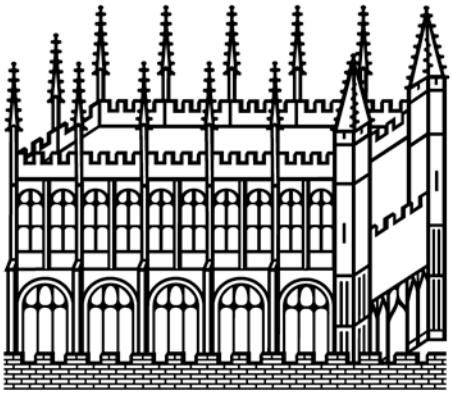

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THE

S.H. 1829.
110

ERMAN PULPIT,

BEING

A SELECTION OF SERMONS

BY THE MOST

MODERN DIVINES OF GERMANY.

BODLEIANA · BIBLIOTHECA ·

TRANSLATED BY THE

RICHARD BAKER, A.M.

MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD

THE BRITISH RESIDENTS AT HAMBURGH.

ONDON:

G. & F.

7.

THE

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GERMAN PULPIT,

BEING

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EMINENT MODERN DIVINES OF GERMANY.

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REV. RICHARD BAKER, A.M.

OF MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD

AND CHAPLAIN TO THE BRITISH RESIDENTS AT HAMBURGH.

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TO THE

MOST REVEREND

WILLIAM,

LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

TO WHOM HE IS INDEBTED FOR HIS PRESENT SITUATION,

THE FOLLOWING SPECIMENS OF

LUTHERAN PULPIT-ELOQUENCE

ARE,

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE,

MOST HUMBLY AND RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THE TRANSLATOR.

PREFACE.

THE following Sermons are taken from a recent publication, entitled 'German Pulpit-Eloquence,' and purporting to be a Collection of Discourses delivered by the most celebrated Lutheran Preachers.

At a time when the theoretical divinity of German authors has excited so much observation in England, the Translator conceived it might not be unacceptable to the British Public, to furnish them with some specimens of their more practical theology. In submitting this selection of Sermons to their notice, whether their peculiarities be considered beauties or defects, he claims no merit, and hopes to incur no blame: as his only object has been, whilst he occupied his leisure hours, to make his readers acquainted with the style of German

preaching, and to give as faithful a translation as possible.

He thinks it right to observe, that he has abbreviated some of the texts, which in the original are often the whole Gospel for the day, and that he has rendered these, and the quotations from Scripture, not according to the Lutheran, but according to the English authorized version of the Bible.

He will only add, that such Sermons require no small exertions and powers on the part of the preachers, as they are delivered *memoriter*, and with much animation, and are nearly double the usual length of English discourses from the Pulpit.

HAMBURGH,
May 21*st*, 1829.

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ON REDEMPTION.

SERMON I.

ON REDEMPTION.

It is a common, but certainly a very true observation, that the wishes and hopes of men are often very inconsiderate, and of such a nature that the Divine government, in its wisdom, cannot gratify them, and that a very small portion of happiness would fall to our share, if God were content with merely fulfilling our wishes. The fact is well known and requires no proof. But it is not the less true, that the benefits which Divine Providence really bestows on us, are seldom discerned in their full dimensions, and valued according to their actual worth. True as this two-fold observation is, concerning the wishes which we entertain in respect of our earthly affairs and prosperity, and a multitude of Divine benefits, which we, on this account, are accustomed to call the unknown benefits of God; it is true also, of such as have reference to our higher and spiritual felicity, as those for

which the Divine government is not less watchful and active, than for our temporal welfare. Amongst these spiritual blessings, for instance, there is none of greater magnitude, and of more inestimable value, than the Redemption which God has ordained through Jesus Christ. It was the greatest of all the benefits which the Jewish nation once implored of God, and it is the greatest which we Christians glory to have received from God: and this with the most perfect right. But the Jewish nation limited their desire almost entirely to a temporal deliverance; comprehended not, in its full extent, the blessing which God would impart to them through Jesus; and for the most part actually scorned it when offered to them, because it was not agreeable to their wishes. We Christians value the Redemption of Jesus higher; but I fear that even we sometimes limit it too much, and are desirous of its being such as, indeed, is scarcely possible. This appears to me, for example, to be the case with all those who confine it simply or chiefly to a deliverance from the *penalties* of sin, inasmuch as, according to the Holy Scripture and to truth, it extends much farther, and is in particular a deliverance from *sin itself*. I have, therefore, resolved to address you to-day on the right estimation of the redemption of Jesus. Our Gospel for the festival presents us with an unsought occasion, in the wishes and hopes of the disciples of Jesus.

God only grant that we may form right notions, and thereby be led to a just estimation of it!

LUKE xxiv. 21.

But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.

WHEN the two disciples in our Gospel disclose their perplexity and dejection, on account of their Master's unexpected fate, to Jesus, whom they did not then know, and at the same time confess, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel," it is clear that they had not a true conception of the redemption which was to be effected, and which has been effected through Jesus. For they imagined its extent much too small, since they confined it to the Jewish nation alone, when they said, we trusted he should have redeemed *Israel;* whereas it was designed for the whole human race. Then again, they looked for a *temporal* redemption or deliverance, though the redemption of Jesus purported to be of quite a different kind, namely, a deliverance of the soul from sin, or a moral and spiritual redemption. I shall, therefore, take occasion to speak of the redemption, as it has actually been wrought through Jesus Christ. But I hope I shall best comprehend what appertains to the subject, if I dwell partly on that

from which Christ has redeemed us, and partly on the condition under which this redemption may effectually avail us; and this, I trust, will lead the way to a very profitable application of my discourse.

In the first place then, from what has Christ redeemed mankind? There are three points in which this great work is contained, and in which it can be most clearly viewed. Christ has, namely, redeemed us; first, from all anxious and tormenting fear of God; secondly, from sin and its dominion; and thirdly, from the punishment of sin as its consequence, and from the apprehension of a future eternal condemnation.

In order to appreciate, in their full value, the greatness and beneficial effects of this redemption, and especially of the first branch of it, according to which Christ has delivered men from all anxious and tormenting fear of God, it is necessary for us to take a view of the mode of thinking of the age in which Jesus made his public appearance, and endeavour to recur to the then prevailing notions of God, which have, in a great measure, become strange to us, who are born and educated in Christendom, by means of the superior information which we have received from our youth up. At that period, the only correct and gladdening representation of God as the Father of men, and the truth that he is a gracious, benevolent, and forgiving

Being, were almost entirely extirpated; and in their place the contrary idea was prevalent, that he is a severe inexorable ruler, who infallibly punishes the smallest offences, from whom no pardon was to be expected, unless his anger were appeased by bloody sacrifices, costly gifts, and self-inflicted tortures of various kinds. This terror was at that time general, nor is it much to be wondered at, being so natural to uninstructed man. Men commonly conceive of the Deity as they are themselves, and transfer the sentiments and modes of acting, which they perceive in themselves, to God. Now, since no man, if he would not deceive himself, can be insensible that he errs in a variety of ways, whether with wilfulness or from indiscretion, and thus transgresses the commandments of God; and since we men, when our injunctions are violated and an offence is committed against us, usually fall into anger and demand satisfaction; we ascribe similar affections of the mind to the Deity also; and because we feel that his displeasure and wrath can make us extremely miserable, we bethink ourselves of means to appease this wrath, and to reconcile the Deity. Far as these conceptions are from being entirely erroneous, certain as it rather is, that God is the most declared enemy of sin, and that he inevitably punishes and must punish it; yet the men of that age erred too much in their representation of the greatness and inflexibility of Divine wrath,

and still more in the means which were chosen to avert it. Instead of striving to be convinced that God is not an inexorable Being, that he does not keep his anger for ever, and that he is disposed to pardon the man who draws near to him with repentant feelings and a resolution of amendment; they believed they must accumulate sacrifices, expiations, and penances of various kinds. This proved a very great and two-fold disadvantage. At one time this idea filled the minds of men with fear and trembling before God, as the strict, inexorable, never-to-be-reconciled Judge; the thought of him, that is, of the best, most perfect, and most gracious Being, which otherwise possesses such a cheering and animating power, lost this beneficial power entirely; and what was most melancholy, men were nevertheless not improved by this constant fear, exactly because they believed that sacrifices and gifts were sufficient to reconcile the Deity and appease his anger. The wisest of the writers in the Old Testament had, indeed, already endeavoured to soften this alarming representation of God, and to weaken their belief in the atoning power of sacrifices; but their persuasions were ineffectual. They had declared, "the Lord is full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering, plenteous in goodness and truth." "He forgiveth iniquity and sin, he willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live." Isaiah

felt himself urged to call to the people, " To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; who hath required this at your hand? Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well[a]." Thus had the wiser prophets of the Old Testament already taught; they had described God as gracious and merciful, and required amendment of life instead of sacrifices; as in like manner the Apostle Paul exhorts Christians in his epistle to the Romans; " I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service[b]." But they preached to deaf ears. Custom prevailed over the truth, the same ideas and sacrifices continued, the world dwelt in distressing fear of God, it propitiated him daily, and yet failed to reform.

But at last Jesus Christ appeared, and taught those truths more forcibly and clearly, exhibited the goodness of God in its full lustre, and shewed that the only means of forgiveness were repentance and amendment. Thus he himself, and thus his Apostles instructed, and thus by his labours a Church was founded, in which more favourable notions of God prevailed, in which he

[a] Isaiah i. 11. [b] Rom. xii. 1.

was worshipped, not as a severe and wrathful judge, but as a kind forgiving Father; the members of which, when they assembled together, brought no offerings as a propitiation, but engaged themselves to an innocent course of life. In this manner Jesus liberated the Christian world from the anxious fear of God, and from the most burdensome and unprofitable service. O, for ever let him be praised, that he has inspired us with trust in the pardoning grace of the Highest! For ever let him be praised, that we through his instruction rejoice in God, and no more tremble before him! Eternally let him be praised, that he has abolished sacrifices for ever, and taught us to offer up ourselves as a sacrifice to God! Thus he has established a real redemption; we now need no more offering for sin. Yet, my friends, Christ has delivered the Christian world not only from the anxious and tormenting fear of God, and from belief in the atoning power of sacrifices, but he has also, secondly, redeemed us from sin, and thereby from its penalties in the present and the future world.

But I must here obviate a misconception. This redemption from sin is not to be understood as if Jesus had taken away all sins, so that no more are to be found in the Christian world; for this would manifestly contradict daily experience. But his redemption consists rather in this, that he has made it possible to men to withdraw from the do-

minion of sin, having set forth to them the reasons for it, pointed out the means, and in general neglected nothing that would render deliverance from sin important and easy to them. So much is certain, that if man should be encouraged to escape from the trammels of sin, this cannot be more effectually done, than when sin is depicted to him in all its noxiousness, and on the other hand reformation and virtue in their advantages and rewards. So much is certain, that man cannot be rescued from the dominion of sin, so long as he is ignorant of its source, the manner in which it is originated, and the means whereby it may be prevented. So much is, lastly, certain, that man will not seldom grow weary in this contest against sin, if he may not promise himself a happy issue and the strength that is requisite, and if in this contest he has not an aim and a reward in his eye, the view of which invigorates him afresh.

But Jesus has most completely satisfied all these wants by his instruction, and thus has made the most desirable redemption from sin possible. For this reason he taught, that it is only sin which renders men unhappy, and deprives them of the favour of God and of felicity; for this reason he assured them, that the forgiveness of God and deliverance from the penalties of sin, are not attached to propitiatory sacrifices, which never could possess this power, but to con-

trition and steady amendment, which alone are well-pleasing to God; for this reason he inculcated, that man must watch over his heart, consider this as the real source of sin, and suppress the rising lusts in their first movements, if he would prevent their bursting forth, and be secured from actual sins; for this reason he admonishes that we must diligently strengthen ourselves by good resolutions, and implore God for power to perform them, in the firm persuasion, that he who promotes all that is good, will least of all deny us his Spirit and the strength requisite for our improvement; and, that we may never grow weary in this zeal, he points out the great worth of a clean heart before God, and the rewards of eternity. This is the redemption from sin which Christ has actually instituted.

Once more; it is not then to be understood, as if he had so taken away all sins that no more remain in the world, nor as if he had made sin impossible to man, and the use of the means of improvement unnecessary. Nothing less than that; for the former would contradict the most evident experience, and the latter would be at variance with the freedom of the human soul, which it was not his design to abolish. But his redemption consists in this, that he has made it possible and of importance to man to be redeemed: and how could it be effected in rational creatures in any other way, without infringement on their liberty? Or how could he do

it in a more effectual manner than by convincing them that sin would be productive of unhappiness, that it disturbs the conscience, that it robs us of the favour of God, that there are no offerings for its penalties, that repentance alone and steady amendment bring forgiveness and salvation? Does not amendment now become of greater importance to us, the more we desire pardon from God? Do not our own heart, and the wish not to be miserable, urge us to the most earnest self-improvement, and to a participation in this redemption? And does not Christ redeem every one from sin, who will suffer himself to be redeemed through him?

Lastly, my friends, the redemption of Jesus extends also to the penalties of sin. And this part of redemption he has doubly effected. Since, namely, he has assured the world of the gracious disposition of God, he has thereby delivered it from the apprehension of never-ceasing punishments; and since he teaches us to avoid sin itself, he thereby delivers us also from its penalty. To comprise it in a few words, the redemption of Jesus amounts to this,— that he has exhibited God to us in his true and gladdening form, that he has inspired us with trust in his forgiving grace, that he has placed reformation and virtue in the room of sacrifices, and that he has shewn us the possibility of avoiding the dominion of sin, and consequently its temporal and eternal punishments. How great and inestimable is this

benefit! If I had the liberty to choose for myself any happiness, could I wish for any greater than this redemption? than the consciousness of a merciful God before whom I need not tremble? than freedom from the bondage of sin? than a joyful prospect of a happy eternity? This, this is the redemption which Jesus has established! How much more comprehensive it is than that which the Jews and even the disciples of Jesus hoped for!

But now a question may be suggested, "Will then all men partake in this redemption?" The answer is, If they perform one condition; and this we will inquire into in the second part of our contemplation.

The redemption, my friends, is now completed. Every thing is done on God's part. But what must man do on his side, in order to profit by this redemption? The short answer is, He must assist in redeeming himself. And this in fact is not so difficult. It is resolved mainly into two points, which we will shortly discuss. The first thing which a man must do, who really desires to be redeemed through Christ, is to believe the assurances of Jesus respecting the merciful and forgiving disposition of God, and to seek to convince himself more and more firmly of their truth. As long as man distrusts the goodness of God, or as long as he thinks he must be propitiated by any thing else than by amendment, so long certainly the redemp-

tion of Jesus from the tormenting fear of God cannot be of service to him. But how easy is this persuasion of the goodness of God! how ready the heart is to entertain it! what grounds for it present themselves on all sides! It is reasonable to believe, when I cast a glance at nature, that the God, who has every where diffused the most palpable marks of his enriching bounty, who has created the world to be the scene of his goodness, and men for the enjoyment of it, it is reasonable to believe, that this God has not destined any creature to eternal pains and never-ceasing misery. It is not probable that he will aggravate the natural consequences of sin by arbitrary punishments, which are not designed for the improvement of man, but to render his wretchedness interminable; and that he will make man still more unhappy than he already is, through sin and its necessary consequences. And is it not probable, that God will at least be as kind as a human father is? But as the latter inflicts punishments only as salutary and correcting chastisements, and derives no pleasure from the suffering of his child, shall it not be so and much more with God? That my reason teaches me. The more I think of God in this manner, the more strongly I seek to be convinced of his goodness, and how far he is from feeling any malicious joy or delighting in vengeance, so much the more my heart listens to the instructions of Jesus, that with God

there is mercy, and that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." And if we would, therefore, facilitate the appropriation to ourselves of the atonement of Jesus, and be delivered through him from an anxious and painful fear of God; it is necessary that we open our hearts to these representations of the clemency and love of God; that we drive away from our souls the alarming images of a dreadful tyrant, and substitute in their place the lovely portrait of a benevolent and bountiful Father, such as nature exhibits him to us.

Should we then bring a heart so prepared to the instructions of Jesus and the holy Scripture, how easily shall we find it to be true, that God is merciful and compassionate, and that we require no oblations to propitiate him! How easily will Christ then accomplish in us that part of his redemption, which consists in a liberation from all disquieting and tormenting fear of God! That is the first condition which we must fulfil, if we really desire to be redeemed through Christ. And the second is this; if we, besides that fear of God, wish also to be delivered from the penalty of sin, we must necessarily be redeemed from sin itself. It is plain that it cannot be otherwise. Punishment is the consequence of sin, sin the cause of punishment. But is it possible that the consequence should cease, when the cause remains? Is it possible, that I should be released from a disorder,

if I continue to commit the excess which generated the disorder? Is it possible that a man should be freed from punishment, when he repeats the same crime which subjected him to the punishment? Can the punishments or the chastisements of God cease, before the object of them, reformation, is attained? "Be not deceived," I might say to such persons, "God is not mocked." Do you think to be saved, because we are redeemed? Is Christ the minister of sin? Shall we sin for this reason, "that grace may abound?" Do we hope to escape future wrath, merely because we are called Christians? Should we not then evidently be in the same case as the Jews, who hoped to be exempted from punishment, because they had Abraham for their father? No, my friends, it remains an eternal, irrefutable truth, that whoever would escape punishment, must first renounce sin. The redemption of Jesus cannot else avail us.

This contemplation, my friends, is abundantly fruitful in profitable applications, if we will use it to this purpose. I will call your attention to a few of them.

In the first place it is manifest, that this redemption, which Christ has wrought for the human race, is a far greater and more salutary one, than that which the disciples of Jesus imagined and wished for. It is greater, because it is not confined to one people, but embraces all those nations to whom the

Christian religion is known or shall hereafter be known. It is moreover greater, because it makes us perfectly free, free in the noblest sense of the word. For what is true liberty? wherein does it consist? Is he free who is oppressed by a tormenting fear of God, who is a slave to sin, who is ruled and led captive by vicious desires, whose conscience distresses him, who trembles at the thought of death, whom the future overwhelms with despair? Or is he free who has trust in God, who is not afraid of himself, who can look forward to futurity with a calm aspect? Freedom from sin is the true freedom; and that is the freedom which Christ has given us. Thanksgiving, eternal thanksgiving be unto God, for that he has performed more through Christ, than even his disciples ventured to hope! They trusted he should have redeemed Israel; and he has redeemed a far greater portion of mankind. They feared their expectation was disappointed; and never was its fulfilment nearer.—Above all things, my friends, let us represent to ourselves the redemption as it really is, and not let ourselves be led away by the imagination that Christ has already redeemed us from the penalties of sin, whilst we are not yet freed from sin. I do not wonder that men are so corrupt as to adopt that part of redemption which favours their evil propensities, namely, faith, and that they are forgetful of that which is troublesome to them, namely, amendment. But ye, who so di-

vide redemption, and flatter yourselves with such hopes, ye deceive yourselves, ye desire an impossibility. For, "if ye sin wilfully, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins [c]," and thus ye are in no sense of the word redeemed. For "whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin [d]." "Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not; whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him neither known him [e]." Finally, my brethren, let us so reflect on this, that we may live as redeemed creatures. What an excellent sanctification of this festival, if we now resolve before God to rise from the sleep of sin, from which Christ seeks to awaken us, and to live to that righteousness to which he exhorts us! Let each one then amongst us be renewed and converted from his sin, that the redemption may not have been in vain, but, that he also may indeed participate in it. Thou thyself, O God! wilt impress these considerations strongly on our hearts through thy Spirit. Amen.

[c] Heb. x. 26. [d] John viii. 34. [e] 1 John iii. 6.

SERMON II.

BY AMMON.

CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATION OF DIVINE JUSTICE.

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LORD, thou art righteous, and all thy judgments are just! Before thee, O most holy, and before thine all-searching look, the veil of dissimulation and hypocrisy, which human prudence so often throws over profligacy and crime, immediately drops; but oppressed and suffering virtue also, which, misunderstood and despised, is yet never weary of doing good, is encouraged in thy sight to the hope of a better world. Therefore the thought of thee, thou eternal and supreme Judge of the world of spirits, seizes at last the heedless and secure sinner, and fills him with horror and trembling, because of the futurity which awaits him; but, therefore also, the conviction of thy perfect justice rewards thy children with contentment and peace of mind, when they suffer wrong and persecution at the hands of men.

Father of all! let the importance of this consideration be ever present to us, that we also may be just towards our brethren; that we may learn wil-

lingly to endure wrong and suffering, because thou directest them to our benefit; that we may all, as thy children, look forward with joy in the hour of death to thy sentence, thou, who art the Judge of all the world!

It is a peculiar feature of the unperverted nature of man, my beloved, that it seeks to preserve the most exact and perfect balance between guilt and punishment, between merit and reward. We detest the judge with all our heart, who sells his judgment for gifts, who gives sentence for the vicious man, but is deaf to the voice of innocence defending itself in vain. On the contrary, we cannot deny our respect and high esteem to the man, who with upright and candid mind reprobates vice in the palace and in the cottage with equal impartiality, who entertains an equal regard for the moral worth of the rich and the poor. So unbounded, my friends, is our respect for a virtue, the conscientious practice of which must form the most exalted dignity and the fairest distinction of humanity. But, alas! the limitation of our powers, ignorance, covetousness, and insensibility, are the dangerous rocks, on which it is so often wrecked on this earth. We all, therefore, expect our sentence and the determination of our fate with silent submission from a superior Judge, whose all-scrutinizing view none of our most hidden virtues, none of our most secret

faults can escape, and who penetrates with infinite knowledge into the inmost secrets of our hearts. The more we labour to become familiar with the legislation of the mightiest and wisest of all Judges, the more firmly we are persuaded, that he lets no virtue go unrewarded, no wickedness unpunished; the more correct our knowledge of the nature of his rewards and punishments is, so much the more unshaken will be our trust in him, so much the more ardent, disinterested, and pure our virtue, so much the more informed and fearless our mind, and so much the more lasting the happiness and contentment of our life.

No part of Scripture is better suited to instruct us with clearness and decision on this point than the text.

ROMANS ii. 6—12.

Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God.

THIS important instruction of the Apostle will give us occasion to meditate on its true signification,

and will employ us for the present hour in a Christian contemplation of divine justice. This contemplation is of two parts. First, God has connected essentially unalterable happiness with virtue, unalterable misery with vice. Secondly, God so guides the destinies of men, that the most perfect balance is preserved between their moral conduct and their real welfare.

1. There is no stronger and more expressive proof of our resemblance to God, and of the high destiny of our immortal spirit, than this, that the Eternal has given us a judge in our own conscience, which loudly condemns our misdeeds, and applauds only our righteous and honourable sentiments and actions. If this cannot by any means be corrupted, nor bribed by any flattery of a foolish self-conceit; then must the favour of the highest of all Judges be the most unchangeable and invariable, and we must, in the first place, take this view of his justice, that he has connected unfailing blessedness with virtue. Do we not ask, beloved, wherein this blessedness, inseparable from the real worth of our actions, consists? Where is there an earthly felicity to be compared with the satisfaction which the silent applause of our own hearts imparts to us after the conscientious performance of our duties? Speak yourselves, my brethren! ye, who with clean and guiltless hearts have borne all the toils of a laborious day with unwearied zeal; ye, who have

distributed to deserving indigence the superfluity which Providence gave you; ye, who have scattered the seeds of truth with intrepidity and prudence; and ye, who have improved your minds by sciences and arts to your own happiness and the good of your brethren, say, has ever a joyous gratification, has ever any voluptuous delight, equalled the purity and fulness of that heavenly pleasure, which penetrated your hearts at the thought of having fulfilled your duties to the utmost? In this contentment with ourselves, and in the consciousness that we have exercised and applied our powers in the most rational manner, lies an inexpressible reward of virtue. This high satisfaction in the soul of the virtuous is enhanced by the love and esteem, which are surely entertained for him in the hearts of all generous and good men.

Nothing, indeed, is more common, my beloved, than for the greatest part of mankind, (who, being themselves weak and deficient in moral worth, would gladly obtain some merit by pronouncing decisive judgments on others) to depreciate the most meritorious and most blameless actions, to defame the purest integrity, and to seek to expose it, under the most odious names, to misconception and calumny. But how much is the true friend of Christian virtue recompensed for these uncharitable judgments by the unfeigned approbation of generous and worthy men, who, after much experience, and afflic-

tion of various kinds, have learnt to value earthly goods according to their real worth, and who now fraternally share their heart and their affection with every true friend of religion and virtue! Thus, great is the reward of the pious,—to be esteemed by wise and sensible persons; but a superior, an unutterable felicity still awaits him,—the applause of his wise Creator and Father. To feel persuaded that one has fulfilled the commands of the Most Holy, to whom we owe our existence, our reason, our faculties, and our whole happiness; to know, that by disinterested, great, and noble actions we are brought nearer to his infinite holiness; that we have become worthy of his grace, love, and fatherly care; and that we may now lay claim, through Jesus, to all the benefits to which his children are heirs; where is the mortal and the Christian, who must not find the supreme and most perfect good of his life in this conviction? Oh, my brethren, that every one amongst us possessed this glad sense in full efficiency; that every one of us could look up to his Father with filial confidence; that this blissful approbation of the most exalted and mightiest Judge were present to us all, and strengthened us to do good and not be weary, that we might reap without ceasing!

But the thoughts and aims of the human heart are sensual and evil from youth up; we are, therefore, 2dly, made sensible of the divine jus-

tice in another point of view, where it has connected unalterable misery with vice. Nothing has at all times, so long as men sought their highest enjoyments in sensual delights and earthly treasures, occasioned stronger objections and more unjust doubts of the guidance of Divine Providence, than the apparent prosperity of the wicked upon earth. Full of dejection and despondency, the innocent but suffering Job exclaims, "When I remember, I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them." And yet, my beloved, nothing is easier for the attentive observer, than to see the hand of Divine justice punishing vice even in the lap of riches and abundance. Cast a glance into the soul of the miser, who with insatiable covetousness scorns no means, by which he can increase his wealth and his treasures, who, inexorable and unfeeling, repels every suffering and necessitous man, banishes every sentiment of philanthropy from his breast, and inflicts pain upon himself, merely in order to feed his greedy eye on his prosperity; how is he harassed by a thousand cares, racked by unbridled desires, and tossed about by constant uneasiness! If we observe the voluptuous spendthrift, who invokes every thing which can gratify the senses and procure him the greatest variety of en-

joyments; who leaves nothing untried in order to acquire power and consequence by means of a brilliant exterior; who willingly sacrifices his time and his property to intoxicating joys and the most varied diversions, in order to drink full draughts from the stream of pleasure; how wretched is he in those moments, when joy deserts him, when reason awakes from her dream, and when the mutability of his happiness appears in all its emptiness and nakedness! He may never want flatterers, companions of his pleasures, and mean persons, who from self-interest cringe before his greatness and splendour; he may always see himself surrounded by purchased eulogists; but the true and noble friend of virtue *must* shun him, *must* despise him, and openly manifest his displeasure and disgust. Therefore, "there is no peace to the wicked;" therefore do they hurry, unsteady and changeable, from one purpose to another, from one gratification, from one dissipation to another; therefore is their heart incessantly tormented by the pains of disappointed hopes, by the pangs of consuming passions, and by the reproaches of an offended conscience. And when the profligate, in this disturbed state, this insecurity of mind, begins to think of the Judge, who will one day demand an account of every, even the least of our actions, who will bring all our deeds to trial, and give sentence according to the holiest laws; then shame and remorse seize him, then he curses the fugitive joys, which he at other times had so eagerly sought for;

then he languishes on the brink of despair for rest, and finds it not. He would gladly hide himself from the judgment of the Most Holy, who views every impurity of his heart with the eye of omniscience; but he is forced to cry out with David, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to thee[a]." So infallible is the misery which follows the steps of vice, and so invariable is the blessing and the felicity, which naturally flows from pure Christian virtue. But Divine justice, moreover, guides the destinies of men in such a manner, that the most perfect balance prevails between their moral goodness and their real welfare, in the examination of which point we will employ the Second Part of our meditation.

