather to be judging our own selves and asking the question—"what do our circumstances and our capacities qualify us to accomplish in and of the great cause of righteousness, mercy, holiness and truth."

But I cannot conclude without addressing a few words of warning and instruction to such as may be present in this assembly, who may never yet have yielded themselves unto Christ. I will not suppose that any one of you would deny the *divine authority* of Scripture; but sure I am that, if there be any now hearing me, who up to this moment have continued in a state of apathy and indifference to spiritual objects, a secret unbelief, a half

unconscious infidelity, lies at the root of such indifference. Now what such persons need is to have it pressed home upon their minds that the *words* of scripture are the counterparts of *glorious* and *terrible realities*. You read the Bible—you hear sermons—you sometimes listen to religious conversation, but the substantial reality of those objects about which the gospel is conversant has never, it may be, for a single hour, exerted any real influence over you. And yet how real, even to the testimony of your external senses, are the outward features of that wretchedness for which the gospel promises to furnish a divine remedy? And how real is that internal misery which no human skill can alleviate, and that mental distress to which earth can bring no consolation. Yes, sin, and sorrow, and sickness, and death, and the grave, are all *manifest realities*. How strange is the infatuation which deludes such multitudes of the human family, who live continually exposed to every variety of evil, and are utterly disinclined to welcome the shelter of a place of refuge. *Bereavement*, or *disease*, or *calamity*, or *death*, may, any moment, be the portion of any one of us; and what preparation, my friends, have you made for the day or the hour of coming evil? If the stroke descend suddenly are you ready to meet it? If slow decay should waste away the vigour of your strength—when the *cold damp-sweat* upon the forehead, and the *pallid countenance*, and the *laboring respiration*, and the *fluttering pulse* give assured evidence of coming dissolution—what cordial have you provided for the fainting heart? what do you look to for support and consolation, when all earthly sustainments shall be withdrawn for ever? The gospel provides for us all we need as sinners, and nothing else but the gospel answers to our deep necessities. Were we to preach to you of one who could save from external poverty, and render all his followers rich in earthly good; or who could elevate his people to the highest rank of temporal distinction, or impart to them every thing that the natural heart desires,

—such a one would be only a Saviour *in name*, and would offer only a *superficial* salvation. You might be *rich*, or *great*, or *learned*, or *renowned*, and yet *wretched*; for not one of these earthly bestowments reaches the malady of the soul. What a sinner needs in order to be happy, is pardon and holiness. He needs that the burden of an unsettled controversy between himself and God be graciously removed. He needs to be delivered from guilt, and rescued from the slavery of a corrupt nature. He needs to be redeemed from no mere earthly bondage, and to become the freedman of no mere earthly master. When he is brought to trust in Jesus, his ransomed spirit finds repose in the bosom of the deliverer—his heart goes out to God, with the cry of “Abba, Father.” As the glories of Emmanuel shine into his heart, he exclaims, surely there *can* be no other Saviour but Jesus—no salvation but that which He has wrought. We may not *live* in selfish isolation from our fellow-men, but it is well sometimes to conceive of ourselves as standing in this peopled universe *alone* with God. Let each of us, my friends, endeavour thus “to talk with our own hearts.” “It is appointed unto men once to die, and, after death, the judgment.” If the course of time continues to run on a few years longer—that flood which millions upon millions of our race have crossed and which thousands are hourly passing, must be crossed by each one of ourselves. How solemnly mysterious is the passage of a human spirit into the vastness of a futurity, only irradiated by the light of the Christian revelation. How overwhelming the thought of entering upon that new state of being with all the sins of a long course of ungodliness recorded against us in the Book of God’s remembrance! My dying fellow-men, *now* is the accepted time—*now* is the day of salvation. Not by prayers—or penances, not by efforts at making yourselves righteous, but by faith in the Saviour’s finished sacrifice and trust in his perfect righteousness, you pass from death unto life, and become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. AMEN.

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A LECTURE
ON
THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMAL REGENERATION,
CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO THE PRESENT POSITION
OF THE FAITHFUL MINISTERS CONNECTED WITH
THE NATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT.

DELIVERED AUGUST 15th, 1849.

“Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”—MARK vii. 7.

My present object is not to *disprove* the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. I have no reason to suppose that this doctrine is maintained by any now hearing me. The question may therefore, perhaps, be suggested, “Why then occupy our time with the subject at all?” It may, or it may not, be held by those connected with the English Establishment; but what is that to us? We do not belong to that Establishment, and why should we concern ourselves with *what* it teaches? Now I trust, before I have done, that I shall make it plain to every Christian understanding, that we have very much to do with the condition of what is generally denominated the National Church. Even a heathen could say, “I am a human being, and therefore I reckon nothing belonging to humanity to be disconnected from myself”—much more would a Christian say, I am a believer in Christ, and therefore I am interested in everything that concerns my fellow-believers.

Many of you are aware that, for a long time past, a controversy has been carried on within the pale of the

Establishment, on the efficacy of baptism. Some have maintained that the baptismal service, as contained in the Prayer-Book, must be understood to teach that every child baptised by a clergymen, and according to the rites of the Church, is, in and by the act of baptism, spiritually regenerated. Others, generally denominated the evangelical clergy, have maintained, that baptism is, in itself, only an outward sign, and that it may or may not be accompanied by any inward and spiritual grace. The Bishop of Exeter, by having refused to induct a clergyman who belongs to the Evangelical party, has caused the question to be tried before the highest legal authority under the Crown. The judge of this highest court has decided that the doctrine taught in the Prayer-Book requires every clergyman to believe that *in* and *by* the act of baptism the child is spiritually born again. Except this decision be set aside by the authority of the Queen in council, any bishop may thenceforth refuse to ordain or induct any candidate for the ministry, unless he be found willing to maintain the doctrine sanctioned by legal authority.

Such is a very brief summary of the facts of the case, and of the present position of the National Establishment.

Having thus prepared your minds more clearly to apprehend the bearing of what I am about to bring before you, I propose, as the Lord may help me, to direct your attention:—

I. To the doctrine itself, in its character and tendencies.

II. To the present position of the godly men connected with the establishment.

I. (1) The doctrine itself is obviously contrary to the whole spirit of the New Testament. In 1st Cor. i., Paul speaks of preaching the Gospel, as being even a more important object than baptising, and regeneration is uniformly ascribed in Scripture, not to any outward rite,

but to the power of the divine word as rendered efficacious by the energy of the Holy Spirit. "To be born of God" is that which constitutes the vast and all-important distinction between those, on the one hand, who belong to Christ, and those, on the other, who belong to the world that lieth in wickedness. Every *regenerated* soul is a *saved* soul, and by the fruits of holiness the reality of the new birth is outwardly manifested and proved. The doctrine now legally declared to be taught in the standard of the English Establishment, is thus at variance with Scripture, and contrary to all fact and all experience. What authority can establish so monstrous a proposition? The great mass of our ungodly population have been baptised in their infancy. We have baptised drunkards, adulterers, murderers, infidels. All these, according to the established doctrine, have passed from death unto life. They have all been born of God. The consecrated water has been sprinkled over them. The seal of the cross has been pressed upon their foreheads. In spite of these words of blasphemy and deeds of crime, we must look upon these as those who have been made "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus." They have all been made children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. So says the church catechism, and all who adhere to the standards of the episcopalian system, are bound to hold and teach accordingly. When the priest at the altar mutters certain Latin sentences, and then declares that that which, a few minutes before, was a wafer, has been changed into a God, you appeal to your outward sense and reason as sufficient to prove the grossness of the lie. Transubstantiation needs only to be understood to be rejected. It carries its own condemnation along with it. It is as if Satan, in the concocting of that absurdity, had tried how far he could go in seeking to befool man's fallen and degraded reason. Baptismal regeneration is a doctrine of the same school. It contradicts Scripture—it insults reason—it sets fact and experience at defiance.

And is it possible that the men of God within the pale of the Establishment will quietly succumb to such an unholy imposition? Is superstition and idle ceremony to occupy the place and usurp the name of Christian doctrine? Has the blood of our martyrs been shed in vain? Did LATIMER, and RIDLEY, and HOOPER, resign their liberties and their lives, rather than surrender the truth of God, and shall those who may be looked upon as their successors, in the maintenance of Evangelical purity, prefer the temporalities of a National Establishment to the purity of Scriptural Christianity. And shall English Christians outside the pale of the Establishment look on with a stare of indifference, or the smile of gratified superiority? If we be Christ's and they be Christ's—whether they will acknowledge us or no, they are united to us by the most enduring of all relationships. The ties that bind us to our earthly connections may be snapt asunder, but the ties that bind us to the men of God, whether in the English Establishment, or in the Establishment of other lands, are lasting as eternity. Either this doctrine must be formally, solemnly rejected, or the National Establishment must be denounced as part and parcel of the Romish apostasy. We must, in that case, seek that it be overthrown. It is a power antagonist to Christ, and we are bound, by all lawful means, to resist its destructive domination. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. We would not invoke the aid of popular violence. Truth conquers by endurance. But we may protest against the errors it upholds; we may entreat the godly remnant, yet clinging, with the prejudices of early youth, to an antichristian system, to come out and abandon an institution by which truth is proscribed; and to our exhortations we may unite our prayers, on behalf of all the right-hearted men, who minister under the sanction of episcopal authority.

2. But let us look more particularly at the tendencies of this unscriptural and unreasonable dogma. All error

comes from Satan, the father of lies. What are the purposes which the doctrine in question is fitted to subserve, on behalf of the kingdom of darkness? Are we to regard this lying tradition as only a harmless speculative error? Has it no deeply important practical consequences? Let us see.

First, it manifestly tends to exalt the clerical order, and to enable the priesthood to domineer over their fellow-men. They claim to be the successors of the Apostles. They claim to be the only true ministers of Christ in our land. This claim they substantiate, not by the soundness of their doctrines, nor by the purity of their lives, but by the averment that a mysterious virtue hath been communicated unto them, by the hands of the bishop in ordination. They may, or they may not, be acquainted with what the Scriptures teach; they may, or they may not, have been enlightened by the divine Spirit; they may, or they may not, maintain outward consistency of character—all these are secondary matters. The seal of ordination has been impressed upon them. The mysterious power of forgiving sins has been conferred upon their favoured persons. There may be nothing about them in mind, or heart, or character, or conduct, fitted, in any wise, to elevate them above other men. They may have no one single rational, or Christian, ground upon which to require the reverence of their fellows; but an unseen glory, a supernatural dignity has been vouchsafed unto them. They may be ignorant triflers—the votaries of fashionable folly, or devoted to the pleasures of the chase, and the dissipation of the banquet-hall—still they are to be revered as the only authorised spiritual instructors of the people. Amazing infatuation! that any should be found weak enough to admit so preposterous a claim; and equally amazing, that the common sense of Englishmen should be insulted, by being told that upon the act of baptism being rightly performed, by one of their duly qualified instructors, depends the salvation of our children. Only think of the condition

of our rural districts under the dominion of Tractarian clergymen. Their only authorised instructor tells the people that, by their children receiving the ordinance of baptism at his hands, their infants become the children of the living God. Who does not see what a weight of importance this figment attaches to the clergyman? He may have very little else to recommend him to their affection or esteem. He may be too ignorant to teach, and too indolent to learn. But he can read the formula prescribed in the service-book. He can sprinkle the water on the infant's brow. He can go through all the instituted ceremonies of popish origin. Neither in parents, or child, or sponsor, or priest may there be any right knowledge of God—any true faith in Christ—any conviction of sin—any repentance for past transgression—yet, according to the doctrine recently established by the highest legal authority, the mighty transformation has been effected. The child may grow up in ignorance and sin; but when, in after years, urged to consider the solemn declaration of the Saviour respecting the necessity of the new birth, the poor victim of priestly delusion may most confidently reply, that he was born again in and by the act of baptism, and that he has been taught by his spiritual guide that no further regeneration is required. And thus, especially in the rural districts of our unhappy country, the dark cloud of popish superstition is gathering in most affecting gloominess. The various Evangelical bodies outside the Establishment may ply their despised and rejected labours. They are looked on as impudent and unwarranted intruders into the domain of the clergyman. Those who listen to the home-missionary, or the unlettered itinerant, must expect persecution as their portion. The preachers of Christ crucified, and the maintainers of baptismal regeneration proclaim a different gospel; and instead of the church-going bell inviting the village population to listen to the exposition of the word of life, ritual observances are proclaimed as the channel through which the souls of

sinner are to be translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Now surely this is a sore, a deadly evil. Can the fact be denied that multitudes of the Episcopal clergy are the determined enemies of the cross of Christ? Under their deadly influence are not souls passing into eternity with a lie in their right hand? If a true servant of Christ be set down in an adjacent parish, he dare not cross the boundaries of his own ecclesiastical territory to carry the word of life to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge; and yet even Christian men can continue to boast of their apostolic church, and dread, with a sort of instinctive trembling, the stroke that would set them free. O that the Lord would enlighten their understandings to perceive that a system which has, throughout the whole of its history, been the tool of mere secular influence, is not the sort of instrumentality from which we may reasonably anticipate the diffusion of genuine Christianity. Will its most determined advocates among the Evangelical section of its people, mention any period in its history during which the majority of its ministers were, in the judgment of the largest charity, spiritually enlightened men. How long is our country to be nominally Christian, and really in a state of baptised heathenism? How long shall the blind guides, sanctioned by the bishops and upheld by the State, continue responsible for the perdition of our people? How long shall they refuse to teach the truth themselves, and hinder those who would gladly diffuse it? I have sometimes thought, if other duties, more suited to a retiring nature, did not seem to bar my way, that I should like to perambulate the parishes where Puseyism wields its iron sceptre, and proclaim among the deluded people the spirituality of divine truth. In most of our great cities, there are men of truth who lift up a standard against the overflowing flood of popish superstition; but, in the rural districts, the ignorant, unthinking, unvisited population are lying in supine prostration, under the withering dominion of a false and

arrogant theology. I should like to bear my testimony against these mistaken men, that thus some inroad might be made on the reign of superstitious tyranny.

But while thus seeking to expose the dangerous and destructive character of Tractarian error, we would desire not to indulge a single feeling of unkindness towards those who are diffusing it. Many of them are young men, who probably have had very little opportunity of hearing the gospel faithfully proclaimed. 'On entering the University of Oxford they have found the views we are exposing advocated by earnest, accomplished, and most attractive men. Who would not regret that such men as the accomplished Professor of Hebrew in that seat of learning, should be found devoting his eminent endowments in behalf of a system so opposed to the simplicity of Scriptural truth! If we ourselves are more enlightened, it becomes us to remember the word of the Apostle, "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" The Spirit of Christ always leads us to *compassionate* those who are in error. We should pray that they may be enlightened from above. We should remember that we ourselves may never have been exposed to the temptations by which these deluded clergymen are surrounded.

It is flattering to the pride of the natural mind—it is especially gratifying to the young and inexperienced—to find themselves elevated to a position that gives them a kind of middle rank between God and their fellow-men. They may be utterly unfit for the discharge of such a ministry as that which devolved upon the first preachers of the word of life—they may find themselves unqualified for exhibiting before the popular mind the affecting realities of our holy faith—but they can readily go through the round of prescribed ceremonies. It saves much time, and effort, and labour to maintain that outward observances are the means of imparting grace.

This is not to be dealt with as a party question. We should seek to look at the whole subject, in a spirit of

thoughtfulness and prayer. Tractarianism is an enormous evil, because it obstructs the efforts of those who are seeking the diffusion of the truth, and the salvation of the people. It is well that Christians generally should be awakened to the enormity of the evil, that they may meet it in a spirit of large and earnest charity. Many of its advocates may be men deserving of respect for their external character; and we have no personal quarrel with them as men. But we maintain that they preach another gospel from that which Paul proclaimed, and, therefore, were their credentials far more imposing than they are, we dare not receive or submit to them. Some of them may come in the semblance of an angel of light, and their deluded followers may imagine they see the beam of a celestial glory irradiating their temples; still, the doctrines they maintain are sufficient to invalidate and disprove their claim to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. No credentials can warrant our reception of that which destroys the very foundation of our holy faith, strips Christianity of its heavenly character, and degrades the dispensation of the Spirit to a dispensation of form, and grimace, and idle ceremony.

II. I now propose, in the second place, to consider the present position of the Evangelical ministers within the pale of the Establishment.

The enlightened clergymen, whether in the days of early martyrdom, or in the time of *ROMAINE* and *SCOTT*, and more recently of *RICHMOND*, have ever maintained views directly opposite to those to which legal authority now demands the assent of every clergyman. By this late decision their faith may be said to be proscribed. If they still continue within the pale of the Establishment, they continue there only by sufferance. That, which their Nonconformist opponents have said all along, has been declared by the highest legal authority to be the meaning of the Service-Book. And the misfortune is that the words in the Prayer-book certainly do seem to convey the very doctrine which Gospel clergymen

condemn. Let any unprejudiced, simple-minded man read the baptismal service, and this would be the impression received from perusing it. It is quite true that the articles contradict the doctrine of ceremonial efficacy in the sacraments; and, therefore, when pressed for replies to the Tractarian, on the one hand, or to the Nonconformist on the other, the men of Evangelical sentiment take refuge in the Articles of the Church. I do not judge, far less condemn, them. There are those among them at whose feet I would desire to sit, and whose grace I would seek to honor, and admire, and imitate. But how humiliating is their position now! Throughout the whole extent of the diocese of Exeter, no clergyman may warn the people against the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. If Mr. GORHAM is rejected, is it right or equitable that those who proclaim the same doctrines should be permitted to remain ministers of the Establishment? May not any of the bishops proceed at once to extremities with refractory clergymen, who refuse to submit to the legal decision as to the teaching of their own church? Have not many of themselves had scruples of conscience, and sore exercises of mind already, in reference to their position? And is not the late decision like the voice of God in His providence, proclaiming that the hour of their emancipation is come. There was a time, nearly 200 years ago, when 2,000 of the best men in the ministry of the *then* Establishment gave up their livings, because they could not assent to everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer. One cannot think of those noble-minded, conscientious sufferers, without a feeling of delighted gratitude and admiration. The HOWES, the BAXTERS, the OWENS, and the HENRYS—the long catalogue of those illustrious men, who, by their holy characters and their edifying works, have turned the by-word “Puritan,” into a term of enduring honor—preferred a good conscience, even with the restriction of their freedom, to the liberty, the *status*, and the temporalities of an Establishment.

History—that record of human crime and of divine retribution—has, here and there, a page of a brighter character; and no brighter page can be found in our country's annals than that which records the labours, the sufferings, the unbending rectitude of Puritanism. While the very name of their royal persecutor suggests a mingled feeling of contempt and indignation, and reminds one of that true saying that God sometimes elevates to the pinnacle of high dignity the "*basest of men*," the name of the once despised and persecuted Puritan suggests sentiments of the liveliest admiration and the deepest reverence. We think of them as second only to prophets and apostles, and look forward to the time when we shall hold unhindered and holy intercourse with those sainted men whom we have heard of, and read of, but have never seen. I do not mean to imply that they were faultless. They had their failings, and, it may be, in some instances, their prejudices, like other men. There are spots in the sun. They knew themselves fallen by nature. They made the cross their only foundation of confidence; and they *so believed*, that, at the risk of much that was naturally dear to them, they determined to act in the spirit of that declaration, "If it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye."

But now to apply *their* example to the case before us. Do the Evangelical clergy really believe all that the Prayer-Book teaches—and that according to the authorised interpretation of it? Assuredly they do not. Why not then boldly proclaim what they believe? Why not boldly renounce a church that *enacts heresy by a law*? Why submit to so monstrous an assumption that, on a theological question, Sir HERBERT FUST is the fittest person in the kingdom to decide; and the Queen in council the only authority qualified to set aside that decision? If women are not permitted to teach in the Church, surely that must be a system opposite to the Church of the New Testament, in which a female,

surrounded by the lords of her privy council, has the supreme authority to regulate questions of theology. During these 17 years past, you have never heard from my lips a whisper of disloyalty. I honour the Sovereign, not only because of her elevated station, but because of her personal character. I give thanks to God for such a Queen. But I cannot with the New Testament in my hand, admit, for a moment, that either to her, or to her privy council, belongs any scriptural right of legislation in the Church of the living God.

The National Establishment is a house divided against itself; and the highest of all authority assures us that such a house cannot stand. Why should those who preach an Apostolic Gospel any longer fraternise with those who dilute or deny it? Why should the Protestant defenders of sound theology be manacled and hampered by the power of a demi-popish hierarchy? Why should such men as BICKERSTETH and VILLIERS lend the sanction of their names to a system they, in heart, and testimony, and conduct, repudiate and condemn?

Should the Evangelical clergy come out of the Establishment, the best of those within her pale would accompany them in their secession. The law of toleration, and the force of public opinion, would secure for them the free exercise of their ministry. The very prejudices of the multitude would give to such ministers a readier door of access, than Nonconformist labourers could expect to meet with. The national system would be drained of its very life-blood. The ceremonialist—the clerical gentleman—the man of mere literary acquirements, and most, if not all, of the lordly overseers, might still cleave to the Apostolic Church. The self-righteous, the careless, the indifferent, the secret unbelievers—all those who are of the world, might still find, within the walls of the National Establishment, their suited and convenient resting place. But the life, and the spirit, and the earnestness, and the labours would be found

among the ranks of the seceders. They might set at defiance the impositions of the Court of Arches, and smile, in security and triumph, at the fulminations of Episcopal indignation. Henry of Exeter might then mournfully exclaim that his work was ended, his occupation gone. Gospel ministers, formerly under his domination, would now breathe the air of liberty.

The secession of Gospel ministers, from a corrupt Establishment, would bring blessings to themselves—blessings to their hearers,—blessings to the Church of God—blessings to the world. It might put to shame the scoffs of infidelity, by proving that there are some who really believe *what they preach*. It might lead many thoughtful moralists to search and enquire. Many dark places of our land would be invaded by a beam of unwonted illumination. The whole country would be moved. Thoughts, hitherto too deep for utterance, that have been exercising the minds of many of our countrymen, might find vent and free expression. The days of Puritanism, in its purest form, or the days of WHITFIELD, might be restored again. If these servants of Christ are able *even now*, with profit and with power, to set forth the Gospel of the grace of God—their new position would place them in a far higher vantage ground for effectually doing so. The proofs of their security would be far more manifest; the consciousness of their call far more inwardly invigorating. The drawling of the parish clerk, and meaningless “amen” of the listless congregation would give place to the prevailing power of earnest supplication, and the heart-felt exclamation—“What must I do to be saved?” There are, in the National Church, men of eminent gifts—of unblemished character—of tender and gracious spirit—of high and holy affections—of large and catholic charity, in whom the monstrous worldliness of the National system cannot destroy the power of a divine life—but whose labours are impeded—whose success is hindered—whose affections are thwarted by their unhallowed connexion with a

secular and Anti-Christian Establishment. Oh that they were wise!—that they understood this!—that they would ponder the unworldly nature of a Scriptural Christianity!

It may be objected against the course I have been attempting to recommend to all the sound members of the Established Church, that thus the churches and parishes of our land would be left in the hands of those who are the enemies of the Church of God. But there is more of *apparent* than of *real* strength in such an objection. Meeting-places, equally serviceable with parish churches, might be erected, wherein a seceding minister might find himself called to labour. There is no lack of outward means to meet the necessary expenditure, and, if the Evangelical section of the Establishment were as poor as they are notoriously the reverse,—He, to whom belongeth the silver and the gold, would furnish whatever *His* service might require. If the Free Church seceders from the Scottish Establishment have, in their comparative poverty, covered the length and breadth of their native land with meeting-places, how much more might the thousands, now in connection with the national system, who appear attached to the Gospel verities, furnish, out of their abundance, all that the exigencies of the case might require. We have seen a godly edifice for the accommodation of the fatherless, raised before our eyes, through the instrumentality of one individual—one faithful servant of the Lord Jesus—who has no other wealth save what is placed at his disposal, through the efficacy of that prayer which availeth much; and the amount, so well and efficiently expended on the erection of that single structure, would supply the loss of some ten or a dozen parish churches of the ordinary dimensions. But, says the objector, our ministers would no longer retain the *status*, the respectability, the temporal provision attached to their present dignified position. In the mind of scripturally-taught Christians, these things rather impede than promote

the great objects of the Gospel ministry. Paul, and his fellow-labourers, knew nothing of such advantages, and some of the most successful ministers of Christ in every age have laboured in dissociation from any national system.

But I must hasten to a close. Weigh and consider the points I have been pressing on your attention. Seek to feel a right and Christian interest in a subject, bearing, with so much importance, on the spread of Scriptural truth in our land. Pray that God would over-rule the decision in the Court of Arches to the promotion of His own glory. He has the hearts of monarchs in His hands. We know not what may be the decision of our Queen, or rather of her privy council. On the one hand, one could wish that the bigotry and intolerance of the Bishop of Exeter met its merited rebuke; on the other hand, we would be thankful that the godly ministers, within the Establishment, were left without a single plea for retaining their position. The decision is not under our control, but we may scripturally aid the cause of our common Christianity, by interceding with God that, directly or indirectly, the verdict of the privy council may tend to the repression of Antichristian error and the promotion of scriptural truth. And let us remember, brethren, that the smallest measure of superior enlightenment brings along with it a corresponding measure of additional responsibility. We may be convinced that our views respecting the spiritual character of the Church of Christ are more in accordance with the principles of the New Testament, than the view entertained by many of our fellow-Christians; but it does not therefore follow that we are more spiritual, more like Christ, than they are. In love, in zeal, in prayerfulness, in devoted service, such brethren may be very far advanced beyond us. Differing from them as we do, in regard to matters of Ecclesiastical polity, it becomes us not to disparage their attainments, but, with humility and candour, to acknowledge their superiority to ourselves. But while

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we must fully do so, the very fact of their superior attainments should make us only all the more desirous for their Ecclesiastical emancipation.

Let us commit the whole matter to the God of all grace ; and let us seek that, both ourselves and those to whose present position our minds have, this evening, been directed, may receive more abundantly out of the fullness which is treasured up in Christ Jesus. And never let us forget that the rejection of error is of little avail, except it be connected with the embracing, and the maintaining, and the diffusing of the truth. While we deny the ceremonial efficacy of the baptismal rite, let us seek that the breath of the Divine Spirit might kindle the flame of the divine life within the hearts of the young, who are growing up around us. Let us seek that He who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth, would make more and more manifest the difference that exists between a mere ceremonial new birth, and the great reality of a spiritual regeneration. Ah ! my brethren, I know not how it has been with you ; but in this matter I would acknowledge that I am verily guilty. I have not felt for the young—I have not prayed for them—I have not sought their spiritual well-being as I ought to have done—I have not lived under the abiding impression that, until changed in heart, they are in danger of perishing for ever. My prayers on their behalf have been lacking in earnestness, in fervency of spirit, and in gracious tenderness ; sometimes, I fear, polluted by formality and heartlessness. And, oh, if ever I may have been instrumental in the smallest measure to your spiritual edification, my earnest request is, that you will repay the benefit by the requital of intercession on my behalf. Seek that I might be more zealously alive to the bright and blessed realities of the Gospel—and that, He who has the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars, would so fill my earthen vessel with heavenly treasure, and so imbue my inner man with a fervent, a gracious, a yearning frame of spirit—as that I

may be fit to be used, as His instrument, in benefitting the souls of my fellow-men; and, in particular, in leading the young out of the path of the destroyer into the safe and pleasant pathway of holiness and peace.