If we raise our ideas, my beloved, from man, whose life is a breath, up to the Eternal, we find that his unbounded holiness must be identified with

[a] Psalm cxxxix.

the most unutterable blessedness, because his supreme intelligence cannot design or imagine any law, with which the infinite effects of the most sovereign power would not at once correspond. Were it possible that human virtue also could be so thoroughly perfected, so pure and spotless, then would the good man be sufficient of himself for his happiness, he would scorn every external benefit as a foreign reward, and would feel himself invariably blest in the consciousness of his own perfection; but so exalted and pure a virtue is not the lot of the finite rational world; and man, who, notwithstanding the most conscientious endeavours after holiness and goodness of heart, is so often depressed by the most distressing sensation of his infirmities and defects, must, when thinking of God, feel but too deeply, that we are all sinners who are not yet worthy of the full favour of God. Now, in order that human virtue, which has to struggle in its weakness with so many and wearisome impediments, may not want outward encouragement to press on with increasing spirit in the path of duty, Divine justice ordains; first, that in regard to the worthy worshipper of God and Christ, the thought of his inward goodness and his real moral worth shall be supported on this earth by rewards of sense: think not, my friends, of such rewards and prizes, as are appropriated to distinguished actions by legislators and princes, rewards which an inde-

fatigable and restless ambition so often carries off, instead of silent and modest merit. Is not the whole wide earth full of God's good things, and is not every thing reward which we enjoy from his bounty? If but a pure and guiltless heart beats within our breast, if the applause of the inward judge but gives us a real satisfaction with ourselves, O, then, no good thing is so small, no enjoyment so poor and simple, that it may not exhilarate us, and fill us with the purest pleasure; then the indigent inhabitant of a lowly hut is happier than the possessor of a splendid palace who is loaded with sins. For this reason the sincere friend of virtue rejoices in a sound and vigorous state of health, vouchsafed him by his heavenly Father, enjoys it gratefully as a gift from his hand, and feels happy in this valuable reward of his integrity. For this reason he welcomes the blessing of Providence, when, by worldly possessions and prosperity, consequently by outward agreeable sensations, it reminds him of this goodness of heart, which now heightens every pleasure, and converts every permitted enjoyment of sense into the purest and highest gratification. For this reason he thankfully blesses the period when outward dignities and posts of honour are allotted to him, because he can now act with greater freedom, do good more extensively, and promote, with less hindrance, truth, order, and tranquillity amongst his brethren. Thus delight-

ful and unfailing are the rewards which Divine justice has appointed for the good man while yet on earth, because the exact proportion of happiness and well-being to virtue is the sublime object to which all finite spirits should aspire; Providence, therefore, guides the destinies of men in such a manner, that, secondly, the vicious man's thoughts on his immorality are also kept up by outward unpleasant sensations. The wicked have no peace, but even their prosperity is unstable and mutable. So true is that which a wise man says in the book of Job: "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds, yet he shall perish for ever. They which have seen him shall say, Where is he? He shall fly away as a dream and shall not be found, yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night."

If the generous and honest friend of virtue acknowledges the hand of Providence in all the events and occurrences of this life, which bestows more or fewer benefits on mortals, as their deserts and their destination for eternity may require; in like manner the vicious man sees in every trouble that falls on him, and in every distress he meets with, the wrath of an avenging Deity. The same unsteadiness of his principles, the same restlessness in his mind, which formerly abandoned him to the

wild gratification of intoxicating pleasures, now sinks him, under the least adversity, into dejected lamentation and desponding anxiety. Does fate hurl him down from the pinnacle of honour, fame, and prosperity, to which he had elevated himself by the depression of real merit, by intrigues and artifices? O, then his humiliation becomes an intolerable anguish to him, then he is too weak to meet the contempt of his adversaries with courage and fortitude, then the tortures of a deeply wounded pride, and the unsatisfied demands of a boundless self-love, embitter every moment of his disquieted existence. Does the rich villain, who knows no greater good than his dishonestly acquired treasures, experience, like others, the vicissitudes of worldly fortune; do rapid floods, or raging flames, or sudden public calamity lay waste his magnificent dwelling? at the loss of his possessions, his heart also fails him, and, full of agony and terror, he trembles under the deeply piercing strokes of misfortune. But the retributive justice of God appears on no occasion more awful and alarming to the wicked, than at the thought of the approach of unexpected death. The hopes of a secure life and undecaying health, to which self-love could formerly fix no limits, now give way; now the building of earthly happiness, in which the sinner promised himself so long a residence, falls in; now comfort and rest are no where to be found, but in

the consciousness of a clean and virtuous heart. And in this poverty and nakedness of his mind shall he, at the period, when his body, near its dissolution, must fight the hard fight of death, enter into thoughts on futurity, from which he has to expect the sentence of an eternal and righteous Judge on all his actions? Who amongst us all, my beloved, does not discern in this indescribable agony and fear of the dying sinner, the irrevocable judgement of divine holiness on the iniquity of vice? We think not in this case of trust in Divine mercy and goodness, and of the merits of our Redeemer, who died for the good of mankind, by averting from them apprehended punishments. These blissful doctrines are full of refreshing consolation for all those, who, having their attention drawn by the religion of Jesus to the destructive nature of vice, have returned to the path of virtue, and now find comfort respecting the offences of past days in the death of our Divine Teacher and Friend. But the sinner already does unspeakable penance in this, that, according to the same principles which he has hitherto followed in his actions, he dreads his Creator and Father as a severe and passionate Judge; that he considers all the sorrows and disasters which come upon him, as the immediate punishments of God; and that, like a child which disobeys the commands of a wise and affectionate father, he enjoys his favours under the loud re-

proaches of his conscience, and with a mortifying sense of his unworthiness. This dejection and fear of the just chastisements of God will never entirely leave the most abandoned and sensual offender, even in the utmost apparent prosperity; and could it even leave him, Divine justice, thirdly, so directs the destinies of men, that the apparent worldly success of the wicked, and the undeserved afflictions of the virtuous, become a beneficial source of the firmest conviction of a blessed immortality, a source, therefore, of the most exhilarating hope for the Christian sufferer. Nothing is more common, my friends, than that, when a successful profligate raises himself above his weaker brethren, or a guiltless Job sinks under the weight of his sorrows, we wrong Divine justice, and frequently break out into loud murmurs against Providence, for the unequal distribution of human destinies. "Is it justice," the censurer of Providence exclaims, "when whole nations groan under the tyranny of profligate rulers; when violence and iniquity heap crime upon crime; when extensive devastations and wars expose the virtuous as well as the wicked to the utmost misery; and when flattery and frivolity so often wear the crown, of which active and modest merit is deprived?" So unreasonable are the doubts and complaints, in which the finite being indulges, respecting the wisdom and holiness of the Infinite; as if he knew whether the virtue which externally

shines so brightly, is internally also pure and spotless; and whether the vice, which he so unconditionally condemns, has not some unobserved moral qualities by its side. But supposing, beloved, that the censurer of Providence judged correctly in this case, and that he had seen vice really happy, and virtue really unhappy; are not the sufferings of the good man, whatever he loses on this earth, rewards for eternity? Let merit be always approved here below; let every wickedness be immediately followed by deserved punishment; let the most perfect balance be ever held between the moral goodness and the welfare of men; where would then, O mortal, be the endless object of thy destination? where thy hope of immortality, and of a better and blissful futurity? where the strength and elasticity of thy mind, with which thou overcamest the greatest obstacles and adversities? It is only the trials and troubles of this life, which form a great and good man, who has the firmness, even in death, to forgive those who have injured him; it is only silent meditations on the decay of this world's goods, which elevate the mind to the exhilarating prospect of a better world; it is only through calamities and sorrows that the hope of a blessed immortality is matured in our hearts into that cheering conviction, which to sensual fools is an unknown jewel.

Let, therefore, all-directing Providence be praised for all the unexpected events and misfortunes, which

with wise and gracious hand it has interwoven with human destinies; we discern, therefore, even in its incomprehensible dispensations, the tie with which it binds us and our hopes to a superior world; let then no doubt and no selfish weakness rob us of this consolatory truth, "Lord thou art righteous, and all thy judgments are just."

O that these considerations might avail, my friends, in leading us to just notions of the nature of Divine rewards and punishments, and in filling all our hearts with filial reverence for the Most Holy, the Almighty Lawgiver and Judge! May the testimony of an unpolluted conscience be able to deliver us all from that anxious fear of Divine vengeance, which is an inseparable companion of sin and vice; for "Fear," says St. John, "hath torment, and he that feareth is not made perfect in love;" but love which is perfected by Christian virtue, knoweth no fear, but rejoices, through Jesus and the merits of his teaching and his death, in the mercy of a holy and all-bountiful Father. What a great and enlivening thought, beloved! Thus then we languish no more under the burden of a hard and terrifying law, which resented every transgression with severe and tormenting punishments; thus we shudder no more at the terrors of death; thus we feel blest in the freedom of our

immortal spirit, through that religion which brings us unto salvation by faith, hope, and love; thus the voice of our heart calls upon us all to "live soberly, righteously, and godly," that we may be the children of God. Let the sinner then awake from the giddiness of error and passion, which despoiled him of his dignity, bound his mind in fetters, and exposed him to the contempt of his heart and perpetual uneasiness. Let, therefore, the pious and good man unweariedly seek the attainment of his grand aim, and find peace with himself, the favour of his Divine Father and Friend, and the enduring and richest reward of persevering virtue. May a heart full of love and zeal for Christian perfection, entitle us all to the delightful hope, that we and all, who rejoice in immortal life, through Jesus, may hereafter be adorned with the crown of virtue, which God the righteous Judge shall give us at that day.

SERMON III.

BY SCHMIDT.

ON THE ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF PRAYER.

SERMON III.

ON THE ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF PRAYER.

When, in the sacred hours of devotion, our mind is uplifted to thee, thou God of love! and when the heart is blest in drawing near to thee; then we feel most sensibly the high privilege of the Christian, to whom thou art Father, and the greatness of man, who may venture to address thee, although he is but dust and earth. We are thine, and thereby the entrance to all the riches of thy grace stands open to us, and the child rests glad and secure in a Father's arms. Joy, and trust, and faith, and hope, and strength, and courage, take possession of our hearts, and in evil as well as good days, we are contented, because we belong to thee. O, let us never forget thee, and let us seek in thy presence that pure and lasting joy, which the world cannot give. Teach us to pray with devotion and faith, and make our hearts susceptible of that bliss, which a pious intercourse with thee imparts. Without thee there is no peace, and the soul wearies

itself in the chase of worldly delusions. Thou alone canst appease its thirst; mayest thou fully satisfy it, here and in eternity! Rest on us thy spirit of strength and of prayer; even now we supplicate thee for it, as Jesus has taught us: *Our Father, &c.*

MATT. vi. 5, 6.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

ACKNOWLEDGE, my friends, in this direction for the right performance of a sacred Christian duty the superiority of the religion of Jesus, which removes all affectation of sanctity, all hypocrisy, and all pernicious superstition from our intercourse with God, and makes prayer the filial effusion of a pious, grateful, and confiding soul. If it is undeniable, that this elevation of the heart to the Supreme Being must become a necessity to every thinking and feeling creature, which not even the most thoughtless and dissolute can always dispense with; if the slightest conception has ever been entertained of the blessing which attends such hours of devo-

tion; it must appear incomprehensible, that what was most to be venerated, and conferred such blessings, should degenerate into idle ceremony; and that the expression of the holiest feelings should ever be exchanged for words uttered without thought, which deadens the mind and leaves the heart empty and cold. And yet our Redeemer found this abuse of what is most sacred general amongst his people. They had degraded prayer into a court-service, and thought to honour God, when they repeated words before him without consideration, and often and loudly addressed him, whilst they were far from him in heart and mind. They had converted their devotion into a trade, and prayed at the corners of the streets in order to be seen of men; that they might pass for pious, though their hearts were unclean and evil. They made many words, like the heathen, that they might without piety and faith, and merely through the charm of prayer, draw down heaven upon earth, bend the will of the Eternal, and extort his blessings; but as to the proper intercourse of a reverential soul with God, few amongst his contemporaries had any clear sense of it or any taste for it. The pious Man then taught men to pray, and opened to them therewith a new fountain of pure felicity; which hitherto had flowed copiously but for few. This is his merit, that he taught us to know the Father, and imparted to us a filial reverence of him, and only by these means was man

qualified for prayer, and made capable of its blessings. As long, my friends, as love of the world, indolence, and religious indifference, prevent thousands from performing this sacred duty; as long as one portion of Christians is ashamed of intercourse with God, or asserts it to be useless and a waste of time, and another with gross superstition considers prayer as rendering a service to God, and as a secret influence for biassing eternal destiny; as long as others with vile hypocrisy profane what is most sacred, and carry on a sordid trade with their sanctimonious manners; so long are the instructions and warnings of Jesus not superfluous, and meditation thereon may still be highly fruitful in disseminating a pure worship of God, and a genuine religious temper. And this determines us to call your attention to-day to two equally important defects, and to discourse at present on the abuse, and the neglect, of prayer.

When man discerns in the appearances of the visible world the eternal, invisible, creating Spirit, which animates and fills all things, and whose breath pervades the whole creation; when he perceives his power and wisdom and goodness in the smallest as in the greatest of his works, and does homage to the Exalted One, whom no eye can behold and no thought can reach; when every thing around him points to a hidden first Cause, and the mind which thinks within him makes him sensible of his

descent from this ineffable Being; then holy feelings are awakened in his breast, with high animation he utters the name of the Creator of worlds.—He, he alone, fills his whole soul, and his mute delight becomes a prayer, with which he praises that glorious Being, whose honour the heavens declare, and whose wonders the whole earth proclaims. At one time this holy feeling pours itself forth in loud hymns; at another it remains speechless, confined in the breast, the tongue devoid of utterance, and becomes the silent adoration of the soul in spirit and in truth. When man has a lively feeling of his dependence on this exalted Being, when he acknowledges his own impotency, and must be sensible that he is but dust which God's breath animates during his pleasure; when with all his efforts he cannot add one cubit to his stature, nor secure one hair on his head, and receives and must expect all that he has and stands in need of from the hand of the Lord of nature; then he prostrates himself before the Mighty One, who creates and destroys, who gives and takes away, who orders the whole destiny of man, his prosperity and adversity, and brings the thanksgiving and the wishes of his heart before him who knoweth the heart, and stammers out his petitions for the manifold gifts of life to him, who rules over inexhaustible abundance—the sense of his weaknesses and his wants inclines the soul to lift itself devoutly to God, and—he prays! When

man feels the iron stroke of fate, and vainly contends against the hidden power, to which kings as well as beggars are subject; when he struggles with severe trials and sorrows, and in the night of misfortune beholds no guiding star enlightening his path till the coming of a brighter day; then he pours out his lamentation before the Lord of fate, and implores consolation and help from the Mighty One, from whom help must come; he prays in anguish of soul; and faith and trust, peace and hope, return into the mournful heart. The exigencies of life lead the way to devout, indefatigable prayer; when calamity assails a man, he seeks God, and, when he chastises, cries to him in his agony. Is it not then incontrovertible, my friends, that prayer is as much a necessity for man, as it is the duty of a rational creature towards the Creator? Every reflection on God and nature and ourselves involuntarily raises the soul to him; every remembrance of our limited faculties and weakness leads us to him; every earthly want bears us from earth to the heaven above, where dwells our help, and every wish of the heart seeks to be expressed before Him, who can satisfy the wishes of the heart. And whoever has not in his own life felt any incitement to prayer, verily, he has renounced his rational nature, and lives like the beast, without the most distant idea of his superior dignity and his nobler calling. Must it not then surprise us that there can be any persons,

who have so little sense of holy things, that they profane these blissful outpourings of the heart to God, and convert prayer into an idle babbling, which gives the lie to devotion; who put on the semblance of godliness, whose power they deny? Men, who go forth with pious mien, and pray at the corners of the streets, with the crafty intention of being seen and praised, or who think that prayer is a service which must be agreeable to the Eternal, even when the heart has no participation in it, and knows not what the mouth speaks! Or those who ascribe a secret power to a multitude of words and the frequent repetitions of studied forms, and fancy they can give the law to heaven and turn fate by the charm of prayers uttered without devotion and without sense!

And yet there are hypocrites and superstitious persons in abundance, who know not the blessedness of a pious intercourse with God, and do not feel its necessity, and who exercise a mere trade with their affected sanctity; who would either deceive men, or prevail upon the Eternal to reward their thoughtless worship, and whose hearts are incapable of that sensibility, which true devotion must produce. "I tell you," says Jesus, "they have their reward." They defraud themselves of the happiest hours of life, and of the sublimest feelings of which the mortal breast is capable.

Yet, perhaps, the number of those is still greater

who do not consider it worth the trouble to deceive the world, and who entirely neglect and scorn prayer. The spirit of the time may be changed, but its fruit is not more gratifying than that of earlier ages. In the place of the abuse which was practised in prayer, an aversion from prayer has crept in amongst us, and superstition and hypocrisy are supplanted, not by the spirit of a purer sense of religion, but by levity and forgetfulness of God. Look into Christian families around you, look to yourselves and your nearest acquaintances. Where is that pious disposition of our fathers, which began and ended every thing with God? How many still think of making a quiet intercourse with him their most important and daily occupation, and of preparing themselves by devotion for the most decisive steps and the most momentous undertakings of their lives? How many can yet say with David, "It is good for me to hold me fast by God, to put my trust in the Lord God?" "Have I not remembered thee in my bed, and thought upon thee when I was waking?" We are become strange to him, and he to us: we fancy ourselves gods who do not need his aid; we ourselves create and govern, and imagine ourselves to be supreme. We emerge from the arms of sleep, and lay ourselves down to rest, we enjoy the gifts of the earth, and take the blessings of fortune, and no eye looks gratefully, no hand is raised adoringly, towards heaven. We often

hear prayer in the church, or at solemnities, or at the table supplied for our use, and we are ashamed so much as to clasp the hands before God; we act the part of absent men, and pity those weak persons, who are not yet able to break loose from the antiquated custom. We educate our children in all knowledge worth acquiring—the art of praying we hold unnecessary for them, and a generation grows up, to whom the first thing, which used formerly to be entrusted to the young soul to keep, remains unknown; and it is no exaggeration when I assert, that hundreds of adult Christians do not know nor understand even the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples. Thus we giddily proceed through life without God, and when at length his hand lies heavy upon us, and calamity reminds us of his existence and his power, then we have forgotten how to draw near to him; we are become strangers in our Father's house, love and faith and trust have departed from us, and we are alone with our pain, and without comfort, on the day of affliction.

Friends, if this is to be the fruit of our superior information, O then let us wish back again the times of pious simplicity and an unsophisticated fear of God; the world was then happier, and richer in nobleness of mind than in the enjoyments of life. The wisdom in which we pride ourselves does not replace that peace-inspiring belief in a higher Being,

who is a Father to us, and the independence of which we boast, does not render us so happy as the feeling that we belong to the Lord of Spirits, who accepts and guides with love those who come to him with love and a clean heart. O, ye know not what delights ye rob yourselves of, when ye shun acquaintance with the holy and gracious One, who ought to be all things to you! In the stillness of solitude the mind collects itself to more serious thoughts and to holy feelings; it is then nearer to that Being who fills all in all, and is blest in this proximity. Then is the soul elevated to God, the restless turmoil of earth and its low occupations disappear before the Eternal, and man looks on himself as a citizen of a higher world. Then faith and love and hope bear him on the wings of devotion to God above, and a heaven opens to the enraptured sight. Then confidence gives utterance to our wishes, and heavy distress is poured out before the Father in meek lamentation, and the heart beats with more ease and tranquillity. Then composure and consolation flow into sorrowing souls, and we collect fortitude from these hours to bear the anxieties of life, and God's strength proves mighty in the weak. Then we learn worthily to wage the hot conflict of life, and remain conquerors even in death. In every thing we triumph, for "Faith is the victory which overcometh the world[a]."

[a] 1 John v. 4.

O, all ye pious souls, to whom prayer is not yet foolishness nor a subject of ridicule, declare aloud to your brethren what enjoyment ye owe to conversation with God, and that ye have known no brighter and more delightful hour than that in which ye have lived to him and to yourselves alone. Tell them aloud, "one day in his courts is better than a thousand" spent elsewhere; and teach them that man, whether in prosperity or adversity, cannot do without his God. If in the storms of life and in severe trials ye have been indebted to a belief in his wisdom and love, and to the effusions of the oppressed heart before him, for rest and strength and comfort and serenity, proclaim it loudly, that faith and prayer were the firm supports which prevented you from sinking, and that there is no joy to be compared with that of holding fast by God.

May this pious temper again return to an erring generation; may the Holy One, who taught us to pray in spirit and in truth, find us obedient disciples! Ah! we stand in need of this temper in times of disturbance, of care, and endless confusion; and when the mind does not learn to seek refuge in God, it loses itself in the stormy tumult of life, and its fairest hopes and joys perish. Let us pray, in order to be acquainted with the God to whom we belong, and to whom we go; let us pray in the time of prosperity that he may hear us when we are in trouble. Let us pray in the stillness of soli-

tude and in the assembly of our brethren, where congregational devotion more strongly affects the mind, and excites feelings which disclose a heaven to us. Let us pray even in this hour, as Jesus taught us to pray. O, this hour is sacred to me, which has gratified the fondest wish of my heart, once again to pray *with you*, with you, whom no distance has estranged from the heart that loves: *with you* and *for you*, and for the welfare of this country and mankind. That the kingdom of God may come to us; that truth may spread abroad, and virtue predominate; that piety and the obedience of childhood may rest upon us all, and godliness be productive of a happy life; that our native country may prosper, and its revered prince enjoy a calmer evening; that his good disposition may descend upon all the sons and daughters of the country, and the fear of God dwell in the land; that we may be delivered from every trial of life, and that a better home may one day receive us into more perfect happiness;—this we beg in the name of Jesus, and with devout faith in a God of wisdom and love. To him, the Glorious and Eternal, be honour and thanksgiving and adoration, now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON IV.

BY TYSCHIRNER.

(Preached in 1816.*)*

THE WORLD PURIFIED BY THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD.

SERMON IV.

THE WORLD PURIFIED BY THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD.

COLLECT your thoughts, my brethren, and listen attentively to my words, for I shall solemnly address you to-day on the most solemn subject that the human mind can conceive—the judgments by which the Lord of the universe makes manifest his righteousness. I will direct your view to God, who sits in judgment on our sinful race, that veneration and pious awe may penetrate your hearts; but that then, when you perceive in the Judge the Father also, and discover in the revelations of his justice, the manifestations also of his love, trust and hope may mix with these feelings, and your meditation end in deep adoration of the highly exalted Being, who sits eternally enthroned in solemn majesty, and yet is a God of grace and compassion. But that you may rightly interpret my words, and estimate the divine judgments agreeably to the doctrine of Christianity, I shall first of all oppose a double error, which at one time misleads men into

uncharitable judgments, at another involves them in inextricable difficulties, and has often shaken their faith. This is partly the opinion, according to which the Divine justice is conceived as only occasionally acting, and consequently the Divine judgments are looked upon not as a continuing, but as an interrupted operation of God; and partly the presumption, that the misfortune, which falls upon individuals or on whole nations and ages, is the measure of their guilt. The living, the ever-creating and ruling, the all-pervading and all-animating God, whom Christianity teaches us to know and adore, never turns his eye from human affairs, never lets his arm rest, and does not, like an earthly king, rise but occasionally to chastise the disobedient, and to curb the daring. His justice as well as his goodness continues through all times, and is a progressive uninterrupted operation. Sin is unceasingly punished; retribution begins with the evil deed, yea with the evil intention, although in the external world it is often not visible till after a long time, and often not at all; for the laws of the holy Governor of the world are eternal and immutable, nothing stops his everlasting rule, which penetrates the whole world, " the Lord never suffers his eyes to sleep, nor his eyelids to slumber." But it is still more important to combat the opinion, that misfortune is the measure of guilt, which is then most clearly discerned to be error, when we con-

template the judgment of God gone out against whole countries and generations. For since in fact the generation which sinned, and the people that deserved its misfortunes, remain; but the individuals which compose the people or generation, change; it is possible, that the children on whom the punishment, the consequence of sin, falls, are less guilty than their fathers. Although, therefore, all are guilty, whom punishment, which follows sin, overtakes, (for all partake more or less in the universal guilt) yet we are not to take their misfortune as the measure of their delinquency, and assert that the nations and people whom great distress, occasioned by sin, has befallen, are guiltier than others. Hence it is that not all misfortune can be considered as punishment, and we have no sure marks by which to distinguish deserved from undeserved sufferings. For God sends calamity not merely to punish but to prove, and not only sin but nature also, (which destroys while it builds, and wounds while it delights), and the will of others, prepare sorrow and pain for man. Unmerited sufferings, therefore, often befal the individual, as well as whole people and generations. On this account, fate must not be the measure of guilt and of merit; and whoever attempts to adopt such a measure concerning individuals or nations, soon finds himself entangled in such difficulties, that he despairs of perceiving the hand of God in human affairs.

For this reason Jesus Christ has expressly declared himself in opposition to the opinion that every unfortunate is a criminal, and that the greatness of his distress testifies of his guilt, especially, when it was related to him, that Pilate had caused several Galilæans to be killed, while offering sacrifices in the temple. " Suppose ye," said the Lord to those who announced this event to him, " Suppose ye, that these Galilæans were sinners above all Galilæans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

But although the degree of calamity must not be taken as a criterion of the degree of guilt, we must nevertheless, if we believe in God, own his judicial dispensations in human affairs; and although his justice, as his goodness, pervades all times, yet it is visibly manifested only on particular occasions. Now the revelations of Divine justice, such events as attract the special notice of men, in which we clearly perceive a connexion of calamity and ruin with sin and guilt, we call the judgments of God, and must call them so, though the amount of merit and demerit may not be estimated by the fate that attends them. We see how a period of disorder and distraction, of bloody conflicts and unutterable misery, comes upon a whole quarter of the globe; and whilst we search for the causes of this ruin, we discover its foundation in the disregard of sacred

things and of right, and in a licentiousness and selfishness, which daringly breaks through the bounds of civil order, overturns every thing, if it can but raise itself, and allows itself every possible liberty and indulgence. We say with right, that the judgment of God is come upon the generation of such a period; for God has so ordered it, that calamity and ruin follow the moral degeneracy of nations and their rulers, without our being at the same time able to maintain, that the generation experiencing such calamity is more culpable than the preceding ones, which propagated the moral degeneracy in the succeeding age and prepared its ruin. We see how a nation that proudly and overbearingly exalted itself, and subjugated, plundered, and brought low the neighbouring nations, has been conquered and humbled. We say with reason, that the judgment of God has overtaken this people; for God has so ordered it, that oppression gives strength and courage to the aggrieved to turn against the oppressor, and to be victorious in the struggle of desperation: we say with reason, that the judgment of God has overtaken this people, yet without declaring them to be worse than other nations, or finding in the victory of their conquerors a testimony of their moral worthiness. We see the criminal receive the reward of his deeds. We say with reason, the avenging hand of God has seized him; for it is the dispensation of God, that civil

society expels from its bosom him, who has wickedly violated the rights of men, and thus the crime engenders his eventual downfal; we fairly acknowledge the judgment of God in the punishment of the offender, yet without determining the degree of his guilt, or asserting that he is worse than all the multitude who stand gazing around the scene of his disgrace. This, my friends, is the notion we ought to have of the judgments of God;—Revelations of his righteousness, significant events exciting attention, in which we discern the connexion of misfortune and ruin with sin and guilt, dark clouds which we see collecting from the vapours exhaled from the earth, and which, menacing destruction, hover now over individuals, now over whole nations. If we believe in God, we must seek and find manifestations of his justice in human concerns, and, therefore, consider events occasioned by sin, and productive of ruin, as Divine judgments. And if we only take care not to regard calamity as the measure of the guilt of those on whom it falls, and do not forget that we are all of us sinners, and consequently no one, who is involved in the general distress, is an innocent sufferer; then every difficulty is removed, and the belief in the righteousness of God exhibited in the world, without misleading us into uncharitable opinions, fills us only with reverence, pious awe, and humility. For in the whole circle of imagination there is nothing greater and

more sublime, more solemn and awe-inspiring, than the thought of God entering into judgment with the sinful race of men. This very solemn thought, however, has its bright and pleasing side, and in this resembles the moon, whose face towards the earth is at one time dark, at another bright and luminous. For even in his judgments God manifests his goodness, even in the solemnity of the Judge the love of the Father is displayed. We shall acknowledge this, if we contemplate the judgments of God as a purification of the sinful world. But let us to-day so contemplate them, that they may appear to us as thunder-clouds, which together with the destroying lightning send down fruitful rain; and that the gentle feeling of confiding love may mix with the solemn awe of our veneration.

MALACHI iii. 2, 3, 4.

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

HOWEVER we may expound these words, my friends, the Prophet obviously speaks of a Divine judg-

ment, which shall cleanse and purify the Jewish people. The day of the coming of the Lord is the day of judgment, and when the Prophet asks, "Who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?" he thereby warns his hearers of the awfulness of the Judge. But he teaches them to be mindful, not only of the judgment, but of its salutary consequences. "He, the Judge," saith the prophet, "shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." He here means to say, that this judgment is not merely a correction, but also the means of improvement, and that the nation purged and purified, freed from sin and reformed by it, will turn again to its Lord and God, and appear before him in righteousness.

What the Prophet says of a single transaction of God having reference to his people, may be said in general of the judgment which pervades all ages, and affects the whole race of men. It is a purification of the sinful world. Dwell awhile with me on this view of the revelations of Divine justice, and hear me with attention, when I discourse to you of the purification of the sinful world by the judgments of God, and shew you, partly, that we must consider the dispensations of Divine righteousness, as a purging of the sinful world, and partly, of what

advantage it is to take this view of the judgments of God. But the consoling persuasion, that the judgment of God is not only a judgment, but also a purification of the sinful world; that God, whilst he makes calamity and ruin to follow sin and guilt, not merely punishes evil, but also corrects and reforms it; is grounded on the holiness and wisdom, which we must necessarily suppose in the Supreme Being. For justice and goodness are inseparably united in that Holy One, who invariably wills what is well known to be good, so that his justice is manifested in the dispensations of his goodness, and his goodness in the exhibitions of his justice. It is the one sacred will, which we, viewing it in one light, call goodness, and in another, justice. Every revelation of Divine justice must, therefore, be a revelation of Divine goodness also; and however severe the countenance of the Judge, however dark his eye, however threatening his uplifted arm, may appear to us, we must, nevertheless, discern clemency in his severity, and love in his wrath. The thought of the Divine wisdom leads us to the same conclusion. For the essence of wisdom consists in this, that its every aim serves as the means for a higher purpose, and all these means and aims closely connected unite in one last object. We must then, since we ascribe the highest wisdom to God, admit that the objects of his justice, the punishments he sends forth over the sinful world, are, at the same time, means

for the attainment of other ends, means for the cultivation and improvement of our species, and that all his ordinances and dispensations meet in this last and highest object, to guide the human race to moral perfection. Thus the view of his judgments, as a purification of the sinful world, necessarily results from the holiness and wisdom of God. Therefore the Scripture also says of God, " He reproveth, and nurtureth, and teacheth, and bringeth again, as a shepherd his flock [a];" therefore it instructs us to consider the sufferings of life as chastisements, and chastisements as proofs of Divine love; and exhibits to us now the punishing severity of the Judge, now the forgiving love of the Father.

If we believe in God, we must believe in a judgment of God, which is conspicuous in the history of the world, and is shewn in whole nations and generations, as well as in individuals; for the ground of the connexion of distress and ruin with sin and guilt, can only be found in the will of him, who has given to the world its laws, and guides destiny according to his discretion. But we must contemplate this judgment as a cleansing of the sinful world, when we have acknowledged that the righteous Being is also all-gracious, and the Judge, the Father, and Preceptor, of our species. And now, if fate appears to us as God's judgment, and the

[a] Eccles. xviii. 13.

judgment as a purification of the sinful world, we look up with reverence, indeed, and holy awe, but still with trust and love, to him who "sits as a refiner and purifier of silver;" for the fire that he pours forth over the world, terribly as its flame may blaze, and painful as may be its effects, destroys and consumes not, it but cleanses and purifies; it resembles not the flame, which, raging, ungovernable, and destructive, rushes through the dwellings of men, but the fire which the artist with design and caution kindles in his laboratory, and renews and extinguishes at the proper time.

Thus the belief, that the sinful world is purified by the judgments of God, is founded on the belief in the Divine holiness and wisdom. But experience also corroborates it, (though it may not of itself fully warrant the belief) since it teaches us that such events as appear to us to be God's judgments, make manifest the difference between the good and the bad, extirpate much evil, and prove that which is good; and thus resemble the refining process, which separates the dross from the silver, consumes the worthless matter mixed with it, and hardens and proves the purified and generous metal. In the days of ease and prosperity the difference between the good and the bad does not, indeed, disappear, but yet it is obscured; the evil clothed in a pleasing exterior seems to approximate to the good, and the good finds less frequent opportunity

to display itself in its full strength, and to stand forth in its distinguishing features, discernible and visible to all. But times of great distress, times of disorder, contention, and confusion, render this distinction visible and clear; at such a period hatred and love, cowardice and courage, selfishness and devotedness, are seen in strong contrast; and good and evil appear as it were perfectly personified, and visible to all, in the heroes in virtue, and in the great criminals, which such times call forth on the public stage of the world. By this we may perceive that purification is the aim of the judgments of God.

But further, history also teaches us, that at all times much evil perished in the whirlpool of appalling events, and opinions, constitutions, and customs sank in it, which only the force of a devastating torrent could exterminate. Such an effect, for instance, was produced by the irruption of the nations which took place in the fifth century, and which appears to us as a judgment of God, that the Romans brought down upon themselves, first, by an insatiable spirit of conquest and an overbearing oppression of the nations, and then by a deep corruption of morals that made them weak and effeminate. Unspeakable calamity to the south and west of our quarter of the globe was the consequence of this event: many cities were destroyed, and whole countries converted into deserts.

But much that was evil and pernicious perished at the same time. Rapacious Rome, that had heavily offended against three quarters of the world, was destroyed, and the iron and burdensome yoke of her dominion was taken off the neck of the subject world, and the enervated effeminacy, and languid worn out existence of a degenerate race, gave way to the fresh life of ruder, indeed, but more youthful and vigorous nations. Or would you have an example from modern history? Consider the event, on account of which posterity will call our age the age of revolution. It was the judgment of God, which France called down by her thirst of conquest, which acquired, indeed, some provinces, but had wasted her wealth by her immorality; which dissolved the bands of domestic and social life by her infidelity; which shook the foundations of rectitude and integrity; and by the contentions of her citizens, one part of whom obstinately maintained oppressive privileges, and, by dissolute living, mocked at the general distress, while another would not acknowledge any distinction of ranks, nor comply with any ordinances. Inexpressible calamity was certainly the result not only to France, but to all Europe. But we must look upon this also as a purification of the world; for much that was noxious and pernicious was swallowed up in the abyss of revolution. It has taken away in many places privileges founded on relations long since changed, which one class

maintained to the disadvantage and detriment of the other classes of civil society, and removed the restrictions of the exercise of religion, which in most countries the stronger had imposed upon the weaker; equality of civil rights and freedom of divine worship, though some nations may not yet have the full enjoyment of these benefits, will accrue, as a permanent gain, from the ferment and the struggles of recent times, and will descend to future generations.

Thus the Divine judgment extirpates what is evil and corrupt, removes oppressive relations of life, puts an end to decayed forms of government, and changes the opinions and habits of nations. But at the same time it proves that which is good. It is misfortune that exercises moral strength, and tries charity, confidence, and courage. He who preserved his charity amidst the struggles of hostile passions; he who trusted in God, when destiny was enveloped in the gloom of night; he who stood firm and unshaken, even when the ground trembled beneath his feet; him has the cleansing judgment of God proved. That which is true and good must go through the storms of events that agitate countries and change the world, in order that its subsistence under every alteration of opinions, customs, and relations, may demonstrate its Divine origin, and its connexion with the essential wants of human nature; for we

justly assume, that the ground of such imperishable duration lies not in fortuitous causes, but in the Everlasting himself. Thus has Christianity been proved to be the work of God and eternal truth, since, in the midst of falling kingdoms and adverse schools of human wisdom, it survived and sank not, when a whole nation publicly renounced it, and half the world was unfaithful to it.

In this manner, my friends, our belief, that the judgment of God is a purification of the sinful world, is confirmed by experience. And now we see the judgment of the world in the history of the world, and in the judgment a cleansing of the world,—a cleansing which does not terminate, because sin does not cease,—but which benefits our species; destroying and wounding indeed, but also extirpating evil and proving that which is good. We must preserve this belief, that the world is purified through God's judgments, in the *first* place, for this reason; because that alone gives us a grand and solemn, and at the same time a consolatory, view of the history of the world. If you see nothing in the actions and destinies of nations, but a succession of bloody wars and quickly broken treaties of peace, of kingdoms rising and passing away, of countries separating and uniting; a multifarious picture, worthy of contemplation, is certainly exhibited before you, but not a great and imposing spectacle. For then it is nothing more

than a long line of common appearances, a long-continued play of the passions, incidentally varying, but essentially always the same. The history of the world, then, only becomes grand and sublime, when we perceive the Spirit of God moving over the depths of the stream of time, and behold the reflection of the Divine glory in the mirror of its waves. He only, who finds a manifestation of God in the history of the world, and in declining and rising kingdoms discerns him who "bringeth low and lifteth up," who "puts down the mighty from their seats, and exalts them of low degree;" he only can look with holy awe and high conceptions at the great spectacle of migrating nations, smoking cities, falling thrones, contending armies, and ruined empires. Solemn, indeed, and more than solemn,—dreadful and terrific is the Lord passing in judgment through the world; who destroys kingdoms that have become great only by conquest and plunder; delivers up enervated and effeminate nations to the disgrace of slavery; sends discord, tumult and rebellion into countries, that turn from him and mock at his holy laws; who punishes the injustice of kings by the rage of their revolted people, and the degeneracy of the people by the scourge of tyrants: and holy awe fills our souls, when we view in the flames consuming Jerusalem, in Rome's falling ruins, and in the horrible disorders of France, the avenging arm of the Judge.

To observe the history of the world as a continued judgment of the world, is a serious contemplation: but by means of viewing it in this light it acquires a religious character, so that we see in it not merely a spectacle of changing forms and appearances, but a manifestation of God; and though his finger is not always clearly to be perceived, yet we may every where be sensible of his rule and superintendence. And however grave and serious this consideration may be, yet it is at the same time consolatory, for this judicial visitation is also a purification of the world, so that not only the justice but also the goodness of God is revealed in it. God does not destroy the kingdoms which have been aggrandised by conquest and robbery, with this intent only, that they may crumble into ruins, but that it may be made manifest to the world, that every work of unrighteousness bears the germ of destruction within itself: he does not give up indolent and effeminate nations to the yoke of slavery, that they may wear perpetual chains, but that they should learn under oppression to be conscious of their strength, and raise themselves again with vigour and courage: discord and confusion are not spread through the people, who scorned what was just and sacred, that they may exterminate each other in endless civil wars, but that they may reform and return to God and to a regard for rectitude. The judging is also the cleansing of the world; and now

a consolatory view of the history of the world is opened to us, for we trace through its dark paths the steps of him, who bears the sword in his right hand, but the palm-branch in his left, who can indeed strike, but also heal, and turn mourning into joy.

To preserve the belief, that the world is purified through God's judgments, is, further, important on this account, because it exercises, especially in times when the government of Divine justice is more obviously apparent, an awakening and consoling influence on our hearts. Both the solemnity of the Lord in judgment, and the love of the Father cleansing the sinful world, must, when the judgment of God is revealed on us and our contemporaries, lead us to reflection, and from that to repentance, and from repentance to amendment. Every one shares, more or less, in the general guilt; we must, therefore, all bow in humility and contrition before the Mighty One, when he executeth judgment. No one is clean; it is incumbent, therefore, on every one, when he sees the visitation gone forth in the age in which he lives, to rise and meet God who would draw men to him by his visitations, and open his heart, that he also may be cleansed and purified, to that grace, which does not always descend as gentle dew, but sometimes as the fire of lightning.

Forget not then, my friends, the call of Divine

grace, recently emitted from tempestuous clouds; and keep the vows you made to God in the days of distress. The Divine judgment is a rousing from the sleep of sin; and happy are all they, who awake and stand up, and turn from levity and folly to serious wisdom, from luxury and licentiousness to pure morals, from selfishness and injustice to strict integrity and sympathizing charity, from a vain love of the world to that faith, which teaches us to overcome the world. And when the judgment of God leads to your sanctification, then, my friends, then you will feel the consoling power of the belief, that it is a purification of the sinful world. For then you will be certain through your own experience, that calamity sent from God has an object; and your conviction, that all the ways of God are wisdom and goodness, will rest on the surest grounds; so that you will be able to contemplate disastrous occurrences, if not without tears, yet without immoderate lamentation, and to support with courage and composure, whatever the time of visitation may compel you to bear.

It is, lastly, of advantage to maintain the belief that the world is purified through God's judgments, because it leads us to expect the maturing to perfection of our species. However often the goldsmith melts the metal and repeats the refinement; his end is at length attained, the silver lies before him, pure and spotless, clear and bright as crystal

or the dew-drop sparkling in the morning sun. In like manner must the design of God with respect to our race be finally accomplished. Long as the trial may last, often as the purification may be repeated, the day must come at length, when man unspotted and clean, freed from sin, and glorified, shall stand before his Maker and Fashioner. We are the children of God, but alas! have departed from the Father, and wandered abroad. Yet we are not for ever parted from home; we shall once again return and find our Father's house. Our souls are shapes of light proceeding from the source of all life and light. But their light is no longer the pure light of heaven; they are obscured by the shadows of earth, clouded by sin and error. Yet the obscurity will not last for ever, the shadows will pass away, the dimness will gradually disappear, and at last they will return to God in the same brightness, in which they at first proceeded from him.

All things are from God, and all went forth from him pure and good, for "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good;" all things return to God, for "in him and through him and to him are all things;" every thing, therefore, will be perfected again in its original purity and goodness. The design of cleansing, is purification; the end of enlightening, is admission to glory; home is the ultimate aim of the wanderer. Yes, God conducts our

species to a final consummation; a time is coming, in which there will be no more error, no hatred, no sin, no pain, and no death; when all will become light and glory, love and life, peace and bliss. This is the time to which the saying of the Apostle refers; "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Amen.

SERMON V.

BY REINHARD.

ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

SERMON V.

ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

"O PRAISE the Lord in his holiness, praise him in the firmament of his power, praise him in his noble acts, praise him according to his excellent greatness! Let every thing that hath breath, praise the Lord. Amen!" To take a higher point of ground than is usual, in order to obtain a wider prospect, and especially to survey our earthly life in its totality, we never feel ourselves more forcibly incited, my hearers, than on the morning of a new year. He who has just passed through a large period of time, and sees before him one equally large, can scarcely refrain from raising himself from particular to more general objects, and contemplating every thing more in the aggregate. For shall he not look *backwards*, in order to enquire what he has done in the past time, what progress he has made in it, what he may consider as finished, as acquired, as the clear profit of his exertions? Shall he not also eagerly direct his view *forwards* into futurity, in

order to consider, how much time may yet be granted to him; to determine what he has to do, to form a plan for the future, and to regulate his whole conduct? Lastly, the quick change of our years, their never-ceasing stream-like course, their almost inconceivable rapidity of flight, when is this more perceptible to us, than on the morning of a new year? But is not at the same time the representation of our whole earthly existence pressed upon us? Must we not be sensible, how short is its period, how lost it is in the abyss of centuries, how it vanishes into nothing, when we compare it with the existence of Him, who continues for ever as He is, and whose years have no end! Thus disposed to stand on higher ground, to extend on all sides your sphere of view, usually confined to daily concerns, and to elevate yourselves to the conception of what is great, general, and comprehensive, have you now assembled here; this I may assume with a degree of certainty. And how do I congratulate you on this frame of mind! Would you enter on the new year with meditations, with feelings, with resolutions, worthy of reasonable creatures and of true Christians, then must your minds burst the limits which ordinarily confine them, they must with thought unrestrained ponder over years and centuries, they must be conscious of a destiny and a dignity, which lifts them above all earthly things, they must adopt measures suitable to this

destiny and dignity, they must, in short, *observe the true position* which is allotted them in the immeasurable kingdom of God, and according to that direct and order their whole conduct. Our position in the immeasurable kingdom of God! What a consideration, my brethren! That we live in an universe, which stretches itself on all sides without bounds; that this universe is the work, the sphere of action, and the imperishable empire of the Infinite; that the place which we occupy in it is not the result of accident, but of the wisdom of Him who disposes and governs all things; that we are thereby brought into contact with the whole, into connexion with all that it contains, and into manifold relations with the same; that from these relations arise duties which we acknowledge and which we must fulfil, if we would answer the purposes of God, if we would not disgrace ourselves, if we would not offer a contradiction to the whole system, and plunge ourselves into misery: all this must be evident to us, this must employ all our meditations, this must determine all our resolutions and designs, if we wish to enter on the new year with reasonable prudence, and to pass through it with benefit to ourselves and others.

Raise then your view, beloved brethren; look well at your situation, and consider, on what theatre of his glory, in what part of his stupendous creation, in what station in his kingdom, God has

placed you. How will your breast heave and expand at this survey! how important will that period, which we this day commence, thus become to you; and with what confidence, with what resolutions, with what hopes, will you advance into it! We fall down then in adoration before thee, O thou Infinite, who "coverest thyself with light as a garment, thou who spreadest out the heavens like a curtain, thou who hast laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever." Make us understand and feel, with joy and elevation of mind, to what thou hast destined us, and let this hour be the commencement of thy blessings for this year! We supplicate thee in silent devotion.

PSALM ciii. 15—22.

As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more, &c. &c.

How wonderfully is the creation of God displayed to us in these words, my hearers, how immense is it represented to us! "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting," as the sacred Bard exclaims. Thus the creation of God is immeasurable in *duration*, and will never cease to be the happy scene of his grace and his love which blesseth all things. And who can comprehend its *extent?*

"The Lord hath prepared his throne in heaven," continues the Psalmist, "and his kingdom ruleth over all." Wide as the dominion of the true God extends, (and is not this dominion boundless, and do not suns and worlds fill remotest space?) far as this dominion extends, so far reaches the power of the Eternal; to him all things therein are subject. What numbers of creatures, what various beings endowed with feeling, what hosts of mighty and exalted spirits live and act in this immeasurable world! "Bless the Lord, ye his angels," says the sacred Poet in continuation, "ye that excel in strength, that do his commandments; praise the Lord, all ye his hosts; praise the Lord, all his works." And what sensations does the Psalmist himself experience at this view into immensity, at this song of praise of all creatures, at this all-embracing sovereignty of the Almighty? It is true, the feeling of his transitory nature, of his nothingness, first strikes him; alas! he appears as a flower which soon decays; as grass which suddenly fadeth away. But a glance at the mercy of the Lord, which "is from everlasting to everlasting," re-invigorates him; consoled he looks around him in the infinite kingdom of the All-gracious, he feels himself elevated as a citizen thereof, and at last cheerfully joins in the universal song of praise; with joy he cries out, "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

What a point of view is here opened to us, my

brethren! Where could we more appropriately celebrate the morning of the new year, than on a spot, which affords us prospects into the boundless creation of God, which every where displays to us the sovereignty of the Eternal, which reveals to us the wonders of everlasting goodness, where we hear on all sides the hymn of praise of God's happy creatures, and where we must observe in what relation we ourselves stand to the universe? Here then let us stay; here let us submit our meditations to the guidance of the sacred writer. Fruitful reflection on our situation in the immeasurable kingdom of God shall employ our thoughts. The author of our text describes this in all its bearings and relations; and we need only apply what he teaches us, in order to find it full of instruction and encouragement at the beginning of the new year. Our situation in the immeasurable kingdom of God is, according to our text, in its present state a most uncertain and transient condition; this should make us serious and humble at the opening of the new year. But it is a place within the sphere of everlasting Goodness; this should cheer and comfort us at the opening of the new year. It is a station in the dominion of supreme Righteousness; this should excite in us the most conscientious and ardent desire of improvement at the opening of the new year. It is a rank in the gradations of the noblest and most exalted creatures; this creates an obliga-

tion of the most generally useful activity at the commencement of the new year: lastly, it is a place, where we are surrounded by the songs of praise of all the creatures of God; and this should animate us, as we enter on the new year, to the most joyful worship of God.

Let us take a closer view of each of these relations. Our situation in the immeasurable kingdom of God is at present a most uncertain and tran sitory state, which the author of our text could ill conceal from himself, as it is the first thing which attracts his notice. "The days of man," he cries, "are as grass; he flourisheth as a flower of the field; when the wind goeth over it, it is gone, and the place thereof knoweth it no more." What appears to us more unimportant, my brethren, what do we tread upon with such indifference, as the grass which grows beneath our feet? But such is man in the immense creation, of such little moment is his life to the universe; thousands may die; millions may disappear; the lowly grass is dried up, and is not missed in the vast universe. What is more perishable than a flower? How quickly it fades away, when the scorching breath of summer blows upon it! But such is man and his vital power; so little may he expect a long duration; every trifle, every breath of calamity may destroy him: and how many families, tribes, and nations, have been so entirely swept away from the earth, that the

place thereof is no longer known! What shall we say, my brethren? Can we on looking at the immense creation of God deny, that our condition is highly uncertain and transient? Do we not daily see, how the tenderest plants of our species wither around us, how the fairest buds fall off while yet unopened, how the fullest blossoms fade, before they bear fruit? And we ourselves; doth not the killing blast blow on every side? Do not destroying powers every where surround us? Are we not every where subject to the dangerous hazard of dreadful accidents? Are we sure of our life for the next day, nay, for the next hour? And of what consequence will it be if we disappear? Will the vast universe undergo any change, will the order of things be disturbed, will the earth mourn over us? Are we not sensible, that scarcely in the nearest country, scarcely in the nearest town, scarcely even in the nearest houses, will it be perceived that we are no more, and our place will soon be no longer known? What a state, my brethren, what a position in the immeasurable, the everlasting kingdom of God! So many nations, so many races of men, so many generations has the heaven, which spreads its arch above us, beheld arise and pass away! What is the individual in this perpetual decay of all things? What is the moment of our life in the boundless duration of the world? Shall this not make us serious and humble on entering

the new year? Let no one however complain, that he is led to so dispiriting a contemplation on a morning, which one is wont to greet with joy. Ye, who know how shameful every deception is, how little is gained by concealment of the truth, ye wiser and better portion of my brethren, O shun not this contemplation; you it alarms not, that our condition on earth is so uncertain and transitory. Only so much the more seriously do we begin the new year; only so much the less indulge in idle dreams; so much the more reasonably contract our wishes; so much the more humbly do we acknowledge for what God has made us, and esteem ourselves no higher than becomes us. And now let the new year produce what it will, it will not surprise *us*, it will not disappoint *our* plans; we are prepared for all. But ye, who begin the new year with a high opinion of your importance, with arrogance and pride, shall I not tell you, "the days of man are as grass," which is trodden under foot with contempt, and that may speedily be *your* fate? Ye, who reckon on a long life, and pass your time in thoughtless security, shall I not tell you, "man is as a flower of the field, when the wind passeth over it, it is gone;" and may not this withering blast at any moment overtake you? Ye, who are absorbed in your schemes and your business, and are dreaming of the brilliant success you will achieve, shall I not cry to you, Yet a little while, and ye will be

no more; when one looketh to your place, ye are gone, and then all your projects are frustrated? Ye, lastly, who commence the new year with all your vices, with all your impetuous desires, with all your wild passions, and think to continue your excesses undisturbed, shall I not tell you, "all flesh is grass, and all its excellence is as a flower of the field;" shall I not remind you, in what jeopardy ye stand, and what haste ye must make to save your souls; shall I not exhort and conjure you, "To-day, if ye will hear the voice of God, harden not your hearts?"

A most uncertain and transient state is our present situation in the kingdom of God; this is the first impression we receive from the subject. So much the more gratifying must it be to us, that it is at the same time a place within the sphere of an everlasting Goodness, for this must fill us with comfort and cheerfulness on entering the new year.

How soon the sacred Poet in our text is exhilarated, my brethren! How soon does he moderate the painful feeling of his short-lived nature by representations of another kind! How he strengthens himself by a view of the grace and compassion of Him, who "hath prepared his throne in heaven!" "The mercy of the Lord," he cries, "is from everlasting to everlasting." The world then is to him the great theatre, the happy dominion of the all-embracing, all-preserving, all-blessing mercy of God; the theatre of a mercy which is "over all his works,"

which neglects none of his creatures, and which is glorified in the lowest as well as in the highest: the theatre of a mercy, which is never weary of doing good, by which this immeasurable universe is continued from century to century, and the influence of which is infinite and boundless as eternity. And is he not right, my brethren? Is not this view of the world confirmed by all we see in it? The wise order which combines all things; the fullness of life which every where abounds; the variety of creatures which fills all nature; the different ranks of beings gifted with higher and higher endowments, till they rise even to the throne of God; the immense abundance of good things diffused on all sides, the numberless kinds of enjoyment, by which every thing that feels and lives, is refreshed; the unutterable charm, the heavenly beauty spread over all things; is not all this the manifest operation, the speaking testimony, the everlasting glory of a mercy which knows no limits, and which has no other aim than the welfare of its creatures?

What a sphere of extraordinary grace has our globe, moreover, become through Christ! No, since the Son of God appeared on earth, it is not to be for a moment doubted that we stand under the inspection of paternal love which takes care of us, which ordains our whole lot, which tolerates our faults with forbearance, which seeks the enlightening, the improvement, and the moral cultivation of our mind,

which will ever preserve and guide us. We are placed, my brethren, within the sphere of action of everlasting Goodness, and we are surrounded by its all-prospering activity. But if this is our position in the infinitely vast kingdom of God, how comforted, how cheerful may we pass into that period of time, which this day commences! Although it may be wrapt in darkness, although it will ever be uncertain what may lie concealed in its womb; it is sufficient that we are not the sport of chance, no blind fate hurries us along; a Mercy, which is from everlasting to everlasting, encircles us; we live in its dominion; can any thing then befal us, but what tends to our benefit? Are you happy and contented in your situation? enter the new year with comfort; a Mercy presides over you which will maintain your happiness, as long as is good for you. Are you unfortunate in your circumstances and desirous of a change? enter the new year with comfort; a Mercy presides over you, which will better your condition, as soon as is expedient for you. Do you pine in want and poverty, and are the questions, "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed," to-day revived in you? enter the new year with comfort; a Mercy rules over you, which has compassion on all its works, which will open its liberal hand, and satisfy you also with good things. Are you troubled by a sense of your transgressions, and feel the reproaches of an awakened

conscience? enter the new year with comfort; a Mercy rules over you, which does not "deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities," which will pardon you for Christ's sake, as soon as you manifest a real change. Are you in a state of great weakness, and groan under the burden of a suffering frame? enter the new year with comfort; a Mercy reigns over you, which can be mighty even in weakness, and "will not let you be tempted above that ye are able to bear." Do you see death before you, and does every thing announce that your end is at hand? enter even ye into the new year with comfort, though it be your last; still a Mercy reigns over you, which "is from everlasting to everlasting," which will preserve you even in death, and carry you to a higher scene of its wonders and its blessings. How happy is our situation, my brethren! Within the sphere of everlasting Goodness, and surrounded by its beneficent acts and dispensations, will it be possible that we shall be in want of any good thing?

Only forget not, that our position in the measureless kingdom of God is also a station in the dominion of supreme Righteousness, for this should excite in us at the opening of the new year a zealous desire of real improvement. We are not placed in the sphere of a blind, or weak, or partial goodness, a goodness which arbitrarily distributes its favours and lavishes them on the unworthy. Hear the declaration of the Psalmist, "The mercy

of the Lord," he cries, " is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children, to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." The gifts, therefore, of that Mercy which rules over us are attached to conditions; the sphere in which this Mercy operates is also the dominion of a Righteousness, in which the commandments of a holy covenant are in force; a Righteousness, which administers its laws with the greatest strictness, which estimates the conduct of men with the most precise exactness, which sooner or later rewards every man according to his works. And we feel it, my brethren; our conscience speaks to us with a power which we cannot elude, " In such a station do we stand; there are certain laws which we are bound to observe :" it is by no means of little consequence, whether we fear or scorn the Lord, whether we keep his covenant or transgress it; in the first case only do we act as reasonable beings, in the last we disgrace ourselves and load ourselves with guilt.

How perfectly holy is the new covenant established through Christ, under whose laws we, as Christians, live! In that it is an indispensable condition, " He that nameth the name of Christ, let him depart from iniquity;" in that it is an essential doctrine, " Ye shall be holy and perfect as your Father who is in heaven;" in that it is an

irrevocable declaration, " Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." And does not experience daily demonstrate, that we are subject to the influence of a strict, incorruptible Justice? But if you forget what obligations your station lays upon you, and transgress the laws of God, what disorders will not arise, into what perplexities will you not fall, what wretchedness will you not incur, with what consternation will you not discover that no wickedness remains unpunished! in the dominion of supreme Righteousness every one receives his deserts! How serious, yet how gratifying; how alarming, yet how encouraging to us, my brethren, as we enter the new year, must be this government of supreme Justice! There is then but one way of converting the year now begun into a year of blessing, namely, real amendment. We must fear God, we must keep his covenant, we must be mindful of his commandments to do them, if we would prosper. Expect, therefore, nothing from the grace of God in the new year, if you arm his justice against you; he will, perhaps, spare you yet awhile, and give you time for your mind to become changed. But woe unto you, if his goodness, patience, and long-suffering, do not lead you to repentance; what wrath will you heap upon yourselves " in the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God!" Flatter yourselves not with the hope of being able to bribe the

justice of God, by an idle faith in Christ, by an empty affectation of piety, or by a reputable course of life in the eyes of the world. Have you not to do with Him, " who trieth the hearts and reins, who judgeth righteously, and with whom is no respect of persons ?" It is well for *you* on the contrary, who are sensible of the duties, which belong to a station in the dominion of supreme Righteousness. To cleanse yourselves more and more from all sin, to put on more and more that mind which the covenant of God requires of you, and to fulfil his sacred will with greater alacrity, with joyful gratitude, and with heartfelt love, will be your care and your continual endeavour through the new year. And what success will you not have, what progress will you not make ! In the empire of supreme Justice no good affection of your heart, no generous purpose of your will, no exertion of your powers in the performance of your duty, no honest endeavour, is unrewarded and without effect. The more faithful you are in small things, so much the more will be entrusted to you ; and if you strive in the new year to " seek, first, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all other things shall be added unto you." And what can better become you, my brethren, than this zeal to perform your duty ? Is not our station in the measureless kingdom of God, also a rank in the gradations of the noblest and most exalted creatures ; and shall not

this oblige us to the most widely useful activity, as we advance into the new year? How is the mind of the author of our text elevated, my brethren! What an alliance appears to him to exist between heaven and earth; in what a connexion does he behold himself with creatures of all kinds; what a series, what degrees of celestial beings and powers reveal themselves before his eyes! "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens," he exclaims, "and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments; bless the Lord, ye his hosts, ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure." Thus we live, my brethren, in a world, where all is in activity, where incalculable powers are in operation, where life and sense are every where in motion, where infinitely more exists than is perceptible to our outward vision, where there is an invisible city of God, where there are countless hosts of free and rational spirits, where there are those that excel in strength, mighty ministers of God, powerful celestial beings, soaring far above us. And yet we hold a rank in this holy, immeasurable city of God. For nothing is foreign to us in the whole universe, however great, sublime, and mighty it may be. We may turn to you with confidence, we may boast of a communion with you, ye angels of God, that excel in strength, exalted powers of the invisible world! Ye are spirit,

and so are we. Your reason raises you on high ; in us also the divine spark glimmers. Ye are free, and we also are capable of guiding ourselves. It is your employment to execute the commands of God, and to do his will ; this is likewise our calling. Ye are immortal, and cease not to praise the Lord ; we too are immortal, and we hope, we hope one day to be admitted into your choirs. Although, my brethren, we are allied by our body to the dust of the earth, yet the spirit which animates the body is a member of a superior order, a citizen of heaven; we are not, therefore, unimportant and of no value in the vast kingdom of God ; our position, even now, is a rank which associates us with the noblest and most exalted creatures of God.