I would add one word, in conclusion, to those now hearing me, who may be fully satisfied of the unfounded character of Tractarian assumptions, but who have not themselves been the subjects of a *saving change*. If you have as yet no Scriptural evidence to conclude that you have passed from death unto life, surely the one thing that should occupy your thoughts and interest your hearts, is the question of your own concern in the great salvation. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The Bible carries along with it the evidence of its heavenly origin. The Gospel it proclaims is not "*after man*." Read and ponder the declarations of Holy Scripture. Cry unto God for the quickening and enlightening of the Divine Spirit. Make confession of your manifold ungodliness, and rest not till you are able to say from the heart, "Lord, to whom can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." You may tell me, perhaps, that you cannot convert yourselves, and that you must just wait until the energy descend from on high. This is to misunderstand, or wilfully to pervert, the truth of God.

By nature, you are at a distance from God, and at enmity against Him. In that state you cannot be happy. You carry the elements of misery within your own bosoms. The sinfulness of a fallen nature—the guilt of accumulated transgressions—the enmity that *will not*, and the moral helplessness that *cannot*, please God, unite to shut you out from His presence; but the words addressed to Israel of old may be proclaimed, as words of encouragement, to every sinner within hearing of the Gospel message,—“Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help found.”

The grace that saves may enter the heart of a sinner so instantaneously, that he passes consciously at once from a state of alienation to a state of acceptance and favour; but it may also gradually dawn upon his spirit, like the streaks of the morning light. To believe a statement is to think it true; and to believe in a person is to rest our full confidence on his faithfulness. The Son of God hath made such an atonement, that whosoever will, may believe in Him and be saved. The blood that He shed was either the blood of an imposter, and the Jews were right in putting Him to death; or that blood streamed from the veins of Him who came forth from the bosom of the Father to endure the punishment in the sinner's stead. You shrink from the former alternative. Believe and confide in the latter. Lay hold of the preciousness of the blood of Jesus. Plead that blood against Satan—plead it as an answer to the accusations of conscience—plead it before the scrutiny of a holy God. Thus will you learn the depths of your own ruin—the boundless character of divine love—the measureless value of the great salvation, and prove, in your own experience, the meaning of Scripture—“Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as He is pure.” AMEN.

A LECTURE
ON
SOCIAL INTERCOURSE: ITS ADVANTAGES,
• AND ITS SNARES.

*Delivered at the Broadmead Rooms,
For the Young Men's Christian Association, in the year 1862.*

SYNOPSIS.—Social intercourse a necessity for human beings. Like other blessings, liable to be perverted.—I. Helps and preparations for rightly using it. (1) Right frame of spirit. (2) A measure of mental cultivation. (3) Suited associates. (4) Suitable arrangements. (5) Aided by being accompanied with the enjoyment of nature.—II. Advantages thus obtained. (1) Increase of our happiness. (2) Mental improvement. (3) Cultivation of the affections.—III. Perils and snares connected with its perversion. (1) Neglect of secret exercises. (2) Neglect of our proper business, &c. (3) Lead to unholy influence.

“It is not good that man should be alone.” The saying I have just quoted, at once a testimony and a reason, uttered just before the creation of our first mother, has found, in all ages, an echo in the hearts of all her offspring. Even before man had experienced the feebleness consequent upon transgression, the above testimony was true. *Social intercourse* would have been a necessity for man, even if he had never fallen; how much more necessary, we may infer it to have become in consequence of the manifold infirmities resulting out of our departure from God. Well has the poet represented the feelings of ALEXANDER SELKIRK in his lonely residence:—

O solitude where are the charms
Which sages have seen in thy face?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms
Than reign in this horrible place.

I am out of humanity's reach,
 I must finish my journey alone,
 Never hear the sweet music of speech,
 I start at the sound of my own.

Society, friendship and love,
 Divinely bestowed upon man,
 O, had I the wings of a dove,
 How soon would I taste you again !

Who amongst us does not shrink from the thought of being situated as *he* was ! Who does not feel that the mere imagination of such a condition ought to call forth the liveliest sentiments of gratitude to God, for surrounding us with all the manifold benefits and blessings resulting from intercourse with our fellow-men.

It is well that we should thus be reminded, even in the way of contrast, of the value of that privilege to the consideration of which I desire this evening to direct your minds.

It is good that the young and the old, that men of all classes of society and of every grade of mental attainment, should enjoy *social intercourse*. Yet even the current phraseology of everyday life tells us how the *privilege* may become a *snare*. How often do we hear it said, respecting one who once promised well, "He was clever, had many amiable qualities, great conversational powers, but he *got into company* and was *ruined*." Strange the blessing should so frequently be perverted into a curse ! but so it is. Our greatest sorrows often spring from the abuse of our choicest sources of happiness. The convivial party, the ball room, the theatre, furnish the very sort of associates, who, to youth and inexperience, appear most attractive ; and thus, that association with our fellow-men which, if rightly used, might have aided in the formation of character and smoothed the asperities of life, often becomes the means of leading those who, in early days, promised to be the joy of their parents' hearts, into such a course of conduct as terminates in misery and disgrace. While therefore we are alive to the

advantages let us be equally alive to the *snares* connected with companionship? Let us enquire,

I. Into some of the *helps* and *preparations* for turning the opportunity of social intercourse to good account.

II. Some of the advantages which we may thus derive from it.

III. Some of the snares, in connection with companionship, to which the young are more especially exposed.

I (1) If we would desire to succeed in turning to good account the privileges of associating with others, it is requisite that we aim after that preparation which consists in a *rightly constituted frame of spirit*. The trifling, the thoughtless, the sensual, are often fond of company; but such is their condition, mentally and morally, as to unfit them for either *imparting* or *receiving* any real advantage from society. He who would *reap*, must first give himself to the labour connected with *sowing*. No man can reasonably expect to derive either gratification or instruction from others, who does not seek *their* benefit as well as his *own*. He may be conscious of his own deficiencies—he may regret that his conversational powers are very far inferior to those possessed by some of his companions—but he is unworthy of enjoying society if he is not at least *desirous* of rendering himself subservient to the gratification, or benefit, of those with whom he mingles. Let, therefore, every one, who values the opportunity of intercourse with others, see that his motives are such as allow him warrantably to cherish the expectation of deriving some advantage for himself, and at the same time, in some measure, of being helpful in promoting the benefit of those with whom he may mingle.

(2.) In order to do this, something more than a mere *desire* will be requisite. The man who spends all his leisure time in society, may make an *amusing* companion but hardly a *valuable* associate. He who devotes his hand to manual labour, or his mind to the ordinary

details of business, and then gives up all his remaining hours to mere amusement, will soon find that his company is acceptable only to a very inferior class of companions. Such a one will be welcomed among those who addict themselves to idle jesting, or to mere political controversy; but the manly, the thoughtful, the well-informed—all who really feel the worth of every hour, and the responsibility connected with the mode of spending it, will seek for other society. In order to do good to others, we must first take heed to do good to ourselves. Even apart from those infinitely more important exercises which relate to our highest interests—(the reverential reading of the Scriptures, and secret intercourse with God)—there are *other* demands upon our intervals of cessation from business which cannot be neglected with impunity. To say nothing of the calls of active benevolence, some portion of our leisure ought to be secured for *general mental improvement*. Every man—but specially every *young man*—ought to seek to increase his stores of useful information, and to cultivate the faculties wherewith God has endowed him. Next to the enjoyment of God and the cultivation of the gracious affections, most of our purest delights spring from the exercise of our mental powers. Just as the goodness of the Creator is seen in the adaptation of external nature to the constitution of man, and even to the requirements of the inferior animals, so is it illustrated by the instinctive delight derived from the legitimate employment of our *intellectual* faculties. How many who, under the advantages of early training, might have found pure and invigorating satisfaction in the pursuit of mental improvement, have become incapable of devoting their energies to anything more elevated and important than the ordinary avocations of business, or the excitements arising from trivial pleasures or sensual gratifications. “In all labour there is profit,” provided that labour be expended on *worthy* objects; and he who never cultivated the power of solitary application, and the capacity of enjoying the society of the “mighty

minds of old," however successful he may be in the race for riches, is, after all, but a poor and pitiable man.

II. I do not mean that young men, in general, should aim at making large attainments in learning.

It is not possible, it is not even desirable for the great majority of those who are connected with our Young Men's Christian Associations that they should be *classical scholars*, or eminent for *scientific attainments*. But, by the exercise of ordinary powers of observation, and by means of suitable reading, very much progress may be made in the acquisition of that species of information which will be found serviceable in qualifying one to take part, with credit and enjoyment, in rational conversation. Men of profound scholarship, or of lofty science, will often be wanting in the power of adapting themselves to the measure of mental cultivation possessed by the average of those who mingle in general society; while persons of far inferior attainments, whose conversational powers have been duly cultivated, will be able to impart, to those with whom they may associate, not merely amusement, but lasting benefit. *Cordiality of feeling; kindness of manner; modesty and forbearance; candour and patience*, combined with *ease and clearness of expression*, seem to me to constitute some of the most important requisites for rendering our opportunities of social intercourse subservient to our mutual good. *Dogmatism; irritability; dictatorial assumption; rashness; levity; tedious trifling*; are some of the most obvious of those evils by which the enjoyment of social converse is most frequently marred. All such obstacles to profitable intercourse originate in the neglecting the culture of the heart. The remedy must therefore be found in attention to the ancient exhortation, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

(3.) In seeking to secure the benefits, legitimately connected with social intercourse, it is requisite that we select associates. To do so requires a measure of self-knowledge and, to some extent, the capacity of judging

correctly respecting the characters of others. Experience proves that there may be both happy and beneficial association between those whose mental characteristics are very far from exact correspondence. Still, a measure of conformity in principles, habits, tastes, and studies will be found helpful. It is hardly possible that those, who find their highest gratifications in that which is merely *showy* and *attractive*, should be fit companions for those who are devoted to the pursuit of the *solid*, the *genuine*, and the *true*. The man who makes the acquisition of wealth the great object of his existence will be utterly unable to sympathise with the man whose aims are of a far more elevated character. He, whose hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, are all bounded within the narrow limits of his earthly life, will be unable to tolerate or even to understand the principles and the objects by which the course of a Christian is regulated and impelled. He who goes into company, merely to get rid of time and to drive away all serious thought, will hardly fraternise with those who have been awakened to the value of existence and who are earnestly seeking to discharge their mission "as even in the great task-masters eye," and who aim, although at an infinite distance, to tread in the footsteps of Him who said, "I must work the work of Him that sent me, while it is called to-day; the night cometh when no man can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John ix. 4).

(4) Even *external arrangements* may serve either to *promote* or to *impede* the legitimate objects of mutual converse.

The *confiding intercourse* of intimate friendship is often most freely enjoyed when a few, whose hearts have been closely knit together, meet apart from others. Those who are thus united, can say to each other what they might feel unwilling to express in the presence of ordinary acquaintances.

This remark specially applies to the unfettered converse of those who are like-minded in reference to

the great realities of Christian truth. Well has the poet COWPER described such converse in one of his finest episodes :—

O days of heaven and nights of equal praise,
Serene and peaceful as those heavenly days,
When souls drawn upwards, in communion sweet,
Enjoy the stillness of some close retreat ;
Discourse, as if released and safe at home,
Of dangers passed, and wonders yet to come,
And spread the sacred treasures of the breast
Upon the lap of covenanted rest.

For less intimate intercourse, it may be desirable that one should sometimes mingle in more general society. Few things, however, appear to me more inexpedient than for a large number of persons to assemble together with the view of each one conversing with that one of the party who may happen to sit next to him. If the object be rational enjoyment, surely the preferable arrangement would be for the conversation to be so carried on, that all might take part either in addressing the rest of the company, or in listening to that which may be spoken for the benefit of all present. If the number be too large to allow of such an arrangement, then the largeness of the number tends to defeat the great object of mutual benefit. I may be located beside some one who, either from shyness or from want of practice, cannot converse freely in so numerous a company ; and I may catch, every now and then, a stray sentence, spoken at another part of the room, sufficient to *excite*, but not to *gratify*, my curiosity and thirst for information. If, on the other hand, I am happily situated, as respects my next neighbour, our conversation would be far happier and freer, if we were to meet by ourselves, instead of our being compelled to talk in the presence of others who take no part in the subject of our conversation. In such a company there will generally be found two or three persons who are

capable of carrying on a conversation, interesting, not only to themselves, but to those around them. What a matter of regret that the advantage of hearing the remarks of such should be limited to the one or two who may happen to be located next to them. To say nothing of living celebrities, let me suppose, what might have happened some forty years ago (in the city of Bristol), that any of us had been invited to meet, at a large party, with ROBERT HALL, or JOHN FOSTER, how deeply should we have regretted to have been permitted only to spend an evening in the same room with them, while we were denied the privilege of listening to their animated and instructive discourse! Or, supposing any of us had been in Glasgow, about the period just referred to, when THOMAS CHALMERS and EDWARD IRVING were labouring together in the Gospel, how greatly should we have been disappointed, had we returned from spending an evening in their presence, without having had opportunity of coming into contact with their minds, or of being invigorated by their manly and generous sentiments! THOMAS CHALMERS was then in the full maturity of his strength. Over EDWARD IRVING the shadow of those hallucinations, which afterwards darkened and dwarfed his noble intellect, had not then fallen. Rarely indeed have two men, so sound in faith, and so consistent in practice, and so largely endowed both in mind and heart, laboured so unitedly in the work of God. The reputation of IRVING has sadly suffered through the aberrations of his closing years. In those sad delusions was verified the keen perception of Sir WALTER SCOTT, who, referring to the great preacher, describes him as having the *impress* of talent on his brow, and the *glance of madness* in his eye. But to have spent an hour in social converse with him, such as he was in the beginning of his ministerial course, would have been indeed a privilege. I should have looked back upon such an opportunity with something of the same grateful feeling with which I now recall, in advanced

life, the interviews I enjoyed, in my early days, with his still more illustrious fellow-labourer.

If the object aimed at, in coming together, be real enjoyment of one another's society, I am satisfied that very large parties will generally be found a failure. Such assemblies answer perfectly well in those cases in which people meet together to indulge in *eating and drinking*—to display the *elegance of their dress*—to waste the precious hours in *fashionable folly*—or simply to rid themselves of that unoccupied time which lies, like an unsaleable commodity, heavy upon their hands. He who has a mind capable of tasting the delights of well-spent hours, who can enjoy, in his retirement, hallowed intercourse with the holiest and the noblest of those imperishable minds who have left their best thoughts and sentiments embalmed in their literary remains, will shrink from wasting his evenings in that talk of the lips which tendeth only to penury. It is rightly regarded as *murder* to take away the life of another; it is *suicide* to destroy our own; surely they who *systematically and deliberately* allow their lives to pass away in vanity and folly, cannot be held guiltless of criminal neglect—a neglect alike injurious to others as well as to themselves. The poet SOUTHEY may have carried his devotion to retired reading much too far. He probably failed in doing that amount of good which a freer mingling in society might have furnished him with the opportunity of effecting; but his too exclusive occupation with his books was a far less evil than that of wasting time in unprofitable company. Hear his experience on this matter:—

My days among the dead are past;
 Around me I behold,
 Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
 The mighty minds of old;
 My never-failing friends are they
 With whom I converse day by day.

With them I take delight in weal,
 And seek relief in woe ;
 And while I understand and feel
 How much to them I owe,
 My cheeks have often been bedewed
 With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

My thoughts are with the dead—with those
 I love in long past years ;
 Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
 Partake their hopes and fears,
 And from their lessons seek to find
 Instruction with a humble mind.

My hopes are with the dead ; anon
 My place with them shall be ;
 And I with them shall travel on
 Through all futurity,
 Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
 That will not perish in the dust.

(5.) It is desirable, if circumstances permit, to combine the enjoyment of suitable companionship with exercise in the open air. Perhaps no city in the empire possesses such advantages, in this respect, as our own. Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, even Edinburgh itself, the fair capital of Scotland, and one of the most elegant cities in the world, must, in regard to the attractiveness of the surrounding neighbourhood, yield to Bristol.

Confidential intercourse between intimate friends may be greatly aided by the beauty and the grandeur of our rocks, and downs, and woods, and vallies. How poor, indeed, are the gratifications that attend our city feasts, or our crowded ball rooms, or our fashionable assemblies, in comparison of those delights which spring from thoughtful contemplation of such scenes as may be visited by us alone or in company, and enjoyed at any time, without cost, or labour. Well has the poet questioned those who find no attractiveness in nature's loveliness, or

who prefer to such attractions the coarse gratifications of sensual indulgence :—

“ Canst thou forego the pure ethereal soul
 In each fine sense so exquisitely seen,
 On the dull couch of luxury to roll,
 Stung with disease and stupified with spleen ;
 Fain to implore the aid of flattery’s screen,
 Even from thyself thy loathsome heart to hide,
 (The mansion there no more of joy serene,)
 Where fear, distrust, malevolence, abide,
 And impotent desire, and disappointed pride ?

“ O how canst thou renounce the boundless store
 Of charms which nature to her votary yields !
 The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
 The pomp of groves and garniture of fields ;
 All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
 And all that echoes to the song of even,
 All that the mountain’s sheltering bosom shields,
 And all the dread magnificence of heaven—
 O how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven ?”

II. I come now, in the second place, to refer more directly to the *advantages* resulting from intercourse with our fellows.

(1) Social intercourse, legitimately enjoyed, tends very greatly to increase the *amount of human happiness*. It furnishes one of the best and most available sources of recreation. It affords relief after severe mental labour, and smooths the asperities of every-day toil. In seeking the enjoyment of association with suitable companions, we obey a *natural instinct*, sanctioned by a *higher law*. This instinct manifests itself in very early childhood. In boyhood and youth it seems to grow stronger by indulgence, and few of mature age, or even in advanced life, can be happy without occasional opportunities of mingling in congenial society. There are some instincts, I confess, which cannot be indulged without sin, while in other cases, what appears as an

instinctive tendency is an *acquired* one; but the *social instinct* has no resemblance, in its nature, to that which prompts the slave of sinful passions to seek the maddening draught, and so to degrade himself below the inferior creation. It rather resembles the craving for food, when we are hungry; or that tendency which induces us to shrink from pain or death. The love of society is found in the purest and holiest specimens of humanity, and is sanctioned by the verdict of conscience, and more than sanctioned by the sure testimonies of Scripture. If we regard the authority of the Bible, we must believe that the infinitely happy God delights in the happiness of His creatures. He may be represented, by our great adversary, or by our guilty consciousness, as one who *governs* us by a system of mere *restraints*. In early youth there are many things that appear to us full of attractiveness, which we are told that God has forbidden. This fact often generates the notion that the Being who rules over all, delights in thwarting the inclinations of His creatures, and in withholding those things which would minister to their enjoyment. This is a most dangerous misapprehension. He who has, for us and our salvation, given up His own Son, "giveth us all things richly to enjoy." No wise and loving parent ever so longed after the well-being of his children as our God and Father longs after the truest happiness of those that trust in Him. He has not revealed Himself as one who delights merely in *restraining, prohibiting, and judging*. He

" Forbids us nought but that licentious joy
Whose fruit, though fair, allures but to destroy."

It were almost blasphemy to assert that His word enforces *one needless restriction*. It is most irrational to imagine that He can be pleased with self-imposed austerities, or with a sullen refusal to accept of the blessing of His hand. The royal prophet did not close his eyes from beholding the sublimity and grandeur of the starry

firmament, but lifted up his admiring gaze towards heaven, and poured forth his sentiments of awe and adoration in a hymn of joyous thanksgiving. The Blessed Teacher, while He trod this earth as our Incarnate God, did not refuse to contemplate the grass of the meadows—the corn of the fields, or the lilies of the valley. We glorify God by seeking legitimate enjoyment. We answer one end of our existence by *being happy*. No source of delight, or satisfaction, of which reason, and conscience, and Scripture approve, ought to be slighted or refused. A right-minded father finds delight in seeing his children happy in each other's society; and the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort regards with divine complacency the course of those who find that “the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace.”

(2.) Another advantage derived from social converse relates to its effect in the *improvement* of our *mental faculties*. By means of suitable association we are helped in the discovery of our ignorance, and in attaining clearer apprehensions of that which we *thought* we knew. In intelligent circles, questions will continually arise which illustrate the importance of re-examining our stores of knowledge. We shall thus be led to enquire more fully into those matters about which we have been constrained to acknowledge our want of accurate information. We may have read some instructive work, and, when asked to give some brief view of its contents, we find ourselves able to give only a very vague and general account of the impression it has left upon our mind. We have been studying some period of our national history, but find ourselves unable to reproduce, with clearness and coherency, those exhibitions of character, or those narrations of leading events, which that period embraces. We thus are led to no unprofitable acquaintance with the *superficial* character of our attainments, and are stirred up, by the discovery of our failure, to bestow, in future, more care and painstaking upon our efforts in the pursuit of

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mental improvement. The reading of many books may be often but little more than an indolent gratification. First of all, let the Book of God be *habitually read and studied*. Let its lessons be received in a spirit of reverence and prayer. Let its principles be apprehended and inwrought into the very frame of our spirits, so that all other books may be read in the light of its authoritative and heavenly teaching. Then let each man select those subjects of investigation to which his mental *tastes*—his intellectual *capacities*, and his *position in society* seem naturally to lead him ; and thus he will be fitted to impart help to others and disposed to receive and enjoy the advantages of association with those who are like-minded with himself. Such association will help us against *one-sidedness* and *partiality* in our judgments,—will assist in *confirming* us, when we are in the right, and in *leading us to discover our mistakes*, when we have, from imperfect information, formed erroneous judgments, either respecting the history of the past or the condition of the present. *Self-knowledge, fairness, courage, candour*—all are aided by mingling in desirable society. Every faculty of the mind is improved by exercise, and there are some faculties that can hardly be exercised in solitary study. If associated with those whose tastes are similar to our own, we shall return, from intercourse with our friends, encouraged to pursue, with fresh zest and interest, the path of self-cultivation.

(3.) But the improvement of our mental faculties is not the *only*, or even the *chief*, advantage legitimately resulting from intercourse with others. The *cultivation of the affections* is even more important than the *improvement of the mind*. Our real happiness—our true capacity for doing good to others—our ability to answer the end of our existence—all depend mainly upon the state of our *hearts*. Christianity addresses itself to *every faculty* wherewith God has endowed humanity. It appeals to our conscience, our reason, our will ; but it pre-eminently demands the homage of our *hearts*.

Were a man of loftiest mental powers and of boundless wealth to devote his genius and his riches in seeking to promote the progress of the gospel, if his heart were not first right with God, the offering of such service would be in vain. God exhibits Himself in the gospel as pre-eminently a God of love; and He graciously condescends to ask that we should yield unto Him the tribute of our love in return. *He, after all, is the most advanced Christian* whose heart is most fully pervaded with love to the Saviour and to all who bear that Saviour's image. The study even of theology—the most exact and careful reading of Holy Scripture—may be unaccompanied with real love to Him of whom the Scriptures testify; and the learned biblical critic may be destitute of that simple test of discipleship, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." Surely then it is infinitely important that we should watch against all mere speculative or intellectual religion. While we aim after intelligence, we ought still more earnestly and prayerfully to aim after the grace of holy love. Wisely conducted intercourse with our fellow-Christians will help us in this high attainment. It may often serve to stir up into manifested life the affections that are getting languid, and to fan into glowing warmth the fire that has been nearly extinguished. Even intercourse by letter helps to keep up old feelings of regard between friends who have long been severed by distance, and judicious and well chosen seasons of social fellowship may, by God's blessing, greatly aid us in obeying the gracious injunction of the apostle, "Little children, love one another."

If we would retain the affection of our friends, it will be most needful that we guard against anything, however trivial, which may become an occasion of disruption. Well has one of our most attractive poets warned us, in words of combined truth and melody, to watch against such an evil in reference even to the closest of all earthly unions.—

" Alas ! how light a cause may move
 Dissension between hearts that love ;
 Hearts that the world in vain has tried,
 And sorrow but more closely tied ;
 Who stood the storm when waves were rough,
 Yet in a sunny hour fall off,
 Like ships that have gone down at sea.
 When heaven was all tranquility.
 A something light as air, a look,
 A word unkind or wrongly taken,
 Ah ! love that tempests never shook,
 A breath, a torch like this hath shaken ;
 And ruder words will soon rush in
 To spread the breach which words begin,
 And voices lose the tone that shed
 A tenderness o'er all they said,
 And eyes forget the gentle ray
 They wore in courtship's sunny day,
 And hearts, that lately mingled, seem
 Like broken clouds, or like the stream
 That smiling left the mountain's brow
 As though its waters never could sever,
 But ere it reached the plain below
 Bursts into floods that part for ever."

Of all the advantages resulting from social intercourse. I regard as one of the most valuable its influence upon the cultivation of the affections. In the descriptions given of the condition of the early church, as it existed in the period immediately succeeding the resurrection of our Lord, we find some of the most instructive and interesting illustrations of the language employed by the Psalmist—

How good and how pleasant it is
 For brethren to dwell together in unity.

You are all familiar with the beautiful description in one of your own hymns :

- “ Happy the souls that first believed,
To Jesus and each other cleaved :
Joined by the unction from above
In mystic fellowship of love.
- “ Meek, simple followers of the Lamb,
They loved and spake and thought the same :
They joyfully conspired to raise
Their ceaseless sacrifice of praise.
- “ With grace abundantly endued,
A pure, believing multitude,
They all were of one heart and soul,
And only love improved the whole.”

This manifested union among Christians themselves must have wrought very effectually upon the convictions of those by whom they were surrounded. The cordial glow of holy love which knit together those who were *one* in Jesus, made their countenances radiant with inward and spiritual delight, which the men of the world had never experienced, and which earth had never before witnessed. Men, for the most part, are not actuated simply by the apprehensions of the mind or the decisions of the judgment, but *mainly* through the power of heart-felt sympathies. How effectual for good is the influence of the affections even in the low sphere of earthly life ! What is it that keeps society together ? What is it which imparts energy and hope and satisfaction to the toiling millions of our race ? What is it that brightens the gloom of winter and adds a richer radiance to the summer's glow ? The power of those affections wherewith God hath endowed humanity. The mysterious law of wedded love, whence spring

“ Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, son, and brother.”

In connexion with that memorable catastrophe, whereby, about some twelve months ago, so many of our hard-working fellow-countrymen were deprived of life, how strikingly were exhibited the combined influences of

religious principle and maternal affection. After days of terrible suspense were succeeded by the effects consequent upon the heavy tidings that all hope of deliverance was at an end ; while the whole neighbourhood was become vocal with the sounds of lamentation, mourning, and woe ; while the hearts of thousands, living at a distance from the scene of the calamity, were deeply affected by the fate of the departed and the sorrowful condition of the bereaved ; while all Christian men bowed with submission before another mysterious exertion of divine sovereignty, and found their consolation in the word of promise that " all things work together for good to His chosen,"—it pleased God to bring to light certain most consoling facts respecting the spiritual condition of those whom no effort of man had been able to rescue from their fatal imprisonment in the bowels of the earth. How gladly did every believing heart welcome the information respecting the mode in which the victims of the calamity prepared to meet their inevitable fate. The brief memoranda that tell of their having unitedly called upon God in the season of their sore distress, and exhorted one another to trust in that Saviour who for them had overcome the terrors of the grave, is *indescribably precious*. We seem to hear their earnest supplications in the hour of their extremity. We listen to their words of mutual exhortation, uttered under the vivid realization of their approaching death. We see them, as all hope of deliverance grew fainter and fainter, and at length died away, calmly, in the strength of a living faith, yielding up their spirits like the first martyrs to Him in whom they had believed. As husbands and fathers commended to God their beloved wives, and helpless children, whom they were never to embrace on earth again, we behold the members of the several families gather themselves together and lie down in each other's arms to die.

Blessed be God that those whose lot was to pass through such a fiery trial had, ere the hour of trial came, found a refuge in the Saviour ! They were not permitted

to die alone. They had the presence of each other, as well as the presence of the Master, to cheer them, as they passed through the gloomy valley. That dark and deadly prison-house was to those Christian miners the ante-chamber of the palace of the King; and now we trust that they are experiencing the reality of that saying that "to depart and to be with Christ is far better."

Christianity exercises its elevating power over the whole man; and very frequently the outward condition of those who yield themselves to its influence serves to render that power the more distinctly marked. Neither limited education, nor incessant toil, nor pinching poverty will hinder the humanizing influences of Gospel truth, nor exclude genuine disciples of the Saviour from some of the very highest advantages connected with social enjoyments. Prize, therefore, opportunities of intercourse with your fellows, as aiding in the cultivation of those gracious emotions on which our happiness so much depends. Even before the sanctifying power of divine grace has exercised its healing efficacy upon the heart, the cultivation of the affections may instrumentally aid in preserving from the grosser forms of sin. What is it which restrains that young man—just entering upon the busy engagements of active life—from those gross indulgences into which his sensual appetites would naturally lead him? His heart is yet unchanged. He has no taste for spiritual joys. His conscience is not yet regulated by the fear of God. He is far distant, it may be, from the home of his childhood. The parental eye no longer watches over him. But his home-affections still survive. He listens, it may be, to the seductive reasonings of those who have become already hardened in vice. He feels the promptings of impure desire. He fain would drink of pleasure's intoxicating draught. He longs to gratify his youthful passions. But the recollections of childhood—the home-links that yet keep their hold upon his heart—oppose a barrier in the way. The image of a wise and loving father rises before the

eye of his mind, and the warning words of a tender mother, yearning over him for good, seem to fall upon his ear. He recalls past scenes of innocent enjoyment, and recoils from the hardening pollution of sensual indulgence, till, it may be, the strength of a divine agency imparts the power of a safer and more vigorous resistance.

This leads me

III. Briefly to notice some of the perils and snares connected with social intercourse.

(1.) Association with others may become a snare by inducing us to neglect more pressing engagements.

(a.) He who lives always in the company of his fellow-men, must neglect the most important means of acquaintance with God and with himself. No reflecting man can be happy without seasons of quiet and retirement; and no Christian can maintain the spiritual life in vigorous activity, who habitually neglects opportunities for secret exercises. Even religious ordinances and Christian fellowship fail to counterbalance the want of solitary devotion. Some portion of our available time must be given to careful reading of the Scriptures—to self-enquiry—to waiting upon Him who seeth in secret—to thoughtful reflection on the past, and calm anticipation of the future. *Many things MAY be done; some things MUST be done.* Things secondary must be required to give place to those which are of primary and essential moment. On this part of the subject I do not enlarge. The above hints may suffice by way of “putting you in remembrance.”

(b.) But there are other snares connected with the enjoyment of society. The taste for companionship may lead us to neglect our business, or the duties which we owe to our own families. There is danger lest the attractions of congenial company should lead the young to regard with deficient interest the services due to those who employ them; but, perhaps, a still greater danger, lest those more advanced in life should be induced to prefer the pleasures of convivial companionship to the

less exciting enjoyments of home. He who finds no solid satisfaction, no soothing solace in the society of the domestic circle, is indeed deserving either of our blame, or our compassion. We are all familiar with the sentiments expressed in SCOTT'S well-known lines :

Lives there the man with soul so dead
 Who never to himself has said,
 This is my own—my native land !
 Whose heart has ne'er within him burned
 As home his footsteps he hath turned
 From wandering on a foreign strand !

So, in like manner, we may ask where can a husband and a father find associations more attractive than those which are connected with the endearing ties of the domestic circle? He who habitually prefers any other home to his own, is indeed deeply to be pitied. Happy the man the sunshine of whose heart is habitually brightened by the gladdening influences of his own fireside. The legitimate delights of home constitute, instrumentally, an invaluable protection against the snares of companionship. Irradiated by the smiles of affection, and sanctified by the voice of prayer, the cottage of the peasant becomes the palace of the heavenly King.

Let me remind you of the picture which the genius of Scotland's most distinguished poet has left us of such a cottage home :

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
 They, round the ingle, form a circle wide ;
 The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
 The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride ;
 His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
 His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare ;
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
 He wales a portion with judicious care ;
 And " Let us worship God ! " he says with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise ;
 They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim :
 Perhaps " Dundee's " wild warbling measures rise,
 Or plaintive " Martyrs," worthy of the name ;
 Or noble " Elgin " beets the heav'nward flame,
 The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays :
 Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame ;
 The tickl'd ears-no heart-felt raptures raise ;
 Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
 How Abram was the friend of God on high ;
 Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage
 With Amalek's ungracious progeny ;
 Or how the royal Bard did groaning lie
 Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire ;
 Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry ;
 Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire ;
 Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
 How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed ;
 How He, who bore in Heav'n the second name,
 Had not on earth whereon to lay His head :
 How His first followers and servants sped ;
 The precepts sage they wrote to many a land :
 How he, who lone in Patmos banished,
 Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand ;
 And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by Heav'n's
 command.

Then kneeling down, to Heaven's Eternal King,
 The saint, the father, and the husband prays :
 Hope " springs exulting on triumphant wing,"
 That thus they all shall meet in future days :
 There ever bask in uncreated rays,
 No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
 Together hymning their Creator's praise,
 In such society, yet still more dear :
 While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way ;
 The youngling cottagers retire to rest :
 The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
 And proffer up to Heav'n the warm request,
 That He, who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
 And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
 Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
 For them and for their little ones provide ;
 But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

(2.) The dangers to which I have just been referring, naturally lead to *other snares* still more perilous. He who disregards his own spiritual interests, or neglects his worldly occupation, or becomes incapable of enjoying the quiet delights of domestic life, will be exposed to all the evils resulting from the companionship of those who have cast off the restraints of religious and moral principle. There is a natural connexion between the *neglect of duty* and the *indulgence in positive sin*. The idle must have excitement. They seek it in the gratification of their sensual appetites. The convivial party—the theatre—the dancing saloons—serve to drive away the painful exercise of reflection and to quiet the whisperings of conscience ; while the infidel club furnishes an opportunity for enabling those who compose it to strengthen each other in their course of sinful indulgence.

Guard, my young friends, as you value your present peace and eternal well-being, guard against the very beginnings of such a course. If you would be kept from a career of reckless indulgence, set a guard upon your *words* and specially watch against *impurity of thought* and *feeling*. [But I am addressing the members of a *Christian Association*. I may, therefore, be permitted to hope that such warnings are hardly needed. Forgive me if I seem to have even for a moment forgotten the class for which more especially these Lectures are intended.] Take the following general directions respecting the perils to which even the privileges of social intercourse may expose you. Seek first, in all such

matters, to have your consciences enlightened by the teachings of Scripture, and then avoid all such association and converse as your own consciences condemn. While you yield becoming deference to the judgments and opinions of those whom you have reason to regard as wiser and more experienced than yourselves, at the same time see that you have Scriptural warrant for that which you allow and for that which you condemn. It is not well that any thing should be permitted to come between the conscience and God. In regard to social relaxations there must be, within certain limits, room left for diversity of sentiment. It would be unreasonable to expect that, after many hours of close attention to business or to study, the jaded mind of the young should always be equal to enter upon conversation of the most *serious* or *thoughtful* description. On the other hand, trifling talk, irritating controversy, evil-speaking, tend to defeat the great objects for which the blessings of association have been bestowed. If, after an evening spent in society, we find that our mental powers have been refreshed and invigorated, and our affections softened and enlarged, surely the hours have not been spent in vain.

No mode of social relaxation ought to be forbidden upon which an enlightened mind can ask the blessing of God before entering upon it, and give heartfelt thanks to the Author of all our blessings in reflecting upon its enjoyment afterwards. In all such questions the truth lies between laxity on the one hand, and unreasoning rigidity on the other. That kind of relaxation which, without operating injuriously upon our highest interests, subserves our physical and mental health, or aids in refreshing us for the duties of our outward position, is not merely allowable, but altogether legitimate. The New Testament is not so much a Book of Rules, as a Storehouse of Principles. The Scriptures forbid every species of amusement that would have a tendency to injure our health—to unfit us for our daily duties—to darken our participations of the good and the true—to weaken our

faith in God, or to harden our hearts against our fellow-men. Its instructions warn us against the fellowship of those whose influence would act injuriously upon our estimate of the evil of sin, or would render us less delicately alive to every high, and honorable, and generous emotion.

I will no longer detain you. I have laid before you the result of my observations and reflections on the subject of Social Intercourse, in a manner accordant rather with my circumstances and ability, than with my expectations and desires. I am sensible how little attractive such a style of address must be to those who look chiefly for something that may furnish them with an evening's amusement. But I selected the subject, not because it was an easy one, or likely to prove particularly attractive, but because it seemed to me adapted to persons of every class, and to involve matters of practical moment to those whom I found myself called upon to address. It has been prepared not without help having been supplicated from the Father of lights, and I have striven to write it as in His fear. To Him, you, my hearers, and I who have addressed you, will soon have to give in our account. While, therefore, we thankfully embrace opportunities of enjoying congenial society, let us never forget to cultivate seasons of thoughtful self-enquiry and elevating contemplation.

“ For wisdom's self

Of seeks to sweet retired solitude,
Where, with her best nurse, contemplation,
She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings,
That, in the various bustle of resort,
We're all too ruffled, and sometimes impaired.
He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day ;
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun :
Himself is his own dungeon.”

NEW TRANSLATION OF
THE SONG OF SONGS.

SONG I.

BRIDE. Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His
mouth,
For thy love is better than wine ;
Because of the savour of thy good ointments,
(Thy name is *as* ointment poured forth),
Therefore do the virgins love Thee.
Draw me, we will run after Thee :
The King hath brought me into His
chambers,
We will exult and rejoice in Thee,
We will celebrate Thy love *as* better than
wine ;
The upright love Thee.

SONG II.

BRIDE. I am black yet comely, O ye daughters of
Jerusalem,
As the tents of Kedar—as the curtains of
Solomon ;
Look not upon me because I am black,
Because the sun hath looked upon me,
My mother's children were angry with me,
They made me keeper of the vineyards,
I have not kept the vineyard which belongs
to myself.

SONG III.

- BRIDE. Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth,
 where Thou feedest ?
 Where thou makest *Thy flock* to rest at
 noon ?
 For why should I be as one that is veiled
 By the flocks of thy companions.
- BRIDEGROOM. If thou know not, O thou fairest among
 women,
 Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the
 flock,
 And feed thy kids
 By the tents of the shepherds.

SONG IV.

- BRIDEGROOM. Unto a company of horses in the chariots
 of Pharoah
 Have I likened thee, O my love.
 Thy cheeks are comely with rows ;
 Thy neck with strings of pearls,
 Rows of gold we will make for thee
 With studs of silver.
- BRIDE. While the King is in the company
 My spikenard sendeth forth its savour ;
 A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved unto me,
 Between my breasts He shall lie all night.
 A cluster of cyprus-grapes is my beloved
 unto me
 In the vine-yards of Engedi.
- BRIDEGROOM. Behold thou art fair, my love,
 Behold thou art fair, thine eyes are doves,
- BRIDE. Behold thou art fair, my Beloved, ye
 pleasant,
 Also our couch is of verdant green,
 The rafters of our house are cedar,
 Our ceiling is cypress.

BRIDEGROOM. I am the rose of Sharon,
The lily of the vallies ;
As the lily among the thorns,
So is my love among the daughters.

BRIDE. As the citron tree among the trees of the
wood,
So is my beloved among the sons.
In His shadow I delighted and laid myself
down,
And His fruit was sweet to my taste ;
He brought me into the house of wine,
And His banner over me was love.
Stay me with wine-cups,
Strew the citrons round me,
For I am sick of love.
His left hand is under my head,
And His right hand doth embrace me.

BRIDEGROOM. I charge ye, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
As with the gazelles or with the hinds of
the field,
That ye stir not up nor awake
The love until she please.

SONG V.

BRIDE. The voice of my Beloved ! Behold it is He ;
He cometh bounding upon the mountains,
Leaping upon the hills :
My Beloved is like a gazelle,
Or a young hart ;
Behold it is He ! He standeth behind our
wall,
Looking forth from the windows,
Flourishing from behind the lattices.
My Beloved answered and said to me,
" Arise, my love, my fair one,
And come away.

G

For lo ! the winter is past,
 The rain is over and gone,
 The flowers appear in the earth,
 The time of the singing of birds is come,
 And the voice of the turtle is heard in our
 land,
 The figtree hath embalmed her first-ripe
 figs,
 And the vines—the tender grapes—give a
 good smell,
 Arise, my love, my fair one,
 And come away.”

SONG VI.

BRIDEGROOM. O my dove in the clefts of the rock,
 In the secret places of the cliffs,
 Let me see thy countenance,
 Let me hear thy voice,
 For thy voice is sweet,
 And thy countenance comely.
 Take for us the foxes,
 The little foxes that spoil the vineyards,
 Even our vineyards *with* tender grapes.

SONG VII.

BRIDE. My Beloved is mine and I am His,
 He feedeth among the lilies,
 Until the day breathe and the shadows
 flee away.
 Turn, my Beloved, be like a gazelle,
 Or a young hart,
 Upon the mountains of Bether.

SONG VIII.

BRIDE. Upon my bed, by night,
 I sought Him whom my soul loveth,
 I sought Him, but I found Him not.

I will arise now and go round and round
 In the city, in the streets and in the spacious
 places,
 I will seek Him whom my soul loveth,
 I sought Him, but I found Him not.
 The watchmen that go about the city found
 me,
 "Him whom my soul loveth have ye seen?"
 It was but a little while after I had passed
 them
 Till I found Him whom my soul loveth.
 I held Him fast and I would not let Him
 go,
 Until that I had brought Him into the
 house of my mother,
 And into the chamber of her that conceived
 me.

BRIDEGROOM. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
 As to the gazelles and to the hinds of the
 field,
 That ye stir not up nor awake
 The love until she please.

SONG IX.

SPECTATOR AT WHO IS THIS THAT COMETH UP FROM THE
 A DISTANCE. wilderness,
 Like pillars of smoke,
 Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
 With all powders of the merchant?
 Behold it is his bed—even Solomon's,
 Sixty valiant men are round about it
 Of the valiant of Israel.
 All of them hold swords, being expert in
 war,
 Each man has his sword by his side, because
 of fear in the night.
 King Solomon made a bridal-car

Of the wood of Lebanon,
 The pillars thereof he made of silver,
 The covering of gold,
 The couch of purple,
 The middle thereof being embroidered with
 love by the daughters of Jerusalem.
 Go forth, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, and
 behold King Solomon
 With the crown wherewith his mother
 crowned him
 In the day of his espousals
 And in the day of the gladness of his heart.

SONG X.

BRIDEGROOM. Behold thou art fair, my love, Behold thou
 art fair,
 Thou hast dove's eyes behind thy veil;
 Thy hair is like a flock of goats
 That glisten from mount Gilead;
 Thy teeth are like even-shorn *sheep*
 Which go up from the washing,
 All of them having twins,
 And not one barren among them.
 Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet,
 And thy speech is comely;
 Like a piece of pomegranate are thy cheeks
 behind thy veil;
 Thy neck is like the tower of David
 Built for an Armoury,
 Upon it hang a thousand bucklers,
 All shields of valiant men.
 Thy two breasts are like two young twins
 of a gazelle feeding among lilies.
 Until the day breathe and the shadows flee
 away
 I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,
 And to the hill of frankincense.

SONG XI.

BRIDEGROOM. Thou art all fair my love,
 And there is no spot in thee.
 Come with me from Lebanon, *my spouse*,
 With me from Lebanon.
 Take a view from the top of Amuna,
 From the top of Shorin and Hermon,
 From the lion's dens, from the mountains
 of the leopards.
 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, *my*
spouse,
 Thou hast ravished my heart with one of
 thine eyes,
 With one chain of thy neck.
 How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse,
 How much better is thy love than wine,
 And the smell of thine ointments than all
 perfumes,
 Thy lips, O my spouse, distil honeycombs,
 Honey and milk are under thy tongue,
 And the smell of thy garments is as the
 smell of Lebanon.

SONG XII.

BRIDEGROOM. A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse,
 A spring enclosed, a fountain sealed.
 Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates
 With precious fruits.
 Henna with spikenard,
 Spikenard and crocus, calamus and cin-
 namon,
 With all trees of frankincense ;
 Myrrh and aloes,
 With all the choicest perfumes.
 A fountain of gardens,
 A well of living waters,
 And streams from Lebanon.

BRIDE. Awake, O north wind, and come *thou*
south wind,
Breathe upon my garden that the perfumes
thereof may flow abroad,
Let my beloved come into His garden
And eat His precious fruits.

BRIDEGROOM. I am come into my garden, my sister, *my*
spouse,
I have gathered my myrrh with my
perfumes,
I have eaten my honey-comb with my
honey,
I have drunk my wine with my milk;
Eat, O friends—drink,
Yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

SONG XIII.

BRIDE. I was sleeping but my heart was awake,
I *heard* the voice of my beloved when He
knocked :

BRIDEGROOM. "Open unto me, my sister,
My love, my dove, my undefiled,
For my head is filled with dew,
And my locks with the drops of the night."

BRIDE. I have put off my coat,
Why should I put it on ?
I have washed my feet,
Why should I soil them ?
My beloved put in His hand through the
hole of the lock,
And my bowels were moved for Him.
I arose to open to my beloved,
And my hands dropt myrrh,
And my fingers the purest myrrh
Upon the handles of the lock.
I opened to my beloved,

But my beloved had withdrawn Himself
and was gone,

My soul had gone forth at His words ;
I sought Him, but I found Him not,
I called Him, but He gave me no answer.
The watchmen that go about the city
found me,

They smote me, they wounded me,
The keepers of the walls despoiled me of
my upper robe,

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
If ye find my beloved,
That ye tell Him that I am sick of love.

DAUGHTERS
OF
JERUSALEM.

What is thy beloved more than another
beloved, O thou fairest among women?

What is thy beloved more than another
beloved that thou dost so charge us ?

BRIDE.

My beloved is white and ruddy,
Distinguished among ten thousand ;
His head is the most fine gold,
His locks are flowing and black as the
raven,

His eyes are as *the eyes of doves* by the
rivers of waters,

Washed with milk and fitly set.

His cheeks are as beds of perfume,

Raised plots of aromatics,

His lips are as lilies dropping the purest
myrrh,

His hands are *as gold rings*

Set with the topaz ;

His belly is of wrought ivory

Inlaid with sapphires ;

His legs are as pillars of marble

Set upon sockets of fine gold ;

His countenance is like Lebanon,

Comely as the cedars ;

His mouth is most sweet—yea He is
altogether lovely :

This is my beloved and this is my friend,
O Daughters of Jerusalem.

DAUGHTERS OF
JERUSALEM. Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou
fairest among women,

Whither is thy beloved turned aside, that
we may seek Him with thee.

BRIDE. My beloved is gone down to His garden,
to the beds of spices,
To feed in the gardens and to gather lilies ;
I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine,
He feedeth among the lilies.

SONG XIV.

BRIDEGROOM. Thou art beautiful, my beloved, as Tirza,
Comely as Jerusalem ;
Terrible as an army with banners.
Turn away thine eyes from me
For they have overcome me.
Thy hair is like a flock of goats,
Which glisten from mount Gilead,
Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep
Which go up from the washing,
All of them having twins,
And not one barren among them.
Thy cheeks are like a piece of pomegranate
Behind thy veil.
There are three score queens,
And four score concubines,
And virgins without number ;
My dove—my undefiled—she is one,
She is the one of her mother, [her ;
She is the unspotted one of her that bare
The daughters saw her and blessed her,
The queens and the concubines, and they
praised her.

SONG XV.

SPECTATORS. Who is this that looketh forth as the morning.
 Fair as the moon, bright as the sun,
 Terrible as an army with banners?
 I went down to the garden of nuts,
 To look upon the verdure of the valley,
 To see whether the vine flourished,
 Whether the pomegranates budded ;
 Ere even I was aware
 My soul was as the chariots of Ammadib.

SONG XVI.

Return, return O Shulamite,
 Return, return that we may look upon thee.
 What will ye look upon in the Shulamite?
 As it were the dancing of two companies.
 How beautiful are thy feet with shoes,
 O prince's daughter,
 The circuits of thy thighs are like engraved ornaments,—
 The handywork of a skilful workman ;
 Thy navel is a round goblet
 Replenished with mixed wine ;
 Thy belly is a heap of wheat encompassed
 with lilies ;
 Thy two breasts are as two young antelopes
 Twins of their mother ;
 Thy neck is as a tower of ivory ;
 Thine eyes the pools in Heshbon,
 By the gate of Bath-rabbim.
 Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon
 Looking towards Damascus ;
 Thy head upon thee is like Carmel,
 And the hair of thy head like royal purple,
 Bound in braided locks.
 How fair and how pleasant

My love for delights !
 This thy stature is like to the palmtree,
 And thy breasts like clusters ;
 I said I will go up to the palmtree,
 I will take hold of the boughs thereof.
 Now also thy breasts shall be as clusters
 of the vine
 And the smell of thy nose like citrons ;
 And the roof of thy mouth like excellent
 wine,
 Going down smoothly for my beloved,
 Causing the lips of them that are asleep
 to speak.

SONG XVII.

BRIDE. I am my beloved's, and His desire is
 towards me,
 Come, my beloved, let us forth into the
 field,
 Let us lodge in the villages,
 Let us get up early to the vineyards,
 Let us see if the vine flourish,
 Whether the vine blossom be opening,
 Whether the pomegranates bud forth ;
 There will I give thee my love.
 The mandrakes give a smell,
 And at our door are all manner of precious
 fruits,
 New and old, which for thee, my beloved,
 I have laid up in store.

SONG XVIII.

BRIDE. O that thou wert as my brother
 Sucking the breasts of my mother,
 When I should find Thee without, I would
 keep Thee.
 Yea none should despise me.

I would lead Thee—I would bring thee
 Into the house of my mother that bare me.
 I would give Thee to drink spiced wine
 Of the juice of my pomegranate.
 His left hand is under my head,
 And His right hand doth embrace me.
BRIDEGROOM. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
 That ye stir not up nor awake
My love until she please.

SONG XIX.

SPECTATOR. Who is this that cometh up from the
 wilderness
 Leaning upon her beloved?
BRIDE. Under the citron-tree have I raised Thee up,
 There my mother brought Thee forth,
 There she brought Thee forth that bare
 Thee.
 Set me as a seal upon thine heart,
 As a seal upon thine arm,
 For love is strong as death,
 Jealousy is cruel as the grave,
 The coals thereof are coals of fire,
 Which have a most vehement heat.
 Many waters cannot quench love,
 Nor the floods drown it,
 If a man should give all the substance of
 his house for love,
 It would be utterly despised.

SONG XX.

We have a little sister,
 And she hath no breasts;
 What shall be done for our sister
 In the day when she shall be spoken for?
 If she be a wall,
 We will build upon her a palace of silver.

And if she be a door,
We will enclose her with boards of cedar.
I am a wall and my breasts like towers,
Then I had become in His sight as one
that found favour.

SONG XXI.

Solomon had a vineyard in Baalhamon,
He let out the vineyard to keepers.
Each man should give for its fruit a
thousand pieces of silver.
My own vineyard is before me.
Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand,
And the keepers of the fruit two hundred.

SONG XXII.

BRIDEGROOM. O thou that dwellest in the gardens,
The companions hearken to thy voice,
Cause me to hear it.

BRIDE. Flee, my beloved,
And be like a gazelle or young hind
Upon the mountains of spices.

REFLECTIONS ON MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

CHAP. I. v. 18, TO CHAP. IV. v. 16.

CHAP. I.—Verse 18: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.”—The espousing, or betrothing, was such a contract of marriage as rendered the parties *virtually* husband and wife, though the marriage was not consummated (Deut. xxii. 23, 24).

The very beginning of the history of Jesus declares a statement utterly opposed to the fallen reason of man. Let the student of the sacred Scriptures know that this is what he has to expect in perusing the records of revelation.

Verse 19: “Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.”—There are two distinct interpretations of which this verse appears susceptible. If *just* be taken in the strict sense, as implying an exact observer of the Mosaic law, then the meaning is as follows:—That Joseph could not take her to wife, because in that case he must, in accordance with the law, have publicly proclaimed her guilt, and therefore brought upon her the punishment of death. But I much rather incline to consider *δικαιος* as expressive of *goodness*, or kindness of disposition; and then the words may be paraphrased thus:—

“But Joseph her husband, being an upright and merciful man, was unwilling to let her guilt be publicly known, and thereby expose her to exemplary punishment (according to Deut. xxii. 20), and was minded privately to cancel the contract and to put her away.”

How grievous an affliction must this circumstance have appeared to this godly man ! Thus we are reminded how, sometimes, our very greatest blessings appear, at first, under the form of the most overwhelming evils.

Verse 20 : “But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife : for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.”—He did nothing rashly. He reflected on the most proper method of proceeding, and probably sought aid and counsel from God. Under trying circumstances let us act in a similar way, and patiently expect a like result.

Fear not. If we can only discover anything to be the will of God, we need not fear to engage in it.

Verse 21 : “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS ; for He shall save His people from their sins.”—This verse is a prophecy, the first part of which has been completely fulfilled eighteen hundred years since ; and the second part has been fulfilling ever since, and is even in our own day continuing to be fulfilled.

Jesus—Jehovah—the Saviour—His people—all the elect of God, all that come to Christ by faith.

He shall save, &c., in spite of all their misery—their sin—their weakness—their enemies, &c. O my soul, rest upon this sentence, uttered by the angel of God. Since it hath pleased the Father to reveal His Son in me, I have nothing to fear. Sin once wholly reigned over me ; sin still daily and hourly plagues me ; but I shall one day be saved fully from my sins. Many things are possible—more things are probable—but a few things are certain, and this is one of them. I may die of this

disease under which I now labour, or I may recover; I may never be permitted to speak in the Lord's name again, or I may do so with more comfort and success than ever. But however important such points may be, they are not nearly so momentous as the certainty that I shall one day be fully, finally, and everlastingly delivered from sin, the root of all misery, and the hindrance to my perfection of bliss. A salvation from sin includes a salvation from every other enemy; and within a very few years, at furthest, I shall be more than conqueror, through Him that hath loved me. Every struggle with my great adversary is as the earnest of final triumph. Oh my soul! let this sentence be thy watchword in the time of danger—thy comfort in the day of sorrow.