But what an encouragement, what an obligation, to be active and generally useful, on beginning the new year ! What ! shall we do nothing in a world where all is active ? In a world where all things are of service to each other, should we become injurious to our fellow-creatures ? In a world where all things fulfil the will of God, should we act in opposition to it ? In a world where we have our appointed rank, where we are of some import, where expectations are placed in each of us, as well as in the highest angel, and in the wonder-working powers of heaven, in such a world should we either be wholly idle, or rather, perhaps, do evil ? Lay it, Oh lay it to heart, all of you, who this day com-

mence a new year! You are of some consequence in God's creation, for he has not endowed you with faculties to no purpose. You are reckoned on in the order of things, for God has not in vain placed you in a condition in which you may and ought to work. You have the means of conducing to the importance of the world; for if you are what you ought to be, if you but perform the duties of your vocation with zeal and fidelity, if you but make yourselves as useful as possible in your circumstances, and become the benefactors of all those, whom you have the power to serve; how much will be effected by your means! how will your utility increase with every day! what blessings will you diffuse in the year now commencing!

And should not the view of our connexion with the higher world, of our alliance with the angels of God, with them of surpassing strength who execute his commands, should not this animate us, my brethren? Should we not feel, how great and noble it is to act in concert with such beings, and to promote the same ends? Should we not joyfully strive to emulate them, that the will of God may be done by us on earth, as it is by them in heaven? Happy year, that begins to-day, if such sentiments inspire us! How much shall we accomplish in its course, what support shall we give to each other, how much will every where be achieved, how will all the burdens

of life be lightened, and what cause shall we have, together with every thing in existence, to praise the goodness of Him, whose mercy is over all his works!

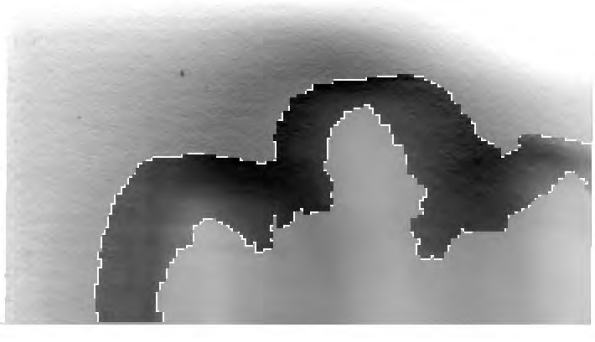
For it is evident, my brethren, it is evident, that our position in the wide empire of God, is, lastly, a place, where the song of praise of all the creatures of God encircles us; and that should incite us to the most joyful worship of God at the beginning of the new year. "Bless the Lord," thus the Poet in our text concludes his sacred song, "bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion." And does not in fact this praise of the Lord resound on all sides? Do we not in every place perceive the ebullitions of delight and of veneration, with which all creatures do homage to him? How happy is our situation in this respect also, my brethren! Are we not surrounded on earth by creatures, which owe every thing to the Father who is in heaven? Do we not see with our eyes that he clothes the flowers of the field, and nourishes the birds of the air? Do we not daily experience, that he openeth his bountiful hand, "and fills all things living with plenteousness?" Is the beauty in which all nature shines arounds us, is the expression of well-being manifested by all creatures, are the voices of pleasure and of joy every where loudly uttered by beings endued with feeling, any thing else than a hymn of praise to the Almighty? And

what a prospect, my brethren, what a prospect into the rest of the creation does our place in this globe afford us! What suns and worlds occupy all space in heaven! What regulations and arrangements do we every where observe for the purpose of diffusing life and happiness! Is it not manifest, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another; there is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them [a]." And shall we not join in this homage of all creatures of God, in this hymn of praise of all Nature? Shall we not cry at the beginning of the new year, "Bless the Lord, O my soul?" Yes, my brethren, a calm, untroubled, and cheerful adoration of God becomes true Christians. The Creator and Lord of the world is their Father; with filial trust may they apply to him, and may expect from him whatever is good, great, and blessed, for Christ's sake. And should they not have confidence, should they not rejoice in the Lord, and "be careful for nothing, but in all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let their requests be made known unto God [b]?"

What ground, moreover, have we in this new year for the joyful worship of God! We commence it in

[a] Psalm xix. 1, 2.

[b] Phil. iv. 6.



peace, and silenced is the noise of arms which surrounded us in the preceding year; the terrors of war, which we also were compelled to feel, have vanished; order is again restored, and fresh blessings will return with it into our families. And the preserver of order in our native country, the man, who protects it by the holy strength of his virtue, the father and benefactor of his thankful people, our sovereign, is he not once more in the midst of us? Is not the high esteem, which is the fruit of his wisdom, his tranquil greatness, and his piety, the pledge of our preservation? May we not be confident and look for new blessings, so long as he is at our head? Let us then, my brethren, begin the new year with lively expectations, and with sensations of joyful gratitude; let us now at the very outset unite our entreaties, that God may bless the king and his house with all good, that He may still continue to protect and prosper the whole country of our fathers, that peace may dwell in our houses and safety in our walls; that He may dry up your tears, ye that are afflicted; soothe your griefs, ye that mourn; and alleviate your departure, all ye that in the course of this year will leave us, and be removed into His kingdom above. And let us not cease to exclaim together, "O give thanks unto the Lord, and call upon his name, tell the people what things he hath done. O, let your songs be of

him, and praise him, and let your talking be of all his wondrous works. Rejoice in his holy name; let the heart of them rejoice, that seek the Lord [c]." Amen.

[c] Psalm cv. 1, 2, 3.

SERMON VI.

BY BRETSCHNEIDER.

THE SOULS OF THE DEAD NOT PERMITTED TO REVISIT THE EARTH.

SERMON VI.

THE SOULS OF THE DEAD NOT PERMITTED TO REVISIT THE EARTH.

MAN sees but the present clearly and distinctly; obscure is the past, concealed from him the future. The images of what has past in our own life fade away more and more every year, and one object after another recedes from the light of certainty into the twilight of uncertainty, which is spread over all former time, and is lost in thick darkness at the point where our consciousness, for the first time, like a ray of light, illumined our being. More hidden from us than the past is the future. Human sagacity, indeed, foresees some few things, but this is but as a drop in the stream of future events, and all foresight ends at the grave. Beyond this all is veiled from us in the deepest obscurity. We shall continue to be, we shall receive retribution: so much we know. But no human eye penetrates into the mysterious land of reward, and never, never has it been permitted to any deceased being to return

to this life, and inform us of things beyond the grave. For all which credulity or superstition has not seldom related of apparitions of the dead, has been found, on examination, either a fraud or illusion. Fruitless too has it been, when friends have entered into an agreement, that whichever of them died first, would appear again to the other, or would, at least, give him a visible proof of his being still in existence: for such a reappearance has never resulted; the kingdom of the dead is firmly closed, and no mortal ever breaks its mysterious seal. But unbelief seizes on this with eagerness; on this account it triumphs and laughs at the hope of the believer, as a pleasant, but groundless delusion. Every thing which reason, every thing which religion offers, of power to elevate the soul to the hope of immortality, it thinks to confound with a single word. It says openly, that if there were an immortality, *one* of the dead must some time appear again upon earth; and it declares undisguisedly, that it will hold the expectation of immortality to be an idle hope, until one of the dead shall have risen and returned into the land of the living. The virtuous also and believer, cannot sometimes refrain from wishing, that the departed might again appear to the living, and by their presence and their assurance might make them certain of an immortality, and instruct them as to the nature of the life after death. They flat-

ter themselves, that unbelief would thereby be fully confuted, every doubt overcome, the necessity of a virtuous life incontrovertibly demonstrated, and a general improvement of the human race infallibly effected. This was also the hope which the rich man, in the instructive story of this day's Gospel, entertained. But Jesus contradicted it, and gave the assurance, that unbelievers would not believe, and the vicious would not become virtuous, even if the dead could and might reappear and preach amendment. To convince you of this, you will, perhaps, my friends, think it difficult. You still, perhaps, believe, that such appearances must produce a great effect. But, in truth, neither more faith nor more virtue would, on this account, be found amongst men. Let us now consider further on this subject, and for the strengthening of our faith, and to invalidate so common an objection against immortality, let us endeavour to be persuaded of the truth of the assurance of Jesus.

LUKE xvi. 31.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

THE narrative of Jesus concluding with these words is one of the most instructive to be found in Scrip-

ture. It pourtrays a luxurious rich man, who entirely surrendered himself to sensual enjoyment, and followed the principle, " eat, drink, and be merry, for death puts an end to all things," but who after death found it quite different from what he had expected. He had five brethren as dissolute as himself, and abandoned to the same fallacious opinions. He intreated that Lazarus might be sent to them to testify, that is, to bear witness to them, by his presence and information, of the continued duration of the human soul, and the recompence of good and evil, that they might amend their lives. For he hoped that they would be so much struck by the reappearing of the deceased Lazarus, or some other from the dead, that they would reform and believe in eternity. Yet Jesus assures us, that this desire never can be gratified, and that if it could, it would be of no use. There are, doubtless, not a few, who wish that such a reappearance of the dead might be possible, and who believe, that it must have the most important consequences in the improvement of men, and in confounding unbelief. Why then has God not permitted the souls of the dead to appear again to the living, in order to place the immortality of the soul beyond all doubt? Our Gospel sets forth three reasons why God does not allow this, since Jesus declares it to be, first, *impossible;* secondly, *quite superfluous;* and thirdly, *useless,* even if it did take place.

In the first place, then, the Lord declares such a reappearance to be impossible. For as the rich man expressed the wish that Lazarus might be sent to him, to mitigate his torments, he received for answer;—that there was a wide and impassable gulf fixed between the souls of the blessed and the cursed, that none could go to the other side, but every one must remain in the spot which God had appointed for its abode. But if no soul may leave the place of reward or punishment, it is also evident that none can return to their old dwelling-place, this earth, and appear in any visible shape to mortal eyes. But what Jesus here declares impossible, reason also admits to be so, after mature reflection. It is, namely, impossible in itself, that the souls of the dead can be seen with our bodily eyes. The soul itself is a spirit, consequently not visible to the eye of the body; and supposing even it were not entirely an incorporeal essence, but of the finest substance, it would still be just as invisible to our eye as the air, and many other invisible acting powers in nature. Souls, therefore, separated from their bodies, can never become an object of perception to our senses. Should we, however, admit that the souls of the departed, on entering the regions of immortality, are again united to new bodies, which might be perceptible to our senses, yet according to the laws of gravity, they would be fastened to their dwelling-place, by means of these

bodies, and could not leave it to revisit our earth. They would then be in the same situation in which they were here, where they were confined to this earth on account of their union with the body, and could not leave it, in order to go into another globe. It seems also impossible, that a spirit becoming perfected should ever have a desire, freely and of its own accord, to return again to the earth, and to hold intercourse with this imperfect world. If there are extremely few men who desire to begin life on earth over again, how should an immortal voluntarily wish to come back to the scene of earthly imperfection? And did such an one wish it, and were it possible, that he could be manifested to our senses; is it to be imagined, that such a journey to our earth would be compatible with the destiny for which the blessed spirits live, and that souls could ever quit the state of retribution? Viewed on all sides, the reappearance of the dead seems to us an impossibility. But supposing, again, that their return to earth were possible, yet would the recognition of them be impossible; we should never be certain that what we saw was actually the person we had known. One may boldly call upon every one, who entertains a wish that the dead might again appear, to declare, in what manner a deceased person should or could convince us, that it is the same whom we have known in life, and by what means he could impart information to us respecting

his condition and that of the dead. It is the body by which we know each other here, but the body of every one departed this life moulders in the grave. By what then should we know the souls of our acquaintances? By this, perhaps, that they disclose to us the peculiarities of their character. But how uncertain is this distinction, and how similar are men in principles, sensations, and that which we call character? Or shall they be known by this, that they remind us of secrets, which we know they alone were acquainted with? But how few men have such secrets!

And who could answer for it that a thousand other spirits do not know our secrets perfectly well? Who, (and that is the worst) who could ensure us, that other spirits, and those perhaps hateful to us, might not in this manner deceive us with vain hopes, or distress us with idle fears? By what then could we know, how discern by our senses, that an apparition presented to our view was actually the soul of a human being? And how could such a spirit instruct us concerning futurity after death? By words possibly. But in order to produce words, the organs of speech of the human body are requisite, which defunct persons no longer possess. They cannot, therefore, speak after the manner of men, and in tones audible by human ears. How else then shall they communicate with us? Shall they, perhaps directly, cause thoughts

and sensations to arise in our minds, without our observing their presence with our senses? But how then could we distinguish these thoughts and sensations from our own, how be assured that it is the spirit of a deceased human being, which directly affects our spirit? And could such an impression, which must ever remain a mystery to us, be called an appearance of the dead? And would it have power to convert the unbeliever, and confirm our hope of immortality? Thus, contemplated on all sides, the re-appearance of the dead, the recognition of them, and the receiving of instruction from them, is quite impossible and inconceivable.

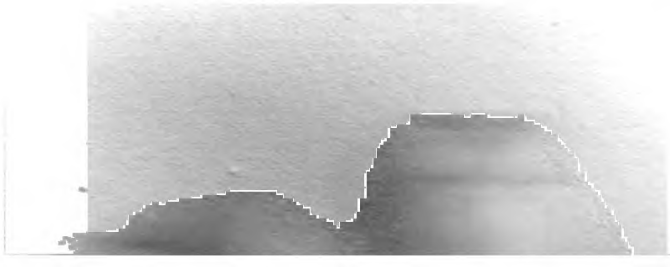
This is also corroborated by experience, which has never been able to produce a single credible instance of such a reappearing of the souls of the dead. For all supposed experiences of this kind have been at last proved to be fraud or delusion. Even Jesus after his resurrection appeared, not to his friends in the spirit, but in the body, and it was the latter by which his faithful ones knew him. When, therefore, the unbeliever, like the rich man in the Gospel, requires, that the dead should first appear to him, before he can believe in immortality, and when the man of anxious mind wishes such an apparition, that at least all doubts may be dissipated, and a powerful stimulus to reform given to sinners; then the former demands and the latter desires something impossible. But every demand

extending to what is impossible, is unrighteousness; and every wish coveting what is impossible, is folly. But such a reappearing of the dead is, secondly, entirely unnecessary and superfluous; for we have, as Jesus says, or makes Abraham say, "Moses and the prophets," whom we should hear; that is, we have already so many valid reasons for the immortality of the soul, that no further confirmation is necessary. It would be superfluous here to discuss at length the grounds which reason and revelation offer for the certainty of immortality. I have only this to remind you of, that these reasons must be fully satisfactory to us. Let us first refer to the arguments of reason. With what right does the unbeliever reject its conclusions, with what right does he ascribe a greater certainty to the perceptions of the senses? A double power of discernment was given to mankind by the Creator; the senses, which are in the body, for the material objects of the visible world, and reason, a power of the soul, for invisible things, and for the truths of the understanding. Both powers of discernment are gifts of the Creator, both bestowed on us with the same intention, although the objects are different; both, therefore, are of equal value, both afford equal certainty, and deserve equal credit. It must therefore be sufficient for us, if reason gives us good grounds for the truth of any supposition, and it is clearly an useless scepticism when we expect proofs

through the senses for objects of rational discernment. We must rather confide as much, and as firmly believe in the decision of reason respecting invisible things, as in the decision of the senses respecting visible objects. And as we require no proofs from reason, that the corn looks green, although some with distempered sight may assure us it appears to them red or yellow; as we require no proof from reason of the existence of distant visible objects, although some short-sighted persons assure us they can see nothing; so little need have we to demand a sensible proof of our duration after death, though some, whose minds are disordered by vice, by an evil conscience, or by scepticism, will not give credit to reason. Yet it is not the argument of reason alone which we should hear; we have also a confirmation in the doctrine of our Lord. We have numberless declarations in his divinely accredited word; we find in his person, in the sublime work of redemption, which he effected by his death, and through which an entrance has been opened to us into a blessed eternity, we find in his glorious resurrection and in his ascension to his heavenly Father, the most sufficient surety that we are immortal. What further testimony do we want? Can any thing afford us a stronger assurance that men are designed for eternity than this, that God sent his Son to them? Can any thing be a surer pledge to us of immortality, than that Jesus insti-

tuted an atonement, by which we are saved from eternal death, and dedicated to everlasting life? Can man in the dust ask more of his Creator than these assurances and this pledge, which we have in Jesus?

Nevertheless if we would still require any other proof of immortality through the senses, we have one at hand, which certifies it to us as strongly and more strongly, than the problematical appearance of any deceased person; namely, the sight of the immense universe and the countless glorious dwelling-places, which God has created for rational beings. Our eyes behold with deep admiration innumerable worlds spread over heaven's space, all which outwardly have much similarity with the earth we inhabit, and are evidently far greater and more brilliant theatres of the majesty of the Creator, than the small globe on which we live. But what further evidence, my friends, do we need? Why should the souls of the dead descend from the abodes which Divine mercy has allotted them, to assure us, that the precious word of Jesus our Lord is true, when he says, "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." Do not our delighted eyes clearly behold these heavenly dwellings? Can any thing else more strongly persuade us of their existence, than the admiring view of them itself? With what right then can the unbeliever demand, and the wavering wish, that the spirits of the dead should assure us



of the certainty of immortality? Have we not the strongest proofs, supported too by the sight of the visible universe, which do not leave room for the smallest doubt?

Supposing, however, that we really received the confirmation of our hopes by means of the dead reappearing, still, 3dly, such a reappearance would not convince the unbelieving nor reform the vicious, and consequently is quite useless. Unbelievers and profligate men are too apt to say with the rich man, 'Certainly, if one arose from the dead and preached to us repentance, then we would, then we *must* believe, and we should immediately amend our lives.' But Jesus assures us this is a vain expectation. "If," says he, "they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." That is, if the grounds, with which reason and revelation furnish us for believing in immortality, have no influence on our minds, neither would it make any impression, if the dead returned, appeared, and preached to us. And in truth, my brethren, so it is. Neither faith nor virtue would gain any thing by it; unbelievers would not be converted, the vicious not be amended. For supposing it were possible that the dead could appear and instruct us, yet we should never be quite certain of these apparitions; they would lose their power through custom and length of time; and lastly would rob our virtue of all that can give it

any worth. We should never be quite certain that we were not deceived; we should always, therefore, be in doubt, whether they were really the souls of departed men, which appeared to us. This lies in the nature of the thing. The appearance of the dead would naturally always have something enigmatical and incomprehensible in it. No means can be conceived, as we have already seen, by which we could be fully persuaded, that any apparition was the spirit of one who was dead, and nothing could give us a surety, that such a spirit really reported, and could report, to us the truth. Such apparitions, therefore, would always leave great scope for incredulity, and even he who would gladly believe, would never bring his conviction to the requisite degree of certainty. What then could be expected from these apparitions? How could they produce considerable effects? How convert the unbeliever and doubter, since the latter questions or rejects much more palpable and fully proved truths? If, however, we assume that we could be certain with regard to appearances of this kind, yet they would lose all power over our minds through custom and length of time. Do you doubt that, my hearers? Well then, let us attend to experience. It is universally known and confessed, that the impression which great events at first excite, gradually becomes weaker, and is at length effaced. You find perhaps examples of this in your own lives.

Now should the dead but seldom appear, perhaps only once in a generation, or but once to every man, the first impression would then indeed be striking; but its strength would wear out with every month and every year, and at last cease to operate. But should these appearances be of ordinary occurrence, they would have far less influence; for we become indifferent to the most remarkable and extraordinary things, by being accustomed to them. The knowledge alone of the future, the danger, the punishment, is truly insufficient to make men wise. What avails it, when the physician points out ever so clearly to the sensualist, that he is preparing for himself an early grave? What avails it, when the intemperate man, the glutton, the voluptuary, sees before him numerous examples of wretchedness, to which these vices lead? What impression does it make, when the spendthrift sees his fortune daily diminishing, and can calculate the day on which he will be poor? What profits it that the thief, the highway robber, has daily before his eyes the place of execution, and may foretel his lot from the example of others? It profits nothing, as experience testifies! The first impression fades away by degrees, and frequent recurrence deprives it still more of its power. Those, therefore, who despise the voice of reason and revelation, the voice of the wisest men and the most evident experience, would not believe and be reformed, "though one rose from the dead."

Represent to yourselves, my friends, that you would convince a company of persons born blind of this truth, that we shall enter after death into a new and more glorious world, for that our Lord has assured us, there are many mansions in his Father's celestial house, and that there a new and blissful abode is prepared for us. Suppose they doubted, and replied to you, 'How idle is the hope with which you would console us! Where are the mansions of heaven of which the Lord speaks? If they exist, why have we no perception of them through the senses? No, we cannot believe in this hope, until we see and perceive the heavenly dwellings.' Imagine, further, that the eyes of these born blind were opened, and the splendour of the sun, the moon, and the innumerable stars of night, poured upon their vision. Then they would fall down and adore, then they would say, 'Yes, now our hearts believe, for our eyes behold worlds on worlds. Yes, we shall be immortal.' But how long, my friends, would this impression last? Do you yourselves furnish the answer. In a short time they would look upon the universe with as much indifference, as that with which an unbelieving and profligate man, who has seen it for years, looks upon it; they would doubt as much and require fresh proofs, as do many who *see*. Can you then still think, that apparitions of the dead would have a different result?

But if such apparitions could really produce that great effect upon unbelieving and vicious men, which people are so inclined to expect, our virtue would thereby entirely lose all that gives it any degree of merit. The Deity, who has given us so many pledges of his grace in our reason, in revelation, in the sight of the world and of heaven, requires of us, and with justice, trust in his word, faith in his promises; he requires the obedience of faith, that is, that we should hold his word to be true, which he has revealed to us in the Scripture and by our reason, and that we live righteously and die confidently in the belief of it. The virtuous, whose virtue, the pious, whose trust proceeds from this faith, is a true child of God, his life is a real service of God, for by love and faith in God he overcomes the world, iniquity, and death. Without beholding with his eyes the rewards of the future world, he is virtuous, and trusts in his heavenly Father, that he will reward him. Without seeing with his eyes the punishments of the future world, he shuns wickedness, because he knows it is against the will of his heavenly Father. And this faith it is, which renders our virtuous actions well-pleasing to God, and gives them their worth in the sight of men. But if the dead must first come out of their graves, in order to confirm by their testimony the word of God which is in us and in the Scripture; if we will not believe and follow the

voice of God, but only our own eyes and ears; we have then no merit, our virtue is no longer a service of God, no longer the fruit of a filial disposition, confiding in God. If, therefore, it is impossible in itself, that the dead should appear again to the living; if such a reappearing is quite superfluous, since the hope of immortality already possesses the most perfect security; and if, lastly, it would neither convert unbelievers, nor reform the dissolute, and in general have no important effect; we must surely see, how foolish is the desire for such apparitions, and with what little ground the want of them is considered as a palliation of unbelief in immortality. For to desire what is impossible, unnecessary, and useless, and moreover to reject what is most worthy of belief and most clearly proved, is either folly or wickedness.

No, my friends, let us not be guilty of this folly. Our belief in the life after death has exactly that degree of certainty and clearness, which is expedient for us. It is strong enough to incite us to a godly behaviour, without making us unfit for the business of this life; powerful enough to raise us above the sorrows of this life, without making its enjoyments tasteless to us. More light would dazzle our understanding, more certainty would rob us of the joys of life. We should "live by faith and not by sight:" "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," neither shall it here appear. We should ex-

ercise ourselves in hope, and trust in God, and learn obedience. Happy they, who understand this, and preserve their faith and virtue! What they here believe, their eyes shall one day behold; that which they strive after, they shall succeed in obtaining; that which they hope, shall become certain truth. For never, never can the word in us and the word in Scripture deceive us. Both come from God, and God is truth.

SERMON VII.

BY VEILLODTER.

ON BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY.

SERMON VII.

ON BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY.

To all who depart hence as good men, the morning of a better state of being, of light, and of freedom, dawns on the other side of the grave. If we shall have faithfully finished our course, then it will be well for us in the evening of our pilgrimage! The good man wearied expires calmly, while he believes that he shall awake with new strength for immortality. Good is it for us, when once our eyes are closed from the charms of this earth; then we behold the greater wonders of eternal love in a fairer region. Good for us, when we have gone through the conflict of the hours of trial; the tears of sorrow flow not in the abodes of peace. Happy we, when we escape from the glooms of this life, there brightness awaits us, there we find what we so earnestly longed for here below, truth and freedom, freedom from the infirmities which here oppressed us. Yes, there we shall be nearer thee, O exalted Being, to whom we here uplift ourselves with holy

desire. We adore thee with thanksgiving, O Father, who hast given us the bliss of this faith, hast planted it in our souls never to be extirpated, and confirmed it to us through Jesus Christ. We supplicate thee with peaceful confidence; ah, strengthen us, that we may pursue the way to heaven, that our path of life may end serenely, that soft repose may overshadow us, when once the sun of our life sinks, that we may breathe our last with joy in the faith of immortality! Amen.

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1 Cor. xv. 19, 20.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

Whoever solemnises, with cordial participation and religious sentiments the two important festivals of the termination of the life of Jesus and his reanimation, experiences a gentle transition from sad melancholy feelings to bright, animating, and joyful sensations. Transported from the field of death, he now sees himself on the theatre of life, where sublime hopes, and prospects of infinity, fill his heart with joy, and he embraces the doctrines of religion with holy thanksgiving. The moment of thy parting from the earth is a regeneration to life, an awaking in a clear morning, an arrival in a lovelier

country, a passing into bliss. Pain and joy, common in thy life-time, affect thee for the last time in death; the last convulsion of thy corporeal covering shakes them off, and opens the way to the spirit for a free upward flight. A few days since we were assembled for the serious and mournful celebration of death; to-day it is the festival of immortality which we here celebrate with songs of praise. Then we saw virtue glorified by the sufferings of that noble Being, who was true to virtue in a state of trial; now we think of the faithful perseverance rewarded, the spirit liberated from its oppressive confinement, his holy desire satisfied in a better world, his faith crowned, his hope confirmed. "Christ is become the first-fruits of them that slept." As he awoke again to dwell for a short time in earthly existence, so do we awake to a heavenly life, when once our eye is finally closed; so does this life, full of toil and conflict, end in triumph; so does the last moment appease the longing of the weary for liberty; so does he pass from the circle of his weeping friends into the circle of them that receive him with hymns of joy. O, if we had not this high belief, how dark would human life be! what an enigma the destiny of man! How devoid of developement, satisfaction, and achievement, the knowledge of mortals, their search after truth, their aspiration for improvement! how hopeless the condition of many a sufferer, how fearful the evening

of life, how terrible in its approach the night of death! Did religion, says the Apostle, open to us no prospect into a more perfect and blessed state, how wretched should we be! Yes, the belief in immortality is a great, universal, and deeply felt, a real, not to be suppressed exigency of the human heart! It rests, not to be eradicated, in our inward breast; it maintains itself against all attacks of doubt. He too, who led astray, to his misfortune, has allowed this belief to be shaken, feels yet a longing for a firmer hope, painfully feels how much serenity, moral strength, comfort, and peace he loses by his doubts. Let us in this sacred hour contemplate the belief in immortality with this view; let us unfold our feelings, our perhaps yet gloomy feelings; let us thus worthily celebrate the feast of him that is risen again, that we may confirm our faith in one of his most valued doctrines. *Belief in immortality is necessary for the human heart!* Let this be the truth which shall employ us in this sacred hour. Let me prove it, and then draw some conclusions from it.