Verses 22, 23: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."—*Emmanuel* implies three things. I. The reality of the Incarnation—the uncontroverted mystery of "God manifested in the flesh." II. The purpose thereby contemplated, viz., the laying open a way for our reunion with God. III. The actual accomplishment of this purpose, consequent upon our reception of Christ. What a fullness of blessings resides and flows from our Emmanuel! Actual union with God—a communion with Him, as our Friend, Father, and final joy.

CHAP. II.—Verse 1: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem." Who these Magi were is uncertain. They most probably had had a secret revelation, by a vision, respecting the star, and Him whose birth it signified. Whether they had previously been acquainted with the promise of Christ I know not.

Verse 3: "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."—The promise of the Messiah had been for 4,000 years the hope of the faithful; yet when the star was seen betokening that the promise had been fulfilled, the vast body of the people were rather "troubled and disturbed," than gladdened by the long-looked-for event. So it was at the first coming, and so we have reason to believe it will be at the second coming of our Lord. All those whose hearts are set on present things, and whose pursuits are bounded by time, dread the appearing of the Great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ. O my soul, couldst thou this day, yea this hour, gladly welcome the approach of that glorious day! Let me seek ever to maintain such a frame of heart as will render the prospect of His coming ever delightful.

Verse 4: "And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born."—There may be a literal knowledge of the Word, and an accurate acquaintance with Scripture prophecies, where the heart is at enmity with God. Never let me ground my confidence on any attainments in knowledge. "Christ" should be *the* Christ, *i.e.*, the Messiah in general; not our Lord in particular.

Verses 5, 6: "And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."—The substance of the quotation is given, not the very words. The Lord often selects the least, that no flesh might glory in His presence.

Verse 7: "Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared."—"Procured from them exact information." The correct rendering is of importance here, because it shews how far Satan and his instruments may be per-

mitted to succeed in their endeavours against the Lord, and against His Christ ; also the simplicity of the Magi, who answered correctly Herod's questioning, without suspecting any harm. Herod has thus become acquainted with the time at which the child was born, and the place where his parents belonged to ; so that nothing appeared to stand in the way of the accomplishment of his purpose.

Verses 8, 9 : "And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child ; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king they departed ; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was."—Verse 8: Hypocrisy.

Verse 10 : "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."—The joy of the wise men was probably grounded upon believing views of the importance of the child's character as the promised Messiah. Jesus is Himself the bright and morning star ; and the words here descriptive of the joy of these godly visitors, may be accommodated to various stages of experience. The sinner who is convinced of sin, and can see no light to cheer, finds Christ, and rejoices with exceeding great joy. In like manner the backslider, the beclouded believer, the dying saint, has only to get a view of Emmanuel, to fill his heart with peace and joy, and his tongue with praises. Whenever I am oppressed with care or sadness, when the next trial comes upon me (and how soon that may be I nothing know), let me strive to get a sight of this Star, and then to experience the promise of the Comforter, making my sorrowful heart to overflow with joy.

Verse 11 : "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him : and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts ; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."—These godly men

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had taken a long journey, and now they felt well repaid for their pains. So believers have often a tedious pilgrimage ; but the vision of Jesus in His glory will more than make amends for every suffering. A believing view of Christ will prompt to worshipping ; and sincere worship will lead to self-dedication. *Gold* may denote His royal office, *frankincense* His divine dignity, and *myrrh* His humiliation and death.

Verse 12 : " And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."—Although these wise men acted with all simplicity, yet they incurred no danger thereby. So let me imitate them in this. The Lord took care that Herod's subtilty should not serve his purpose.

Verses 13, 14 : " And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word ; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt."—Divine watchfulness more than a match for the devil's enmity.

Verse 15 : " And was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son."—Israel a type of Christ, therefore called the first-born of God (Exodus) ; therefore their being brought out of Egypt typified this event in our Lord's history.

Verses 16, 17, 18 : " Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children,

and would not be comforted, because they are not.”— Rama was a city of Benjamin, where Rachel was buried. The cry of the bereaved mothers reached thus far, though the distance was six miles northward of Jerusalem. The comforting words annexed to this quotation, in the prophet, may delightfully serve to assuage parental grief. (Jer. xxxi. 15)—“They shall come again from the land of their enemy.” The cruelty of the tyrant shall redound to the glory of God. The little innocents whose blood was shed on account of the infant Saviour, shall, through eternity, rejoice in Him whose blood was shed for them.

Verse 19: “But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt.”—So all the enmity of cruel tyrants terminates in death.

Verse 23: “And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”—To belong to Nazareth was tantamount to being despised and rejected of men. Hence the question of Nathaniel (John i. 47). In the fact of our Lord's being considered as a native and inhabitant of Nazareth, there was fulfilled the prophecy that spoke of his humiliation.

Perhaps also there was an allusion to the fact that He should be the true Nazarite, as the word Nazarene may also be rendered. Let me trace one or two points of resemblance between the Nazarite under the law and our Lord Jesus Christ, as the fulfiller of the legal ceremonies.

(1.) His entire separation from the world, and consecration to that work which He voluntarily undertook.

(2.) His abstinence from all sensual pleasures, or worldly gratification.

(3.) His never permitting His hair—*i.e.*, His spiritual strength—to decrease through the being overtaken in sin. Samson's strength lay in his hair.

(4.) “Separate from sinners.” Though He mingled with them, He contracted thereby no defilement.

(5.) His accepted offering, after He had finished the work which His Father had given Him to do. (See Num. vi. 1, 2, &c.)

CHAP. III.—Verses 1, 2: “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—He came in the wilderness, because the word of God by Isaiah had foretold this; but the wilderness of Judæa was not a desolate, but inhabited part of the country (See Joshua xiv. 10).

The visible Church of God was sunk in formality and unbelief; the repentance, therefore, here meant has principally respect unto that lifeless condition of godly-favoured people; and is enforced by the consideration of that new dispensation being just at hand. By the “kingdom of heaven,” I understand here the New Testament dispensation, as the beginning and foundation of the heavenly glory. The term *μετανοια* implies a change of mind, and consequently of character. The true penitent is changed, as it respects his views of God, himself, of time, of eternity, of Christ, of the word of God, of the ordinances of divine service, &c.

Verse 3: “For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.”—There may be an allusion in these words to the practice of kings and conquerors sending pioneers before them to cut through the obstacles that opposed their progress, and to prepare their way.

The moral preparation here required seems to have been self-reflection, examination, and that part of repentance which consists in a knowledge of our own state as sinners, which, in the very nature of the thing, precedes a joyful reception of the Lord Jesus as our Saviour.

Verse 4: “And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.”—The most eminent

of all the prophets had no worldly glory. Austerity and self-denial marked his character.

Verse 5: "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan."—The power of God, through the instrumentality of the zeal of John, drew vast crowds to his ministry. The baptism of John seems to have been administered to any who requested it, upon a profession of repentance.

Verse 7: "But when He saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to His baptism, He said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"—Description of the Pharisees and Sadducees, modern formalists and unbelievers. Terrible destiny that hangs over such persons. The question implies that there is some *peculiar* difficulty in getting such persons made alive to their danger.

Verses 8, 9: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."—Persons may make a profession, and yet have remaining about them much of the old leaven. Let me hence learn to put no confidence in any outward privileges, or attainments. Let me learn not to think highly of myself, because of the opinion of others.

Verse 10: "And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."—Formerly a profession answered very well; now swift judgment is on the point of being exercised towards all mere professors.

Verse 11: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."—The baptism with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, is not necessarily promised in these words to the very individuals so addressed. Although miraculous gifts did in the first ages

accompany the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the essence of that baptism did, I think, consist in the graces, and spiritual power communicated to the first believers. Let me labour after this baptism. To be overwhelmed, plunged, immersed into the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 12: "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."—*Floor*, His professed church; *wheat*, His true followers; *chaff*, false professors; *fan*, or winnowing shovel, His Word; *garner*, heaven; *unquenchable fire*, hell.

Verse 13: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of John."—Why was Jesus baptized? That He might submit to any Divine appointment; that He might prefigure His bloody sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection; that He might set an example to all His followers.

Verse 14: "But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?"—John's humility, and confessed inferiority. However much any of us may attain, we need and desire more.

Verse 15: "And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him."—"Becometh us;" Himself, as the Head, and His people, as His members, to obey every appointment of God.

Verses 16, 17: "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—After obedience comes honour. Comfort of this declaration of the Father, when taken in connection with our union to our Lord. By my union to Christ I become accepted in Him. He is Himself my righteousness, and from Him, as a Head

of influence, flow down into my barren soul the consolations of the blessed Spirit.

CHAP. IV.—Verse 1: “Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” Though all the reasons wherefore our Lord was tempted may not be discoverable by us, yet some of them are obvious. Hereby the power of the Spirit, acting in and by the humanity of Jesus, triumphed over the subtilty of Satan. Again, our Lord well knew that His followers were to be a tempted people. He therefore chose to set us an example for directing us when brought into similar circumstances, and to encourage us under them. We are thus practically assured that we have an High Priest who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; and that the very enemy against whom we are called to contend has been overcome by Him, who is our Head.

Verse 2: “And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.”—Probably at the close of the forty days His hunger became far more intense than it had been before; yet throughout that period, as well as at its close, He was tempted of Satan. (Mark i.)

Verse 3: “And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”—The strength of a temptation often consists in the plausibility of the action to which we are tempted. At first sight, there seems nothing positively sinful in the act to which the tempter attempted to persuade the Son of God. Its *sinfulness*, however, consisted in its implying a distrust of His heavenly Father's care; a misapplication of the miraculous power wherewith He was furnished, and which was never to be employed for His own personal gratification as a man; and also the very fact that Satan requested the working of this miracle, gave a character of sin to what, under other circumstances, would in itself have been lawful.

The act of turning the stones into bread was in itself no more sinful than the act of multiplying the loaves to supply the wants of the famishing multitude. But the end and design, the circumstances under which our Lord was placed, and, above all, the quarter from which the suggestion came, rendered that sinful which might otherwise have been right.

Verse 4: "But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—Our Lord was stored with His Father's word, and uses it to teach us how we are to overcome our Great Enemy. These words are a quotation from Deut. viii., and the lesson they inculcate is one of those which the Israelites were to learn, through a course of painful experience in the wilderness. The obvious application of these words seems to be as follows:—The natural desire of every man is to acquire enough of the good things of this present world, and to supply the cravings of appetite, pleasure, and ambition. We are naturally disposed to think that we can live by bread alone; we are in a state of ignorance respecting that hidden spiritual life, which can only be maintained by the word and promises of God, made spirit and life to our souls by the Holy Ghost. Now the great lesson which our Father teaches us from day to day is, that earthly possessions are insufficient to our happiness; and that there is higher food, and a more elevated condition of being, which are mutually suited to each other.

Our Lord's words to Satan may thus be explained:—
"You would have me needlessly put forth an exertion of miraculous power in order to supply my corporal life; but the life which is of infinitely higher consequence would thereby be injured. I should thus sin against my Father's holy will, and act as if the life of the body were of more account than the life of the soul." Let this great truth be continually impressed upon me, that the life of the Spirit and the provision for its sustenance are

of infinitely more moment than the life and the support of the outward man.

Verses 5, 6: "Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, if Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee; and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone."—Satan also can quote Scripture, but not fairly; he misapplies it and perverts it. Never take Scripture out of its connection. Endeavour to quote it accurately.

Both this and the former temptation are grounded upon a doubt as to whether our Lord was God's Son or not. A complying with either would have encouraged this doubt. To cast Himself down from the temple, just to prove His Sonship, would have unnecessarily put God to the proof, *i.e.*, unnecessarily called for an exertion of divine power in His preservation.

Verse 7: "Jesus said unto him, it is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."—The answer of our Lord is a quotation from Deut. vi. 16, and refers to the conduct of the Israelites, who doubted of God's presence and power in the wilderness, and therefore required proofs of it. To tempt God, in the language of Scripture, invariably means to *distrust* God's power, as any one acquainted with the passages well knows. See the following:—Exodus xvii. 7; Num. xiv. 12, 11; Ps. lxxviii. 18, 19, &c., &c.

The promises of God towards His people ensure their security; but wilfully to put ourselves in the way of evil, professedly trusting to His preserving care, is to pervert these promises, and to turn the grace of God into licentiousness. The former temptation resembles the man of earthly-mindedness in general; this that of Antinomian abuse of our Father's gracious declarations.

Verses 8, 9: "Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith

unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me."—Satan, up to this time, appeared as an angel of light; now, as if foiled in artifice, he tries the result of open impiety. In his eyes the offer was a splendid one; and therefore he asks in return a large price,—even the worshipping of himself. Horrible as the proposal is, it is just what all true votaries of earthly glory must do, in order to effect their purposes.

The word *worship* in the Greek has an ambiguous meaning, denoting either civil respect and homage, or religious adoration. The very ambiguity of the word (*προσκυνειω*) may have been intended by the tempter to soften the horrible character of the condition proposed.

Verse 10: "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee, hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."—Religious worship is expressed in the New Testament by *λατρευω*. Therefore worship and service are here restricted to religious adoration. This is due to God alone. Let Arians and Socinians consider how they can recognize the authority of divine revelation consistently with refusing worship and religious adoration to the Son of God. And if they are so far willing to yield to the inspired record, as to profess to be worshippers of the *Son*, either they must renounce their peculiar principles, or be guilty, on their own showing, of worshipping one who is not God. The Sabellians may get out of this dilemma; but all who hold the natural inferiority of the Son are incapable of extricating themselves from the charge, either of positive infidelity, or rejection of the Divine testimonies, or the grossest inconsistency with their own principles. Either they do not worship the Son, and are guilty of infidelity; or, professing to worship one whom they account inferior to the Supreme Being, they are guilty of idolatry.

Verse 11: "Then the devil leaveth Him; and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."—Like our great example, we may expect temptation; but like Him also,

at its close, we may look for the visits of those ministering spirits, who are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation.

Verse 12: "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee."—Two reasons may have induced our Lord to retire into Galilee. First, to avoid the fury of Herod, who, having been so far led already, might probably be inclined to proceed further. Secondly, to supply the lack of John's ministry there, by publicly commencing His own. The most active and faithful of the messengers of salvation may be laid aside, imprisoned, or put to death; but all these events are under the control of Him who can never be mistaken as to what is best for the Church, and most suited to promote His own glory.

John is no sooner imprisoned, than Jesus enters upon the work of preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom.

Verses 13, 14: "And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet."—As this was according to prophecy, so it accorded with the general mode of Divine actings. The darkest part of the land of Israel was Galilee of the Gentiles; and there it pleased our great Prophet first to diffuse the light of truth. The Gospel seeks out the most depraved and despised of the human family; it often passes by the man of letters, and the proud moralist, and sheds its heavenly lustre within the cottages of the most abandoned and hopeless of our race.

If you are rich, and have need of nothing, the word of this salvation will be but coldly listened to; but if you feel yourselves wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, the ministry of Jesus will be a savour unto life.

Verses 15, 16: "The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness

saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."—In this passage we have a description of the condition of the Galileans; but the description need not be restricted to them. In its strictest meaning, it applies to all that are living without God, and destitute of the knowledge of the gospel of Christ. It applies to the past and present state of heathenism; and extends to all who have received no other light than that of nature to instruct them.

(1.) They are said to be sitting in darkness—*i.e.*, they are in utter ignorance of all those points with which it is most of all the concern of immortal beings to be acquainted. They know not whence, or for what end, they were originally created; what is the design of God in their creation; how they may please Him; what they have to expect beyond this present state of being; or where to apply for instruction respecting their most enduring interests.

(2.) They are not only in darkness, but in the region and shadow of death. Their hearts are as depraved as their minds are unenlightened. They are destitute of any spark of spiritual life; and the gloom of present sinfulness and eternal misery hangs over them. They see their nearest and dearest relatives snatched away from them, and know not for what destiny; and the little happiness which they are enabled, from natural capacity, to enjoy, is embittered with innumerable mysterious sorrows.

The body is the slave of sensual impulse, and degrading or Satanic enjoyment; the heart is filled with the very seeds of every evil thing; and the mind, ignorant of good, is skilful only in sin. Such is the picture of the heathen world—such is man without God—such is the sinner without a Saviour.

(3.) There are many who, it may be, think themselves comparatively in a state of great happiness, while they are themselves, if possible, still more melancholy in-

stances of the potency of Satanic influence—they who, amidst all the advantages and external privileges of a gospel land, have despised and rejected the great salvation.

(4.) The Gospel is here called “a great light.” Let me trace some of the leading points in which this light is exhibited.

(a.) Light upon our origin, condition, and prospects. Our creation at first in a state of holiness; our fall in our first parent; the present state of apostasy in which our whole race lies by nature; the possibility of being admitted to the favour of God; the incarnation, atoning sacrifice, and resurrection of the Saviour; His ascension, advocacy, and mediation; the willingness of the Father to accept of sinful men in Him; the means of enjoying the present favour and eternal glory of God; the assurance of the “new and living way;” the nature of happiness, in what it consists, and how it may be realized both now and for ever. These and many other truths of a like nature, revealed in the Gospel, are fitted to dispel the darkness of the human mind, and cheer the gloom of the human heart.

(b.) More particularly, the Gospel does not merely reveal great general truths suited to excite the enquiry and animate the hopes of those to whom its message is addressed; but if that message be once received, it certifies assured peace and eternal glory to the receiver.

Has this light shone into my soul? Has the work of the Spirit, corresponding with the promise of the Scriptures, been begun in my heart? Do I rest upon the testimony of God? Then nothing can hurt me. The Lord of heaven and earth has taken me by the hand. He has become bound to supply all my need. He has undertaken to manage all my concerns. My health and sickness, my sorrows and joys, my life and death, all are under His gracious management and loving disposal. What remains for me to do but to give myself up entirely into His hands; to resign my own vain and foolish will;

to wait on my God continually ; to cultivate intercourse with Himself ; to sigh and cry earnestly for His Spirit to cherish every holy and heavenly grace ; to prize every Spiritual affection as better than gold, yea, than much fine gold ; to maintain a constant warfare against every sin ; and to do all this, under the protection of Emmanuel's cross ; yea, to esteem all striving but idleness, and all hope but vanity, that is not in its origin and its continuance *through the blood of the Lamb*.

Yes ! this light has shined into my soul ; my body may be wasted by disease ; my mind may be enfeebled by decay ; my heart may be oppressed with many a bitter trial ; but "the star of Bethlehem" *has* shined, and all will be light when my pilgrimage is over. Daily mercies, daily trials, momentary joys, and lengthened afflictions may fill up my history as a man ; but as a son of God, I am shielded from every suffering but those which a Father's loving chastisement inflicts upon me ; and every trial is a medicine, bitter for the moment, but effectually beneficial in its result. Let meditations like these quiet every anxious fear, and strengthen my confidence in God.

OCCASIONAL REFLECTIONS
ON THE SCRIPTURES.

JOHN V.

VERSE 14: "Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."—Words applicable to a sinner recently brought to peace; or to the case of a restored believer. How profitable to review the causes that may have led to coldness, or deadness, or open evil, and to watch against the beginnings of sin in time to come. To this end we may often reflect upon what it is to be made whole? How much of untold blessing is contained under these terms? *How* we have been made whole? What richness of grace and wisdom has been expended on our salvation? To what end we have been made whole, even that we may yield ourselves up a sacrifice of willing and happy service unto Him. These words of Jesus, heard through circumcised ears, and entering into a circumcised heart, how full they are of direction to the happy child!

Verse 17: "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."—The charge against Jesus was that He had violated the Sabbath-rest both by performing the miracle and also by what He had told the man to do. Now the answer, or defence, which our Lord offers for His conduct, requires especial notice, because it is the foundation of all the discourse which follows.

When God created the world and formed man upon it, He rested on the seventh day *from all* His works: He rested and was refreshed, because He could look upon them all, and pronounce them all very good. But as soon as sin entered into the earth, the rest of God was broken; and ever since that time, by His providence and grace, He has been counter-working the design of Satan in the introduction of sin. The Sabbath of God will not be until the restitution of all things, when He shall once again be able to rejoice in the works of His hands. Now the Son, with the Father (as He was associated in creation), so has He been associated in all acts of providence and grace; and His reply to the charge of His accusers is that of a Divine person working with the Father in order to the ultimate reduction of the earth to a state of peace and righteousness. "My Sabbath is not yet come. The Sabbath of God has not yet been re-established, and therefore, in union with my Father, I have worked hitherto, and must continue to work, until all things be accomplished."

Verse 18: "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."—Truth not understood, nor received, will always tend to harden and exasperate the enmity of the natural heart. So it was in this case. The Jews understood so much of what Jesus said as to perceive that He claimed equality with God. In this their inference was correct. Had any mere creature used such language as that of Christ, it would have amounted to blasphemy, because a presumptuous arrogating the honour due only unto God. No created being could righteously urge the conduct of the Supreme God, in extenuation or apology for violating a divine law; else all rule of right for the creature might be superseded.

In verse 19, &c., our Lord goes on to illustrate His defence by the following considerations:—

(1) The *inseparable union* between the Father and Son

is of such a character that the Son can do nothing separately from the Father. In this consists the very essence of His exalted dignity, that all He does is done in co-operation with the Father.

(2.) The *power* of the Son is *equal* to that of the Father; otherwise He would be unable to imitate exactly, and without failure, all that He sees the Father do. The Father has only to exemplify, and thereby approve of certain works, and the Son (even in union with our nature) does the same.

Verse 21, &c.—Our Lord next instances some of the acts common to Himself with the Father.

(1.) Raising and quickening the dead (according to His own will).

(2.) Judging every one of the human family. What immensity of knowledge, what divine qualifications does this require. Omniscience, omnipresence, immensity, wisdom, holiness, justice, faithfulness—all these attributes must meet and manifest themselves in the Judge of the quick and dead.

In verse 23 our Lord gives one important reason for all judgment having been committed into His hands. I have been particularly asking of God that the *power* of this reason might be realized fully in my own soul.

1. What is it to honour the Son?

2. How does it appear that the refusal to honour the Son implies the dishonouring of the Father?

(a.) In order to apprehend aright what it is to honour the Son, we must consider what honour is due to Him. The same respect which we may shew to a magistrate would be dishonour, if shewn towards our sovereign; and therefore the honour sufficient for a fellow-creature, or even for an angel, would be insufficient for a being so exalted as the Lord of glory.

We are to honour the Son, by esteeming Him to be all that the Father hath revealed Him to be. He is set forth as the object of the adoration of angels, therefore we are to honour Him by worship, fear, love, service, &c. In fine,

- (1.) By esteeming Him above every other object.
 (2.) By yielding Him the homage of our supreme affection.

(3.) By dealing with Him as with that Being who made and preserves us ; who knoweth every thought and feeling of our hearts ; who became our surety and sacrifice, and before whom we shall one day be fully manifested. He is to be honoured equally with the Father, as possessed of the same divine perfections, and as sustaining towards us the same characters of Creator, Preserver, and Judge. O, my soul, what a depth of mystery is here. Let me adore in unquestioning submission that into which my finite powers cannot penetrate.

Do I so prefer Christ before all, that the habitual frame of my heart is a readiness to yield up friends, wife, children, life itself, that I may see and enjoy Him more fully than I do, amidst the darkness of my present state?

2. By not honouring the Son, how does it appear that we dishonour the Father? Because

(a.) We slight *His* wisdom. He esteems Christ's above all, and we esteem something else more than Christ.

(b.) We slight *His* authority. He commands all to honour and submit to Christ. By not doing so we are rebels against the Supreme Lawgiver.

(c.) We slight *His* bounty. The great gift of His love we have not gratefully received, and therefore the grace of God is dishonoured. We trample on love as well as power.

ROMANS VIII. 17—23.

VERSE 17: "And if children; then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together," &c.—Having in the previous verses set forth the high privilege which

belongs to every believer—even that of being a child of God—the apostle proceeds in this and the following verses to unfold the prospects to which this relationship warrants us to look forward. Throughout the Scriptures there are certain exceeding great and precious promises made unto Christ, and to all that are His seed; therefore, the fact of our being united with Christ, and in Him made the children of God, entitles us to expect our part in all the blessings promised by the Father to the Son. In Hebrews i. 3, it is declared that the Son has been appointed heir of all things, and into the self-same elevation His people are brought by faith, as it is said, he that overcometh shall inherit all things (Rev. ii). Our portion is therefore present rejection and future glory with Jesus our head. The Head passed through a state of humiliation, abasement, and sorrow, and then entered into His glory. So we, in like manner, are first to tread in the steps of the rejected sufferer, and then to participate in the triumph of the exalted King.

Verse 18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—The apostle is thus led to dwell a little upon the circumstantialia of the promised glory, in order that our spirits may be sustained and refreshed by having the scene of our future blessedness definitely before us.

(1.) Had this declaration been made by one who had had little experience of what the sufferings of this present time are, it might have appeared the result of a very limited knowledge of the matter in hand; but, very few Christians ever drank so deeply of the cup of sorrow as did the man who came to this deliberate conclusion (see 1 Cor. iv., and 2 Cor. iv. 11). He knew what present trial was; his whole apostolic history was a history of suffering; yet, in the faith of the coming glory, he considered all his present trials as nothing. In this particular I find myself sadly defective; and perhaps this is the case with most

of us. Let us seek to imitate the faith of Paul. Let us aim after clearer, steadier, more adequate, and more influential apprehensions of the glory that is to be revealed in us (1 Cor. ii. 9). As long as our expectations are according to the testimony of the word, they can never exceed the reality; and only a very large measure of the Spirit of Christ will produce in us anything approaching to an adequate perception of what lies before us in the bright vision of futurity.

Verse 19: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Let us enquire

(1.) What is meant by the revelation of the sons of God?

(2.) What by the earnest expectation of the creation waiting for it?

With regard to the first of these points, John iii. &c., connected with Col. iii. 1, 2, 3, and the immediate context of the verse itself, plainly refer us to the period of the revelation of Christ in glory as the period of our manifestation, and consequently as the period to which the creation is here represented as looking forward with earnest expectation.

(2.) By the creature, or creation, in this verse, we are evidently to understand the animate and inanimate creation—all that which, in consequence of the sin of Adam, fell into a condition of vanity and suffering. It does not imply that there is any knowledge of the approaching deliverance in the creatures that suffer, but is a strongly figurative expression suitable to the nature of the subject, and in accordance with the language of ancient prophecy—implying that the very irrational animals feel the consequences of that bondage to which they have been subjected; and did they know of the results that shall take place consequent upon the church being glorified, would be looking out for that event.

In order to understand this, it is needful to recall the facts connected with the history of the fall. All things

were made very good ; but as soon as sin entered into our world, misery and death followed close upon it. Not man only inherited the consequences of his departure from God, but the earth itself was cursed, because of man's sin. The beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea—all came into a condition of bondage because of man. Fear and enmity, suffering and death came upon the tribes of animated being. They have continued in this state ever since, but they are destined to a happy deliverance at the revelation of the sons of God.

Verses 20, 21 : "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."—Creation was subjected to vanity not willingly, &c.—that is, every creature is naturally the unwilling slave of corruption. In every creature, and in man as a creature, there is a restless dissatisfaction with present things, because of the first man who subjected it, or rather, because of the Lord's doing so in consequence of the first Adam's sin ; but when Jehovah *did* subject man to death, and the creatures to suffering, and the earth to the curse, it was in hope of a time when the seed of the woman should restore all things. This passage, then, looks back to Paradise lost, and onward to Paradise restored. This is one chief theme of that sure word of prophecy whereunto we do well that we take heed (Acts iii. *ad fin.* ; Psalm viii. ; Isaiah xi).

When the children of God are brought into their glory, the creation, animate and inanimate, shall have its suited glory also. The Lord shall *rejoice* in His works, and the period will at length arrive at which the Lord shall once more look upon all that He hath made, and pronounce them to be very good.

Verse 22 : "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."—

The misery and anguish which these words express just suit the state of our world ever since the fall. How multiplied, how diversified, how all-pervading are the sources of human wretchedness! Nor (v. 23) are the saints themselves, in their present state, free from that which is the inheritance of every descendant of Adam. We, too, are subject to pain of body—to depression of spirits—to the misery of departing from our God. It is well to have it a settled thing that there is no complete deliverance to be expected but by our receiving the adoption, viz., the redemption of our body. How the thought that we shall then be eternally free from sin, as well as from suffering, should endear to us that brightest of all prospects. Our full salvation is not yet a matter of experience, but only of hope. Let us, then, earnestly look forward to the brightest and the surest of all prospects. Let no cessation of sorrow, nor weight of trial, nor urgency of occupation keep us from uniting our longing desires with the groanings of the enslaved creation; and let the burden of our cry be, Come, Lord Jesus! come quickly.

PHILIPPIANS I.

VERSES 12—19: “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence

of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."—In speaking of the previous verses of this chapter, I remarked that the character of the epistle was that of a holy, godly cheerfulness. The Apostle throughout looks at the bright side of everything, and the contrast was noticed between the language of Solomon in the Ecclesiastes and this of Paul in the Philippians. Solomon's experience of every thing the world can give is that it is vanity; but Paul in prison, destitute, deprived of that liberty which is naturally so sweet to everyone, is yet full of joy, because he writes as one whose connection with the first Adam was snapt asunder.

In exact correspondency with the character of the whole epistle is Paul's view of his sufferings as given in this 12th verse, "*But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.*" He had been preaching the Gospel, and many had been converted to Christ; but in the midst of this success, he is hindered and put into prison. Now looking at this naturally, we should say, what a pity, surely this is a great hindrance and much to be lamented! and there appears much reason for saying this; but Paul says of his sufferings, (for no doubt *sufferings* are implied though not mentioned) "*But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.*" This one instance in Paul's experience is only a specimen of God's dealings with all His children. Our tendency is ever to look at the trials, condition, and circumstances of ourselves and others, and at everything in the light of sense, and not by faith upon God's Word; and there is not a day in which we are not engaged in this struggle of endeavouring to look at these things in the light of

faith. In looking at things naturally our spirits are cast down ; and it is only by looking at them by faith we can be supported. If any of you have laid aside the Word for some time, you find yourselves looking at things just as unconverted people do ; from the habit of using different language, you may not talk about them just as they do, but your thoughts will be much the same as theirs. Sometimes one thing, then another, then a third thing comes, and our feeling naturally is, we shall be overcome, we cannot bear it ; but the way in which Scripture helps us is by showing us how God, in the general, over-rules everything, and also how He works in particular cases ; but one requires much more faith than the other. We want to know how in *spiritual instances* "all things work together for good," &c. ; and here we have one of these instances before us. We may ask how came Paul's imprisonment to work out good ; and in like manner we may ask how comes sickness, trial, weakness of body to work good ; and if we can make out how one does this, we have to apply the principle to the others. Well then,

Verse 13 makes it out in the case of St. Paul, "*So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places.*" True it is that if he had not been imprisoned, many would, perhaps, have been converted ; but his imprisonment caused an inquiry why he was there, and into the doctrine which he had preached. This inquiry stirred up the stagnancy of the heathen mind to look into the matter ; just as it is now, if any man suffer imprisonment, for the spreading of any principle, it excites inquiry : so here as the Gospel is the power of God to salvation, the more people are stirred up to inquire about it the better, for God, in His wonder-working grace, often turns men hereby to the acknowledgment of the truth ; and in this case the inquiry had reached the royal palace, or Cæsar's court. Thus the first effect of Paul's imprisonment was, that

the truth was brought before many who otherwise would not have heard of it; and the second effect we have in

Verse 14: "*Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*" There were many true-hearted brethren who loved to preach the word, but they were not so full of faith as Paul was; and the effect of Paul's sufferings for Christ was not to stagger them, but seeing how Paul was sustained, they might well say, "we need not be so much afraid of suffering for Christ's sake, for God will comfort us as He has Paul;" and so Paul's experience of God's help in the prison had the effect of leading the other brethren to speak the word without fear, regardless of the suffering it might bring upon them. "Waxing confident by *my bonds*;" at first sight, the question arises, how could *the bonds* have this effect? but this is evidently a figure, meaning that Paul's conduct under sufferings was fitted to teach them.

Verses 15, 16: "*Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds.*" We may perhaps have wondered, that at that early age, when persecution was sure to follow upon preaching Christ, that yet some would even preach Christ of envy and strife. It shows us that none can judge surely but God; for these men were doing a good, a most important, work in preaching Christ; it was not a false doctrine: in Galatians, Paul speaks with abhorrence of preaching a *different* gospel; but these must have preached the same Gospel as Paul did, and yet he says they did it of envy and strife, "of contention, and not sincerely, *supposing to add affliction to my bonds.*" What a Satanic motive! I know not in Scripture such another instance showing the excellence of the work and at the same time the abomination of the motive! proving to us that we can never judge of the real character of a work by its outward appearance.

Verses 17, 18: "*But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the Gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*" This testimony of Paul's experience ought to correct our judgment of those who go forth to preach Christ; for if we knew they did it from false motives, yet if really they preached *Christ*, it is matter for rejoicing. It shows us, too, that God is not bound. There is such a thing as the vessel not being meet for the use that is made of it. In general, there is a connection between the effect the truth makes, and the channel through which that truth is communicated; just as water partakes of the character of the course through which it flows, so the word preached partakes of the character of him who preaches it. But God acts as a Sovereign in this, as well as in all His matters; and we may say, let Christ be preached, if even it be from malicious motives; if it were not for this passage, we might question if ever the preaching of the word from bad motives were to be rejoiced in.

Verse 19: "*For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*" What is the meaning of *salvation* here? Because, as salvation is generally taken in its spiritual application, meaning deliverance from the power and condemnation of sin, a difficulty is thereby presented. But, in reply, it will be found that the word is not confined to this sense; for instance, in Acts vii. 25 the same term is rendered "deliver;" again in Acts xxvii. 34, it is rendered "health;" in other words, Paul advises the famished shipmen to take meat, because it would be for their safety, deliverance, or profit. Thus the word *salvation* is made applicable to temporal as well as spiritual deliverance; and here it may be rendered, "I know that this shall turn to my *profit*." I prefer this term to deliverance, because this latter would give the appearance of Paul being only concerned about getting free from his

imprisonment. But it might even have turned to his release from prison : how ? God might have converted souls even through those who preached Christ of envy and strife, and they might have been added to those before converted in praying to God on his behalf ; and thus Paul, in conscious dignity of fellowship with God, could say, " I *know* that this shall turn to my salvation *through your prayer,*" &c. " O Lord," David says, " I pray Thee turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."

EXPOSITION OF THE FOUR PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN MATT. XIII.

THIS chapter presents us with the successive aspects which Christianity would outwardly present. It furnishes answers to four questions, which we may imagine to have been put to our Lord just previous to His going forth in His ministry. 1. How shall the system of Christianity be established? 2. Of what class will it consist? 3. What will be thought of it in the world? 4. To what extent will its purity be preserved?

How Christianity was to be established in the earth? is to be answered by the parable of the sower. It was to be established by the ministry of Christ and His apostles; and in this parable we have a description of the results of the testimony to Christ down to the present time. Some have heard the word, but they must be compared to the seed which fell on the way side, since they remain altogether unaffected by it. Then some are to be compared to the seed which was cast upon a rock, "which had no root, and dured but for a while;" others—a large number—are like the seed choked by the thorns; the lust of other things coming in chokes the word, and they become unfruitful. But on the other hand, wherever the word has been faithfully preached it has brought forth fruit, "some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty." By this parable, then, the question is answered how persons were to be brought into the system of Christianity.

The next parable—that of tares sown among wheat—gives the answer to the question, Of what class will this outward system consist? There might have been but

two classes included in it—true Christians and infidels. But we find it altogether different. Comparatively soon nominal Christianity spread over all the Roman empire; even cities, towns, and villages put on the profession of the Christian name. Mark how this corresponds with the parable. Good seed was sown, but the enemy came and sowed tares. People professed to be Christians, but really they were still of the world.

The question, What aspect would this system present to the world? is answered by the parable of the mustard seed. It must either refer to the spiritual character, or to the outward aspect, of Christianity. To be like mustard seed, it must be mean, and taken no account of; but surely it is not a *little* thing that the Son of God should come from heaven for the salvation of sinners; it is not a little thing in the sight of angels; nor in the sight of God; nor in the sight of those who have the mind of God. But if the comparison be compared to the outward aspect of Christianity, how true is it to actual fact; for this Christianity began among a despised people, and was founded by One who was crucified. "Birds of the air" are used to set forth those who are in league with Satan.

The remaining question, Would this system retain its purity? is answered by the parable contained in v. 33, "*The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*" Most of us are aware how many eminent saints of God have interpreted this parable to mean the gradual dissemination of the truth through the world; and when a notion has long had possession of the mind, especially if it be a happy thought, it is something like a *rent* to give it up. But on two accounts, would a sincere consideration lead to the suspicion that this parable of the leaven hid in the meal could not mean what so many fondly hold. In the first place, the context would lead the mind to doubt it, because if tares and wheat grow together *till the end*, where is there room

found for an universal prevalence of the truth? In the second place, there is not a solitary instance in Scripture in which "leaven" is used as the symbol or emblem of that which is good. This word occurs ten times in the Old Testament, and ten in the New. In Ex. xii. 15; xiii. 7; xxxiv. 25; Lev. ii. 11, &c., we find that leaven was forbidden to be used; and by reference to all the instances of it in the Old Testament it will be seen to be nowhere symbolical of that which is good. The same thing is true of all the cases in which it occurs in the New Testament. Thus Matt. xvi. 6, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadduces," and this we know from Luke was *hypocrisy*. These Scriptures lead us to suppose that something *evil* must be meant by the figure of leaven being used in this parable, and unquestionably it is here used as the symbol of *corruption*; and see if the past history of Christianity does not bear out this interpretation. Believers themselves were instrumental in introducing false principles into Christianity; so that already in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th centuries, instead of gracious principles prevailing, false ones were thus early introduced into Christianity, till it became one vast mass of corruption. Has not the interpretation of widening, deepening, and extending corruption been verified by experience? Christianity, as an *outward system*, has always tended to corruption. Look at Popery, and even Protestantism after the Reformation, and it will be seen that the tendency of Christianity, as a system, has been downward, downward, downward! In proportion as we have any standing in the world, we become as the "great tree," in "the branches of which the birds of the air" can lodge. The Christianity which the world may admire is, in the sight of God, corrupt and worthless. National systems, and especially such an one as the Church of England, are thoroughly worldly, and opposed to the word of Christ; they are only fitted to attract the world, and to cast out those who really walk with God. If Christianity be in

any way supported by the world, we have reason to expect it is not Christianity *really* they are supporting.

In the three other parables (vv. 44—50) we have the kingdom of Heaven set before us as that which Paul says is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). Thus this first parable sets forth the result of a true reception of Christianity in the heart.

"The kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hidden in a field; which when a man hath found, he keepeth it a secret, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."—In some cases it will fail to do this fully; as, indeed, in all cases earthly things must fail to set forth perfectly heavenly things; for we see this in the law itself, which, we know, was God's own typical plan of, setting forth heavenly truths. It was, we are told, but "the *shadow* of good things to come," and "not the *very image* of them." "The kingdom of Heaven," there it is said, "is like unto a treasure hid in a field; which when a man hath found," &c. Here the results of receiving Christ are represented as an individual finding treasure in a field. A field may be looked upon with much pleasure in the verdure of spring, in the fertility of autumn, without seeing any further value in it, while at the same time there may be hidden treasures under its surface. So people may admire and diffuse Christianity because of its perfect morality, and yet be unacquainted with Christ. But suppose an individual finds a hidden treasure in this same field which he has hitherto admired, he then looks upon it as much more desirable, and sells "all that he hath and buyeth that field." And with respect to Christ, by an external knowledge of Christ, any see not His hidden beauty; they know Him not as the One in whom "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Then, an individual having this apprehension of Christ *sells all*, that he may buy Him. Not, it is true, in the sense of giving anything for Christ; and yet, in a sense, he may be said to buy Christ, in the way expressed by the language of Isaiah,

“buying wine and milk *without money and without price.*” The selling would mean *a renunciation of all that is contrary to Christ*; for the grace of God teacheth us to *give up* something, as well as to *receive* something. It teacheth us to *deny* ungodliness and worldly lusts, as well as to live soberly and godly. A man cannot be wedded to this world and receive Christ at the same time. Where the love of the world exists, there cannot be the love of Christ. This forms the turning point in the history of a converted sinner. *Renunciation* on the one side, and *reception* on the other, must go together. And these words of Christ in this parable are not contrary to His other words, “He that forsaketh not all that he hath,” &c. Here, too, we have the manner of a sinner’s receiving Christ—It is with joy.

In the next parable (45, 46) we have something different. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”—At first sight, there is much resemblance between the two parables; still there is one great feature of difference. In the case of the field, the individual *is not seeking after the treasure he finds there.* So a person may not be looking after, as it were, the things of God, but all at once, through the word, or the truth publicly taught, or some providence, he may have his eyes opened to apprehend Christ. But here we have one going about *seeking* goodly pearls. He has possessed many jewels but he finds one so valuable, that he disposes of all the others in order to buy this. Thus a child of Adam born to disappointment and sorrow, may be crying, “who will show us any good?” He may have been seeking happiness in ambition, in wealth, in honour, or in something not according to the mind of God, and apparently to others he has been successful: yet he has not found the good pearl: there exists still a secret dissatisfaction which cannot be dispelled till he apprehends Christ; but *then*, having found the pearl of *great price*, he sells

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all that he hath in order to buy it. The one parable represents an individual finding Christ when he is not seeking after Him; the other sets forth one who has been vainly pursuing the things of the world for happiness, but finds it only in things of God.

Verses 47—50: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."—The last parable is one of most solemn import, and comes home most closely to Christians, even the most scripturally, meeting together. It is different from the parable of the sower. The tares were the work of Satan done while men slept; but here it is altogether different. The *one* net drew both good and bad fishes. The net is applicable to the public preaching of the word, agreeably to that saying of Jesus to the sons of Zebedee, "Follow Me, and I will make you *fishers of men*." So both these kinds were brought into the kingdom through public testimony to Christ; that is, there is not the intention to introduce hypocrites into the kingdom, and yet they come in, and however Scriptural may be the mode of receiving, there is exposure to this evil. The day of infallibility certainly is at an end. All were gathered by the same Gospel, partook of the same privileges, bore the same name. There is something far more in the truth here taught. In the other case, it is the work of Satan which came in as a judgment upon unfaithfulness, and unwatchfulness,—"*men slept*;" but here is a result of that imperfection attaching to everything below. *Blame* is not imputed to anyone.

HINTS FOR AN EXPOSITION OF MARK VIII. AND IX.

MARK VIII.

VERSES 1—3: "In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far."—(a) Compassion of Christ even to temporal suffering; comfort for the afflicted, much more for the spiritual wants of His people. (b) He is the same as ever now. (c) It becomes us to imitate this feature in Him.

"Faint;" grow wearied.

Verse 4: "And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?"—When anything is proposed to us we naturally consider our ability of performing it, and reasonable prospect of getting it accomplished. Still the disciples ought to have remembered the power of Christ. They had already seen many proofs of it, particularly a case in point. (Chap. vi. 37, &c.) Extreme dulness in learning to trust the power of Christ. Just the same in us.

Verse 5: "And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven."—Make use of the means already put in your power.

Verses 6—8: "And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and

gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.”—Implore *His* blessing upon everything, and receive it with grateful hearts. Thus every temporal mercy knits the soul to Christ. Communion with God in earthly things.

The abundance that remained, after all were satisfied, is sweetly typical of the fulness that still resides in Jesus, after so many have derived from Him the blessing of salvation. Addressed to sinners: addressed to my fellow-saints.

Our Lord, after such miracles, always dismisses the multitude (see John vi. 15). Probably the same reason in other instances, *rejection of dignity in a world like this*. Disposition of the Pharisees, willing to find an excuse for not believing, and dissatisfied with sufficient evidence. “The Jews require a sign.” Love of miraculous manifestation, no proof of a right state of heart. The true believer does not need such miracles to produce faith. Internal evidence more satisfactory.

Verses 12, 13: “And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.”—Deeply afflicted for the hardness of their hearts, and, probably, having before His eye the tremendous sign of His Messiahship, in the destruction of their state and nation. Warning, not to reject Christ when the terms of His salvation are proposed to us.

Verse 14, &c.—See exposition of parable in Matthew.

Verses 16, 17: “And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand?

have ye your heart yet hardened?"—(a.) They misunderstand Christ through the carnality of their apprehensions. So Nicodemus (John iii); so the women of Samaria (John iv); so the Jews (John vi); &c., so we, by allowing our mind to run mostly upon earthly things, are in much ignorance respecting divine things. (b.) It implied a stupid forgetfulness of the power of Christ, evidences of which ought to have been fresh in their memories. Have not all of us had sufficient evidences of the power of our Lord? Yet are we not often distrustful, and in temporal and spiritual trials afraid of being forsaken at last? (c.) Christ intends we should treasure up in our memories, and frequently refer to, the history of His gracious acts. "O forget not all his benefits." When we feel ready to sink, sit down, and recal some of His past deliverances, and cry, "awake, oh arm of the Lord, awake, as in the ancient days."

Verse 22: "And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him."—The natural blindness of this man fitted to remind us of our spiritual blindness. Applied to unrenewed mind; to the regenerated. The *former* blind, as regards their state by nature, their awful danger, the virtue of the remedy, the preciousness of the Saviour, the horror of hell, the blessedness of heaven.

The *latter*, partially blind, as to what God hath done for them; the glory of Christ, the vanity of earthly objects, the surpassing enjoyment, and reality of eternal life, the state of our fellow-men, the manner and purpose of the Lord's dealings with us, &c. The promises and prospects held out in the book of God. Now both classes must come to the same Jesus for illumination—"I am the light of the world."

Verse 23: "And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked if he saw ought."—No refusal on the part of Christ. No work of mercy ever proposed to him in vain. But He seeks not

to obtain honour from men; He fulfils the character which prophecy described (see Matt. xii); He uses the simplest means; He condescendingly enquires from the sufferers their success. So He sends His ministers, and through them speaks, in the Gospel's still small voice, to the sinner's heart; and, as the half-awakened soul begins to catch a glimpse of spiritual light, the voice of Jesus is heard gently enquiring if he sees ought.

Verse 24: "And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking."—This expression seems to denote the confusedness of his vision at first. So a sinner, at the beginning of his conversion, does not generally come into the full blaze of Gospel light; there is a progress in nature, and there is also a progress in grace. This should make us tender of the weak in faith, and lead us not to overdrive the flock. We are to desire the improvement of all; but not to feel impatient at slowness of attainment.

Verse 25: "After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly."—(a.) The Lord did not leave the cure uncompleted. So neither does He in the renewal of a sinner's heart.

(b.) Nothing but the hand of Christ could effect the completion of the cure. So, if the Lord has begun with any of you, you must resort to Him continually to carry it on.

Verse 26: "And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town." Reason of the privacy Jesus sought, seems to have arisen from His being in the state of humiliation; and not to be fully revealed, until He should be glorified, and made known, by the descent of the Holy Spirit. Thus we are, again and again, reminded not to seek that honour which cometh from men.

Verse 27: "And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Cæsarea Philippi; and by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?"—He delights to hear His true followers

expressing from the heart what He has taught them concerning Himself. Therefore He puts the question that they may have opportunity so to do.

Verse 28: "And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say Elias; and others, one of the prophets."—All sorts of notions entertained by the natural mind about Christ; some say one thing, and some another; Arians, Socinians, &c., &c. Nature will utter many discordant doctrines; but grace only one account of Him.

Verse 29: "And He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ."—The answer of Peter contains that truth which is the foundation of all our hopes. All that the promised Messiah of the Prophets was, the expression of Peter contains. Whatever, then, we find, from Genesis to Malachi, touching Him who was to come, is implied in this comprehensive declaration. Chiefly, the anointed *Priest, Prophet, and King*. Let us dwell a while upon each of these distinct offices, and examine in how far we cordially acknowledge each of them to belong to Jesus.

Verse 31: "And He began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."—Our Lord had hitherto kept out of sight of His disciples the prospect he now reveals to them. This is the first announcement respecting His sufferings, rejection, and crucifixion.

On this I remark (*a.*) How constantly these scenes must have been present to His mind during the days of His flesh.

(*b.*) How great the manifestation of love, in His being so earnestly occupied about others, while His own sorrows were enough to have filled His mind with constant matter of contemplation.

(*c.*) How kind and considerate to keep secret from the disciples what they could not have borne, and yet,

before it took place, to prepare their minds for what was coming.

As Jesus looked forward, let us be looking back upon that decease which *He* accomplished at Jerusalem.

But again let us dwell a little upon the force of terms employed—that *He should suffer much, &c.* This may comprehend the whole of His sorrows; while the other two expressions particularize the most manifest of His outward sufferings.

He should suffer the desertion of His disciples, the scorn of the mob, the indignities from the soldiery, the calumnies from His accusers, &c.

But particularly He should be rejected—*Αποδοκιμασθη*. The guilt of this rejection is magnified by the circumstances. He was rejected by those who had the fullest opportunities of being satisfied of the dignity of His character, and the holiness of His life. In spite of every species of evidence, from prophecy, from miracles, from life and doctrine, they said, “We will not have this man to reign over us.”

Verses 32, 33: “And He spake that saying openly. And Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter saying, Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”—From the conduct of Peter we may remark the extreme unwillingness, on the part of our nature, to admit such truths as those which our Lord had asserted.

We like not suffering, contempt, and death; and though Peter was taught of God to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, yet a Christ crucified was still a stumbling-block even to him. Let us be aware of this tendency and guard against it. Let continual cry ascend to God, that we may be satisfied, and more and more delighted with a despised Saviour; and if, in following Him, we should bring down upon ourselves the contempt of our

fellow-men, let us not, therefore, shrink back from the cause of our Lord.

Verse 33.—The indignation of our Lord is expressed more on this occasion than on any other. If Peter, though an apostle, and really taught of God, could so grievously mistake, may not we have cause to tremble, lest we fall into the same evil.

How shall we savour of the things of God?

(1.) Seek from God *sincerity* of desire, just to love what He loves, and hate what He hates; yea, to have the very mind of Christ.

(2.) Consider the continual tendency of our hearts to savour the things which are of man, and prize highly everything that tends to recover us out of this state.

(3.) Submit our minds to the testimony of God; and expect that the flesh will shrink back, but that the spirit will be blessed thereby.

(4.) Trust not to any of our erring fellow-men; but to Him whose power is adequate both to form and maintain within us a right state of heart towards Him.

(5.) Consider how blessedly Peter afterwards was taught; and let a true ambition animate us to seek the same instruction.

Verse 33.—More particularly let us enquire—

I. The meaning of "*savouring of the things of man.*"

II. The various sources through which we are in danger of doing so.

I. The word rendered "to savour," occurs in several other passages of the New Testament, and is variously translated. It denotes the sentiments of the understanding, including the bent of the will, and the affections of the heart. To "savour of the things of men," is to judge, value, mind, and desire according to the natural mind; and consequently, to "savour of the things of God," is to judge, value, mind, and desire according to the Spirit.

It is translated "*to think*" (or be of opinion), Acts

xxviii. 22 ; “ *to mind*,” Rom. viii. 5—xvi. 16 ; Gal. v. 10 ; Phil. iii. 19 ; and to “ *set affection upon*,” Col. iii. 2.

Now the charge brought against Peter was that his judgment was formed, his mind occupied, and his desires directed according to the will of the flesh. Peter was a converted man when he was guilty of this sin ; and therefore we may conclude that even we, who know God, are liable to fall into the same.

(2.) But consider some of the matters to which this expression may apply.

1. To our views of ourselves.
2. Of the present life.
3. Of earthly honour, riches, comfort.
4. Of the proper means of carrying on the work of God.
5. Of the state of our fellow-men, &c., &c.

In reference to all practical sentiments, or principles of action, let us seek first to have the mind of God—a sameness of judgment, a unity in aim and purpose.

- (3.) The sources whence false judgment arises.
- (a.) Unwillingness to submit to the revelation of God.
 - (b.) Indolence of mind preventing reflection.
 - (c.) Tendency to follow the opinions of others.

Verse 34 : “ And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Who-soever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”—By “ *coming after Christ*,” we are to understand the acknowledging Him as our Teacher, Lord, and Example. The expression of our Lord is fitted to make us pause, and ask ourselves whether we really do desire this ; and when we have settled that we do so, the next subject for our reflection is the condition annexed to such an aim.

(1.) To “ *deny ourselves*,” implies first some real knowledge of our own hearts ; our self-righteousness, our pride, our enmity against God, our love of this present world, our indifference to eternal blessings, &c., &c. ;

that having become acquainted with what we are in ourselves, we may daily deny our natural tendencies, and cherish those which are produced and maintained by the Spirit of God.

(2.) "To take up the cross" may refer to all these acts of self-denying obedience whereby the natural man is subdued and kept under.

Everything that serves to crucify our carnal mind may be called a cross. Such a cross will be very pleasant to our renewed nature. Thus prayer, meditation, self-examination, &c., &c., may all serve to weaken the power of evil within us, through the energy of the divine Spirit.

(3.) "Follow," in the sense of imitation.

Verse 35: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."—If the disposition of any of your minds be to preserve your life at the expense of fidelity to Christ, by indulging such a desire you forfeit present peace, and life eternal; if, on the contrary, any of you suffer the loss of life for the sake of truth, in the very act of martyrdom you shall enjoy true happiness, and in the world to come enduring glory.

Verse 36: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"—By refusing to follow Christ, or by unfaithfulness to our profession, we may gain worldly ease and present outward comfort; but what shall honor, riches, ease, profit us in the forfeiture of eternal glory.

O my Saviour, make me willing to follow Thee now in separation from evil; save me from self-deception; let not death nor torture be so terrible as the prospect of Thy frown. Let me consider what will be most profitable in the end.

Verse 37: "Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—Let this verse arouse you who have never made the interests of your souls the chief concern. Rich—sensual—learned—prosperous—tried—eternity is at

hand to you and me. O that I could feel for you as I ought. This hardness of heart—this strange recklessness of spirit—this unmoved hearing of sermons—this contempt for the godly—your whole past and present course of life is a deliberate march to perdition. Settle the question at once, how much you would ask, how large a sum you would accept as the price of your souls? If the very question shocks you, reflect that in neglecting the great salvation you are as certainly selling your souls, as if the prince of darkness were present to bargain with you, and you weré to sign the horrible agreement with your own blood. My déar fellow sinners, it will not be notorious and monstrous criminality, for which the greater part of those who perish will be condemned; the crowning offence, the damning sin of the great majority will be—having neglected so great a salvation.