Every thing is really necessary to us, which we absolutely cannot dispense with, without perceiving our condition actually impaired, and our reasonable wishes disappointed of fulfilment. Thus, for instance, rest is needful to the weary, the esteem and love of good men to the noble-minded, and sympathizing consolation to the sorrowing. But above all things,

faith in immortality is a real exigency to every thinking, aspiring man: for we cannot do without it, without being rendered unhappy, and seeing our purest and most holy desire unsatisfied; we cannot do without it, without losing what is most precious in existence; a satisfactory explication of the great end of our life, and therefore an answer to the great question, For what purpose am I made? it is, further, the raising of our moral strength, and a powerful support of it in trial, redounding to its honour, a refreshing solace in a state of suffering, and lastly a peaceful passage through the evening hours of our short earthly being. Sufficient reason surely, if this is the case, to call belief in immortality a real necessity for the human heart. Why do I exist on the earth? For what purpose has that holy Being created me, whose wisdom and goodness I find so abundantly conspicuous in nature? Every thing in the world is so ordered as to answer its purpose; and the goodness of the Father of all must have also fixed a certain object for me,—the noblest of the dwellers on earth,—which I am destined to attain. Every thing is matured for the developement of its powers; I also am richly furnished with precious endowments, faculties, and abilities. To cultivate and fully display these, to cultivate them for the acquirement of the highest imaginable good, of wisdom and virtue, for the continual increase of improvement, and for the final attainment of pure happiness; by the right use of

all my powers to raise myself more and more to a likeness with God, and to the exalted peace of a holy mind—can I conceive a more sublime end of my existence? And does not every thing, reason, religion, and the view of my own nature, point to the same end? But in what contradictions are my thoughts involved, if I may not look for the accomplishment of the scheme of God, in my duration beyond the grave, since I can by no means attain this object of my existence, if in death I cease to be! For then I might fairly ask, to what end are those manifold powers, those rich endowments imparted to my nature, which millions of my brethren, prevented by outward circumstances and the pressure of their condition, never disclose; and which I never see fully developed and matured even in the most favourable condition, and in the longest life? Wherefore are they given with such profusion to millions, who die in the flower of their years, or in the age of childhood? To what purpose the faculty of imagining the future, and the irresistible desire to continue to live always? To what purpose the increase of knowledge, improvement, and experience, if I am hurried away exactly when my career is brightest, at the very period when I begin to rejoice in the hardly won possession of these advantages? To what purpose the constant striving after a happiness, which I do not find here below so as my heart longs for it? Even the purest virtue of the most excellent man, how

deficient, how imperfect it remains! Even the high satisfaction attending it, how often is it disturbed by weaknesses, which here can never be entirely cast off! We see every thing around us unfold itself, every thing ascend from one perfection to another; the caterpillar is converted into a butterfly: and shall the noblest inhabitant of earth alone make no progress, and after advancing a few steps, again quit the career so nobly commenced?

These doubts, an answer to which is so urgently requisite, are removed only by belief in immortality. The infinitely wise Creator cannot have wasted such noble powers upon us; every thing which I observe and feel, leads me to a superior aim of my existence, which I can only reach by everlasting duration, and shall as certainly reach, as I confidently believe in the wisdom, justice, and goodness of the Eternal. For if man had received the finest faculties to so little purpose, how would that be consistent with the wisdom of the Eternal? If he had planted in us this warm aspiration for immortality, without satisfying it; if he annihilated us, when we first became susceptible of purer happiness, how should we be able to believe in his omnipotence and goodness? Do we not revere him as the All-holy and the All-just? And yet shall vice often triumph here below, and innocence be oppressed? Shall there never be a state of righteous retribution and glorification of virtue? Shall we

be impeded by the most holy Being in our advances to perfection? How wretched, indeed, should we then be! how could we enjoy the pure generous pleasure of gratifying thought, if the great belief in immortality were wanting? Viewed then on this side, how pressing an exigency is it for the human heart! And without it how much should we lose in moral power, in strength under severe temptations, in persevering courage under the obstacles to our growing perfect! Now, since the hope of an everlasting progressiveness and a future easy victory; since the prospect, that a blessed result will one day crown our often laborious exertions, elevates our minds; now we press cheerfully forward; now the view of the wide field which is opened to our best activity, invigorates our spirits; now we sink not in trial, since the hope strengthens us that it will one day terminate, and we shall reap the blessed effects of our fidelity; in the mournful feeling of our infirmities we now rely on the consolatory belief, that the hour will come when we shall be delivered from them, and this trouble will vanish. But, my beloved, if this short earthly life alone were granted us for the developement of our virtuous energies; if at this beginning of good we should be forced to stop; if we should after much exertion acquire in vain a certain strength, which would be destroyed with our spirit in the grave, should we not faint in these efforts? What would

the little progress profit us, which we could here make in virtue? We should then resemble travellers, who should enter on a road to a lovely country, from which, after advancing a short way, they are called off again. Yes, it is highly needful for our heart and our virtuous zeal, to be firmly persuaded, that the good we have sown will once ripen; that, destined to perpetual advancement, we labour for an endless futurity and for the fuller accomplishment of the designs of the Eternal; when we subdue ourselves; when we perform his sacred will with faithfulness; when the doing good costs us great sacrifices, and that every progressive step is an approach to the grand object, to the attainment of which God has called us. And is it then, my beloved, is it always so easy in human life, to act nobly and uprightly? Ah! when weak man, yet ever longing after happiness, is assaulted on all sides, in perplexing situations and in the hours of adversity; when he can prove his regard for virtue only by making severe sacrifices; when he stands alone in conflict, and on one side brilliant advantages, on the other heavy sorrows are offered to his choice, when on his resolving nobly every cheerful prospect vanishes, when, perhaps, virtue demands the surrender of his life; then he stands in need of a supporting, comforting thought, of an encouragement which may determine him to honour what is right; then it is so natural that a man should desire the prospect of a life, where

the weary may rest from trial, and the hope, that spiritual blessings may flow from his devoted fidelity.

To love good for its own sake, to perform it merely from a sacred regard to duty, and without having the smallest respect to the painful or the gratifying consequences which may accrue to us, that is certainly great; that is the pure virtue after which we should be zealous aspirants. But we shall scarcely attain it here below; we cannot in our state of weakness entirely dispense with the supports of our virtue; and precisely in this feeling of our infirmities, from which we wish to be freed, lies a principal reason why we so fervently, so heartily, long for immortality. This faith then, viewed in this light also, is a real and urgent necessity of our hearts. Even Jesus Christ, the man of superior moral greatness, was strengthened by this faith in contending for truth and virtue. When with sorrow he spake to his disciples of his death, then his view was always directed to the future beyond the grave; then he saw in his death his departure to the Father, and rejoiced in the glory with which God would crown him, when his hard conflict should be finished. And, lastly, how deeply felt an exigency is this heart-cheering belief in the dark days of trial, in the nights of hopeless sorrows, and in the evening of life!

Strength of mind in suffering, bestowed by God on those who love him—fulness of comfort lies in

the words, Better days shall come! This consideration imparts happiness, and raises the spirits in the midst of tears; thou also who, of the same nature and destiny with thy brethren rejoicing around thee, canst not join in their cheerful tone; thou, who with equal desire of prosperity hast found trouble and heaviness, and regrettest what the earth cannot restore to thee, thou too shalt find in a better world what thou longest and mayest long after, rest, joy, and peace. After the storms of life thou shalt land in a milder and more friendly region; shalt there be justified, if here the world mistook thy generous nature; shalt there find the love which here the unkindness of man robbed thee of; shalt there in the company of the perfected, perhaps in the embraces of those thou hast loved, be recompensed for the loss which nothing on this earth replaces; shalt there lay aside the covering, under the pains of which thou hast here long groaned; shalt be relieved from the weight of cares which thou hast borne with resolution and submission; shalt there discover the sacred truth which thou hast earnestly sought when contending with frequent doubts, and shalt see every pure, heavenly desire, which here was cherished and nothing could suppress, fully satisfied. Better days will come and last for ever: take this belief from the noble and patient sufferer, and he is overcome in struggling with his hard fate! There are many human sor-

rows which are borne in secret; the prosperous man neither knows nor conceives them. There are sorrows of the soul, which only death removes. But who would carry them with him to the grave, did not a ray of comfort from this very quarter shine upon the weary soul, did annihilation only destroy the sufferer's pain? For all those grounds of consolation, which belief in the directing hand of God presents, would lose their force, if the perfection and perpetual advancement, at which we aim, and to which God leads us through trials, were snatched away; if we did not live in expectation of a state, where the holiness and justice of God will be vindicated to us, and we shall acknowledge with adoration the wisdom and goodness of his dispensations. We must eradicate the ardent longing for prosperity and felicity, which the Eternal himself planted in our souls, if in days of adversity we would not languish for the hope, that better times may come; if we, afflicted by our weaknesses, depressed by bodily sufferings, grieving for painful wounds of the heart, were not desirous of deliverance and a state of more perfect enjoyment. And when the evening of life approaches, when every thing, which was dear to the heart, is torn away, when all things have disappeared as a dream, when much that we once coveted affects us no more; when the mind now thirsts for new enjoyment, and but one desire warmly glows within it; ah, then it

turns its view to heaven, and seeks there what the earth has no power to give it. The life of man would terminate dreadfully, if the grave were his home; the evening of his present state would be dismal, if destruction followed it; despair must seize him, whom joy caressed in former years, were no prospect beyond the grave opened to the departing.

How great and invincible a necessity is belief in immortality! How every thing is centred in this belief, a heaven full of bliss and tranquillity! This great hope dries up all tears, reconciles the sufferer to the world, exalts him, who has nearly run his course, above this earth, cradles him in peaceful repose, makes bright images float around him, and gently leads the sun of his life to its setting. Yes, my beloved, the belief in immortality is no imaginary want of the heart: it is not a visionary happiness which we so ardently desire; not a truth in which only our love of knowledge is interested; not an affair, which at the most adds only to our well-being upon earth. No, this belief is extremely important and essential to our rational and composing reflection, to our strength in virtue and our cheerful perseverance in good, to our consolation in anxious hours, and our only hope in death. Without it we should be really wretched, and an inexplicable riddle to ourselves; we must then envy the irrational creatures, which would fulfil the purpose of their existence better than ourselves, which

have no apprehension of futurity, and suffer death without fear. We can do without much in the world, and yet live contented and serene; we need not much knowledge in order to be happy; but we cannot miss this comfort, this faith, without being deprived of every possible interpretation respecting the object of our existence, and consequently of the foundation of every pure joy, every true satisfaction, every delightful hope. Deep in our souls rests the desire for immortality; we are unable to extirpate it. And therefore is it also, if we believe in the existence of an eternal Being, full of wisdom and goodness, a strong proof of the reality of our eternal duration. O not in vain, not to disappoint us, has he who created us, planted such a holy impulse in our souls! We must cease to believe in any higher destiny, we must abandon the sublimest aim of human existence, perpetual advancement in wisdom and virtue, if we should doubt of the immortality of our spirit. No; as certainly as this pure and lively desire for deliverance from earthly infirmities, for superior wisdom and refined virtue, for constant pressing on to perfection, exists in my soul, so surely do I know, that I shall not perish, when my body falls into dust. I bear the pledge of my immortality within me; the reason which God gave me compels me to believe in its everlasting duration. This state of infancy here below will not constitute the whole of my existence. These abun-

dant powers in me will not remain undeveloped, this longing after a better condition will not be destroyed in death. We are immortal, my friends! As sure as God gave us a warm desire to know more of his wonders than the earth displays with all the charms of the fresh and thousand-coloured spring, so surely this short life is not the last purpose for which God created us. And the more virtuous you are, the more acquainted you become with these noblest cravings of your heart, so much the more will the belief in immortality take root in your souls. The more sacred the purpose of human life appears to you, the more certain will you be that you are formed to attain it by perpetual advancement. The more ardent your thirst after truth, so much the more heavenly the hope, that it will one day be allayed in the regions of light. The more you feel your confinement, whilst full of desire for greater perfection, so much the more delightful will this truth be to you, the hour of deliverance is at hand! Thus your virtue cherishes the holiest hope, and this elevates your heart and gives it strength unto victory.

Nothing then, my beloved, shall rob us of this precious faith; we compassionate with brotherly love him who cannot subdue the unhappy doubts, into which he has strayed; we despise him who ridicules what is sacred. We are immortal! May this heavenly confidence be our light in the way of

life, our comfort in the gloominess of sorrow, and may it infuse into us a foretaste of heaven at our dying hour! We adore God for the unutterable blessing of this faith; we sing praises to him for it with holy joy on the festival of immortality. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

BY SCHOTT.

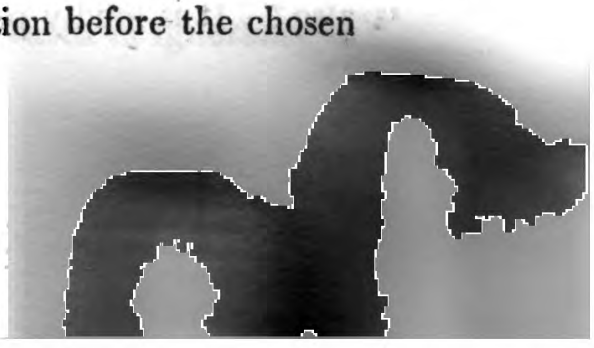
THE INTIMATE CONNEXION BETWEEN THE FERVENT LOVE OF GOD, AND LOVE AND REVERENCE TOWARDS JESUS CHRIST.

SERMON VIII.

THE INTIMATE CONNEXION BETWEEN THE FERVENT LOVE OF GOD, AND LOVE AND REVERENCE TOWARDS JESUS CHRIST.

To thee, the only-begotten Son of the Highest, the eternal Mediator and Propitiator, who hast acquired for us the sacred privilege of the children of God, be honour and praise for evermore! Amen.

Great and striking unquestionably, my Christian hearers, is the difference of judgments formed on human actions and speeches. But a greater and more striking diversity has never been exhibited, than that concerning the discourses and acts of Jesus, our Lord, whose last calamities pass before our view in these still and solemn weeks. The purity and innocence of his life, the superhuman power with which he performed things which no other man did, the celestial strength of the truth of his Gospel, did not fail to make a due impression. "Thou, O Lord, hast the words of eternal life," cried Peter with high inspiration before the chosen



of Jesus, who were assembled in familiar circle round that Divine Being; who opened their hearts to his heavenly doctrine, and rested on him their trust, their labours, their wishes, their hope. "Never man spake like this Man." "Verily this is that Prophet that should come into the world." "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Thus said the unprejudiced among his contemporaries who could not conceal from themselves, nor deny, that they never before felt so deeply affected. When Jesus spake, feelings of joy, of admiration, of gratitude and love, broke forth in those multitudes which followed him, into loud acclamations, into an universal glorification of the Lord. But the louder the admiration of his deeds, the stronger the influence of his doctrine became; so much the more the hate of the Pharisees, the hate of the Scribes and Jewish priests, increased, and armed itself against Divine truth and Him who proclaimed it; so much the more assiduously did they labour to calumniate his character, to deride his instructions, to traduce his miracles, to destroy his reputation, to bias his adherents and make them revolt against him; so much the more studiously they contrived means and occasions to deprive him of his efficiency, his liberty, his earthly existence. Can we deny, my hearers, that Jesus is estimated in very different lights in our generation also? It is loudly proclaimed in our temples, that

he is the Son of the Eternal, the Saviour of the world, the true and only Mediator and Redeemer; the song of praise soars aloft to him on the wings of devotion; at his altar is presented to us, that which should raise us to an invisible and blessed communion with him, the Divine Being; and in the hearts of pious Christians lives Jesus evermore.

But—how sad a spectacle! wicked men also have arisen, to whom the holy Scripture, the heavenly doctrine of Jesus our Lord, has afforded a convenient occasion for dull jesting, because they are not capable of comprehending what is holy, because their mouths, their hearts, their course of life, profane and desecrate every thing; persons full of hatred and hostility to Jesus are come forth and have blasphemed Him, in whose mouth was no guile; and thoughtless men live on the vanity of their hearts, who do not indeed mock nor blaspheme, but who feel no interest in Jesus. For this coldness towards the Redeemer, which has been so widely spread in our days, excuses are not wanting. It is often sought to be palliated by the explanation, that men can maintain a religious disposition in general, pray to the Highest, and love and worship the Deity, without particularly regarding Jesus and his word, without being *Christianly* religious. And in fact, my hearers, this objection is certainly plausible. Who may assert without injustice, that among all those, who have lived on the earth in ignorance of

Jesus and his Gospel, there has been no religious heart? But we, to whom the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord has appeared, to whom it is granted to search the Scripture, to understand therein, what that Divine person has communicated, what he has done, effected, and endured for us, to behold his glory, the glory of the only-begotten Son of God—we, who call ourselves Christians, cannot possibly accede to this erroneous opinion. He who has once received the word of eternal life, who is at all acquainted with the sacred history of him, in whom we have life and full sufficiency; if he will not contradict himself, nor belie his understanding, nor separate what is indissoluble, let him not say, "I love God," if in his inward mind he has no regard for Jesus. For a true, genuine, filial love of God stands in the closest connexion with the love and reverence which we owe to Jesus. The words of our text call upon us to unfold this thought more perspicuously.

JOHN vii. 42—44.

Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God, neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.

THE Jews, to whom Jesus speaks in the words of

our text, blinded by proud self-conceit, called themselves children of God and the Lord's people, since, being the posterity of the pious Abraham, they thought they had the first title to the favour of the Lord. They called themselves children of God, without worshipping him with a truly filial regard. They conspicuously manifested what little real desire they had seriously to perform the will of God, by the contempt and ungrateful hatred, with which they treated Jesus and his Gospel. Full of the generous love of truth Jesus addresses them, "If God were your Father," if you worshipped God with truly filial sentiments, if you could with perfect right call yourselves children of God, then "ye would love me." Let us take this saying of our Redeemer into consideration. The intimate connexion in which the filial love of God stands with love and reverence towards Jesus, is the subject for our present meditation. Let us in the first place inquire into the nature and grounds of this connexion, and then it will easily be shewn, how fruitful and important is the contemplation of this subject.

1st. To love God as a father, my hearers, comprehends infinitely more, than the worldly-minded man is accustomed to understand by it. It comprehends in fact far more, than openly to confess with the lips, that God is our Father, our Lord, and our Judge; more, than to feel a transient emo-

tion at the thought of God, which passes quickly over without making any deep impression, or having any beneficial efficacy on the heart and life; more, than to solemnize sacred forms of devotion and the worship of God from mere custom. No; to be thoroughly penetrated by an ever active, ever lively consciousness of the sacred relations in which we stand to God, the Creator of life, the Giver of all good things, the Lord and Judge of all the living and the dead; to know no higher good, no fairer object of our exertions and wishes, than God and his heaven; to feel affected with a holy joy, when the greatness, the dispensations, and the will of God are published and made sensible to us; *this* is to love God. And if this love be deeply rooted, then we pray from the heart, we join with the whole soul in the hymns of praise, by which God is glorified aloud in his temple; we find it our meat, like Jesus, to do the will of God. We affirm not without reason, that whoever loves God as a Father, must feel himself deeply penetrated by similar sentiments, sensations, and affections towards Jesus; he must love and worship Jesus also; Him, who stands in the most intimate union with God; Him, the most perfect image of the invisible God; Him, who proceeded from the Father, to accomplish his work upon earth; Him, who reconciled and brought us into favour with God. "We believe and confess, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,"

exclaimed the inspired Simon Peter, the ardent witness of the truth, when Jesus asked his chosen followers, if they also would leave him, like those who walked no more with him.

And every where, wherever we look into our holy Scriptures, the word of life, the momentous word meets us, Christ is the Son of God, he stands in a superior and exclusive connexion with God. On all sides his disciples call upon us to believe in the Son of God; from him they promise Christians grace and salvation and everlasting peace of mind; "he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," saith the Scripture, "overcometh the world[a]." And does not Jesus himself, he, whose pure and holy sense of truth and right is declared by his every word and every action, and which offers the strongest inducement to us to believe that which he says of himself; does he not announce himself as the Son of the Highest? Do we not hear from his own mouth the assurance, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son;" "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." But that this expression not merely comprehends and signifies the general union, which connects us all, as children and creatures of God, with the Eternal; that it is a far superior, a pre-eminently sacred alliance, in which Jesus our Lord stands with God the Father, exalted above

[a] 1 John v. 5.

human wisdom and knowledge; this is attested by what the Scripture tells us of the Son of God, of his immediate descent from Heaven, and of his divine nature and dignity; this is pointed out by that expressive phrase, 'He is the only begotten of God;' the Redeemer's own words indicate this to us, when he calls himself one with the Father, when he extols the love wherewith the Father loved him, before the world was, when he declares of himself, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him[b]."

And can we, my hearers, to whom the call of the Gospel does not sound as a new and unknown word, can we assert, that love to God and coldness towards Jesus, the only begotten of God, can be combined? Can we boast that we worship God in truth, when our heart pays no tribute of worship to him, who is in a higher sense than all of us, the Son of God? Should we not join in the words of the Apostle, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God[c]?"

And undoubtedly, in this superior and holy connexion, by which Jesus is united to God as his Father, he is at the same time the most perfect image of the invisible God. We are perfectly right,

[b] Matt. xi. 27. [c] 1 John iv. 15.

my hearers, in esteeming ourselves as beings, whom the Eternal created after his image. For where reason and freedom, where a holy power operates, to discern what is true, to discover what is right, to perform what is good; there something divine lives and reigns. But who, of all mortals who ever walked on the earth, has equalled Him, who was not blinded by illusions, enslaved by sensuality, overcome by passions, like common men; who spoke of divine things with a divine mind, things which no wise man on earth, no searcher of the Scriptures before him, had made known; who with constantly ready help, with ever refreshing consolation, drew near to the afflicted among mankind as a Saviour, in like manner as the infinite love of the Highest is inexhaustible in doing good; who, conscious of his innocence, had a well-grounded, a most decided right to say, "Who convicteth me of sin?" Verily ye in vain take credit to yourselves that ye love God, if the thought of Jesus, the holiest resemblance of the invisible God, makes no impression on your hearts. Is it true, that the infinite might and greatness of God fills and inspires your hearts with wondering awe, his parental graciousness with filial gratitude and love, the sacredness and kindness of his will with pious and holy desire towards Him, the fountain of all good? then reverence, gratitude, and love towards Jesus must impress the inmost soul, a holy longing after the Lord, as becomes de-

vout Christians. For he is " the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, who upholdeth all things by the word of his power [d]."

And he came forth from the Father to accomplish his work upon earth. " If God were your Father," thus Jesus himself declared in our text, " ye would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God, neither came I of myself, but he sent me." And with what love of truth, with what sacred veneration for the will of God, with what noble frankness did Jesus say to the people of those days, " My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me [e]:" " the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." With what joyful consciousness he addresses God in prayer, " I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do!" And indeed there is no need of artful eloquence, of elaborate proofs, in order to be convinced of the high mission of Jesus. Hear his word of life, his Gospel, with candid disposition; it will powerfully affect and irresistibly convince you, that here breathes the Spirit of God! Think of the mighty deeds which he performed with holy purpose, when he comforted the afflicted, relieved the suffering, called the dead to life; they loudly proclaim, God worked in him and with him.

[d] Heb. i. 3. [e] John vii. 16.—xvii. 4.

Behold the Conqueror of death and the grave; and you cannot doubt that by the power of God he burst the bonds of the sepulchre. Do you not contradict yourself when you assert that you hallow the name of God, when you speak of love of God, of warm feelings of piety towards the Giver of all good, and yet devote no love, no gratitude, no reverence, to the ambassador of God? Do you not oppose the eternal decree of God, do you not rebel against His will, do you not scorn with arrogant presumption the sacred dispensation of God, which he ordained for your salvation, if you do not with your whole soul turn to him, whom God himself has distinctly declared to be his Elect, whom he has chosen to be the Saviour of the world? "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him [f]."

And what did the Son of God accomplish upon earth? Was it not the most high and holy work, the one thing needful, on which the everlasting salvation of mankind rests? Has he not allied and reconciled us with God? The nations, before the Saviour of the world appeared, passed their lives without the knowledge of the true and living God, which alone surely leads to salvation; being subservient to a vain worship of idols, and exposed to lamentable perversions of the understanding, the

[f] John v. 23.

corrupt propensities of their hearts, and to revolting vices; but few had any perception of the truth; the followers of the Mosaic law, in general lifted up with foolish pride, were satisfied with their outward works of the law, with penances of the body, with their descent from Abraham, and idly conceived the splendid pomp of their sacrifices would blot out their sins; the best of their people looked around with longing desire after that comfort, that peace, and that hope, which alone spring from entire trust in the eternal mercy of God, from real humility and amelioration of heart. Then appeared the saving grace of God to all men; then he sent the everlasting Mediator, Christ, that he might reconcile the world to himself; then those who were before dead in sins, at enmity with themselves, estranged from God and his heaven, were converted into a holy people of God, cleansed of their sins by the death on the cross, made worthy of the mercy of the Lord, dedicated to virtue, called to eternal salvation; the world became allied to God, the earth to the heavens. Well then, whoever speaks of true filial love and veneration of God, whoever finds the supreme happiness of existence in the elevating belief, "In God we live, and move, and have our being," whoever esteems the friendship of the Eternal as the most sacred of all things; let him loudly confess, that he feels under the most solemn obligation to entertain a fervent affection for him also,

through whom we have free access to the Father; let him offer to him devout thanksgiving, glorify his name, and openly and joyfully testify, that he belongs to Christ, that Christ lives in him, and he in him.

Secondly. It is impossible to separate a true, genuine, and filial love of God from the love and reverence, which we owe to Jesus. Not without reason I called this consideration important. For it shews us clearly and incontrovertibly, how reprehensible is that coldness towards the Redeemer, which has been so widely diffused amongst us, and engages us to the most serious examination of ourselves.

Why are there so many amongst us, who call themselves Christians, and yet are nothing less than Christians? Why is that ardour, that zealous warmth of past times for Jesus and his Gospel no longer felt? Why do we hear so many Christians of our day, either never speak of Jesus, the Redeemer, or speak of him with that indifference and coldness, with which men talk of unimportant and quite customary things, of long past occurrences? Why do they despise the temple, avoid the commemorating supper of the Lord, and shun the sight of his cross? They are fallen away from the love of God, and wander on with a perverted mind; they are dead to what is holy, they have no real religious disposition. In vain you endeavour, ye contemners of Jesus, lukewarm Christians, to pal-

liate your coldness! In vain ye affirm in your conceit, We, blessed God! have a regard for piety, we are religious after our manner. Either ye deceive yourselves, ye do not understand your own thoughts, pursuits, and feelings, or ye seek to deceive the world. Were you in earnest in your love of God, ye would certainly name the only-begotten Son of the Eternal, with sincere love and sacred veneration, and glorify his name before the world. Were your hearts thoroughly moved and penetrated by the hallowed feeling of the majesty and greatness, the all-embracing love, the sanctity and wisdom of God, ye would also reverence Him, who is the brightness of his glory. Did that humility really actuate you, which is inseparable from the true love of God, which pays a devout attention to every thing that is revealed to man as the sacred will of God, as the dispensation and decree of the Eternal, which seriously feels and considers, how little man can do of his own power, did not help and salvation come to him from above; ye would fly to him who came forth from the Father, to perform his work upon earth, with hearts full of veneration, with love and trust, with holy desire. Did you feel an inward and lively conviction, that there is nothing superior, nothing more desirable than a life in God and friendship with the Eternal; you would seek sure salvation from Jesus, who reconciled and made us friends with God. Do you

turn earnestly to God? you will apply also to Christ. Are you really religious men? you will also be unfeigned Christians.

It is undeniable, my hearers, that coldness towards Jesus incontestibly betrays coldness towards God, and the want of a true sense of religion. Let us then examine our own hearts with strict earnestness. For, in fact, our behaviour towards Jesus proves, in the clearest manner, the degree of our love to God. It is the principles, the judgments, the expressions, the sentiments and feelings, which refer to Jesus and his word, in which the pious mind, the zeal for religion, is generally reflected. Is it, perhaps, the ruling spirit of the age, which disposes thee to indifference and coldness towards Jesus? Is it the fear of being unfashionable, which prevents thee from openly and cheerfully avowing, that "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father?" Dost thou join with the lukewarm Christians, because their levity prevails, their number is the greater, and their mode of thinking the most approved in the place where thou residest? Whoever must confess this, let him then acknowledge, that the true love of God is something strange to him, that he esteems what is terrestrial and worldly higher than God and his will, that he is ambitious of empty, transient, and deceitful honour amongst men, and not of eternal praise with God. Dost thou disregard Jesus because his doc-

trine opposes thy prejudices, censures thy corrupt inclinations, reproves thy favourite faults, and with holy earnestness urges amendment of life? Whoever must confess this, let him then acknowledge, that his heart is alienated from the life which proceeds from God, that it is a mere semblance and a vain illusion, when he boasts that he loves God. Dost thou utter the name of Jesus without warmth, without participation of thy heart, because in the exercise of thy reason thou canst dispense with the doctrine of revelation, because thou imaginest thine own strength requires no aid from Jesus, and thy merit needs not the refreshing consolation of the atoning death of Jesus? Whoever must confess this, let him only acknowledge that he is too proud to feel his unworthiness before God, that he regards not the voice of God with sacred reverence, that the genuine filial disposition, the true love of God, is wanting. May they, whose heart affords no better testimony, be alarmed at themselves, may they inwardly and strongly feel, that it cannot continue thus, if they would be at unity with themselves and enjoy solid peace; may they seek with redoubled diligence the one thing needful, and in the love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ and the fellowship of his Spirit, may they find that blessing which the world cannot give!

Thou rejoicest, pious Christian, when a just consciousness tells thee, that a devout awe of the

only-begotten of God, that gratitude and love towards Jesus, fills thy whole heart. Thy joy is sacred and righteous; thy sentiments and feelings towards Jesus certify to thy mind, that thou hast found the true life, the life in God. Hold fast then what thou hast found, what thou hast won by faith; overcome the world, when it would estrange thee from thy heaven, when it would persuade thee to labour for that alone, which is empty, earthly, and perishable; fight the good fight, finish thy course, and keep the faith unshaken. Then wilt thou stand firmly in the storms of the time. When the bloody conflict of nations approaches, when all is in disorder, and exterminating death demands the most grievous sacrifices, the peace of God leaves not thy breast. For "neither death nor life, neither present nor future, neither height nor depth, can separate thee from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen.

SERMON IX.

BY LÖFFLER.

ON THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

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God, who has formed us for happiness, and who leads us unerringly to this end by obeying his laws, be with us in this hour! Amen.

My Christian hearers, amongst the important doctrines of religion, in which we are instructed in our youth and in after-life, that of forgiveness of sins is unquestionably one of the most momentous. Who is not sensible that he needs this forgiveness? Who does not wish to be worthy of it and to secure it? And on what point is the instruction of the Christian religion more express, than concerning the manner in which we ought to reform ourselves, to seek forgiveness of God, and to keep ourselves worthy of it? Important, however, as this doctrine is, and abundant the instruction respecting it, yet it appears as if prejudices of various kinds prevailed, which have so much the more injurious consequences, as virtuous zeal is apt to be weakened thereby, and men are placed in a state of

excessive, and yet fruitless anxiety. The first take place, when persons not only consider forgiveness of sins as a gift easily to be obtained, but are also of opinion, that all, even the natural consequences of sin are done away, when they feel an assurance of this gift, and a certainty that God is not angry, and begin to think sin and vice, whose consequences are so easily obviated, less to be dreaded. Man passes easily from one extreme to the other; and so there are others, who, influenced by erroneous representations of God, give themselves up to the most tormenting fears, and tremble before God with the most serious intention of amendment, and are slow to believe that He, the All-gracious, can be disposed to forgive. Since we all need pardon of God, and it is desirable that we neither too readily hope for it, nor expect too much from it, nor give way to too great apprehensions about it, I think I shall offer somewhat not unworthy of the attention of all those who are willingly reminded of the essential parts of religious instruction, if I speak more fully on this important subject, on the occasion of our Gospel for the day. God grant that we may here also discover the truth!

MATT. ix. 2d and 5 following verses.

And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee, &c.

WITHOUT being led by this narrative to enter on the apparently difficult question, whether Christ could only announce and assure forgiveness of his sins, like other teachers of religion, to the sick man, who probably suffered the consequences of his sins in this sickness, and was dejected and sorrowful on this account; or whether he could really and of his own power forgive them, and make the punishments attached to them cease; and firmly convinced that he will have said nothing which is not perfectly correct, and that, devoid of all arrogance, he will not have attributed more to himself than was actually his right; let us only make use of this Gospel to remind us of the instruction we have received concerning forgiveness of sins, to form correct notions of the thing itself, and then to apply these admitted and lively notions for our information, and for the destruction of various prejudices. And then, perhaps, the before-mentioned question will be more easily decided by reflecting persons. But, whilst I speak of the forgiveness of sins, I shall give an answer to two questions in particular. First, what it is, and how it is obtained? And, Secondly,

what effect it has? The first will secure us from too great anxiety, and the last from a carelessness which is far more injurious than that anxiety.

When we speak of forgiveness of sins, our thoughts turn to God, who has a right to punish and is said to forgive, and to man, who needs and desires this forgiveness. The representations that God punishes, that man intreats God for pardon, and that the punishments of sin are removed, have certainly a character of truth which human reason must acknowledge, and with which the holy Scripture agrees. The following seem to be the fundamental notions of this truth. We cannot look upon this world, in which so much order and connexion prevail, and especially the moral world to which we, as men, belong, in any other light than as under the superintendence of a superior Being, by whom it is governed. This government is carried on according to certain laws, which are no other than the understood moral precepts of the intellectual world in general, and the human race in particular. Now as often as man transgresses one of these laws, which, by means of the liberty granted him, he has the power to do, whether from ignorance, or want of consideration, or from wilful design, he remains at all times exposed to the consequences, which the Ruler of the world has attached to such a transgression, and which we are doubtless justified in calling punishments; and we may assert with reason, that

no violation of the Divine commandments, and, therefore, no sin, remains unpunished. But hence very false notions of God easily arise, especially of anger and revenge; because we are not able to conceive the Deity otherwise than as bearing some similarity to us men, and because it is too natural and easy for us to transfer our affections and passions to God.

These incorrect notions have no little influence on the idea we form of forgiveness of sins itself, and particularly on the manner of seeking this forgiveness. For the most part (at least this is the idea of a great number of Christians) we imagine God in wrath, when man commits an offence, and disposed, not only to make him feel the natural consequences of sin, but also to inflict on him additional and eternal penalties; we fancy that his offended Majesty can only be appeased by satisfaction being made, and that in general God can be moved, not so much by inward contrition and steady improvement, as by continual and painful supplication, slowly and gradually to pardon, to mitigate his anger, and to remove his punishments. Hence men tremble when they seek forgiveness; hence have they so much anxious fear whether they shall obtain it; hence they commonly take a wrong method in seeking it; and, chiefly because they consider punishment as the operation of the wrath of God, promise themselves a greater effect from it,

than from the nature of the thing it can possibly have. But this is founded on extremely erroneous notions, inasmuch as God is never in *anger*, and forgiveness must be regarded, not as a change in *God*, but as a change in *man*. Little as we can deny that God disapproves, when man transgresses the Divine precepts, yet as little ought we to believe that he is angered, that he is filled with wrath and vengeful feelings against man, and that he is not inclined to forgive him, and to take away the punishments, as far as the happiness of man himself permits. For the injunctions and commandments, which God has given to the world and to us man, are not given for his own sake, but for our happiness. He is not made happier by the observance, nor less happy by the violation of them; for his blessedness is independent of the world. When man transgresses them, he injures only himself; and, therefore, is not an object of hatred and condemnation, but of regret and compassion, like the unfortunate, who does not regard the warning voice of a friend. Here also the image of a *father* teaches us the truest conceptions. As a wise father enjoins nothing to his child but what is profitable for the child itself; as he must pity him if he offends against his injunctions and injures himself; as his corrections serve only to make the evil consequences the more sensibly felt, and to warn the child the more strictly against a similar trans-

gression; as also he is disposed immediately and heartily to forgive the repentant and intreating child, and to remove the discretionary punishment, which he had added to the natural consequences; so it is with us men and God. When man transgresses a command of God, he violates a precept, which God gave him for his benefit, he does injury to himself, he draws upon himself the prejudicial consequences which are more or less connected therewith, and prepares his own misfortunes and his own punishment. But God delights in this punishment as little, as he is inflamed with passion against men; on the contrary, the only sensation which we may attribute to God, is compassion, regret, and a wish that man should be converted and become wiser; and if this takes place, if a man confesses the sins he has committed, if he purposes to forsake them, if he is really resolved to avoid them, and gives proofs of his amendment; God is well pleased with this change, and it is scarcely necessary for a man to implore forgiveness, because God, who knows the heart, already and before his intreaty, had forgiven him. Yes, we can and indeed must maintain, that on such occasions no change is effected in God, but only in man; for God, the immutable, is always inclined to forgive; and it is only requisite for man to be convinced of this disposition, and to manifest a genuine reformation.

These are the representations which reason gives us of the forgiveness of sins and the manner of obtaining it, and which alone are acknowledged by her as correct, unless God is to be thought imperfect, and actuated by human passions. In this view of the subject the instruction of the Gospel, and Christ himself, who has imparted to us the truest notions of God, coincide. Although our human language, and consequently Holy Writ which is composed in this language, cannot speak of God otherwise than with expressions which properly and with truth can only be spoken of man; yet Christ is so far from applying the expressions of anger and revenge to God, that he rather attributes to him feelings of benevolence and love; and, on the subject of the conversion of man especially, he is so far from encouraging this idea, that he rather attributes to him only the sensation of compassion and pity, and describes him as invariably disposed to forgive man, and to assure him of his gracious and pardoning inclination.

We have a narrative of his in reference to this point, which may supply the place of all direct instruction; I mean the story of the lost and returning son. Since this narrative exhibits in the most correct view in all its parts the manner in which forgiveness is sought and obtained, and as this instruction proceeds from the mouth of Jesus himself, permit me shortly to mention it.

When the Prodigal, disregarding the warnings and advice of his father, had plunged himself into a state of misery, which he was no longer able to bear; when now at last sensible of his folly he repented, and took a resolution to return to his father and solicit forgiveness; how does Christ pourtray this father, by whom God is signified? Does he let the son intreat long for pardon and without success? Does the father in his anger overwhelm him with indignant reproaches for his ingratitude? Does he leave him in the agonizing doubt, whether he shall find favour, or must return again to his wretchedness? Or must he seek an intercessor, who may soften the heart of the father and incline him to forgiveness? Nothing of all this. The tender father's heart, as our Saviour paints him, was never turned from his son; he ever felt his folly, and cherished the warmest sympathy for him. Apprehensive of the distress into which he had thrown himself, fearful only that he was for ever lost, and constantly wishing his restoration, he hastens to meet him on hearing of his actual return, spares him every word of shame and remorse, heaps upon him every mark of tenderness, and is elated with joy that the lost one has returned, and his son supposed to be dead is yet alive. Here is no trace of revenge and anger, here no change is perceptible in the disposition of the father, who at all times entertained for him the tenderest affection. But

so much the greater is the change, which takes place in the mind and sentiments of the son. He fears lest his father should have no pity, and rather be provoked and enraged against him; he doubts whether he shall be able to prevail on him to pardon, and he considers how he may best move his heart to compassion by the most penitent confession and the most modest request, because he dares not hope for so easy a forgiveness for such offences. But how is this apprehension shamed by the father's treatment, whose unchanged heart had ever been constant in its affection; and how the alarm of the son now appears as the natural effect and the just punishment of such conduct!

Thus, my friends, it is with man and his Maker. No change takes place in God, when he forgives, who always continues benevolently inclined towards man, ever pities him when he transgresses his commands, and willingly affords manifestations of his grace as soon as he amends; but man can with difficulty subdue that terror of God, which his condemning conscience creates, and encourage in himself a filial confidence towards him. And this confidence is entirely dependent on the actual improvement of man himself. This must be so from the nature of the thing, and the holy Scripture confirms it. As fear and trembling before God arises from the consciousness of having done wrong and of transgressing his commandments; so this fear must necessarily abate,

as soon as that consciousness gives way, and a better one takes its place; provided only that no unjust and simply human ideas are entertained of God. Thus St. John also in the well-known saying, "We have confidence towards God, if our heart condemn us not," fixes the ground of trembling before God, plainly not in God, but in the human heart; and so it is also in the story of the Prodigal Son, in which Christ represents pardon to be subsequent to the return. Our own feelings also corroborate this truth. Who dares to look up with confidence to God, with an assurance of his approbation, when he knows that an evil heart, resisting the regulations of God, beats in his bosom, and that he is able to do what he acknowledges to be unlawful without repugnance?

And thus it seems to me perfectly clear, that forgiveness of sins cannot be a softening of the anger of God, to whom every angry emotion is foreign, nor in general any change in God, the Immutable; but that it is a change in the human soul, according to which it is convinced, or cheerfully renews the conviction with application to itself, that God is gracious: and that this assurance of the favour and approbation of God, or, which is the same thing, the conviction of pardon, can only be cherished in our minds, and is only acquired, by effectual amendment.

Important as it is for us men to form correct no-

tions of forgiveness of sins, and of the manner in which it is obtained, it is equally important further to know what is its effect, in order to guard against expecting more from it than it is really able to perform, and being misled by these too high expectations into a pernicious carelessness. If we put the question, "Why do we seek pardon for our sins?" I believe we shall all agree in the answer; "That the penalties of them may cease, that we may again rejoice in the favour of God, and may be peaceful and comforted in our conscience." This last is the result which the conviction of forgiveness affords, although a considerable limitation takes place in the removal of the punishment itself. Certain as it is, that he who reforms may be assured of the approbation and grace of God, much reason as he has to rejoice in it and in his better condition, confidently as he may hope that God will not inflict on him extraordinary and arbitrary punishments from a wrathful excitement, yet should we err exceedingly in believing, that *all* the consequences of sin committed are taken away at the time of conversion, and of the assurance of God's favour, and that it can be looked upon as if it never had been committed. This observation may appear singular, but a reflecting mind will own it to be true; and it is much to be wished, that it were rightly understood, and rightly laid to heart.

We may divide all the punishments of sin into two

kinds; first, the natural, necessary, and inseparable consequences, which never fail; and secondly, the discretionary chastisements which God may inflict in addition and in an especial manner, either in this or in the future life, for the amendment or the punishment of men. These last are immediately suspended, when reformation takes place; since it is impossible that God should still and for ever continue to punish a man who sincerely endeavours to please him, who is cured of his thoughtlessness and his follies, and now strives to do right on all occasions.

To apprehend severity like this would be to destroy the nature of God himself. But however true and undeniable this must be, it would be as great an error to hope that the natural consequences are immediately and at once abolished on forgiveness, and that therefore the sins could become as things which had never happened. This will be best illustrated by examples. The young man who lavishes the season of youth, and neglects the opportunities of informing himself, will he not feel the consequences of his lost time and his ignorance, even when arrived at an age when he has long acquired knowledge, and more justly estimates the value of time, and has accustomed himself to greater diligence? Does repentance alone remove ignorance? Can wishes bring back the past? Does the remembrance of it entirely vanish from the soul? Are not rather

these consequences and the sense of them of very long continuance? Is it possible, is it in the power of God himself, to remove them? Or the voluptuary, who has debilitated his body, enervated his mind, dissipated his fortune, and sacrificed his civil advancement in society by a disorderly mode of life; will he, because he is brought to a knowledge of his folly, because he implores God for pardon, and is convinced that he has forgiven him, and will not eternally condemn him, will he thus be enabled to annihilate the consequences of his way of living? Will his enfeebled body be again invigorated? the lost strength again imparted to his enervated mind, his impoverishment be at an end, and he once more be put in put in possession of the prosperity which had been destroyed? Or rather, does not this condition and the consciousness of it remain? Can this consciousness be relieved otherwise than slowly and by degrees? And can those consequences, even after complete forgiveness, be otherwise than gradually, and perhaps never entirely, removed? Thus, therefore, with some reflection, and from experience it is made clear, that remission of sins delivers us from an anxious fear of God, but does not put an end to the natural consequences of sin; and that we should expect too much from it, if we looked for more than a conviction of the favour of God.

This contemplation, my friends, admits of the

most important application, and is exceedingly rich in profitable inferences, if we pursue it further, and are willing to make use of it for this purpose. Permit me to call your attention to a few only of the instructive conclusions to be drawn from it.

In the first place, let us impress this consideration deeply in our minds, that remission of sin and its punishment is only obtained by amendment of life. It appears, almost, as if no small number of Christians were of a different opinion, and cherished the conceit, that nothing is requisite for this forgiveness but for a man, when opportunity offers, to acknowledge his misdeeds, to confess and deplore them before God, to believe in his grace, and only not doubt that he is a gracious Father, and inclined to reconciliation. True as this is, and certain as it is, that without confession, without repentance, and without trust in the mercy of God, there can be no forgiveness; yet we should be mistaken, if we supposed it to be attached to these alone, and that confession, contrition, and trust in God, can cause the chastisement to cease. However we may view the divine punishments, whether as discretionary or natural, in both cases the remission of them depends upon effectual amendment. For how can God withdraw his extraordinary corrections, which have no other object than to reform man so much sooner and more certainly than the natural penalties alone

can do, until their end, namely reformation, is actually gained? Can the use of medicinal remedies, with which this sort of punishments is most justly compared, be left off, before the sick person is perfectly cured, and these remedies have had their due effect? It is the same with the discretionary correction of God. And as to the natural necessary consequences of sin, will they or can they be put a stop to by any thing else, but real amendment? Can the sick man be restored by any other means than by discontinuing his excesses? Is the spendthrift extricated from his difficulties in any other way, than by improved habits of life? Can he, whose heart condemns him, rejoice in the grace of God, until his conscience testifies, that he has forsaken the sins he used to commit, and practises the opposite virtues?

The remission, therefore, of the penalties of sin by no means depends on sorrow and good purposes alone; it is rather only the result of amendment, which, however, is not conceivable, without that confession and repentance. Important as this consideration is, especially for all those who deem a zealous improvement of life less necessary than remorse and faith; yet it is equally dangerous to expect more from forgiveness of sins, than it is able to perform. The times are past, when excessive fear prevailed, and the times of levity seem to have taken their place, when too much is

hoped for, and even the removal of the natural consequences of sin is expected, from forgiveness. For a great part of mankind appears to presume, that they had no occasion to shun sin so much, because they could obtain pardon and a cessation of punishment. They persist in their opinion, because, to speak after their manner, they could at any time reform and receive forgiveness. Such persons are surely in a dangerous error. For although they may be brought by repentance and reformation to the conviction of God's favour; although, when actually amended, they have no reason to fear that God will for ever condemn them, and make them completely miserable; yet will they be able also to remove the natural consequences of sin, which continue after forgiveness? Will it be in their power to eradicate the consciousness of their former follies from the soul, and to suppress the wish, 'Oh that I had lived otherwise, that I had acted more wisely?' Believe it unquestionably, my friends, impaired health is renovated, even after convalescence, but slowly and by a strict regimen; poverty oppressed with debt is removed only by persevering and regular industry; the reproaches of conscience are renewed by the memory, and many a consequence of sin, however earnestly we may beg pardon of God, is never to be retrieved. Lay that to heart, ye who think that a man needs only to intreat God for pardon, in order to be delivered from the penalties of sin.

Lay that to heart, ye who on this ground are so little afraid of sinning; and may the reflection penetrate deeply into your souls! The consequences of sin last long after improvement, they accompany us to old age, they leave us not in death, they lessen our happiness even in the future world. But we also, who have right notions of the forgiveness of sin, we who know that it depends entirely on amendment, and that then a change takes place only in us, not in God the unchangeable; and that God himself cannot abolish the consequences of sin, and undo that which is done; we will not on this account believe, that we have no need of humiliation before God, of confession of our faults, of repentance, and prayer for pardon. Judge for yourselves, how worthy of man and how necessary such a humiliation is. Even the best amongst us must confess that we stand under God, the purest and most perfect Being; that we, like all rational spirits, are bound to obey his commands, and that our welfare and happiness depend on obedience. Who feels not this obligation? but who feels not also his deficiency, when tried in the sight of this perfect and omniscient Being? Is the purest amongst us quite pure? Is the best, one who combines all perfections in himself; or only one who has the fewest faults? Have we not all manifold infirmities? Do we not all stand in need of improvement? And would one of us hesitate to pray, "Who can tell,

O Lord, how oft he offendeth ?" " O pardon, All-gracious, pardon my secret faults, and assist me with thy strength to improve myself more and more, and to be constant in that which is good." May this be our wish and our prayer ! And God, who cannot disapprove of such a prayer, will hear us, will bless us with a sense of his approbation, and support us with strength to persevere in the good path unto the end. Amen.

SERMON X.

BY HANSTEIN.

JESUS ALREADY GLORIFIED IN DEATH.

(FOR GOOD FRIDAY.)

SERMON X.

JESUS ALREADY GLORIFIED IN DEATH.

(FOR GOOD FRIDAY.)

THE whole labour and life of Jesus Christ, whose death is to-day commemorated by his Church, was a glorifying of God among men. For what other object is apparent in his discourses and in his actions, in the institutions which he founded, and in the establishments which owe their existence to him, than to spread abroad a worthier perception and a purer worship of the Eternal, whom he called Father; to cause his name to be more revered by the world, his law to be more sacred to men, or, as he himself expresses it in his incomparable prayer, to hallow the name of God, to introduce his kingdom, the kingdom of his adorers, and to engender that regard to his will on earth, which is paid to it in Heaven. For this purpose did Jesus contend against the God-dishonouring superstition of the multitude, against that service of ceremonies

and sacrifices, to which the blind leaders of the people had perverted religion; against the hypocrisy, which was an abomination to the saints in Heaven, and a disgrace to humanity. And how studious of the honour of God was the whole demeanour of Jesus Christ, our Lord! God was to him more sacred than all things. To God above he poured forth his prayers and supplications. From above, what he hoped and expected, descended upon him. From thence, what befel him here below, was directed. God was his whole thought, his consolation, his joy, until his eyes were closed. "I come to do thy will, O my God." "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day, for the night cometh, in which no man can work[a]." "All things must be fulfilled, which are written of me in the Prophets, which God has decreed for the Son of Man." "Not as I will, but thy will be done." This was the principle of his labours and his sufferings. Thus, as long as he was able and permitted to work and be active, he had but one aim in view; to do the will, to fulfil the appointment and the mission of his heavenly Father. Thus he knew in the days of sorrow but one law, the law of submission to the providence of God; but one comfort, the comfort of his paternal love and his gracious protection; but one hope, the hope that even death

[a] John ix. 4.

could not tear him from the hand and guardianship of God. Therefore was he "faithful unto death," and "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," and honoured, magnified, and glorified in this manner, by word and deed, by acting and suffering, in life and death, that God, of whom he constantly declared that "he had sent him."

This retrospect of the life and end of Jesus Christ to the honour of God, enables us clearly to understand, when we hear him utter in his last prayer the emphatic words, "Father, I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do[b]." Nor will it surprise us, that, prepared to take the last step, he begins the same prayer most worthy to be read and reflected on, with the words, "Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son. I have glorified thee, now glorify me also, O my Father." Thus he, who never sought his own honour, full of confidence commits the saving of his innocence, the crowning of his work, the reward of his fidelity, the result of his self-devotion and sacrifice, to him who judgeth righteously, who leadeth all things to a glorious issue; full of confidence, and not in vain. Oh, God has heard this solemn prayer of the Holy Sufferer. He, who had glorified God on earth, was (thus the High and Mighty One in heaven rewards) glorified

[b] John xvii. 4.

again; he who hallowed the name of God among men, to him has "God given a name, which is above every name," and exalted him before the world; and all this not first on the day of his illustrious victory over corruption; no, even on the day of his death on the cross, even in the moments in which he gave up the ghost. If we meditate on this, my hearers, then will this day's still and solemn memorial of his death, this day of universal mourning for the end of the holiest and first of the children of men, be changed into a festival of his glorification. May it become so to us all; that at the grave itself of the Redeemer of the world we may praise that God, who even in the death of his saints doth all things well, even at the grave of the just bringeth all things to a glorious issue!

LUKE xxiii. 39—49.

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, &c.

AGREEABLY to the text, and the solemnity of this hallowed day, let the present subject of our contemplation be, Jesus Christ already glorified in

death. 1st. By nature consecrating his end. 2dly, By the honourable testimonies of the witnesses of his death and the friends of his life. 3dly. By that which he himself said and did in his dying moments.

On the very day of his death on the cross, in the very moments in which he expired, began the exaltation and glorification of the divine Sufferer, which he was so fully confident the Almighty and gracious Being would cause to succeed the gloomy lot of his clouded life, and the dishonour of his name and his innocence by injustice and violence. It did succeed. We have before stated, by what means the dying day and the death of Jesus Christ were so particularly distinguished; how that great day of days, that Greatest of all mortals, was so solemnly glorified. 1st. That nature itself consecrates the end of the Redeemer, that extraordinary movements and appearances in the inanimate creation distinguish the day and hour of his death, is a circumstance, my hearers, which we must at least not overlook; because certainly those agitations of the quaking earth, that opening of the rocky graves, those hours of night at mid-day, that rending of the sacred veil, were the working of that higher Power, which prescribed laws to Nature, the ordinance of that higher Wisdom, which, not without aim and design, permitted all this to take place precisely at the hour when it did take place. It is

true that of all the events in nature which the Evangelists record, not even one was unnatural or contrary to nature. Even earthquakes and their effects, even obscuration of the sun and nocturnal twilight in the day-time, are, though not quite common, at least, entirely natural phenomena. And though convulsions of the earth and bursting of rocks are somewhat strange and unusual in our northern countries, yet they are not so in those warm regions of the east, they were not so namely to the inhabitants of Syria and Palestine. And though an eclipse of the sun at the time of full moon, and that of three hours' duration, is an impossibility, when one reflects that these eclipses are occasioned by the intervention of the moon between the sun and the earth, and can be calculated centuries before by those skilled in the knowledge of the heavens, still was a darkening of the sky, of the light of day, and of the noon-day sun itself, not seldom the immediate indication or consequence of earthquakes in those countries, where the sun glows with greater heat, and the exhalations issue stronger, and the vapours and fogs thicker, from the bosom of the earth; and the trembling earth can split rocks, open graves hewn in stone, and tear asunder its own surface, as well as throw down palaces, remove walls, sink mountains, and convert inhabited and fruitful places into lakes and abysses. In this manner then all these events happened, not con-

trary to the order of nature, not unnatural nor preternatural, and were therefore, in this sense of the word, not exactly miraculous appearances.

But who can take from them the character of extraordinary, surprising, resembling a miracle, and having the appearance of a miracle, which they must especially have had at the moment when they occurred; which they then had and must have had, even if the people who were thereby impressed with seriousness and alarm, had not been so fond of wonders, so desirous of signs, and so accustomed to astrology? It certainly resembled a miracle, that at the time of full moon the sun lost its brightness, and "there was darkness over all the land" for three hours. It was doubtless surprising, that when "the earth quaked, and the rocks rent," as Matthew adds in his Gospel, "the graves" also (probably those cut in the rocks) "were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and appeared unto many." It was certainly most striking, that, during the general concussion, even the walls of the temple trembled in their foundations, and the strongly-woven double curtain, which divided the holy place in the temple from the holy of holies, was rent by it, and thus in an instant the entrance to the inner sanctuary of the nation, allowed to the High-Priests alone but once a year, was laid open!

O, my hearers, even reflecting and considerate persons might, without indulging in a foolish and

idle interpretation of signs, when these disturbances of nature occurred, cry out with astonishment, what a wonderful coincidence with the event of the day! The Innocent condemned, he who was rejected in the tumult of the people, he who was sacrificed to the envy and hatred of the priesthood, dies, and the sun withdraws its light, as though it mourned for his death; voices are heard out of the depths, as though they accused both judge and people; the graves are opened, as though the kingdom of the dead was in agitation at the crime of the living world; the sacred veil was rent, as though, after this victim, the service of sacrifice, the service of the temple, and the whole constitution of the religion of Moses, should, if not actually cease, at least sustain a violent convulsion: all, as if the heaven itself could give a mark of its displeasure at that deed of sinners, and a testimony of approbation to that holy and guiltless One, who was betrayed unto death! Yes, even we, my hearers, who, after the lapse of centuries, only hear and read of this coincidence of circumstances with the history of those days, of the unusual agitation of nature with the remarkable end of the holy and divine Nazarene, cannot refrain from observing, "This was the finger of God." These were accusations and rebukes of the crime completed at Golgotha; significant omens of the things which should come; and, at all events, memorable distinctions of the great Sufferer, and of the never-to-be-forgotten

hour in which he gave up the ghost, holy and innocent, and yet as a malefactor. Yes, it was as though the saying of the prophet Amos should then be fulfilled: "Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day. And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation." Yes, it was as though entire nature deplored the just One dying, as though the sun hid in darkness, the earth convulsed to its centre, solemnized the moment when he cried out, "It is finished."

Secondly. Yet more conspicuously still, than inanimate nature in her powerful and significant, yet dark and mysterious language, do the tongues and actions of men glorify him who expired on the cross. We may now remark the declarations of the witnesses of his death, or have regard to what was done by the friends of his life. Both are honourable to him, the humiliated, and redound with glory in his ignominious end. Hear the witnesses of his death. One, indeed, of the crucified malefactors railed on him, incredible and unnatural as this rude levity, this wanton coarseness may seem; but then the other more intelligent, better disposed, and more feeling fellow-sufferer declares the innocence of Jesus, and rebukes the first:

" Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss." This sinner, brought to reflection and thoughtfulness, turns full of confidence to the dying Friend of man, and honours him by the intreaty full of faith and hope, " Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

The people, indeed, who, urged by curiosity, passed by in throngs, and whose inflamed passions were not even yet appeased, since their dreadful cry " Away with him, crucify him," had been complied with, blasphemed, and " wagged their heads at him" in scorn; yes, even elders of the nation, scribes, and chief-priests could mock him, could mock his dignity and power, and that protection above, in which he trusted, at the very moment when that blood was upon them, which they had wildly and barbarously called down on themselves and their children. But on the other hand the sight of his martyred form, his tranquillity and resignation, his magnanimity and dignity in the pangs of death, moved many a heart of those who beheld the terrible spectacle; and the voice of God in nature struck many a conscience of those, who had consented to the death of the innocent. " All the people," our text relates, when they saw what was done, " smote their breasts and returned." The soldiers, indeed, joined in the mockeries and

revilings of the Jews, in the same unfeeling manner as they parted his garments amongst them, and cast lots for them under the eyes of Him that was dying: but then their captain felt the silent power of suffering innocence, the irresistible force of that greatness of soul, which knows how to encounter death itself, and praised God, and said, "Certainly this was a righteous man." And all who watched the cross together with him, "when they saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly," and, carried away by a natural feeling of reverence for the invisible God, exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God." Oh, what honourable testimonies, when we reflect, that they were uttered by the mouth of a Roman and a soldier, by the dying voice of a penitent criminal, and also by a part of the people whom the death of the Just One had called together! Now was fulfilled what the Lord had said before to this people; "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me I speak these things[c]." And to all this let us add the resolute act of the friends of Jesus Christ, which the Evangelist records. He who died as a malefactor, should be buried also as such; and no doubt his irreconcileable foes with great satisfaction intended for him this ignominy also, that his corpse should

[c] John viii. 28.

waste in corruption on Calvary. But he who was to have "made his grave with the wicked," resembled "the rich in his death." Two generous, honest men, members of the high court which had condemned Jesus, but secret reverers of his deeds and his words, Joseph and Nicodemus, who had not assented to the counsel of their brethren, besought Pilate for the sacred body; who willingly makes some little reparation for the evil he had done through fear of man, and is glad, by granting their request, to reconcile himself, at least in some degree, to his heart and conscience, having, up to the fatal moment of decision, always spoken for Jesus. At once it is, as if all the shame were removed and changed into honour, as the anguish of sorrow and the agony of death subsided at once into peaceful stillness and the repose of a refreshing slumber. Oh, truly, truly, already in death was Jesus Christ glorified and highly honoured, and to him and his glorious burial, the completest application may be made of that prophetic word, "His rest shall be honourable." And now the body of Jesus is interred, as that of a person of distinction; a new family sepulchre receives it, and is thereby consecrated; precious spices and costly ointments are prepared for embalming the holy dead, and his friends, both men and women, are allowed to assemble at the sacred place, where he shall sleep.