Verse 38: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."—Let faith realize the scene here referred to, and to confess Christ will be no longer difficult. O how hard is it for us in a day of peace and extended profession to enter fully into the force of these words. Do we now confess Christ by openly renouncing all fellowship with evil—by cheerfully bearing the burden of His afflicted saints—by speaking of Him in the face of worldly opposition and infidel contempt? If not, what reason have we to suppose that we should be faithful in a day of severe test? Henceforth let us keep that day more prominently in our view; and let the glory which shall then be revealed already put to shame the false glory of a present world.

MARK IX.

VERSE 1: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power"—In the latter part of the previous chapter, our blessed Lord had been educating the minds of his disciples towards that condition of glory in which He shall be manifested, at His second coming; and, as an encouragement to their steadfast perseverance in the truth, He now tells them, that "the kingdom of God should come with power" during the life of some who were then present amongst His hearers. As the connection between the subjects is retained in each of the other evangelists who record this transaction about to be considered, we may be helped to a clearer apprehension of our Lord's words from a comparison of this verse with the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke.

Matthew's expression is, "till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." Luke, "till they see the kingdom of God." Mark, "till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. To what do these expressions refer?

It may be to the transfiguration which was an evident representation, and, as it were, a specimen of the coming glory. It was not *actually* the glory; but thereby did the Son of Man exhibit Himself, beforehand, such as He shall be in the day of His appearing, and the kingdom itself was represented in the forms of risen saints, who converse with Him.

But the phrase, "kingdom of God," is unquestionably applicable to the full establishment of the Gospel dispensation, through the effusion of the holy Spirit; nor are there wanting reasons for preferring this latter interpretation to the former.

(a.) Because the words, "shall not taste of death," refer more naturally to something rather remote than to

any immediate event. (b.) Because it is said in Acts i, "Ye shall receive power after the holy Ghost is come upon you;" and, Rom. i., our Lord is said to be "declared the Son of God in power upon His resurrection from the dead;" which passages may be considered as parallel to what is here stated, (c.) The kingdom of God in grace, that is the Gospel dispensation, being the earnest of the kingdom of God in glory, the evidence derived from its establishment was well fitted to comfort the hearts, and strengthen the faith, of the disciples.

Verse 2: "And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them."—Our Lord appears to have admitted Peter, James, and John, to a peculiar nearness of fellowship with Himself. We have the evidence of this in several instances recorded in the Evangelists.

It is remarkable, that these examples have reference to His *power* (Mark v. 37, Luke viii. 51); to His *sufferings* (Matt. xxvi. 37, Mark xiv. 33); to His *glory* (Matt xvii. 1, Luke ix. 28, and the passage before us). The peculiar pre-eminence amongst the followers of Jesus consists not in any external dignity; but in a more intimate acquaintance with Himself. Here, then, opens up a scene fitted to excite a holy ambition. In prayer, in meditation, in self-denial, let each of us strive to know more of what Christ can do, of what He has endured, and of that glory in which He is to be revealed. Knowledge of His power is a mighty source of comfort, not only as respects objects of desire, but of fear and aversion. We naturally dread pain, and poverty, and distress. When these evils threaten us, let us remember the power of Him whose word can raise the dead; but particularly when oppressed by inward evil, we feel utterly unequal to contend against our own corruptions, it is refreshing to remember, that the enemies which molest us are the enemies of our Lord, and must ultimately be entirely subdued under Him. So of the sufferings: so of the glory.

(b.) Benefit of retiring to be alone with Christ. How is it with you, my readers? Do you feel this to be true enjoyment? If we do *now* feel happy to be alone with Christ, how rich shall be the consolation which shall be poured into our souls, when we shall see Him in the fulness of eternity.

(c.) Even now, Christ reveals Himself to those who seek Him in earnest simplicity of mind, and is transfigured before them.

Verse 3: "And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." Purity of the rest of God. Two classes—self-righteous, hypocrite.

Verse 4: "And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus."—Elias may represent the prophets, and Moses the law; they hold communion with Jesus on the theme of His sufferings. (see Luke ix. 31.) So in our glorified bodies we shall still remember Calvary.

Verse 5: "And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." Peter falls into a similar mistake with that recorded in chapter xiii. 33. He would have the glorious rest before going through the path of tribulation that leads to it. How many pangs of sorrow had Peter to endure before he attained the quiet enjoyment which his Master promised him. Such is the appointment of our God. Having fled for refuge to the Gospel hope; having seen, received, and embraced the promises; being brought to declare ourselves pilgrims and strangers on the earth, we shall *one day* reach the shore of the heavenly enjoyment. But, alas, through what floods of sorrow may our passage lie. O that I had grace to fix my eye with so steady a gaze on the prospect of the heavenly Canaan as to be little affected, either with fear, or the pressure of earthly trials.

Peter is now arrived where he finds the full accomplishment of the words, "it is good to be here."

Verse 6: "For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid."—Imperfect creatures, though sincerely attached to the Saviour, yet naturally tremble at the manifestation of anything connected with the invisible state. So the loving disciples, who came to anoint the body of Jesus, were alarmed at the appearance of the angels.

Verse 7: "And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son; hear him."—"*Hear him.*" He is henceforth to be received as the supreme authority for truth—doctrinal and practical.

Neither Moses nor the prophets are to be preferred before Him; nay, their writings can only be apprehended by the teaching of His Spirit, and the light of His instructions.

SKETCHES OF SERMONS. *

LUKE I. 13—17.

“BUT the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias ; for thy prayer is heard ; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness ; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink ; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just ; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

I. The answer of prayer, verse 13.

II. The joyful result, verse 14.

III. The character and office of John, verses 15, 16, 17.

I. These words are fitted to encourage every praying heart. There is every reason to believe that, for a long time back, it had been the prayer of Zacharias that he might have a son. This desire seems to have been almost universal among the godly Israelites ; nor do we ever find that the Lord rejected it as sinful. Abraham, Rachel, Hannah, and Mary all received the blessing as from God. But Zacharias had waited so long, that he began to despair of having his request granted (v. 18). He had

* The following Sketches of Sermons are copied verbatim from Mr. Craik’s own MSS.

perhaps, by this time, already ceased to pray for it. Learn hence—

(1.) That though the time at which we expected the fulfilment of our petitions may pass away, yet God, in His own time and mode, will grant us an answer of peace.

(2.) That even although we may forget our prayers, God has not forgotten them. They are as seed buried in the dust, and, to all appearances, dead and unproductive, but destined to spring forth abundantly in God's season.

(3.) That though God may answer our petitions, even though our faith should fail, yet it is a great sin to doubt of their fulfilment, merely because of difficulties being apparently lying in the way of their accomplishment. Such sin must bring chastisement (v. 20).

II. The joy of Zacharias arose from the answer to his supplication. The desire granted is sweet to the soul in any case, and particularly after the desire has been repeatedly laid before God in prayer. When, through our petitions being heard, we have another evidence that our Father hears us, in the joy of the deliverance we are ready to welcome those circumstances that may again drive us to a throne of mercy, and issue in a renewed manifestation of His willingness to listen to our cry. Has it not often been so with you, believer? Is there anything now upon your heart, and waiting the issue of repeated supplication? Anticipate, by faith, the joyful result, and hear the voice of the angel declaring, "Thy prayer is heard." How blessed is our lot, if we are daily crying unto God for more grace, and more sensible nearness to Himself. We may not perceive our progress, but the Lord will one day subdue our enemies, and feed us with the finest of wheat.

Zacharias, in common with others, and more than others, would rejoice because of the character of his son. A wise son maketh a glad father; and, as John was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, he was

probably, of all that ever lived, the holiest and most obedient child.

He would most of all rejoice that this child was to be the forerunner of Messiah. The Hope of all the saints, the dear desire of all nations, the Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of Israel, was actually to have His coming heralded by the promised offspring of Zacharias. This was the most blessed of all the sources of this godly man's delight, and, accordingly, this is the great theme of his song of praise (see verse 68, &c.). In this last point particularly, all those that looked for redemption in Israel would participate in the joy.

III. Character and office of John—*Great*. Not great in the sight of the world. His poverty, his austerity, his apparent enthusiasm were all fitted to render this godly man an object of contempt, rather than respect, in the eyes of the earthly-minded. But God seeth not as man seeth; consequently, there is an utter opposition between His judgment and the judgment of the un-renewed mind. It is of consequence to ask ourselves whether we are ambitious of such greatness as belonged to John, or are seeking after greatness among men. He should derive his energy of spirit, not from natural nourishment, but from being filled with the Holy Ghost. Such a case, therefore, is possible. What has been, may be again. Encouragement is thence derived by parents to persist in prayer for their children. None can limit the Holy One of Israel, or say how soon the power of the Spirit may work effectually in the heart of a child.

(3.) He should be an instrument, in the hands of God, of effecting the conversion of multitudes. Conversion is here and elsewhere in the Scripture briefly described as a turning to the Lord. It implies

(a.) A turning from ignorance to knowledge. By natural estate we are all ignorant of ourselves, of Jehovah, of the worthlessness of present things, of the unspeakable value of things eternal and invisible; and, above all, ignorant of the way of access to present peace with God, and the

enjoyment of Him for ever. John, and other successful ministers of Christ, are instrumental in revealing to sinners their own guilt and misery; the character of the true God; the comparative insignificance of the world, and all that it can afford us; the worth of eternity; and the way of peace. Have you been in this way turned to the Lord? Have you been made acquainted with all these things?

(b.) From unbelief to faith. The natural mind is not only ignorant but unbelieving. The truth may be presented again and again, but there is no reception of it into the heart. It is for this reason that men continue ignorant under the preaching of the gospel. Souls in conversion are not only made acquainted with the truth, but enabled to believe it. Faith is a heart-felt assent to the truth of God—an internal, influential conviction, wrought by the Spirit in the heart of the renewed. It is this that gives to the promises and threatenings of the Bible all their practical power over us. Have you got this faith?

(c.) From enmity and disobedience, to love and holiness. By nature, we are at enmity against God, and walk as the children of disobedience. By grace, we are brought to perceive, embrace, love, and obey Christ. Have you been brought to love Him? Then you no longer love the world. Then you love His people. Then you meditate in His statutes. Then you keep His commandments. Some of you are conscious that this mighty work has never yet been performed on you. Oh! my fellow sinners, let the time past of your life suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh. Eternity is at hand. Every step is bringing you nearer your station at the day of judgment. Prepare to meet your God. He is a consuming fire to His enemies. Now is the day of grace. The season of invitation is not yet passed by. The stroke of wrath has not yet descended. The sword of vengeance, that hangs, as by a hair, over your heads, is staid from destroying you, through the forbearance of

that very Being whom you continually disobey. Is there one unconverted man that purposes to leave this chapel without resolving to break off his transgressions by repentance? I charge that man to meet me before the throne of judgment, that I may testify, even there, that if he perish my hands are pure from his blood.

1 CHRONICLES XII. 18.

“THEN the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them and made them captains of the band.”

From these words the following subjects for our meditation naturally arise.

I. Some of the points in which David was a type of Christ.

II. The acknowledgment and profession of our allegiance to the true David.

III. The prayer for the prosperity of His cause.

IV. The encouragement arising from the certainty of success.

David is used, in the language of prophecy, as a name of Christ. Jer. xxx. 9; Ez. xxxvii. 24, &c.

1. The circumstances of his history and position. He was anointed of God to be king of Israel; so Christ, &c.

(a.) Chosen of God, and anointed as king.

(b.) Despised by his brethren.

(c.) Opposed and persecuted by Saul.

(d.) A mighty warrior.

(e.) Was cursed, though innocent.

(f.) Ultimately successful over all his enemies.

(g.) A prophet, as well as king.

- (h.) The character of his government.
- (i.) Betrayed by his friend, &c., &c.
- 2. The character he displayed.
 - (1.) Faith and confidence in God producing courage. So Jesus (1 Sam. xvii. 34, &c.).
 - (2.) Parental reverence and care (xxii. 3). So Jesus committed His mother to John.
 - (3.) Forgiveness of injuries (Saul). 1 Sam. xxiv. 18.
 - (4.) Tenderness of heart (Absalom). See also 2 Sam. iii. 32.
 - (5.) Continual reference to the divine will (asking of God).
 - (6.) Doing good to his enemies (2 Sam. ix. 1).
 - (7.) Confidence of God in the midst of trouble. 1 Sam. xxx. 6.
 - (8.) Interested more in the cause of God than in his own concerns (2 Sam. vii. 2; xxiv. 14).
 - (9.) Pleading the Divine promises.
 - (10.) Recompensing kindness; so a cup of cold water, given in the name of a disciple, &c., &c.
 - (11.) Love for his children.
 - (12.) Earnestness in prayer (passion).
- II. "Thine are we," &c.
 - (1.) By the gift of the Father (John xvii. 2, and x. 16). In Isaiah liii. we read the express promise, that the Lord Jesus should see his seed, and this same seed were interested in the promise to Abraham. (Rom. iv., and Gal. iii.) Therefore we belonged to Christ before we were acquainted with Him, and our names were in the covenant before we had any personal existence. This serves to comfort us, respecting the security of our salvation, and to fill us with gratitude to the Author of all our blessings.
 - (2.) By redemption. On this ground the Apostle enjoins holiness of life. (1 Cor. vi. 20, vii. 23, so 1 Pet. i. 18.) Reflection on the evidence of the Saviour's love, in the agonies He endured to purchase our redemption. Our spirits were in captivity to Satan, and our bodies yielded

up to obey his will ; we were therefore in a state of utter ruin, and we were rightfully the property of Him to whom our recovery is due.

(3.) By self-dedication. None understands the force of this expression who has not been brought to dedicate himself to Christ. My dear friends, you are, most of you, familiar with the doctrines of election and atonement, and, almost all of you, are accustomed to use the expression "our Saviour." These doctrines are the blessed foundation of all our peace ; but do you acknowledge their practical power. If so, a mighty change has taken place in your hearts. You naturally reckon yourselves under your own authority and in your own power ; but by grace you renounce all high thoughts of self-confidence, and consider all that you have, and are, and can do, as due to Him who bought you.

III. "On thy side," &c. This is the natural consequence of the preceding. It implies—

(1.) Separation from the world (2 Cor. vi. 17), its maxims, principles, practices, society, &c., for the friendship of the world is enmity against God.

(2.) Union with the people of God. (Song Sol. i. 7.) Practice of the Church from the beginning. Acts of the Apostles. Application to those who love the Saviour yet hesitate about church-fellowship.

(3.) Active promotion of His cause.

(a.) By walking circumspectly.

(b.) By redeeming the time.

(c.) By godly conversation.

(d.) By prayers and means, &c.

We are engaged in one common cause, with all who, in whatever way, are seeking the glory of Christ. Let all other parties be merged in this.

IV. "Peace, peace."

In the language of the Old Testament, peace includes every blessing. It denotes prosperity of the highest kind. In this prayer the speaker expresses a desire for the progress and triumph of that cause in which David was

engaged, and the same terms are well fitted to the circumstances of the true David. He is engaged in the cause of "truth, and meekness, and righteousness" (Ps. xlv), and every heart in a right frame seeks the prosperity of so blessed a warfare.

Let us pray then that we ourselves, may, more and more, advance in the knowledge of the truth, and that our fellow-saints may, more and more, be delivered from error.

Let us cry unto God to put a stop to the spread of heresy and false doctrine in nominal Protestantism, to dispel the shades of popish superstition, to destroy idolatry, and beat down, in every region, the strong holds of the enemy of souls.

Oppose error on your knees. Few of us are fitted for controversy, but all of us who have the Spirit are qualified for prayer.

Error should not be met by bitterness, nor with sarcastic wit; it must be met by the love of truth, and the power of holiness. One part of meekness consists in yieldingness of spirit, not contending for one's rights, not acting as the children of this world—lawsuits, politics, &c.

Righteousness. Fulfilling the various relations of life. Adopting in trade and business the principles of the Gospel.

The latter part of the prayer rebukes all sectarian bitterness. If we can trace enough in any man's character or conduct to make us look upon him as a *helper* of Christ, let that be sufficient to secure for him our love, and, so far as possible, our co-operation. Oh when shall all the saints, even in Bristol, be united together to make common cause against the enemy of souls.

May my God make me an instrument of this union. Oh! for wisdom and grace to help it forward. It is impossible to the eye of sense, but all things are possible with God.

V. "Thy God helpeth thee."

. The conflict between Christ and Satan is as old as

time. It is even now going on. But the oath of Jehovah hath sworn that Emmanuel shall at last visibly triumph. All His enemies shall be made His footstool. This is our comfort. Our Leader is sure of victory. We are secure of sharing in His triumph.

What desperate madness is their's who fight against Him. Your success is impossible. God must cease to be God before you can prevail. "Be wise then, kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish by the way." All good men are against you, the angels are against you, the Mediator is against you, the Father is against you. Pause, think, submit, pray, believe, live, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

PROV. II. 1—5.

"MY son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

These are the directions of wisdom, how we may be guided to attain heavenly knowledge.

I. "If thou wilt receive my words." Reception. Were we to reason, respecting the reception of a divine revelation in the world, without taking into account the enmity of the human heart, we should arrive at conclusions the very reverse of the actual fact. The ignorance of man in the absence of such a discovery—the character of God—the consequent perfection of His Word—the natural appetite for knowledge—the importance of those objects revealed, &c., would all lead to the conclusion that whatever truth

God should be pleased to make known, would be hailed with delight, and received with readiness and joy. The testimony of Scripture, and the experience of every day, concur to prove that such an inference is unsound; and therefore, the first requisite for knowing truth is here, and elsewhere, declared to be a willingness to receive it.

This implies :

(1.) That the mind be brought down into an humbled state, through a sensibility of ignorance.

(2.) That the various strongholds, which oppose the reception of truth, be shaken.

(3.) Especially the opposition of the flesh. Arising from pride, indolence, formality, self-righteousness, ease and indulgence, &c.

II. "And hide my commandments with thee." Hiding implies :

(1.) Valuing. Men do not lay up sand, and common stores, but gold and diamonds.

(2.) Retaining. Some may, in a sense, receive the truth, yet not retain it (Luke vi. 49; Mark iv. 15—17, &c.). Memory. Repetition. Meditation.

(3.) Use, "that I may not sin against Thee."

III. Seeking opportunities of improvement.

(1.) Hearing, especially what God says in His Word (Ps. xlv. 2).

(2.) The words of wisdom, by whomsoever declared. Are you willing to receive instruction, through any medium, from a poor, ignorant child. Try yourselves by this test.

(3.) Departing from hearing foolishness, or falsehood. (See Prov. *passim*), "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge."

IV. Object sought after in hearing. To obtain reputation among men, to get on in the world, to be able to talk, and display your knowledge—all such motives are barriers to the investigation and discovery of truth. They oppose progress. *Apply* thy heart. Never be satisfied with knowledge, without getting benefit for the

heart. The right end of knowledge is to fill us with love to God and man ; and to enable us to glorify the former, and benefit the latter. All knowledge, that leads not to this, is barren and unprofitable. Knowledge of truth, when not so applied to the heart, fails of attaining the end designed by God.

Apply this test to all your studies, all the objects you are pursuing, and all the means you are employing.

V. Prayer.

(1.) To express entire dependance upon God.

(2.) To be enabled to discern (in what you hear from others) the truth from the falsehood.

(3.) To apprehend the Sacred Scriptures.. Words, of themselves, are only signs of thoughts. God's thoughts are so far above ours, that man's words cannot convey them, except the words be accompanied by an internal teaching. God has always employed the most proper terms, still, as the language is human, it cannot, in itself, express the ideas which are in the Divine mind. Still, the internal teaching is ever in accordance with the true meaning of the words ; nay, the rules of grammar, and sound criticism, though insufficient to lead unto the truth, do always coincide with the dictates of the Spirit. If any meaning be put upon the words, contrary to that which in themselves they are fitted to express, that is not the true meaning, otherwise God would have employed a faulty medium of communication.

I may find some obscurity in the letter of a friend, but, if I apply to him to explain his meaning, I shall find (provided the letter be correctly written) that his words are capable of expressing the idea meant to be conveyed. So it is with the divine testimonies (*a fortiori*).

(4.) Another ground of prayer is that thereby they may find entrance into my heart, and draw me sensibly nearer to God.

That is a dry and unsavoury knowledge which has not been obtained, and is not kept up, through intercourse with God. There is a knowledge which puffeth

up. Intercourse with God will keep us low before Him, and a conviction of our inability to make any progress without Him, will serve to restrain us from glorifying as though we had not received it.

(5.) By making our knowledge already gained serve as materials for prayer, we increase it. For example, we are taught of God the truth of the atonement;—pray, respecting this, that thereby you may see more of the evil of sin; the love of Emmanuel; the security of our salvation; and the certainty of all other blessings.

CRITICAL REMARKS ON PASSAGES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.*

ON THE NAMES OF THE TWELVE PATRIARCHS.

EXODUS I. 1—4.

THE names here given of the twelve Patriarchs set forth great truths connected with the character, condition, and privileges of God's people—the true Israel. The notion common to our natural hearts is that God may have to do with great things. He may have to do with the revolution of nations, and the disposal of kings; but that such a minute circumstance as the giving of a name, for instance, is altogether beneath His notice. But we know that such a notion runs counter to the whole of Scripture. "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered," it is said. We shall find, therefore, much instruction in the consideration of these names. It is worthy of note that the names of the children of the *lawful wives* come first; those of the handmaids of the two wives come last—Joseph being omitted, as he was in Egypt already. (See Gen. xxxv. 22—26.)

Reuben—that is, "Behold a Son!" As it were the key-note to the whole, we have regeneration brought before us. "Except a man be born of God, he cannot

* The following Critical Remarks are extracted from notes of Lectures and Sermons by Mr. Craik, taken down in shorthand by Mr. W. Parsons. They were preached during the period from 1846 to 1849.

see the kingdom of God." "Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The condition, then, of believers, as born of God, is brought before us by the name "Reuben."

Simeon—that is, "Hearing." One of the first results of regeneration is to lead to prayer; as we find it recorded of Saul of Tarsus, "Behold he prayeth!" And all who ask in the name of Jesus are heard of God. This is a truth not belonging to any particular stage in the progress of the believer, but is always applicable.

Levi—that is, "union," "association." An allusion to this is made in Num. xviii. 2—"And thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, &c., that they may be *joined* unto thee." The word rendered *joined*, is precisely the same as *Levi*; and if the English would bear it, it might be said, "that they may be *Levi-ed* to thee." This name brings before us association in Christ Jesus. Believers are associates with Christ. "Therefore God even thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows," or associates. This is a higher point in Christian knowledge—a further step in Christian apprehension, learning that truth, "heirs of God, *joint* heirs with Christ."

Judah—that is, "praise." This joint heirship with Christ is the special character of those who are to *praise God*. The tribes of Simeon and Judah were closely connected together, as may be seen from Joshua xix. 9; so there is a special connection between prayer and praise. Judah was a more important tribe than Simeon; so praise has a higher character than prayer. For the time is coming when prayer will no longer characterize the believer, since it will be swallowed up in praise.

Issachar—that is, "there is a reward." The reward is a reality—"That I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures" (Prov. viii. 21). The reward of the saints is two-fold—present and future. "In the keeping of Thy commandments there is great reward." "Godliness is profitable

unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." There is also the ultimate reward, even that which was said to Abraham (Gen. xv. 1) "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," the same word that forms part of the word Issachar. Thus every time we think of Issachar we are reminded that God's people are entitled, by His grace, to a present reward, and the enjoyment of Himself to all eternity.

Zebulun—that is, "a dwelling." This term is always applied to a place having a consecrated use, and not to ordinary dwellings. It is applied to God as in His temple, or as dwelling with His people, reminding us of the words of Jesus, "Abide in Me, and I in you." *Zebulun* thus brings before us the indwelling of Jesus in His people, and His people in Jesus. The reward is connected with abiding in Christ—"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Joseph would come in due order here before Benjamin. His nature means *he shall add*, and brings before us that cheering truth, "Unto him that hath shall be given." We may mourn over the weakness of our faith, but more faith shall be given; and so of our love, and hope, and every grace; but Joseph's name, *God shall add*, is to be our comfort and watchword as we go on in our conflict. How little did Rachel know what would be the fulfilment of her own words "the Lord shall add to me another son" (Gen. xxx. 24). As little did Balaam enter into the fulfilment of his words concerning Israel; or as little did Caiaphas know of his own prophecy, "that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John xi. 51, 52). God *did* add according to the impatient utterance of Rachel, "Give me children else I die;" but in the answer to her request she found her death!

Benjamin denotes "Son of the right hand." There is a peculiarity about this instance. We learn that as

the soul of Rachel was departing she named her child Benoui, *i.e.*, *the son of my sorrow*, but that his father called him Benjamin, *the son of the right hand*. These two names naturally remind us of a twofold aspect of believers. On the one hand they are the fruit of the Redeemer's travail. Every believer is the fruit of what the Surety endured in His unutterable anguish. Just as Rachel died in giving birth to her son, so, by the death of Jesus, believers had their life, according to that ascription of praise (Rev. v. 9), "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood;" and when this earth shall be the scene of the glory—when He shall take to Himself His great power and reign, other places may be blotted out, but the hill of Calvary, and the Garden of Gethsemane shall never be blotted out; but for the deepening of the joy of the redeemed there shall ever be the remembrance of the pangs of Him who shall then be seeing the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Thus believers are the sons of sorrow, but they are also the sons of the Father's right hand, *i.e.*, they are exalted to sit with Him who is seated at the Father's right hand, henceforth expecting till all His enemies be made His footstool.

Dan, that is, "judging," reminding us of Paul's words, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. vi. 3) *i.e.*, we shall have association in judgment or rule with Jesus in His kingdom, "sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Naphtali, that is "wrestling," teaching us that though all these features of privileges belong to us, yet we are to have conflicts; "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers," &c. So long as we continue in this world, we shall never get into such a condition as that the name Naphtali, wrestling, is not applicable to us. If the name be applied to wrestling in prayer, there we are to connect it with the blessing of Naphtali in Deut. xxxiii. 23, "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord;" for

these are the results of believing prayer. If there be much prayer to our Father who seeth in secret, He will reward us openly. If any believer be much in prayer, such an one shall prove the blessing of this verse (Deut. xxxiii. 23).

Gad, that is, "a troop" (not "good fortune," as stated in a certain version), according to the blessing of Jacob (Gen. xlix. 19). As Rachel regarded Joseph to be the pledge of more children, and named him *adding*, so Leah looked upon Gad and said, "a troop cometh." According to Gen. xlix. 19, Gad shall be assaulted. Gad occupied that part of Canaan outside of Jordan, and therefore was more exposed to the incursions of the enemies of Israel. It is well that everyone should know the geographical position of the tribes: it is frequently helpful in understanding what is said of them. "But he shall overcome at the last," *i.e.*, God shall come off victorious, just expressing the position of believers. We have to fight some battles over and over again; but the promise is, we shall overcome at the last—we shall be more than conquerors!

Asher, that is, "happy," is well fitted to close the catalogue of the believer's privileges. Asher's blessing in Deut. xxxiii. 25, is a promise applicable to God's people. Asher is expressive of everlasting happiness; it is the word which begins Psalm i.—xxxii., &c.—"Blessed." Almost always in the Psalms where you find the words descriptive of happiness, you have this word *Asher—blessed*, happy.

Thus these twelve names together are descriptive of the believer's character, privilege, and everlasting happiness; and somewhat, too, in order.

PSALM XVI.

WE have this Psalm twice quoted in the Acts—first in Peter's discourse on the day of Pentecost (ii. 25, &c.), where he expressly says that the Psalm refers not to David, but to Christ: again it is quoted in ch. xiii. 34, &c., by the Apostle Paul, who refers it to the Messiah as contrasted with David. Having thus cleared our way to a safe application of this Psalm to the Lord Jesus Christ, I would briefly advert to the foregoing verses. It is all important thus to have the authority of the New Testament, because otherwise we might make a mistake; for we have no authority to say that *every* Psalm applies to Christ: if we did so, we might apply to Christ that which does not belong to Him. In connection with this it is well that we should not allow ourselves to be carried away with any particular theory. It is very helpful to us to be able safely to apply a certain Psalm to Christ, and thereby to know what was His experience; and the practical use of such Psalms is to bring us acquainted with the mind of Christ; for in this connection He is not to be looked upon as distinct from His members. He is not only an atonement for sin, but an example to His people. There can be no true following of Christ without a knowledge of His mind, His thoughts, His feelings. We may read such Psalms as the diary of a dear departed friend (to compare them to natural things) where finding the disclosures of how He was enabled to walk with God, we should be greatly instructed thereby.

In verse 1, we have the prayer of Christ for preservation, care; and here at once a difficulty may present itself. If we think of Jesus as the Creator and Preserver of all things, there seems a difficulty; but the answer to this is, that in many Scriptures we have references to His divine nature; others refer to His human nature; others, again, refer to Him as God in our flesh, as Head of the church, both divine and human. If they speak

of Him before His incarnation, it refers to His divine nature ; but if they speak of Him as growing in stature and in wisdom, they refer to His human nature ; and if we do not make this distinction, it would be contrary to Holy Scripture. His human nature was limited and finite, but not so His divine. We cannot understand how infinite could dwell with finite, but we must not on this account deny the fact. Many seem to think that because Jesus was divine, He was not exposed to a sense of dependence and weakness ; but if we once admit this, we destroy the plain meaning of Scripture—we entirely destroy any force in His example to us. We have to think of Him as the needy One, for “though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich ;” and thus we have this expression as the utterance of the soul of Christ as conscious of weakness and dependence—“Preserve me, O God,” founding it upon this condition, “for in Thee do I put my trust.”

Verse 2 contains the consecration of Himself to Jehovah. In this He is the example to His people ; for as He made Jehovah His portion, and found His delight in those who did the will of God (verse 3), so the leading of the Spirit of God in His people is ever to the same thing.

Verse 4: “Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god : their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.”—Those who are idolaters in their hearts have this set before them as their lot, “their sorrows shall be multiplied ;” but, says Jesus, verse 5, “the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup ;” and then contemplating with delight this His portion, He adds, verse 6, “the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places,” &c.

Verse 7: “I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel : my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.”—One result of Jesus’ thus having Jehovah as His portion, was to get instruction from Him. As the man

of large possessions likes to think of his property, so the soul of the Man Christ Jesus was delighted in thinking of the portion He possessed in the Lord. He made use of His possession; and when we speak of God as our portion, it is not a matter of theory, but we are to make use of Him. Here we see that Christ made use of Him as the source of wisdom—"I will bless the Lord who hath given Me counsel." But here there may come in the same difficulty which presented itself in the first verse. Did Christ *need* counsel? We may illustrate this by a reference to Luke vi. 12, where it is recorded that the Blessed One spent the whole night in prayer to God. Now surely we may fairly infer that the whole night spent in prayer, and the choice of the apostles which took place "when it was day," are connected. While He humbled Himself on the one hand to get instruction, yet, on the other, whatever was necessary to His work was known to Him, for He could look forward to the hour of His sufferings. He might have looked at the consequences that would follow the choice of these apostles, the preaching of the gospel in the Roman empire—its extending to our own land—our own knowledge and reception of the gospel. We may look upon these things as the result of Christ's prayer; we may pass over 1800 years, and connect our present condition with that memorable night of prayer. To this also we may refer the latter clause of this verse—"My secret thoughts also instruct me in the night seasons." Christ blesses the Father for counsel, which implies prayer; and with this is coupled *meditation*, two means of growing in divine knowledge. How near does this bring Christ and His members together! We have ever to remember, at the same time, that there is a vast disparity between them. In Christ there was no taint. He was *really* human, but He had nothing to do with man's fallen condition, except it were to bear our sins. He took our nature, but it was in spotless purity. He maintained His whole course in purity. The holiest of men has to

confess sin ; but if Christ confesses sins, it is the sins of His people ; and thus we are ever to remember the vast disparity that exists between the holiest of the members and the Blessed Head Himself. But when we are well grounded in this, we may draw near to view how near He came to us—to see that He had every feeling of our nature which a sinless Being could have. This seventh verse is the language of the Head ; and is not this, brethren, often the language of the members ? We have sought direction how to walk ; and when we have heard a voice behind us saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, we have sympathy with the mind of Christ, and say, “ I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel.” We have to bring nothing *to* the Word, but to bring everything *from* the Word. We are to expect no *new* revelation from God, but only discoveries of what *in the Word* has not been known before. We seek of God to teach us what is already in the Word ; and in reference to such increased knowledge of the example and experience of Christ, we may say “ my *secret thoughts* also instruct me in the night seasons.”

Verse 8 : “ I have set the Lord always before me : because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.”— We have had first, the Lord as the portion of the Man Christ Jesus, as used by Him for preservation, then, as used by Him for counsel, direction, instruction ; and here the Blessed One gives out to us the secret of holy walking. He so walked as having Jehovah always before Him and near Him : before Him in order to please Him ; and *near* Him for His defence. This tells us not only what was the walk of Christ, but what should be the frame of our minds in our walking. How often have we failed, because of not setting the Lord always before us. Because we get out of His presence we fail and slip aside. What a verse is this to begin the day with, to go through the day with, whether we be alone, or in our business, in our families, or in social intercourse ! “ *I have set the Lord always before me : because He is at*

my right hand I shall not be moved." This is not a thing of set times and seasons—this is *man's* religion. How natural to man is it to be religious after sorrow ; but the Spirit of God does not teach us to be religious merely at certain times.

JOB III. 1—12.

THE two first chapters of this book of Holy Scripture, record the history of Job's unparalleled trials, and the spirit in which he was enabled to bear them ; and when we consider the depth of them, we must all acknowledge that the grace he manifested, was far beyond that which is ordinarily manifested by God's saints ; therefore the Holy Spirit takes notice of it especially by the Apostle James. But, while these chapters show Job's patience, this third chapter presents him in a very different aspect. The two first chapters present him as an object of imitation, but this third as a warning. The first and second chapters furnish matters for admiration, the third contains unjustifiable language, showing us that none are perfect ; but that the only one perfect as man was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. From the third chapter to nearly the close of the book we have the discussion between Job and his three friends.

As Job said many things that were wrong, as did also his friends, the question naturally occurs, how are we to know that which is according to the mind of God, and that which is not ? We cannot read this book, it may be said, as we do the writings of the prophets, because there are many things contrary to the mind of God. Three answers may be given to this question. The first is a general answer—that believers having the light of the prophets and of the New Testament without them, and the teaching of the Spirit within them, may judge

all things ; and, therefore, if we find any thing uttered by Job or his friends *contrary* to the prophets and the New Testament, then we are warranted in affirming that they were mistaken ; but, if on the other hand we find the same thing spoken by Job, as that which is spoken by those who spoke without any mixture of error, then we have the truth independently of the discussion. For instance, we know that to be true which we find in chapter iv. 8, of this book—"Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, shall reap the same." Because we find the same truth in Gal. vi. 7—"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." And thus it is we must discover what is according to God's mind.

The second answer is that we have here most important truth *misapplied* ; e.g. the truth contained in the verse I have already quoted is most important truth, but it was truth *misapplied* in this case, because it made out that Job's trouble was the consequence of bad conduct on his part. The saying of Eliphaz here was true in itself, but it was *not* true in its application to the case of Job.

A third answer is that though there may be certain assertions in this book that may appear to have been untrue as respects any past age of the world, yet they may have their accomplishment in the future age. For instance, chapter v. 25, 26—"Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season." Now if a believer were to read these verses as applicable to every saint, he would be stumbled by what he sees around him ; for surely it is not because a man walks with God, that his seed shall be great, and his offspring as the grass of the earth ; or that he comes to his grave in "a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season." It might therefore be said, if this is contrary to all present experience, what comfort does it contain to a believer ?

The general principle is true, that true prosperity is the result of godliness ; but I apprehend that the fulfilment of these verses will be in the times of restitution, of which the prophets have so blessedly spoken, when Satan shall be bound ; it shall be true *then*, as Eliphaz speaks in these verses 25, 26. According to Isaiah lxx—"As the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (see verses 19—25). Having thus thrown out some general principles for our guidance in understanding this book, I would remark that while *as a whole* it is a part of inspiration, yet that certain parts of it *cannot* be so ; *e.g.* the rash saying of Job's wife, which he rebukes, surely cannot be according to the mind of Christ. Nevertheless, all these utterances are *recorded* according to the mind of God ; but it does not at all follow that the *utterances themselves* are so.

The structure of this chapter iii. is as follows :—to verse 9 we have the imprecations of Job on his birthday ; 10th, the reason why he did so ; 12, 13, regret that he did not die as soon as he breathed ; 14—19, a touching description of that state of being in which he would have been, had he died immediately ; in the remainder of the chapter he laments for what was his past and also his present experience.

In verse 3 we have Job's imprecation upon the day and night of twenty-four hours which formed the day of his birth ; verses 4, 5, contain six imprecations on the day, and verses 6—9 give nine imprecations on the night. Each of these express the anguish of Job's spirit ; and O, when we read the utterances of this holy man of God, and when we contrast our condition with his, even the most tried one amongst us will be persuaded that he has abundant reason to be thankful that he is not crushed beneath a similar load of accumulated trials.

Verse 3 : "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived."—Job does not refer to the inroads of the

robbing hordes of the Sabeans, nor that he had been stripped of his children by a sudden tempest; but he passes by all these, and begins at the beginning, and looks upon himself as born to it all, and therefore says, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived." There is a particular stress put upon the words, "man child," because in the east it was considered a much greater blessing to have a male child than a female. As if he had said, O how foolish were my parents to rejoice over this that "a man child was conceived." He then takes up the day in six different imprecations, and the night also into nine.

Verse 4: "Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it."—"Let that day be darkness"—when it comes round let not the sun shine. "Let not God regard it"—let not God search after it to bring it out. "Neither let the light shine upon it"—let not the sunbeams burst upon it, let not one ray of light enlighten its gloom.

Verse 5: "Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it;" or, as it is in the marginal reading, *challenge it*. The word is the same used in many places for *redeem* (e.g. Ruth iii. 9, Lev. xxvii. 13); that is, claim a thing as having a right to it. And so here, "let darkness and the shadow of death" *claim it for their own, because of their relationship* to it. "Let a cloud dwell upon it;" or, let clouds piled upon clouds pavilion over it. "Let the blackness of the day terrify it"—let the obscurations of the day, let sudden tempest, eclipses, terrify it; in the same way as if the sun were suddenly eclipsed at noon, it would produce a terrifying effect.

Verse 6: "As for that night, let darkness seize upon it."—The word used for "darkness" here is not the same as in verse 4. When it is day then "darkness" might be sufficient, but as night is generally dark, something more is needed. Let *gloomy darkness*, not ordinary darkness, such darkness as was over Egypt, *which could*

be felt. "Let it not be joined unto the days of the year"—let it not be reckoned among the nights of the year.

Verse 8: "Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning."—Doubtless any who have thoughtfully read this verse have found a difficulty in understanding it. "Their mourning" is rendered in the marginal reading, "a leviathan," and without the least question this is the proper rendering, for it is precisely the same word as is found in the following passages:—Job iv. 1, Isa. xxvii. 1, Ps. lxxiv. 14, civ. 26; and the meaning of the verse is more correctly, "Let them curse it that curse the day, who are skilled in rousing leviathan,"—a term evidently used to signify the fiercest monster in God's creation. This sentence has reference to those who professed to be able, by their incantations, to call forth the energies of animals. It is not necessary that they actually possessed the power, but if some *professed* to have it, it would give the explanation of this language.

Verse 9: "Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but have none; neither let it see the dawning of the day."—Observe the beautiful gradation here: 1st, the twilight—"Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark;" 2nd, midnight—"Let it look for night, but have none," let there be no streak of earliest dawn; 3rd, the morning—"Let it not see the dawning of the day," or the eyelids of the morning (as margin). At twilight the stars begin to sparkle, but when that night comes round, let no stars adorn the firmament, let it have no streaks of morning dawn, and let there be no morning's beams. Thus we have the imprecatory language of Job respecting his birthday; language altogether unjustifiable, but recorded to show how much he suffered. In chapters i and ii. we have the *circumstances* of Job, but not how he felt under them; but here we have his experience; and O, as we meditate upon it, we learn something of the exceeding bitterness of his sufferings.

Verse 10 states the reason for this language: "Because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes."

Verses 11, 12: "Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck?"—O, how can we *now* tell *why* it was not! It was in order that he might be a monument of God's wonderful dealings, and that his history might be a comfort to thousands. That there might be handed down to believers such lessons about *God* as could not be learnt in any other way. How often has it comforted those who have been ready to despair. The remembrance of it has lighted again the almost extinguished ray of hope.

One word in conclusion respecting verse 12 which has been the sweetest to my own mind in the whole chapter: "Why did the knees prevent me?"—The word "prevent" means in Scripture, not what it does now in common speech, but *to be beforehand, to get the start of*, as, *e.g.*, it is used in 1 Thess. iv. 15, *i.e.* we shall not get the start of those that are asleep; again in Ps. cxix, cxlvii, viii: "I *prevented* the dawning," &c. I was beforehand, I got the start of it. Why then did the knees prevent me—why were these kind intentions prepared for me. This verse brings before us the especial graciousness of the Lord in creation, in the wonderful adaptation of the child before it is born for the state of being in which it is about to be introduced. There is the mother's affection prepared for it.

PROVERBS I. 1—6

“THE *proverbs* of Solomon.”—The word rendered “proverbs” here is one derived from another, signifying “to rule;” so that we are to regard the verses that compose this book as *authoritative, weighty sayings*. They are designed to make impression; and their brevity and force are well calculated to effect this design. “The proverbs of *Solomon*.”—Solomon is to be looked at here merely as the instrument through whom these authoritative sayings are recorded for us. Solomon whose very name is “Prince of peace,” was, we well know, an eminent type of the Lord Jesus Christ; and every sentence tells us that a greater than Solomon is here. Therefore the remembrance of the evil into which he fell in his latter days, leaves unaffected the weighty character of these sayings, seeing he was only used instrumentally to convey to us the words of heavenly wisdom.

Verse 2: “*To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding.*”—At first sight it would seem as though the terms wisdom, instruction, understanding, &c., were only varied expressions for the same thing; but a closer examination will show us that this is not the case, but that each term has a distinct and important significance. “Wisdom” is a generic term, the others are specific terms: wisdom is that which distinguishes God’s people from the ungodly, who are spoken of as foolish. Here, then, we are told that one design of this book is to give the knowledge of what wisdom is. For instance, it informs us, as in the commencement, in verse 7, that wisdom is *the fear of the Lord*. Again, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (chap. ix. 10). Having told us what heavenly wisdom is, it tells us the source of it (chap. ii. 6): “for the *Lord* giveth wisdom; out of *His* mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” In the third chapter

we learn its preciousness, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom," &c. What encouragement have we to seek this heavenly treasure! The Lord *giveth* it; and in itself it is so valuable. Let us ask ourselves, do we keep up the estimation of the surpassing value of heavenly wisdom, the fear of the Lord? It is declared to be above the price of gold, or silver, or rubies, yea, it says, "*all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her;*" *i.e.*, everything that man naturally delights in.

The other terms used are special; comprehending some particular feature. Thus this word "instruction" includes the ideas of chastening, discipline, correction, education. *Restraint* is the main idea. All these things imply the existence of something evil; and the result of God's discipline is to deliver us from evil. The first moment anyone is a child of God, he has this heavenly wisdom, but he cannot be *educated*. And the measure of this instruction, education, will vary; there will be all variety in this, but wisdom is one thing common to all. Every child of God is wise as distinguished from the foolish, the ungodly, but every child is not instructed. Well, then, another value of this book consists in its fitness to instruct in everything. It is to help us in profiting by all God's dealings with us. *Every* believer must, more or less, endure chastening, according to Heb. xii. 5, &c., if there is no chastisement there is no sonship. No believer ever so walked as that he needed not correction; there was only One Son who needed not chastisement. The moment one is introduced into the family of God he needs instruction; and all the varied circumstances we meet with are to contribute to instruction. How precious, then, is this book! It is needed throughout our whole lives; no saint ever finishes his education till he reaches the time when that word shall be accomplished, "I shall be satisfied when I awake up in Thy likeness."

"To *perceive* the words of understanding."—The force of the term is *to see through and through*. How much is this perception needed, and yet how few believers are

possessed of it! Another object of this book is to sharpen our spiritual wit; to give us quick perception as to what is according to the mind of God.

Verse 3: "*To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity.*"—To receive as the ground receives seeds; for the very purpose of fruitfulness: this is the idea embraced by the word receive. "Wisdom" here is a different word altogether from that in the previous verse: it means *knowledge to maturity*. And then the three following terms have their distinctive differences. Justice, perfectly *straight*; judgment, perfectly *level*; equity, perfectly *smooth*. The figure of a road may illustrate the three meanings: a straight one in opposition to a winding one; level in opposition to hilly; smooth, not stony, uneven. Ps. xlv. 7, well illustrates the word *judgment* here: "But God is the Judge," that is, *God is the Leveller*; so it continues, "*He putteth down one, and setteth up another.*"

Verse 4: "*To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.*"—"Subtilty," that is, *practical skill*: skill in the use of God's Word; in fighting against spiritual enemies; and making use of providences. "The simple," the inexperienced. "The young man," from a word meaning unsteady. "Discretion," thoughtfulness, the opposite to remissness, carelessness.

Verse 5: "*A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.*"—"A wise man will hear;" not as is expected in the world; such a one would be only a teacher; the place of wisdom is to be a disciple, since there is no limit to progress in divine knowledge. The other part of the verse contains a promise—the whole is parenthetical.

Verse 6: "*To understand a proverb, and the interpretation, the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.*"—The terms here used intimate to us that the meaning lies not on the surface; hence the admonition, "If thou *seekest* her as silver, and *searchest* for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the

Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (chap. ii. 4, 5). The way of salvation in the gospel is made most plain, so that none may misunderstand: true, the natural man discerneth not the simplest of God's truth, but this arises not from the obscurity of the truth. But there are other things in Scripture which are dark sayings; so that we are encouraged to *seek* after truth, for "*all* Scripture is profitable."

PROVERBS XIV. 1—4.

VERSE 1: "*Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.*"—Understanding this verse literally, it sets before us the importance of the female character. Upon the mother of a family, for instance, depends the welfare of the whole household. Every *wise* woman acteth so as to promote the welfare of the whole family. All in the *house* depends upon the character of the wife, the mother, the mistress. "But the foolish plucketh it down with her hands." By fools, or foolish, in this book, are meant those who are without the fear of God; and such an one "plucketh it down with her hands." The whole verse shows the importance of the influence of women in society; and it becomes every godly woman to ask, "How may I act so as to promote the welfare of the household, my husband, and my children, or my servants? I may not occupy at all a prominent place, but, according to God's Word, I occupy a place that may be productive of much good or evil." But while this application of the verse at once presents itself, we may refer it to that which the term "woman" often denotes in Scripture, namely, to bodies or societies of individuals. Every body or church of believers who are walking together in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, are not dependent upon *external* circumstances for their prosperity. As a united body we may

minister to one another "as good stewards of the grace of God;" we may so walk together as to help each other, and show forth the praise of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. Therefore as any godly association of individuals may profit themselves, so there may be the "foolish" in this aspect—an associaticn not walking so as to edify one another; and this should be our steadfast object to "follow after the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another." If we are doing this we shall illustrate this saying, "every wise woman *buildeth her home*;" but if we are not seeking to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, without any external hindrance whatever, there is a tendency to confusion, illustrating the truth that "the foolish *plucketh it down with her hands*." Here, then, we have a general principle; in the verses that follow we get illustrations of it.

Thus, in verse 2 we have a text by which the fear of the Lord may be known—"He that walketh in *uprightness feareth the Lord*." It is not known by profession, or by the maintenance of any certain doctrine, but by "*walking in uprightness*." "He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous." But if there be no fear of God, a man is sure to walk perversely. If one be watching against sin, maintaining an upright walk, *he* fears the Lord; but if another is walking perversely, he despises the Lord. But we have here, further, the result of godliness upon any of the sons of men. The more closely we walk with God, the more we shall find that His character agrees with the representation given of Him in His word; but the more one walks in his own ways, the more confirmed he gets in despising the Lord. The more we learn of the character of God, the more we shall see the desperate evil of sin; but we have the contrast of this in Israel, in Isaiah i. 4. They first *forsake* the Lord; then they provoke or *disdain the Holy One of Israel*; and this leads to the climax of the evil, they are gone back into apostacy.

Verse 3: "*In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride ; but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.*"—"In the mouth of the foolish," those destitute of the knowledge of the Lord, "is a rod of pride ;" that is, they use harsh, rash expressions that hurt those against whom they speak, and these rash expressions come back in righteous retribution upon their own heads ; as in the case of Goliath, who said to David, "Come to me and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field ;" and the result was that he endured the very thing that he had rashly threatened David with. This teaches us to set a watch at the door of our lips, remembering that if we return unkindness by harsh, unkind expressions, we shall assuredly suffer ourselves. When we retire to think over what we have said we shall be sorry. "But the lips of the wise shall preserve them." We have need to know when to speak, and when to be silent. As another of these proverbs says, "Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer" (xxiv. 26), or, more correctly, "*He is armed at the lips that giveth a right answer.*" How have most of us to regret that so frequently we have given a wrong answer. Thus we have in these verses two ways in which a church may be built up ; but this is to be done not merely by negative means.

Verse 4: "*Where no oxen are, the crib is clean ; but much increase is by the strength of the ox.*"—Oxen in the Old and New Testaments are typical of those who minister the word of God, e.g., 1 Cor. ix. 9, &c. As if the Apostle had said, "Is this command to be restricted to oxen ; certainly not ;" and from this word to Israel about literal oxen Paul derives instruction respecting those who minister the word of God. "Where no oxen are, the crib is clean," or the barn, the threshingfloor is empty. In other words, where there are none whom God has set over the household of faith to minister to the edification of the saints, or to preach the gospel of His grace to those without, there is little progress in the

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growth of believers, and less in the conversion of sinners. And this truth was in the mind of Jesus when He said, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few." What then, be contented about it? not so, "*pray ye therefore* the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." This is a connection of Divine appointment, not of necessity. God might convert sinners by angels, or without any instrumentality; but we have not to speculate upon what God *might* do, but to remember that He has appointed human instrumentality to be used in blessing those already called by His grace, and in gathering in those who are without, according to Rom. x. 14, 15. And in the Revelation, the Lord appears as one who holds the seven stars in His right hand, in the character of the One who has the residue of the Spirit, who desires the edification and purification of the churches. In doing this He uses human instrumentality, according to 1 Peter iv. 10, 11, and Eph. iv. I do not mean to assert that God has appointed a certain order of men for this work, but that it is the work of all believers to whom God has given the ability, to edify the body; by such instrumentality the body is to grow up into Christ the Head in all things. If a dozen or twenty believers meet together and are satisfied to be without any gift among themselves for their own edification, or for preaching the gospel around them, I should say such a body must be marvellously different in spirit from that scripture, "follow after things wherewith one may edify another;" and would soon be an example of this verse, "where no oxen are, the crib is clean." Where there has been no ploughing, there can be no reaping, and the floor is clean.

PROVERBS XVII. 1—3.

It is said in Ecclesiastes that the Preacher sought out acceptable *words*. He wrote these proverbs, and we have an instance of a suitable word in this first verse: "*Better* is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife." The word rendered "better," here, is one denoting *richness, sumptuousness*. It is used in connection with the anointing oil in Psalm cxxxiii.; and the term "quietness" means *tranquillity, prosperity, freedom from disturbance*; alluding, as it does, to oil clarified from all dregs. It means that tranquillity spoken of in John xiv., "Let not your peace be troubled;" or that peace mentioned in Phil. iv., "The peace of God that passeth all understanding." It tells us that happiness must come from *within*.

Many of the sayings of this book would have an external application to the common affairs of life. It would be universally admitted, for instance, that better is little in peace than riches and honour with strife, disturbance; yet the world does not act upon it. The perception of what is good, and acting according to it, are two different things. The world goes on more than ever it did in seeking riches, and honour, and abundance; however fully it has been proved that it is connected with strife, and disturbance, and anxiety. A thousand years' experience fails to profit the world, so lost and ruined is our fallen nature. The writer of this verse had proved, more than any man that ever lived, what wisdom, riches, honour, and power, could do; but, being taught of God, he says, they are vanity and vexation of spirit.

Well, then, we may read this verse as God's decision as to what is best for man; it is serenity of mind. Mark this decision, ye who are *young*. You naturally shrink from obscurity, meanness, poverty, and say, you must get on in the world; but, remember God's decision, that happiness does not consist in the opposite of all you

shrink from. The history of individuals, of families, of nations, abundantly testify to the truth of this, that there is no happiness apart from God; and it is well for us that there is not. For believers there are provided both peace of conscience and peace of mind; for there is a difference between these two, there may be peace of conscience where there is not peace of mind. For peace of conscience there is provided the blood of Jesus; and for peace of mind the promises of God. All trouble of mind should be met by that word, "Be careful for nothing;" but we must remember the directions added, the peace of God comes not apart from requests being made known unto Him *in faith*. All anxiety is about one of these three things; either that some good will be denied, or that something evil is coming upon us, or that some good will be taken away. All these anxieties are to be met by faith, apprehending God's revealed character, as set forth in that verse, "The Lord will *give* grace and glory; and no good thing will He withhold from them who walk uprightly."

This quietness would include tranquillity arising from union with others, whether as a family or a body of believers; and to attain to which we should follow after "things that make for peace, and the things whereby we may edify one another." How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

Verse 2: "A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren."—Applying this verse externally it would teach us not to make too much of outward advantages, but to seek to fill up the place assigned us. A wise *servant* is far better off than a squandering *son*. We may apply it, too, in another way, and remark that abundant spiritual privileges will avail nothing if not turned to good account. Let it be an encouragement to those amongst us who are much occupied in their worldly calling, who lament how scanty are the opportunities they have of meeting with the saints for prayer

and instruction. Remember how the half hour, or less, may be improved, that is within reach for prayer and meditation, provided always you can abide in your calling with God. Otherwise you have to leave your position at once, without parley, without seeing another before you. You are children of Abraham by faith, and like him you have to go out not knowing whither you go.