3dly. And yet, my hearers, the tribute paid to his glory in death by friends and enemies, by the tongues of men and the voice of nature, seems smaller and of less importance, when we turn our thoughts to that which he himself spake and did in the last moments, by which he himself, when actually dying, crowned his character and his life, and acquired a just title to perpetual renown and the most reverential memory.

Look back once more with your mind's eye to the cross of the expiring Redeemer, and when you there hear his last words, admire his last directions, and bow yourselves low before the high dignity of his mind and heart; Oh how soon the tauntings of the rough multitude, the contumely of his virulent haters, and the insults which were heaped upon him throughout his death and his rejection, are forgotten! How the darkness of night disperses, which shrouds the place of the death of Jesus Christ in mourning, before the holy splendour of virtue, which proceeds from the sublime Sufferer, the great and glorious Being put to death! For—name a more sublime, a more honourable death, than that which Jesus Christ died!

If we did not even once think of that which concerns us so much, and which makes this day a festival; that he gave up his life, freely and without sin, gave it up for the truth of God, for the great and momentous cause of the enlightening and re-

demption of the world; that he, as a Martyr and Saviour shed his blood and bowed his head to death; if we did not at all think of this,—Oh, let us hear the manifestations of that Divine mind which he maintains to the last moment of life, the expressions of that high tranquillity of soul and conscience, which remains his beautiful imperishable jewel, of that benevolent love, which treats and blesses both friend and foe with equal gentleness and forbearance, of that most firm faith in God and a state of endless duration, which strengthens his heart and encourages him in the last struggle; let us but admire this, and we shall confess all more honourable to him than the glorious signs of mourning nature; more honourable to him than the costly burial which was allotted him was his deportment in death itself, and that which he said and did in the last moments. With what inward peace does he, who could say in the last evening of his life, "Father, I have glorified thee on earth and finished the work which thou gavest me to do," now look back from the hill of his cross upon his active and laudable, his holy and blessedly completed course of life! with what tranquillity of soul does he, in sight of death, of eternity which brings all things to light, and of him who maketh just retribution, at length cry out, "It is finished!" I have accomplished that which I had to perform, I have undergone that which I had to suffer. With what in-

comparable love for his enemies does he, the much and grievously afflicted, the man of sorrows, and at the same time the man without sin, pray for those who prepared for him the cup of death, and treated him as criminals alone are treated! "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

With what gracious kindness, full of sympathy and consolation, he speaks to the dying man near him, who had a foresight of a higher destiny and an anticipation of immortality, and says, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." With what tender, grateful, and, to the last, faithful affection, does the expiring Son look upon his mother, bowed down with grief and speechless, in order to mitigate the pain, when now the sword went through her soul, and to heal her breaking heart with the word of comfort, "Woman, behold thy son." It was John, his most intimate and faithful follower, to whom he bequeathed the precious legacy, "Behold thy mother."

Lastly, with what unshaken faith his heart rests in the moment of his last agony on Him, whom he called Father, and whom he taught men to call Father, and on futurity and eternity, for which he waited, and to which he pointed, as long as he had walked on earth. God is still his Father, and into his hand, the hand of Almighty power and grace, he commends his spirit. There he is not lost, there no evil touches him, there he is safe from the trou-

bles and cares of mortality, and delivered from the grave's consuming power. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

These were his last words, the triumph of his faith, of his trust in God, of his hope. He then "bowed his head and expired." Thus he departed into the rest above which awaited him, into the immortality in which he trusted, into the glory which the Father had given him before the world was. Yes, more glorifying than the mourning, with which nature solemnly celebrated his end, more glorifying than the declarations and actions of the witnesses of his death and the friends of his life, was his death itself, and that which he said and did in his last moments. His sentiments and faith in death were the crown of his Divine life.

Let me, my hearers, conclude this discourse with a short exhortation in three parts. The first; If we regard the death of the Redeemer in this point of view, then the day which celebrates him can surely not be a day of tears, a mourning solemnity; then this commemoration of his death and burial becomes a festival of his glory. Praise God, therefore, not only for the whole life, but also for the death of his Holy Son. Thank God and praise his glorious name, because Jesus Christ so honourably attained his end, because, even before he died, he was crowned with praise and glory, after the endurance of pain and sorrow, ignominy and humi-

liation, and because his death was the diadem of his life.

Let not pain and grief,—no, let a holy joy possess and penetrate our minds, when we think of the hour in which Jesus Christ finished his work, and God glorified him who had glorified God on earth.

The second exhortation; Mourn not for the good, whose end was peaceful and blessed, as that of Jesus Christ, lament not the dead who lived and died worthy of future fame, as he was. Who does not now think of his own departed, of their life and their end, of their last struggle, their last words, their last blessing, and of the moment when they closed their eyes, of the terrible moment when their coffin was closed, and their remains let down into the silent chamber of corruption? Oh, if they lived religiously, and were virtuously disposed, and feared God, and did what was right, if they crowned their godly life by faith and hope, by love and fidelity in death, so that their memory was blessed amongst us; then let the tear of pious recollection, of grateful love, of melancholy feeling flow this day; but mourn not for them who sleep in peace, deplore not those who finished their course, and fought the good fight, and preserved their faith unto the end. Their rest is also honourable, and how desirable in these times of disorder and trouble, in these regions of wretchedness and grief! Happy they, whom God has perfected! Blessed are all they who died

in the Lord! To them truly was "the day of death better than the day of their birth."

The last exhortation: Mindful of Him, yea, mindful of thee, thou perfected and glorified Mediator, and of thy holy and blessed death, we have all doubtless but one wish, That we may die thy death, O thou Righteous! that our end may be as thine was, Holy and Blessed! Oh let us also finish that which God has given us to do; let us also keep the faith, and a good conscience, and a clean heart, even to the end; and whether the end shall arrive soon or late, let us also then depart with a forgiving benevolent temper, let us resignedly and quietly endure what it may then be our lot to suffer, let us also with confidence and faith recommend our spirit to the Father, and full of joyful hope pass into the land of eternal peace. Then, O then we die thy death, thou Just One! Then will our end also be as thine. Amen.

SERMON XI.

BY VEILLODTER.

ON THE SANCTITY OF AN OATH, AND THE CRIME OF PERJURY.

SERMON XI.

ON THE SANCTITY OF AN OATH, AND THE CRIME OF PERJURY.

Oh God, most holy and just, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, and thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven, that right and truth may rule, and peace and love dwell among us! Let us ever adhere to the truth before thee, that we may not shun thy all-seeing eye, and thy eternal justice. Strengthen us to this effect according to thy grace, that thy fear may constantly govern us, that we may evermore walk before thee with our view devoutly directed on high, and find our happiness in thy love. Amen.

Philip. i. 3—8.

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun

a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

THE Apostle rejoices in our text in the uniformly constant fellowship of the Church at Philippi in the Gospel of Jesus, feels confident that God will gloriously complete the good work which was begun in them, and calls God, the Omniscient, as a witness of the desire of his heart for them when in his imprisonment, and of the affectionate sentiments he entertained towards them. "God is my record," he says, "how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." This asseveration of the Apostle, uttered with pious feeling on a solemn occasion, leads our serious attention to those oaths, which are required by authority as the seal of important depositions and promises, and those which, uncalled for, are uttered by the inconsiderate on the most trifling occasions; thus I feel myself under an obligation before God, to address you who are here assembled with the deep seriousness of the Gospel, respecting both kinds of oaths, and the heinous crime of perjury. The importance of the subject itself demands such consideration, but alarming appearances of our time give it a peculiar and impressive interest. The sacredness of an oath is

undervalued by thousands; it is less respected, especially since the time when the taking of oaths has been so multiplied, and certainly often unnecessarily imposed; when the solemnity with which they formerly were taken is seldom any more observed, rather indeed a levity of conduct is more frequently perceived in those to whom the oath is administered. The profligacy of many who esteem earthly advantages higher than the favour of God, and are not afraid to mock him, the Most Holy, is to be added; and the blindness of those, who think that any dishonest reservation will exempt them from the penalties of perjury, completes the deplorable picture. How deeply these appearances affect the true happiness of the people! How can we subsist, what shall become of us, when no more trust is to be placed in our declarations, even of slighter import; and when again truth and honesty are so lightly esteemed, that many cannot be impressed nor bound even by their calling upon the all-holy Searcher of hearts! Whither shall we sink, when the fear of God so departs from us, that the taking of an oath is no longer a sure pledge of the truth, this highly important religious act seems to be misapprehended, and is actually made an object of profane jesting? On what a brink of destruction do we hover, if we do not all shudder with one feeling of horror at the shocking impiety of perjury! Let us then, beloved, take a nearer view of this

high object, and seriously consider the sanctity of an oath and the fearful crime of perjury. May God strengthen us, that our hearts may feel a lively impression of the deep interest of the subject!

That veracity and integrity be held sacred and every where effective, is an essential condition of the furtherance of human improvement and general prosperity. A lie is the germ of all moral corruption and the grave of our well-being; a lie is of a devilish nature[a], and where it dwells and operates, there are the plagues of hell. A lie is a fraud and a secret felonious attack upon our most valuable possessions; falsehood, flattery, and hypocrisy, are its offspring; suspicion, distrust, and discord, its fruits; wherever, therefore, it gains admission, there tranquillity and safety are destroyed, misery enters at the moment in which truth departs, love withdraws at the same time, and blessing and happiness desert those wretched beings, who think to found the attainment of their ends on deceit.

At the cradle of the Redeemer of the world sounded the sacred cry, "Peace on earth!" and thereby it was declared, what spirit must animate those, who would avow themselves servants of that divine Person, namely the spirit of the strictest regard for right, the spirit of truth, candour, integrity, and faithfulness. Where this spirit prevails,

[a] John viii. 44.

there is unlimited trust, cheerful confidence, quiet submission, firm security, and consequently peace. Where love works, there distrustful anxiety gives way, for "Love worketh no ill to its neighbour." But where this is the case, nothing more is required than the simple word, the simple affirmation, the simple promise; every pledging of honour, every joining of hands, every additional protestation, is quite superfluous. The language of a sincere heart is alone sufficient, the word alone is amply satisfactory. But the Lord, to whom we would belong, willeth such surety and such trust, and quite decided is his declaration; "Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." We may consequently assume, that in respect to those who are truly his, the real members of his spiritual kingdom, his precept, "Swear not at all," is to be taken literally. For where the truth, which he enjoins, presides, there belief also prevails, and when that is so, what need is there of any other confirmation of an assertion or a promise? Yes, thus should it be, this should be the rule with us. Truth should have planted its banner among Christians, no doubt of integrity should find place amongst them, no other surety than an honest heart be necessary, no oath be required, because not needed. But this holy kingdom of God, this sovereignty of truth and of full belief, comprehends not alas! in any part of the

world, all who call themselves after the Lord. Liars walk by the side of lovers of truth, and deceivers near honest men. Both, who have rendered themselves unworthy of trust, stand in need of a surety for what they say; they are willing to pledge indeed their honour, their faithfulness, and the clasping of hands; but what is binding or sacred to such unfortunates, to whom truth is no longer a duty? They themselves disgrace the sureties whom they have proposed, and even honour does not restrain them from falsehood and perfidy. The last means, therefore, are tried to bind them, that they may not recklessly commit themselves. The highest consideration which can be conceived, shall awe them, the consideration of the Omniscient who seeth in secret, the Most Holy, who punishes deceit and wrong with eternal perdition. Where depositions or promises are of great importance to society, where the innocence or the life of a brother is concerned, or the indispensable faithfulness in office, recourse is had to the sacred thought of God, to bind persons of doubtful disposition. They shall call upon him, the eternal Searcher and Judge of all hearts, to witness the truth of their declaration, the honesty of their promise; they shall point above with upraised hand towards heaven, where the ever righteous Rewarder of evil is enthroned; they shall speak the truth, as they value their everlasting happiness; they themselves shall pronounce

judgment on their falsehood, if in these solemn moments they are guilty of it. Thus they give, as it were, the fate of their immortal soul as a security. Whether the swearer is made to lay his hand on the Bible or not, and lights are placed near the image of the Crucified, or not—he who swears as a Christian, well knows the fearful assurance in the Bible, " Be not deceived, God is not mocked;" he is already under a strict obligation to imitate the Lord, who was fastened to the cross because he continued faithful to the truth even unto death. Hence the occasion of oaths is derived from the unchristian temper of those, who in the levity and corruption of their hearts have become strangers to veracity, and whose conscience needs to be particularly roused and alarmed.

Yet, since light-mindedness and dishonesty often lie concealed, and the judge cannot presume precisely to discern the inward mind, the oath is required of all persons in cases, which the law prescribes, and even the good man, whose simple word and promise are as sacred to him as that which he swears to, must comply with the oath imposed by the law. It should indeed be enforced only on urgent occasions, and be taken with the greatest solemnity. If it be otherwise, if it be required without necessity from him who must obey, or if there be a reprehensible levity in the proceeding, then legislators and judges may stand

responsible before the Judge of worlds, when they make what is holy common, and treat with disrespect that which should be revered: but it does not exempt you, who swear, from that solemn seriousness, with which you ought then to behave. Does it rest with you in a question of right, whether you will maintain your actual rights by an oath, and is the advantage of such a nature, that you can forego it according to your conscience? then rather give it up, than solemnly invoke God on an affair of small moment. But must you swear? then view this most sacred act in its fullest signification; an oath is of weighty import, whether a small or a great matter is at stake. Persons usually prepare themselves beforehand for important undertakings; do you then also seriously consider what you are about to do. You shall give evidence or make a promise. Reflect, before God, whether you can do this or that with perfect conscientiousness. Think how easily our senses err, how our memory may deceive us. Consider whether you have the *power* to perform, what you shall promise upon oath; whether you have an entire *willingness* to fulfil conscientiously, and *for a continuance*, the duties to be undertaken. Do you feel fully satisfied on this point? well, then proceed with the reverence which such a sacred act requires, but also with the composure which your purity of intention affords you; then uplift the soul, the eye, the hand, to the

Omniscient Being who is nigh unto you, then testify to the truth with secret prayer to him, who is the eternal Fountain of truth: or if you are sworn to undertake high duties, then cheerfully vow to your God first, what you will vow to men by invoking the name of God, and to that which your mouth utters, let your heart say forcibly but calmly, Amen! Behold, thus shalt thou swear with that deep veneration and propriety, which proclaim the sanctity of an oath to all who observe thee, with lamentation for human corruption, which has so grievously weakened the confidence in simple assertion, but nevertheless with the gratifying feeling, that by thy upright conduct in these sacred moments thou glorifiest God.

In the same degree, beloved, in which an oath taken with sincerity is a religious act, highly to be venerated and of awful importance, appears on the other hand perjury, as an infamous and shocking crime, a dreadful blasphemy, an abominable trifling with heaven and hell. To begin with smaller things; whoever lies without blushing, whoever testifies what he has not seen or heard, whoever promises what he will not perform, whoever pledges his honour to an untruth, whoever abuses the mutual and assuring pressure of hands to the ruin of his neighbour; how low is such an one sunk! how despicable is he! But, alas! he may sink still deeper. With daring countenance he now strikes at what is

divine, makes a mock of the Most Holy, scorns everlasting mercy, purchases empty worldly profit with the wages of hell. Represent to yourselves the terrific portrait of a perjured man, and consider then his abominable conduct. When the human judge can pronounce no sentence respecting a deed done without witnesses, he, who has some knowledge of the affair, shall now be called upon to afford ground for decision. The case affects the right, the honour, the property, perhaps even the life of a fellow-creature.

How pressing a demand upon his veracity does the importance of these valuable things constitute! how shameful then to speak falsely! But that this may the more surely be prevented, that the man may not be induced, either by fear or gain, to swerve from the truth, it is required of him, that he shall take God as the holy witness of his declaration, and speak the truth, if he wishes that God may be gracious to him. The earth, its advantages and its sorrows, should be lost sight of in these solemn moments; God and eternity should fill his soul. But now the miserable man steps forth with unabashed brow, to deride both divine and human laws, and for the sake of some worldly trifle, which to-morrow may be the prey of fate, profligately to hazard his eternal happiness; he steps forth with reprobate mind to raise his hand to heaven, the seat of the avenging Deity, and

with perjured words to blaspheme the Most Holy. Now is the deed of hell accomplished, equally heinous, whether the wages of sin be small or great. The judge must now do wrong without his fault, condemned innocence now goes weeping from the place where justice alone should rule, the terrible curse of her tears now lies upon the perjured man. He has confessed God with his lips, but has blasphemed him inwardly; he has sported like a madman with God and eternity. He would obtain enjoyment, and he has laid a gnawing worm that never dies to his heart; he has, like one not in his senses, valued the span of this life higher than eternity. It is to no purpose that he reserves a secret sense in his oath,—that he gave in his own mind another signification to his words. Wretched, contemptible subterfuge! This shameful deception will vanish, when once his conscience shall awake with the pains of hell, and the words, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked," will hover flaming before his tortured soul. Oh! it is too shocking to wish to make the most holy and righteous God, as it were, a concealer of crime and disgrace. Imagine not, wretched man, that an oath as a human exigency is of trivial importance, hold it not for something common, if, perhaps, it is treated as common by an erring legislation, or an inconsiderate judge.

A sacred awe of it should dwell in every breast;

if thou hast it not, woe unto thee! Hast thou so severed thyself from God, that thou no more regardest him? Woe unto thee! He is enthroned above the stars, his presence will be alarmingly announced to thee in the voice of thunder, in the voice of thy terribly awakened conscience, in the voice of the messenger of death, whom God sends to bring you before his holy tribunal. Unhappy man! already thou hast destroyed thy peace here below; thou must tremble for fear of the exposure of thy crime, must dread solitude and the anguish of sleepless nights, must shudder at every anticipation of thy hour of death. Yes, fly from every death-bell, every funeral procession; they warn you fearfully of the hour of judgment. And yet it comes to thee also inevitably. Miserable man! nothing saves thee from its agony! Thou hast, in swearing falsely, renounced the mercy of God; and yet no mortal, not even the most pious can stand without it. Alas! when the good things, which thou boughtest with perjury, now appear to thee accursed, when thy heart, in the heat of anguish, pants for coolness, as thy dry palate thirsts for refreshment, when thou shudderest at thy former self-cursing, when thou findest no solace in thyself, and lookest forward with despair into the night of eternity--poor man! even they, whom thou once defrauded, must now deplore thy misery.

Let me break off, beloved, and with mild words

urgently exhort you; honour with inviolable fidelity God and the truth! "Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; and esteem whatsoever is more than these" as "evil." Withstand the temptation to acquire any advantage, though by the very least deviation from the truth. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Fathers, Mothers, Teachers, hold it of the first importance in the education of those entrusted to you, forcibly to represent to them veracity and faithfulness in their serious and their beautiful colours, and to plant in their souls the deepest abhorrence of every the smallest kind of dishonesty. Let us all walk pure and without offence in the true fear of God; and, in all temptations, by firmly holding fast truth and right, let us keep that holy peace, which blesses those only, who are of a clean heart, even to the end. Amen.

SERMON XII.

BY TZSCHIRNER.

ON THE END OF THE WORLD.

SERMON XII.

ON THE END OF THE WORLD.

"LORD, thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, thou art God from everlasting, and world without end." Amen.

THE expectation of the near approaching end of the world was intimately interwoven, my friends, with the creed of the original church, and many Christians of the earliest time hoped or feared, that they should witness this great event, and behold the day of the Lord's return. The same expectation was renewed from time to time. In the following centuries numerous prophets arose, who proclaimed the day and hour of the end of the world; and there are some, even among our own contemporaries, who believe they can read on the dial-plate

of the world's great time-piece, and determine what time it is in the kingdom of God. Then, namely, when the year one thousand after the birth of Christ drew near, many voices announced that this thousandth year of the Christian era would infallibly conclude the succession of ages, and bring in the end of the world; and the people full of terror and anxious expectation looked forward to the things that should come; the thoughtless man became contemplative and serious, the pious redoubled the exercises of devotion, and numerous pilgrims wandered to the Holy Land, that the great day of judgment might find them at the grave of the Redeemer. Experience has belied all these prophecies. The specified years and days arrived, and men looked with eager expectation to all quarters of the heavens, to discover the precursors of the consummation so near at hand; but the heaven altered not its form, the earth swerved not from its course, and every thing moved on in its accustomed track; the stars rose and set, as they had done since the memory of man, and day and night, summer and winter, alternated as they had done for thousands of years. Nature, in its steady order, in its equal course, and in the unexhausted fulness of its strength, mocked at human folly, which attempted to fathom its secret energies of life, and calculate the duration of its years, and presumed they knew what, as the Lord himself says, "no man knoweth, no,

not the angels in heaven, but the Father only." More rarely than at former periods, have proclaimers of the world drawing to its close appeared in our days; and if at times such a prophetic voice is heard, it is not attended to, and fills no minds, as formerly, with fear and apprehension.

But this is not, perhaps, merely the fruit of wisdom, which disclaims the knowledge of what cannot be known, but also the consequence of unbelief, the result of an irreligious view of the world, according to which many of our contemporaries consider the world not as the work of an Almighty Creator, who can destroy what he has constructed, but as the changeful product of an eternal power of nature, which obeying, not God, but its own law of inward necessity, is moved in a circle without beginning and without end. In the minds of many in these days, all idea of an end of the world is effaced; and hence it is, and not from a modest acknowledgment of the limitation of human faculties, that there arises in most of them that indifference, with which they repel all questions referring to this great event. But the end of the world is as essential an article of the Christian faith, as the doctrine of its creation and government: a religious view of the world necessarily leads to this reflection, and religious feeling is never more powerfully awakened, than when we transport ourselves in idea to the time when the structure of the world falls to pieces, the entire order of things at present

subsisting, terminates, and a "new earth and a new heaven cometh, wherein dwelleth righteousness." I will, therefore, present this great and serious consideration to your minds, and address you on the end of the world. Ask not, what will such a contemplation profit? its object lies in itself. The magnitude of this consideration is its importance, and its seriousness is its power. Let us then meditate on it in our inmost souls.

MATT. xxiv. 37, and following verses.

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

JESUS and the Apostles, as often as the last things which should happen were the subject of their discourse, spake in figures, and only in figures could they speak of a change which will occur perceptible by the senses, but which never has been subjected to human experience. The image and the thing itself, the doctrine and the figurative words in which it is clothed, are closely conjoined in these discourses; so that in many cases we do not distin-

guish, with certainty, the one from the other, but may easily either take the symbol for the thing signified, or consider that which is more than symbol as mere figure. Hence the difference of opinion among the expositors of Scripture on the doctrine of Christianity, respecting the latest things which are to happen. But if we declare ever so much to be figure and allegory, which is accustomed to be held for doctrine, still we cannot mistake, that Jesus and the Apostles proclaim an end of the world, and speak of a period when the now existing order of things shall cease, and a new earth and a new heaven shall appear. This period is most frequently called 'the day of the Lord,' or 'the coming of the Son of Man,' and we collect from the descriptions of this day, that it will be an epoch completely subversive of the subsisting order of things. This Jesus indicates, when he compares in the text, the time of his return, and the time of the deluge, and says shortly before, that "the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." The Apostles speak in the same manner of this time, and Peter, for instance, says, "on the day of the Lord the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up[a]."

[a] 2 Pet. iii. 10.

Christianity, therefore, manifestly inculcates a dissolution of the world. In discoursing to you on this doctrine, I shall first shew what we are to understand by the end of the world, then state the reasons which lead us to expect such a change of things, and, lastly, excite those sentiments which the thought of the termination of worldly things, may and ought to awaken. When the Scripture announces an end of the world, it does not mean what we understand thereby in scholastic language, but in the language of common life, not the system of the universe, not the whole countless host of suns and stars, which move in infinite space around the source of all life and light, but the earth, the planet which God has allotted for an habitation to the human race. The Lord, indeed, speaks, in a passage preceding the text, of a time when "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." But this is evidently a figure, of which he makes use, after the example of the Prophets, in order to depict the greatness of the change of which he speaks. Revelation has not instructed us concerning the heavenly bodies and their inhabitants and destinies; we know nothing further of the stars, than that they shine over our heads, and in regular tracks perform their course round their suns.

Revelation is given to the human race, and what information it affords us respecting future things, relates to our species and its place of abode. By the end of the world, therefore, of which Scripture speaks, a change is to be understood which will take place in the earth, in the planet inhabited by mankind. But Jesus Christ has as little revealed the nature of this change, as the way and manner in which it will be effected. Will this change be a destruction of our planet, or only a transformation, a metamorphosis? Will the earth cease to exist as earth? Will it vanish from the spheres? Will the sun, perhaps, which led the youthful and blooming daughter for thousands of years with golden cords round his shining countenance, one day draw her when grown old into his burning lap? Or will the decaying earth be born again and renovated, and formed for the residence of more perfect creatures? We know not. Reason can venture on this point but uncertain conjectures, and Revelation has not declared it. Just as little do we know of the manner in which this destruction or transformation of our planet will be effected, whether by a derangement of its native energies, or by the influence of another heavenly body pressing on its path. Scripture teaches this only, that the now existing order of things shall cease, and with the destruction or transformation of our planet an essentially altered condition of the human race shall begin. Though we may not ver-

bally and literally interpret the passages of Scripture which treat of the end of the world, yet we obviously collect from the words of Jesus Christ; "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken [a]," and from the words of the Apostle, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up [b]:" from these words we obviously collect, that every human institution shall cease, the frame of the earth disappear, the law of nature undergo a change, and the present order of things terminate. And all those parts of Scripture, which either describe the return of the Lord in great power and glory at the end of time, or represent the future judgment and the separation of the good from the bad; or speak of that corruptible which shall put on incorruption, and that mortal which shall put on immortality; or express the expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; all these representations lead to the conclusion, that with the destruction or transformation of the earth the present constitution of our race will have its end, and a new and more perfect state of the same will commence.

This is what we have to understand by the end of

[a] Matt. xxiv. 29. [b] 2 Pet. iii. 10.

the world,—a dissolution or transformation of our planet, with which the existing order of things ends, and a new and essentially different state of the human race commences. But this expectation is no idle dream, no empty fiction of an enthusiastic fancy; the doctrine of Christianity approves itself to reason on the clearest grounds. For that the earth is liable to subversion and destruction, is manifest from this, that it is a body, a mass composed of different materials and impregnated with vital power. Its magnitude and the fulness of its strength do not exempt it from that law which all worldly things obey, but only prolong its existence and the periods of its changes; so that thousands of years elapse, before that takes place in this gigantic frame, which the small body experiences in the course of a few moons and years. But it is a body similar to every other body, it is finite and contained in space; its inhabitants have reckoned its length and breadth; it bears, like all bodies, relation to other bodies; the beams of the sun rouse its vigour, and the weight of the cold moon presses upon it, and forces its seas over the boundary of their shores; it is continually changing, like every other body; firm land is buried in the depth of floods; islands rise out of the ocean; here a volcano soars aloft, there another sinks back into itself. The earth being a body is, consequently, like all other bodies, subject to the law of mutation and dissolution. And whoever would doubt, that

that which daily happens to the members of this great body, could also befal the entire frame, let him learn from the study of nature and from history, that our planet has already experienced transformations, by which its whole form has been changed. There was a time, which the study of nature as well as history indicates, when the earth was not what it now is, a time, of which Scripture speaks when it says, "And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters:" a time, when our planet was formed, under mighty conflicts of the elements, for the abode of the various species of beings which now occupy it. At that period, when the mountains were raised, and the valleys sunk, the islands rose above the level of the sea, the sea retreated within prescribed limits, and the bowels of the earth melted, and bursting through the surface forced their way to the air, at this period of disorder and jar of elements, the form of the earth could not be that, in which we now view the dwelling-place of our species.