Verse 3: "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts."—Gold and silver being precious, they have to be tried, tested. The fining pot for silver, but the *furnace for gold*; the severer test for gold. The more precious, the more it must be tried. For lead, or tin, or iron, it is not important if there be alloy; but it cannot be allowed in silver or gold. *So the Lord trieth the righteous.* The wicked man may be allowed to go on in prosperity and ease; not so the righteous. There is a progress in the severity of trial, so that increasingly there may be shown to us the alloy, the evil that exists in our hearts. God does not, at first, show the new convert all the evil that is in him; but increasingly, as he is able to bear it. Look at the evil that was in Jonah, a prophet of the Lord; he cares more for an inanimate gourd than he does for the thousands of inhabitants of Nineveh, yet we have no reason to say his heart was worse than are other believers'. And whilst we are in these bodies of sin and death, we shall never get beyond the *fining pot* and the *furnace*, nor to the depth of our evil hearts. But, nevertheless, we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son; and therefore the time is coming when both the fining pot and the furnace shall be laid aside, there will be no further use for them.

ISAIAH XL.

THIS chapter forms a part of a great whole, a portion of that great burden of prophecy, which Peter says is "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Comparing it with other Scriptures, it will be seen to have special reference to Israel, who were the depositories of God's law, and the manifestors of His grace; but here, and in other parts, are certain great truths and principles, not to be limited to one set of circumstances, or to one period of time. This is fully borne out by the testimony of the New Testament. This chapter, we shall find, contains truths for the sustainment and consolation of Israel while captive in Babylon; they are intended to comfort their hearts in the captivity, and to assure them of its end (1, 2). In the third and fourth verses of this chapter reference is made to another great deliverance, the sending of the Messiah. This is confirmed by the way in which the Evangelist Matthew speaks of John the Baptist, as the forerunner of Christ at His first coming. Again, verse 10 compared with Rev. xxii. 12, shows there is reference to the second coming of Christ, and not to His coming in the flesh; it looks beyond this to His second coming in glory, suddenly passing from one to the other, as we frequently find is done in prophecy; a linking the two together, and not preserving the distinctiveness found in the New Testament. This chapter, then, is applicable to the condition of the Jews in Babylon, to the coming of Christ in the flesh; and applicable also to the full deliverance of God's people, when He shall come again in glory; and applicable likewise to *us*. If we read this prophecy as only for the Jews, we do not get the blessing out of it intended for us; since from Eph. i. 3, we know that we have been "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;" and it is our warrant to take every promise and apply it for our own comfort; since such promises

are not only applicable to the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, but those who are his seed according to faith. Paul takes special care, in his Epistle to the Galatians, to show that by *faith* we, too, are the seed of Abraham, and heirs of the promises. How applicable to the saints is that passage in the next chapter (xli. 8—10): “But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”—“Jacob whom I have chosen,” whom I have grasped, have apprehended, never to be rejected. In verse 9 there is no reason for the words “chief men,” it should have been rendered “*extremities.*” “*Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness*” (v. 10). Surely this word has comforted thousands of God’s people according to the flesh; and we, too, may get comfort from it. For instance, if we are called to God’s service, or to trial, or to pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death, we may surely take it to ourselves. “Be not dismayed,” do not look round, as one distracted, for help from one side and another; but “fear thou not, I will strengthen thee;” that is comforting; “I will help thee;” that is something more, for one to come and help me is more than being myself strengthened; and further than this, “I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” How greatly is our comfort increased if we see there is a warrant to appropriate these promises to ourselves. On the one side, there is a danger of taking away these promises from those to whom they belong; but on the other hand, we may hinder our own comfort by rejecting them as not belonging to us. Reverting

then, to chap xl. 1: "*Comfort ye my people, saith your God;*" whether we take this as applying to Israel, or to God's believing people now, it puts before us *God's caring for sinners*. This is the only *solid* ground of "comfort." No comfort is solid but that which comes from God. How comforting is it that in spite of all their worthlessness, God should desire that poor sinners should be comforted. The natural tendency of the heart is to look upon God as one who *gives*, on the ground of being *entreated* to give. The universal notion, naturally, is that of drawing blessing from Him through the earnestness of our entreaty. But, in the Gospel, God is represented as full of blessing, and ready to pour it out on poor and needy sinners. True it is, that word to Israel is applicable under the Gospel, "I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do these things for them;" still we have not to go to God as one inclined to punish, but who will not if we beg Him not to do so. On the contrary, His language is, "*Comfort ye my people.*"

Verse 2: "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."—"Speak ye comfortably," or, as the margin has it, "to the heart;" not merely to the mind, or the ear, but to the *heart*. What were God's ministers to cry to Jerusalem under the Babylonish yoke? "Her warfare is accomplished," or rather, her affliction long continued, her period of hard bondage now is ended. "For she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins;" not that she had received doubly the real desert of her sins, but that she had received *ample, sufficient* punishment for them. So far as her *national* sins were concerned, Jehovah was satisfied, according to His gracious estimate of them; and He could now receive her back to outward communion. So, according to what Rom. ii. states, Jerusalem's present outward hard bondage shall come to an end; He alone

can judge how long she shall be trodden down, but when *He* thinks long enough, she will be restored. Then passing over the long interval, as is the way of Isaiah, he comes to John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Messiah (vv. 3—5). These words have an application to the first coming of Christ, but still such terms are used, which in the full extent must point the heart onward to something further, to the time when every hindrance shall be taken away, in order that this *Mighty Conqueror* may go on. "*The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*" This was not fulfilled at His first coming. There was a fulfilment then in such cases as that of Simeon, and others; but the terms "all flesh shall see it together," would lead us on to the full manifestation of His glory in the millennial blessedness. Solomon had the fullest experience of what earthly glory was, and he says it is vanity; "that which is crooked cannot be made straight." This is the character of the present earth ever since the fall; but the period is coming when "the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." What is the security for it? is it from anything that we see? O no! but because "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." It is in vain to look for such blessing on the ground of probabilities, or of likelihood; our only ground for its fulfilment and that of all the glowing scenes of prophecy is *this*, "*the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*"

Verses 6—8: "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."—"The voice said, Cry," or, proclaim, preach. The truth of these verses is not only something referring to the Gospel dispensation, but especially belongs to it, namely, that "all flesh is

grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field ;” for Israel’s privileges were connected with fleshly distinction, and therefore flesh was of some consequence ; it was more than grass ; but the especial character of the Gospel dispensation is, that distinction in the flesh is *nothing* ; as it says, (John i. 11, &c.) the privilege of sonship to God was given to those who *believe*, who were born *not* of blood, &c., *but of God*. And this is what John the Baptist says (Matt. iii. 9), “Think not to say . . . we have Abraham to our father : for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” Under the law the succession to the priesthood depended on the flesh, on being of the seed of Aaron ; but the Gospel preaches the abrogation of all fleshly distinctions ; belonging to Abraham is of no value now, it is no more than mere grass. It brings in that which was to be of an enduring character. The Gospel connects everything with *eternity*, according to that expression in the Revelations, “the *everlasting* Gospel ;” it is an everlasting thing, resting on the word of God which abides for ever (vv. 9—11). The reading in the margin is the correct one, the good tidings were told to Zion and Jerusalem. Referring this to the first preachers of the Gospel, who were to begin at Jerusalem, it would be full of comfort. All the civil and ecclesiastical power was against them when they preached Jesus of Nazareth as the One who was God over all, and the One who fulfilled that prophecy, “Unto us a child is born. Who shall be called the Mighty God,” &c. “Behold your God.” Then again, compare this tenth verse with Acts iii. 19—21. Here are the two things that they preached, that Jesus *had* come, and that He was *about to come* again with strong hand against the strong ones (see margin).

Verse 11 : “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd : he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”—This is suitable to God’s dealings with Israel

at last ; but it is not to be confined to it, for Jesus speaks of Himself as the Good Shepherd, and enables His people to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," &c. He not only takes them to pasture, but guards and protects them ; and the whole verse gives us a view of Christ in all His tenderness. Then the following verses apply to Him in all His essential dignity as Maker of all things ; but not dwelling on these, only remark how verse 26 was fitted to be a comfort to Israel, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number : he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power ; not one faileth." Looking at things naturally, there was no likelihood of deliverance ; but to what does God send them ? The unclouded brightness of an eastern sky told them of the resistless power of Jehovah. And so with us under numerous difficulties, we have no need to go far for comfort, we have only to look up. Surely there must be much lurking unbelief in our hearts, or Scripture would not present these to our view. I had never had a *profitable* view of the stars, till I saw them in this verse.

ISAIAH XLI. 1—20.

IN this chapter we have Jehovah pleading His cause against the gods of the heathen, showing their utter inability to tell things to come (verses 22, 23). He by His prophets had foretold things to come, and rests upon it a proof of His divinity.

Verse 1 : "Keep silence before me, O islands ; and let the people renew their strength : let them come near, then let them speak : let us come near together to judgment."—The term "islands," here used throughout Isaiah,

is of much wider signification than we now give to it ; it applies to all countries bordering on the sea, and thus the term might be rendered *maritime lands*. "Let them come near, then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment:" let the people who worship gods stand up for their idols and plead for them; let all idol worshippers say whatever they can in defence of the objects of their worship; let the case of idol gods be fairly tested, and see who will come off victorious in this litigation.

Verse 2: "Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow."—Observe that the language here is in the past tense, though it was not a thing accomplished; and this we often find to be the case in prophecy, because the things thus spoken of are as good as done in the mind of God. For example, in chap. liii. 4 of this book, we have it stated, "Surely, He hath borne our griefs," &c. All, you will observe, in the past tense, because all was transacted in the purpose of God. This, then, that we have in this second verse, was something future; and the first question is, Who is this "righteous man," or, as the margin has it, "man of righteousness?" By comparison with chap. xlv. 1, we find Cyrus is the individual who is to "subdue the nations before him," &c. Some have thought that Abraham is here meant, but there seems not the slightest foundation for this opinion, since one as a mighty conqueror is here spoken of, which Abraham was not, with the exception of the circumstance recorded in Gen. xiv. "Who raised up the man of righteousness?" This expression does not refer to the character of Cyrus, but is applicable to him as executing the commission which God gave him. He was God's instrument to rescue Israel from the Babylonish captivity, and to accomplish His righteous vengeance upon Babylon.

Verses 3, 4: "He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am He."—God claims superiority above the gods because He raised up this Cyrus to be the monarch of Persia, and gave to him his success. This is true of all conquerors. The whole history of the world, and of the Church, is full of illustrations of this. If He designs to punish Europe, He raises up a Napoleon; if in mercy to His Church, He sends deliverance from nominal Christendom, He raises up a Luther. We are to see the hand of God in these things, and to say, "Who hath wrought and done it?" &c. "I the Lord; I am He." Verse 3 is descriptive of the rapidity of Cyrus's conquests, "He traverseth not the way with his feet." He seems not to touch the ground, so rapid is his progress.

Verses 5, 6: "The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage."—These verses show the result of the success of Cyrus upon those countries who expected to have his power exercised over them. These nations were idolaters, and, being alarmed, had recourse to their idols. Verse 7: In this time of alarm each, according to his place, helped on the other. This was all the poor idolaters could do, even making these efforts to secure gods of wood. This was all the help idolatry could afford.

But in verse 8, &c., is a word to the people of God, the only one people of all those who were subject to Babylon, who had no reason to be alarmed because of the success of Cyrus. "But thou Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend." Mark how Jehovah delighteth in those epithets which peculiarly belong to Israel. "But thou *Israel*." Israel was the name proper to them as the worshippers of Jehovah. "*Jacob* whom I have chosen," reminds us

of that word, "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated." In this respect they are presented as the elect people, "*The seed of Abraham.*" This goes back further still: God had promised that in Abraham's seed all nations of the earth should be blessed.

Verse 9: "Whom I have taken"—taken hold of, grasped. "From the chief men;" or rather *extremities*, in reference to Egypt, which was the extreme of the nations then known. "I have chosen thee," so as never to cast thee off. "I hate putting away" (Mal. ii. 16).

Verse 10. In the midst of this consternation, "Fear thou not, *I am with thee.*" That is the great difference between God's people and all the people of the earth. "Be not dismayed;" do not look round, as one distracted. And while this is spoken of Israel in Babylon, yet it is not to be restricted to them. If there be any comfort in these words, they belong to the seed of Abraham according to faith. They are as a tower of strength to us while travelling on in our pilgrimage. "I am thy God." I, the God of gods and Lord of lords, am *thy* God. "I will strengthen thee;" His presence is to be enjoyed in the consciousness of our own weakness. All His people feel that they need to be strengthened. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," is written of them. If there are any who are unconscious of weakness, of what use are God's promises to them?

Verses 11, 12: "Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing, and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought."—Here follows what becomes of Israel's enemies: "*they shall be as nothing;*" and this is applicable to all the enemies of God's church. A variety of expressions are used respecting these enemies: they are incensed; they contended with them; they warred against them. God's enemies are various. But the word of threatening is alike to them

all: they shall be so utterly consumed, that if they are sought for, they shall not be found. Verse 15. Mountains and hills are used as emblems of the enemies of Israel.

Verses 17—20: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, and the pine and the box-tree together; that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."

—These verses present us with some of the most striking imagery of the whole prophetic Scripture. Observe verse 17, "when" is in italics and therefore supplied, but it had better be read without, as it tends rather to obscurity. "The poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them." In this image is pictured the distress of God's people. The persons presented are the poor and needy; the place they are in is the wilderness; what they seek is water, and their circumstances are, *dying*. What a condition of distress is this! Let us attempt to bring it home to ourselves. What is to be their refuge? "I the Lord will hear them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them;" and not only so, but a complete and rapid deliverance will be effected: "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water," &c. One moment there is nothing but a wilderness; no stream, no verdure; but we look again, and, in a moment, the scene is changed. The wilderness is a pool of water, the dry land, springs of water. And for what purpose is this? Why will the

Lord do all this? "That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this; and the Holy One of Israel hath created it" (verse 20).

ISAIAH XLII. 10—25.

IN order to understand to what times and circumstances the different parts of this chapter refer, we must remember the way in which the prophets often write, namely, at once alluding to some great event, and then going back to what may be introductory to it; for instance, this 10th verse—"Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof"—at once brings before us the time when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth; when the knowledge of salvation shall everywhere be known; then follows a statement of judgments which introduce this state: thus, that is last in accomplishment which is first spoken of, or which is before the mind. For example, if it be in the mind of an individual to build a house, the house is before his mind as built, complete, and suitable to live in. He does not at *first* think of the ground, the foundation, &c.; but then as the *consequence* of what is in his mind, he thinks about clearing the ground, laying the foundation, &c. So in Scripture we may often find stated *first* the ultimate result in the mind of God, and then the means by which this result is brought about. Thus, here in verses 10 and 11 is a call to praise the Lord from the ends of the earth; that is the thing which first presents itself to the mind. Then in connection is mentioned certain prominent parts of the earth, the sea, the inhabitants of the

wilderness, rocky places, the mountains—all are exhorted to sing a new song in connection with the results of blessing arising from the second coming of the Lord. In the Old Testament we find in Psalms 96 and 98, the “new song” mentioned, and both in connection with this same great event (see the last verses of each); and in the New Testament, in Rev. v. 9, and xiv. 3, &c., the “new song” is also brought before us, and also in the same connection, as if purposely to celebrate something that was peculiar, something not known before, something in harmony with that new creation, in which shall be fulfilled that word “Behold I make all things new.” Now after the prophet has brought before us the ultimate results of blessing, he states that which will bring it about, v. 13—17; then verse 18 is a message to Israel, “Hear, ye deaf, and look, ye blind, that ye may see.”

Verses 19, 20: “Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord’s servant? Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not.”—These two verses are illustrated by Psalm xxxviii. 12—14, which speak of the Messiah as deaf and blind; for when He was accused of many things of which He was altogether innocent, He heard it all as though He heard it not: He looked upon the things of the world around Him as though He saw them not; and when Israel is brought in again—when they come to see that Jesus is the true Messiah, then will they remember Him as the one who, in reference to the things of this world, saw not, and in reference to the many cutting things said against Him, heard not.

Verse 22 is exactly applicable to the present state of Israel, whether as regards their outward condition or their spiritual state: “But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.” It is with Israel just as our Lord declared when He said that

Jerusalem should be "trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;" for shortly after that day they were spoiled and robbed; and down to the present day this verse is suited to the actual condition of Israel. If we remember how that in every country of Europe they have been spoiled, and how in other countries even to this day they suffer severely, we see a wonderful fulfilment of this verse. All other nations have passed away, and have been succeeded by others, but the Jews are still without a country; that land which flowed with milk and honey is now the very opposite. They are for a prey, and none delivereth; other nations are subject to distress, but sooner or later deliverance has come; still there is none for the Jews. No great nation like our own has come forward to protect them. Then the more you look into this verse, the more you see how exactly it is suited both to the external condition and the spiritual state of that people. "They are hid in prison-houses," I would take as a figure to set forth their spiritual state, as we have the same figure used as in verse 7: "They are snared in holes;" this leads us to think of some hid in holes, caves, and dens, who would never be visited with the rays of the sun; and so the Sun of righteousness has arisen, but Israel has refused to be enlightened by it: those upon whom He shone have rejected Him. "They are snared in holes," they have stumbled at that stumbling block—at certain truths concerning Christ. Then verse 23 is a question to those who have heard of the desolations of Israel: "Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken, and hear for the time to come?" Who will listen to this as a voice of instruction? Who will compare the state of the Jews as recorded in history, and these things here prophesied of them, and will ask what lesson have we to learn from them? They remind us of God's faithfulness, and are thus instructive to any who do not know God. Israel are the people of God, who promised Abraham that his

seed should be blessed above all nations; and so no other nation has had God so near to them. Whatever the western nations may think of the advantages they enjoy in respect of their civilization and so on, they have never been equal to the Jews in privileges. We can never look at an unconverted Jew in the same light as an unconverted Gentile, though they be equally in a hopeless state without faith in Christ, because the former is one of that family respecting which blessing is coming, beloved of God for the father's sakes. But though beloved of God, after bearing century after century with them, He yet brings judgment upon them. While God is full of tenderness and mercy, He is revealed as the God of holiness and justice; then when we see such conformity between the state of Israel and prophecy respecting them, we should say, surely God will fulfil all His word.

Verse 24, the question is put still more closely, "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law." We may reply, the Romans spoilt them and sent them as wanderers from their own land. Yes, but the Romans were only *God's sword*. And this constitutes the difference in reading history as a Christian or as one of the world. We shall not merely say it was a country more powerful that conquered Israel, but we shall say it was the Lord. So with ourselves, if we are suffering from the ill-conduct of our fellow-men, the tendency is to regard merely the individual so using us; but, like David said of Shimei, we should own God in it. In one sense it was not true that God had bid Shimei curse David; He could not have told him to tell lies concerning David. *But many things are according to God's secret purposes, which are contrary to God's revealed will.* Perhaps David never appeared so much like the man after God's own heart as when he said, "Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him."

And it is always well with us when we are able to say, even of cruel conduct towards us, it is the Lord. When the Romans brought such trouble on Jerusalem, they were only doing God's will; and the present ill-treatment of Jews in some parts of Europe, is according to God's secret purpose, though not according to His revealed will. If, when we think of Jews as totally regardless of Moses' word, we are ready to ask, "Who gave Israel to the robbers?" we are here reminded it was "*the Lord against whom they have sinned*," "for they would not walk in His ways," &c. This is applicable to any trial that comes upon us in consequence of sin, for it brings before us the blessing of obedience. We may see the blessedness of the ways of wisdom by seeing the misery of sin, and also by seeing in the word the promise made to obedience. When we read the terrible catalogue of evils brought upon Israel, we see the dreadful nature of sin. Because of their peculiar privileges was the severity of the judgments; and this is according to all God's word, e.g., Amos iii. 2, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities," as it here immediately follows—

Verse 25: "*Therefore* the Lord poured upon him the fury of His anger and the strength of battle; and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." The more we know of the sufferings of Israel from the Romans and afterwards, the more we see the fitness of this word. But has Israel yet seen the hand that smites them? No; this is yet to come, and then shall be fulfilled Lev. xxvi. 40, &c. God thus deals with His spiritual people; He may bring chastisement upon sin, and yet they may not know and consider that for which the Lord chastens them. We may suppose that Israel think of all manner of reasons why they are scattered, for if you ask any unconverted Jew, he never tells you the true reason—that they have slain Him who was the heir; but this is what Israel shall be brought to see. Thus far we have the condition

of Israel ever since they have been given up to the Roman and other nations; then who it was that thus gave them up—the *Lord*; what it is for—their sin in rejecting the true Messiah; and then chap. 43 commences with most precious promises of grace. Israel is a glass in which we see God as not suffering sin to pass unpunished: we see God here coming forward in grace in spite of their long rejection of the Messiah. In verse 22, after the blessings of their restoration are brought forward, He reminds them of their sin. God, in dealing with the sinner, will have him fully aware of his sin (verses 22—25). This is applicable to any backsliding one; but what does He add? anything that one would expect? After a true indictment without a flaw, what but the sentence is to be looked for? But no! “I, even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” O encouraging word to Israel—to us—to any here present who are at all awakened. It is no use to extenuate your sin; God does not, and you must not. But *why* should God blot out the sins of Israel, or of sinners? It is for *His own sake*. What a plea is this for any of us who have wandered from Him. It is for His own glory! Surely if we would understand God as holy and just, and yet full of mercy, we must enter into the history of Israel. There we see Him as faithful and righteous, and yet exuberant in the riches of His grace!

In Memoriam.

DUST to its kindred dust,
In hope we yield,—the earth shall keep its trust,
Till Christ the Lord of all from Heaven shall come,
Anew to mould it for His glorious home.

Whose dust is this that sleeps awhile, to rise
Quick at that day-dawn, and to scale the skies?
Whose dust is this which Jesus then will claim,
And ransom from its charnel-house of shame?

He was a man of God, whose dust we lay
Beneath the sod, with stricken hearts to-day;
A guileless man,—an Israelite indeed,—
From scornful pride, from sordid passion freed;
Whose heart with true and deep affections thrilled,—
In tenderest sympathy, how wondrous skilled!
Who, void of self, made others' care his own,
While his own burden, oft he bare alone.
A single eye was his,—one purpose ran
Through all his life,—a consecrated man
Was he to God, by whose pure word of truth,
He sought to live e'en from his very youth.
Such was the man, whose hallowed dust to-day,
Deep in the ground, with reverent hearts we lay,
Midst love's deep sighs, and many a gushing tear,
So freely poured around his silent bier.

What made this man so lovely? ah, we trace
The Spirit's impress in each trait of grace;—
Whate'er we loved in him, whate'er admired,
Was by that Spirit's quickening breath inspired;
'Twas from this spring his inner life began,—
The life of faith and love,—his former man,
His lovely or unlovely self, had died,
When first he learned of Jesus crucified—
The surety found by God—whose death should be
The ransom price, to set the guilty free.
He saw, he trusted,—felt the secret love
Of God in Christ,—his heart's affections move

With impulse new,—nor self he serveth more,
Not now his own, he's Christ's for evermore.

The Cross with all its grace was now his rest,
And thence the motive power that fired his breast,
Dead to the world, with Him who theré was slain,
And raised with Him, in Him he lived' again ;
Not I, but Christ, his lips and life declare,
Who bore the shame, the honour now should bear,—
And hence the spring perennial, that sustained
His life in freshness, long as life remained.
True to his Lord, his heart its treasures laid
Low at His feet, and constant fealty paid ;
His mind of rarest mould, and wealthy store,
Dug from the depths of rich recondite lore,—
His mind which never took the vassal guise,
But free of all, the truth alone would prize,—
That mind, intelligent, consents to bow
To Jesus, with implicit homage now ;

He might have won a place of high renown,
And wreathed his brow with honours, as a crown ;—
But no ! his Master's fellowship he loved,
His spirit and His service, he approved,
And in His church, amongst His poor would dwell,
Share in its conflict, all its sorrows feel,
Feed it with truth and love,—yet, all his days,
Nor ask a recompence, nor covet praise !

Hushed be the strife of tongues, the discord's din,
Such sacrifice bespake the grace within ;
Wisdom is justified of all, and he
Who *self* denied,—oh, let his name go free,—
Free from the thought that he could e'er betray,
The Master he thus served,—in evil day.
Patient he laboured on, and meekly strove,
Ungenerous thoughts to recompence with love,
Sufficed to know his Master's gracious smile,
His Master's seal upon his work the while,
Trophies of grace proclaim the work was sure,
Midst wreck of worlds, this witness will endure ;—
Hushed be the strife of tongues, man's day is past,
He rests where strife is done, and stormy blast !

And what a light shone round his dying bed,
Grace in his heart, and on his lips was shed,—
The name of Jesus,—as a sweet perfume,
Was whispered oft, and banished fear and gloom ;
Death seemed not nigh, but life,—who entered there,
Saw as Heaven's light, and felt its balmy air ;
Jesus, unseen, was nigh, His servant's stay,
His long tried love, the cheer in life's decay ;—

Who honour me, I honour,—precious word,
 The faithful servant found a faithful Lord !
 When death drew on apace, he murmured not,
 The Lord he loved, and served, should fix his lot ;
 Fain would he live, the Shepherd's flock to feed,
 If of his life the Shepherd yet had need,—
 But if his Lord shall call him to his breast,
 Twere better to depart with Him to rest.
 And there he resteth now, his service done,
 His conflict ended, and the Victory won !
 His dust now laid to dust, awhile to sleep,
 Waits for the morn when eyes no more shall weep,—
 That morning with its joy which hasteneth on,
 Such as on sorrow's night hath never shone,—
 Redemption's morn, when all the firstborn host,
 Gathered from every sea, from every coast,
 Shall at the Bridegroom's quickening voice arise,
 And speed with joy to meet him in the skies ;
 While on each brow His likeness he will trace,
 The last, the crowning, perfect, touch of grace !
 Thus meet for fellowship, th' adorned Bride
 Shall with her Bridegroom evermore abide.

Jesus ! to thee we turn,—thy servant's place
 Is vacant now,—thy plenitude of grace
 Alone can fill the void,—to thee we cling,
 Our Joy, our fulness, in life's sojourning.
 Be to the sorrowing ones that feel thy hand,
 The shadow of a rock in weary land ;
 The widow's riven heart, the children's breast,
 Fill with thyself, and be their joy, their rest.
 And when the little flock Thy servant fed,
 Sorrow submissive, bow the knee, the head,
 In prayer, in trust,—let living springs from Thee,
 Refresh our hearts, enrich our penury ;
 And may our chastening yield us full increase
 In fruit of righteousness, and love, and peace ;
 Nor hearts decline, nor feet be turned aside,
 But where Thou feed'st Thy flock, with Thee abide ;
 Our bond, Thy name—Thy word, our rule may be,
 And in Thy yoke be found our liberty.
 Nor these alone,—Thy saints on every hand,
 Strangers on earth, who seek the fatherland,
 Keep in thy fellowship,—that, one with Thee,
 Thy church, the witness of Thyself may be,—
 The herald of thy cross—salvation's power,
 And of thy coming—glory's advent hour !

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