Prior to this time of either the first formation or the renovation of our planet, already grown old, history indeed is silent; but traces of the time, when there were living creatures and even men on the earth, (though as yet the elemental conflict had not subsided, and its conformation

was not yet completed, and different kinds of animals from the present inhabited it) have been preserved in the traditions of primæval nations, of wide-spread inundations and monsters of earth and sea; and the petrified limbs and stiffened forms of unknown animals which are found on the summits of the highest mountains and in the undisturbed plains of the icy sea, lead us to the same supposition. In like manner the history of the peopling of our earth brings us to the conclusion, that it once had another shape, and was not inhabited by men. It was peopled by degrees from Asia, and thousands of years appear to have passed away before the migrating tribes from the mother-land of our species extended themselves over the desert plains of the other parts of the world, inhabited only by animals. Now this gradual population of the earth brings us back, (since we reduce all nations to one people, this people to one family, and this family to one man and one woman) to the beginning of the human race, and from this to a period, when the earth being fashioned in the shock of elements was not yet the abode of our race.

Yes, there has been a time, when our planet wore a different appearance, and could not sustain beings of our species; and once again the time will come, when it will cease to be the dwelling-place of mankind, and will either assume a new form, or disappear from the rank of stars. How and by means

of what instruments this change will be brought about, we are indeed ignorant; but more than one possibility is conceivable. Deep in the earth there rages a fire, which throws up mountains, melts stones, and sends forth burning floods, and terrified nations often hear the subterranean thunder which shakes the lands, so that rocks tremble and cities are overthrown. Swelling seas cover the half of its surface, which, as they formerly sank, so that large islands started up, may once again uplift themselves and break in over their shores. Other innumerable heavenly bodies travel near our planet in infinite space, and several of them are contiguous to its path; the sun may attract it so that it shall perish in his sea of fire; the moon may lower itself into its atmosphere, so that all its seas shall pass their shores, and endless inundations overwhelm it; a wandering star may come in hostile contact with it, so that after a fruitless contest it must yield to the stronger enemy and be driven from its place. The earth bears in its bosom destroying powers, and bodies float around and near it which threaten its dissolution. Therefore thou wilt not subsist for ever, thou cradle of our race, thou land of blessing and of cursing, thou grave full of joy and life; thou Paradise full of pain and death, thou scene for thousands of years of our wisdom and folly, our virtues and vices; no, thou canst not last for ever! thou thyself also, like every thing which thou bearest, must obey thy law, the

law of mutability and destruction! Possibly thou mayest continue thy course for thousands of years longer with strength and gladness, attended by thy moon, and led by the shining sun. Possibly thou mayest still for thousands of years maintain the succession of days and nights, summer and winter in invariable order, and see the generations of men come and go. Perhaps also the day of the Lord is nearer than we imagine. We cannot penetrate into the mysterious obscurity of thy existence, we cannot measure thy vital power, nor count thy years. But finite art thou and transitory, of that we are certain, as thy children are finite and transitory; for that which is created is not eternal and imperishable, as the Creator is eternal and immutable; for thee also a limit is fixed, even thy long day will decline. He that formed thee, will change thee; he that created thee, will destroy thee; even thy strength shall decay, even thy structure shall fall into ruins, even thy law and thy order shall be no more. We look for a new heaven and a new earth.

Only the frivolous and foolish man repels with unconcern every thought of the future final destiny of his kind, and of the earth which bears and nourishes it, and remains unmoved and unaffected, when forewarned of the day of the Lord. But the pious and wise man, without being absorbed in fruitless researches into what is unfathomable, and without wearying himself in vain endeavours

to determine that which cannot be determined, attentively regards the earnest words, " Watch, for ye know not what hour your Lord will come," dwells in silent meditation on the great thought of the end of the world, and is led by it unto God, awakened to a holy seriousness, and elevated to sublime anticipations and hopes. Above all, that sense of the emptiness of worldly things fixes on his attention, which teaches him to seek the Eternal and Immutable, and awakens the consciousness of a power in his own being, which defies the destroying violence of the elements. On all sides, indeed, wherever we turn our eyes, we are met by images of decay; history is a large silent field covered with ruins and graves; what we bear in the memory is past and gone; what we built we see totter, and in the humiliating feeling of diminished and wasting energy of life, the sad idea of approaching dissolution often occurs to us. But we are never more forcibly affected by the feeling of the vanity of worldly things, than when we transport ourselves in imagination to the day of the falling world, and hover as it were over the ruins of our destroyed planet. The earth has now filled the measure of its years, and its time is come; the conflict of the elements begins, and in the mighty struggle all the works of men perish, and the last of our race are buried under the ruins of falling palaces and cottages; and not only the works of men, but the

works of nature also come to an end; the barriers of beach and shore are broken through; the mountains, thousands of years old, bend their heads, all life stiffens, the beautiful structure of plants and animals is resolved into rough matter, the powers of destruction rule, wild and lawless. And now the conflict is ended, now the earth is again waste and void, and darkness is on the face of the deep.

But our meditation cannot end in the feeling of the insecurity of all things arising from these thoughts; we are not able to bear this annihilating feeling; we must, if we would not sink under it, merge it in another feeling which will again raise and strengthen us. We must turn from the vanity of worldly things to him that is Eternal and Imperishable, and never is he, who existed "before the mountains were brought forth, who is from everlasting and shall be evermore," never is he present to our souls in a more lively manner, than when we look up to him from the midst of images of destruction. Yes, the sense of the vanity of every thing temporal and earthly, which springs from the thought of the perishing world, leads us to God the Eternal and Imperishable; and whilst our contemplation is directed from the world which passeth away to the everlasting Creator, it is as if we were borne by a higher power over a waving sea and an unsteady ground to a safe rock. For the Eternal and Immutable is our Lord and Father,

and has poured into our being a ray of his light which is never extinguished, the power to know and to love him; and when we are conscious of this power, and look up to him in whose sight a thousand years are as yesterday, we feel the full signification of the important words; "The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever[a]." With the sense of the vanity of worldly things there springs likewise from the thought of the end of the world a sense of our dependence on God, which induces a holy awe of our Lord and Judge, and earnestness and faithfulness in the practice of good. Every thing, indeed, our origin and our end, what we know and what we attempt, reminds us of our limits, and thereby brings us to a feeling of dependence on a superior Power. But nothing can awaken this feeling more forcibly, than the thought of Him, who, as he of old laid the foundations of the earth and stretched out the heavens, will again fold the heavens together as a garment, and will shake the strong places of the earth. God spake once, "Let there be light, and there was light;" once again he will say, Let there be darkness, and it shall be dark, for he "speaks the word, and it is done; he commandeth, and it standeth fast."

This sublime thought of the Almighty Lord o

[a] 1 John ii. 17.

the universe occurs to us, when we consider either the beginning or the end of the things of this world; and then he appears before us great, majestic, and awe-inspiring, the Lord of lords and King of kings, in his might and splendour. And now we feel that we are dust, but his is "the kingdom and the power and the glory;" that "in him and through him and to him are all things;" that "in him only we live and move," that he "worketh all in all." We become deeply conscious of our dependence on God, and now a pious fear of our Lord and Judge fills our hearts, and an ardent desire is excited to please Him, in whose hand rests our fate in time and eternity, by pure intentions and blameless conduct. On this is founded the moral effect of the doctrine of Christianity concerning the return of the Lord, the serious import of the words, "Watch, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," and the strength of the exhortation, "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy [b]."

But however the thought of the end of the world may dispose the mind to seriousness, yet it does not deject it, but rather strengthens it, and exalts it to glad anticipation and lofty hope. For while it reminds us of the relation which the earth bears

[b] 1 Peter iv. 13.

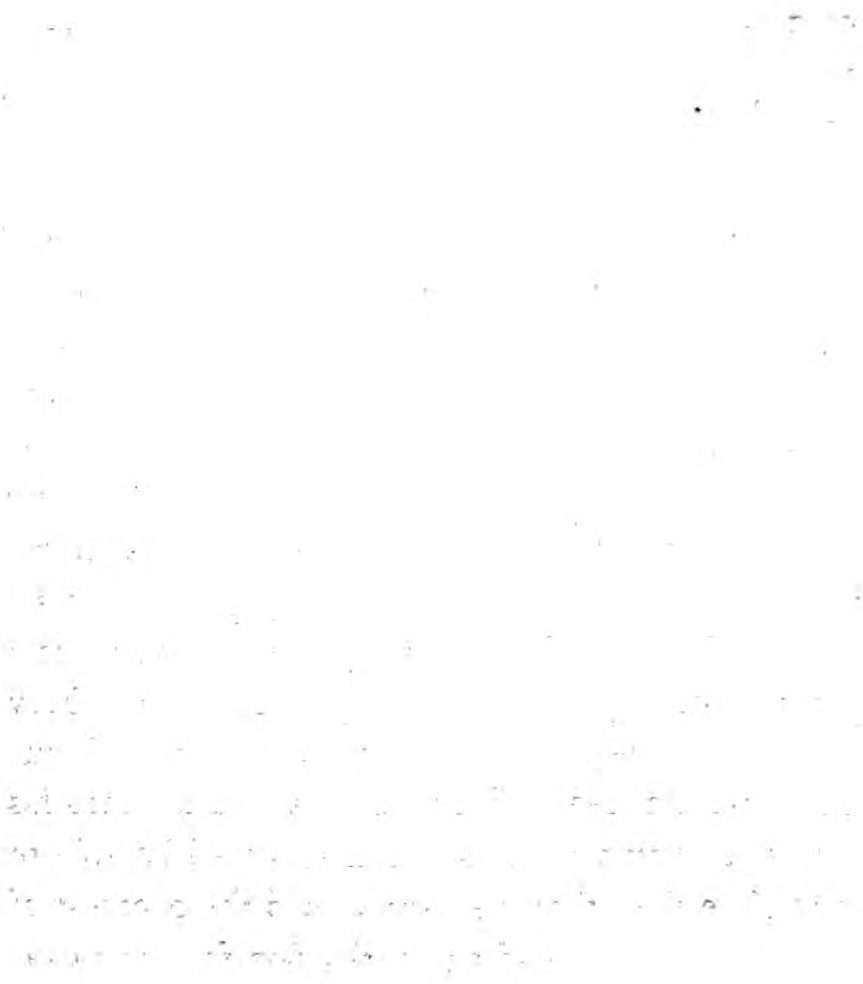
to other heavenly bodies, it leads us to the conjecture, that the inhabitants of the earth also have an affinity with other stars, and by the power of Him who has wound an all-uniting band round all stars and all suns, may be removed from the present to another dwelling-place. And now the obscure but grand idea strikes us, of our connexion with the universe, the idea of an eternal duration in other parts of the immense creation, of passing from star to star, from sun to sun. But nothing expands the heart more, nothing raises the soul higher than the thought, that we are not fastened to the earth with everlasting fetters; it is but the cradle, in which our first strength is developed; we shall one day leave this cradle behind us, and more freely and boldly emerge into an immeasurable life: it is but the first step of an infinite ladder, on which we ascend ever higher and higher to the stars above, and from the stars to the sun, and from our sun to the suns which our vision can scarcely reach, and from these suns to the worlds beyond, which no human eye has seen, and no language names. We form these conceptions, when we think of the relation the earth has to other heavenly bodies, and consider that, because a limit is ordained to it, it cannot be the eternal abode of the human race. And this conception becomes Hope and Expectation, when we observe the instructions of Scripture respecting the last events; for it manifestly describes

the end of the world as a time, when the human race shall be removed into other parts of the universe, and pass over into a more perfect state. It tells us, the Lord will bring his own into heaven; it describes heaven as the abode of blessed spirits, who see God, and promises the faithful and pious, eternal bliss. Thus ends the thought of the end of the world in the greatest conception that man can imagine, in the highest expectation that he can form. Therefore we look forward with seriousness indeed and devout awe to the day of the Lord; but we rejoice also in his coming, for we wait for " a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Amen.

SERMON XIII.

BY AMMON.

ON THE DIVINE MISSION OF CHRIST.



SERMON XIII.

ON THE DIVINE MISSION OF CHRIST.

O God, we praise thee with deep emotion of soul, for that thou hast crowned the excellent faculties, which we owe to thee, with the precious gift of reason, and hast laid the foundation of our knowledge of thee and thy sacred will in the depths of our spiritual nature. But with equal emotion and gratitude we warmly extol thy goodness, which sent a benefactor to appear amongst us, in Jesus thy ambassador, who has spoken to us in thy name, secured our wavering reason against gross errors and false conclusions, calmed our heart with respect to the past, and by his triumph over persecution, death, and the grave, has opened to us a prospect of a glorious and joyful futurity. May our conscience testify, that we have occupied our minds with a free and honest examination into his divine dignity and mission; may we all be able to say before thee, that we have valued the greatest of thy mercies, the sending of thy Son for our salva-

tion, according to its worth, and that we have laboured to become worthy of its fruits by filial devotion; may we all now appear before thee with the pious intention of seriously and conscientiously considering, how much our rational religion is profited by the conviction, that Jesus Christ was sent to us by thee, that he might become our wisdom and righteousness, our sanctification and redemption. Holy Father, sanctify us in the contemplation of this truth, for thy word is truth. Amen.

JOHN xvii. 3.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

THE well-known words of our text, beloved hearers, contain two conditions under which a true and lasting happiness, both here and hereafter, is promised us; namely, the knowledge of God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Since the time when Christianity gradually became the predominant religion in our quarter of the globe, the efforts of teachers have always been to extend and to perfect this knowledge, and especially in latter times to procure for it a new accession and increase by a more liberal cultivation of our reason. Great and splendid in the mean time as the advancement

of our age may be towards a purer knowledge of God, and, through that, to an improved rational religion; it at the same time appears to neglect in an equal degree the knowledge of Him, to whose instruction we are indebted, in a great measure, for the enlargement of our reason, and who has been ordained by God himself to teach us the truth, to be our Saviour, Mediator, and Redeemer. Yes, my hearers, we must confess, that our knowledge of Jesus has not always gained by the enlightening and cultivation of our reason; we must confess, that we do not always entertain that opinion of his union with the Godhead, and the divinity of his mission and his actions, which the dignity of his person and the authority of Scripture demand of us. Whence proceeds this injustice and coldness towards an ambassador of the Godhead, whom we know to be one of the noblest benefactors of the human race, and who, considered only as man, as a guide and friend of virtue, merits our deep veneration and esteem? Is it then not possible to unite a regard for reason with love and reverence for Jesus? Is it folly and deception, which the Scripture teaches us of his close connexion with the Father, and of his divine mission to mankind? Is it then such a matter of indifference to our happiness, whether we know Jesus or not, and is the religion of reason, which our age so loudly proclaims and adopts, of itself sufficient to direct our weak virtue, to set our

heart at rest respecting our past offences, and to fill us in the presence of death with strength, consolation, and contentment? I think it is due to my conviction, my duty, and yet more to the welfare of your immortal souls, distinctly and solemnly to negative these questions before you all. In order, therefore, to perceive the grounds of this conclusion, let us inquire together, How much the religion of reason gains by the conviction, that Jesus Christ was a divine ambassador.

This inquiry will give us occasion, 1st, to determine what is properly a divine ambassador; 2dly, to shew, that Jesus Christ possessed this dignity in the highest degree; and 3dly, to make it clear, how much our rational religion must gain by this conviction.

1st. Who is a true ambassador of God to man, and how can we distinguish him from an enthusiast and an impostor? The answer to this question, my dear hearers, is the first point which shall occupy our attention. If we look upon God as a wise and holy Father, who acquaints his children with his will and his decrees, not merely by means of nature and the experiences of life, not merely by reason and their conscience, but also by verbal instruction; then an ambassador of God will be a man, who is immediately called upon by the Almighty himself to announce to his brethren the commands and promises of God, and who by his various knowledge

and his virtues, by his works and the effect of his labours, convinces his contemporaries and posterity of the divinity of his vocation. That God himself required him to appear as his ambassador among men, no one can know but he himself; for who is able to look into the depths of his heart, in which the pious sentiments of religion glow, as sacred flames on a solitary altar? Who is able, with corporeal sense, to perceive the spiritual voice of the Deity, which, as the still suggestion of conscience, unheard by human ears, makes known to him the commands and promises of the Eternal? No, my dear hearers, when an ambassador of God comes among men, he appears not, like the envoy of a monarch, in outward splendour or with earthly pomp; but with the aspect of a calm sage, whose heartfelt desire is to improve and to bless his brethren by a worthy adoration of the holy and all-gladdening Deity. Contemporaries and posterity, who would try the divinity of his office, will next judge of his talents and knowledge; they will inquire, if his mind possesses intrinsic strength to raise itself to worthy conceptions of God, and, avoiding superstition and fanaticism, to find the way to the truth; they will lastly subject his knowledge and information respecting God and religion to a close examination, will compare them with the most sacred thing known to man, with the decisions and requisitions of their conscience, and so ascer-

tain and inwardly feel, whether his doctrine be of God. Still greater will be the attention paid to his heart and life; they will go on the principle, that a messenger from God must necessarily distinguish himself by the strictest purity of morals, if he would become worthy of the love and the special commands of God; and although they can require of him no faultless and superhuman virtue, yet they may justly expect, that his soul shall be free from the dominion of every evil desire, and will therefore declare him to be a deceiver or deceived, if riches, sensuality, or ambition, have power to charm and to enthral his heart. Even in his social relations they may expect extraordinary and surprising actions from him, who gives himself out for a messenger of God; for although, even in the service of the Deity, he is still a man, who has no command over nature, and much less can subvert it, or alter its everlasting and beneficial rotation; yet there is a variety of powers, partly unknown and hidden, both in and beyond the sphere of man, which the Ruler of the world can employ for the sudden healing of the sick or the awakening of the dead, and which he can permit to operate as the credentials of him whom he has sent.

And that there may not be the smallest deceit or delusion in such an important concern, as the mission of one intimate with the Godhead, posterity has in its hands another particular

touchstone of the truth, *the success of his teaching, and his influence on the improvement and amelioration of mankind.* For when the omniscient Ruler of the universe raises up to the human race an extraordinary ambassador and interpreter of his sacred will, he will also place him in a situation, where his exertions may be productive of good, where he may overcome the enemies of truth, and render a large portion of his brethren happy, by the blessings of religion. Behold here, beloved hearers, the extent and the distinguishing marks of an office, which rises in dignity and elevation far above the office of the mightiest king and potentate; the distinguishing marks of one sent by the Godhead, who, endowed with mind and talents by the Deity himself, consecrated to virtue, accredited by extraordinary deeds, and recommended by the success of his labours, has this end in view, the great work of God upon earth, the improvement and happiness of man! We maintain that Jesus Christ, this Divine benefactor of our race, possessed that *dignity in the highest degree;* and we will endeavour to prove the truth of this assertion, under the second head of our contemplation.

Jesus Christ, dear hearers, is the highest messenger of God, who, as far as history informs us, ever appeared among men; for he combines in himself all the characters, with which reason marks this exalted dignity. I will not now ap-

peal to the testimony which he so often delivers concerning himself,—" I have not spoken of myself, but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak[a]:" for no one could have an assurance of the certainty of this inward call of the Deity, but the divine person himself, and his friends who already knew on other grounds, that he spoke the truth. But how remarkable (if we may be allowed to view him in his human character, together with Peter and Paul) how remarkable are the mind and talents of this man, who, brought up in no school, and educated by no learned person, while yet quite young, penetrated with eagle-quickness into the intricate religious faith of his nation, separates truth and falsehood, as fruit and the husk, from each other, who, from the desert of his despised country, steps at once into the assemblies of the people, and unexpected as a bright light in the darkness, shines in the circle of his most learned contemporaries. As a pure and plentiful water-course suddenly bursts forth over a dry soil, and refreshes the languishing and wasted fields; so now the noblest streams of knowledge respecting God and religion flowed out of his mouth; he brought down the awful Sovereign of the universe as a gracious father to the circle of his children, consecrated by his

[a] John xii. 49.

divine instruction the lilies of the field and the sparrows on the ground, as heralds of his providence, and spread abroad the doctrines of immortality and a just retribution hereafter, as a fruitful seed, in the hearts of his brethren.

In what exact unison these doctrines stood with his sentiments and actions, is unknown to none of you; ye know the deep reverence towards God, which he so frequently manifested in the most heartfelt prayer to him; ye know the warm affection for his fellowmen, expressed in all his words and acts; ye know the freedom from pretension, and the humility with which he thought of himself, and which inspired even his enemies with respect and admiration. Even on occasion of the miracles which he performed, I may remind you of the confidence and dignity, with which he healed the sick and called the dead to life; of the firm trust in God, with which he raised his friend Lazarus; of the care and discrimination, with which he distributed these extraordinary gifts to the believing and meritorious; and of the calm greatness of soul, with which, immediately after the most remarkable works, he withdrew from the admiration of the multitude, and surrendered himself in solitude to the feelings of gratitude to God, and the peaceful rewards of his own heart. Neither the arts of eloquence, nor force and compulsion, nor extravagant promises of terrestrial happiness, nor an excessive obtrusion of his miracles,

should be made the means of propagating the religion which he taught; no, he was satisfied with the testimony, "the works which the Father hath given me to do, they bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me[b]," and submitted it to the experience of every one to convince himself, whether his "yoke," were "easy, and his burden light," and whether by believing in him they found "rest for their souls." Can you then wonder any more, my dear hearers, that the result of his labours was great and brilliant; that his contemporaries considered the day of his death almost as a day of consecration of his heavenly kingdom, on which forgiveness of sins, and the joyful hope of future blessedness were imparted to them; that his religion spread itself with uncommon rapidity over three quarters of the globe, and the modest and most superstitious people bent under the easy yoke of truth and love; can we, indeed, wonder when we ourselves begin to be witnesses, how a great and powerful nation, which, in the giddiness of her liberty seemed to have cast off the bonds of all public religion, has gradually again assembled under the banner of Christianity, and by her return to the truth becomes the best eulogist of Jesus and his doctrine! So true is that which Peter in the fulness of his conviction exclaims, "Thou art Christ,

[b] John v. 36.

the Son of the living God; to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

I will now no longer insist on a proposition which is sufficiently known to you all, and of which I have cited only the principal proofs, in order, thirdly, to shew the connexion in which this truth stands with religion. Our religion of reason gains by it partly in certainty and assurance, partly in efficacy and perspicuity, and partly in inward power for promoting piety and the accomplishment of good; three points well worthy to be observed and fully weighed by us. If Jesus Christ is an ambassador of God, our rational religion gains first in certainty and assurance. We all know, indeed, what is right, and "what the Lord our God requires of us;" the internal judge, before which our thoughts accuse or excuse themselves, is certainly a strict monitor of virtue and piety; nature, conscience, and experience, teach us clearly enough, that there is a God, who created us to be his children, and guides our destinies for our moral welfare and consummation; and the sweet hope of a future better life so surely and infallibly emanates from the serious contemplation of ourselves, and the pure virtue of our heart, that we need only subject our thoughts and wishes to reason, in order to be assured of a blissful immortality. But then, beloved hearers, have we this so much extolled reason always in our power? Do we not see that the most educated men exhibit the

most various and most opposite principles, concerning the most holy thing in us, our conscience and our moral nature? Does not the greatest part of our being consist in blind impulses of nature, in a number of sensations, desires, and propensities, which continually, like a thick cloud, envelope and bury in obscurity and darkness the faint glimmering light of our mind? And even then, when our reason is ever so clear, our passions ever so moderate, our hearts ever so clean and innocent, do not scruples and doubts respecting God and his providence, respecting our fate and our duties, respecting futurity and immortality, fall on us like a tempest, and undermine our peace, distract our hearts, and rob our virtue of its firmest supports, hope and trust in our Creator? When in this temper of mind, over which the best and most intelligent man has not always the mastery, how desirable and welcome must be to us the voice of Christ, which cries, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will refresh you;" "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst [c]!" How strengthening and convincing must the force of truths now become, for which reason requires the most elaborate proofs, when the messenger of God instructs us with inimitable dignity and sim-

[c] John vi. 35.

plicity; "your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things [d];" "the hairs of your head are all numbered;" "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us [e]," for all those who are "pure in heart shall see God." Confess, then, dear hearers, that the best informed religion of reason gains in our heart in certainty and assurance, if we unite with its intimations the testimony of God and him whom he has sent.

But, my friends, it gains still more thereby in perspicuity and efficacy. We may always concede, what is so frequently asserted in our days, that the general religious doctrines of revelation can go no further than the general instructions of reason, because both are unconfined, both in a state of progression, and capable of an eternal maturity. But is it then reason alone which is conversant in religious matters, and do not sensations, feelings, and a certain activity of imagination contribute their share likewise to the clearer knowledge of the truth? We know that God is a pure and most perfect spirit, who should be reverenced and adored only by spiritual and devout dispositions; but should we, weak and sensual beings, have sufficient strength and ability to raise ourselves with pure

[d] Matt. vi. 32. [e] Rom. viii. 18.

love to this highly perfect Spirit, if the Son of God had not appeared on earth, that we might view in him the image of the Godhead in human form, and lift up ourselves in him, as the first of his children, to his and to our Father? We know that God is willing to remit the debts of the returning sinner, amended by repentance and faith, and that where mercy begins, there avenging justice must cease; but would this healing and consolatory persuasion remain firm in our hearts if Jesus, crucified and dying for our sins, were not a most expressive assurance to us all of Divine love and compassion? We know that suffering and struggling virtue is ultimately victorious, and that even death can only delay, not prevent or destroy, its triumph; but would this truth be so clear and visible to us, in the frequent wrongs which we have to sustain, if the suffering and dying Jesus did not at the same time stand before our souls, as the Christ risen again and enthroned at the right hand of his Father? We know lastly, that every one of our free actions makes us better or worse, more susceptible of happiness or misery, and that a righteous retribution of our deeds awaits us all after death; but can this conviction boast of the clearness which the doctrine of Scripture exhibits, that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according

to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad[f]?" So undeniable is it, my dear hearers, that the religion of reason gains in clearness and efficacy by maintaining the position, that Jesus Christ is a Divine Ambassador. Add to this, that it gains in inward power for promoting piety and the accomplishment of good, and you have all that the mission of Jesus must make dear and invaluable to you.

From the great power which the senses assert over the will, the inward motives of reason are in most cases too weak to moderate our passions, and bind our heart to what is good. Our noblest purposes and resolutions must be supported and strengthened by sensations and feelings, in order to be executed and accomplished. But where could the religion of reason find motives to virtue and piety, which better support the authority of our conscience, and more actively rouse all the energies of our mixed, moral and sensual nature, than the history of him, whom God sent to be our "Wisdom and Righteousness, our Sanctification and Redemption[g]?" When the feeling of our weaknesses depresses us, and mournful experience of the injustice and perfidy of the best informed men shakes our faith in mankind; what can better drive away these

[f] 2 Cor. v. 10 [g] 1 Cor. i. 30.

melancholy sensations from our breasts, and impress deeper in our souls the consideration of our dignity as immortal beings, without which no virtue prospers, than the thought of him, who was "one with the Father," and who became our brother, that we also might be one with him, as the head of his Church? When passion and unbelief would extirpate from the soul our sensibility to what is good, what is able to animate and strengthen it more powerfully, than warm affection to him, who has "left us an example, that we should follow his steps[h]?" What is able in the midst of the misfortunes of life, under the most violent excitement of desires, under the continually renewed dominion of sin, to awaken in us nobler feelings and purposes, than a look towards the divine Friend of man, who as Teacher contended for us, as Propitiator suffered for us, as Saviour of the world mediated a new covenant between God and his children, and as the Conqueror of death won life and a blessed immortality for us by his triumph? O! my hearers, the consciousness of having an immediate messenger of the Deity, who by his mind and his virtues became the image of the Eternal to his brethren, for our Friend and Teacher, our Saviour and Redeemer; the conviction, that by faith in him and in his doc-

[h] 1 Pet. ii. 21.

trine, by the fruits of his death and by the feast of love, we stand in blessed union with him as members of one body ; the hope of one day, after the death of this body, beholding him exalted at the right hand of God, and of partaking of his glory ; these representations rejoice the heart, calm the mind, strengthen and invigorate the spirit to what is good, and induce in all friends of the Divine doctrine, the heavenly persuasion, that neither height nor depth, neither the present nor the future, neither death nor life, can separate them from the love of God through Jesus Christ, whom he has sent.

Judge now yourselves, my hearers, how we must be affected towards those, who make it their business in our days, not only to speak in a contemptuous and disparaging manner of the person and office of the Redeemer, but also to eradicate Christianity more and more out of the hearts of this generation, and to proclaim the religion of reason as the only true religion, the only one that can make us happy. Far be it from us to despise this precious gift of Providence, or to encourage superstition and ignorance, which arrogantly enough wraps itself up in empty forms, and preaches that, as Divine revelation for all men at all times, which bears the stamp of human invention and folly, not to be mistaken, on its front. No, my dear hearers, we will never forget, that all blind faith, which con-

tradicts the internal laws of our thought and will, is useless, pernicious, and dangerous to our virtue and happiness; we will therefore never cease to reflect, to "search the Scriptures" ourselves, to "prove all things and hold fast that which is good[i]." But let us not on the other hand be unjust and unthankful for those glorious measures which God has instituted by his ambassador Jesus Christ for the amelioration and happiness of our race; let us revere with devoted heart the auxiliary aid for the promotion of truth and virtue, in the abundance and fitness of which Christianity is distinguished above all religions of the world, and never forget, that, according to the wise counsel of the Lord, no man should be lost, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth. And so we approach thee, thou perfected Saviour and Redeemer, whose name is an offence and a folly to so many of our sensual contemporaries, with the devout conviction, that the knowledge of thee, the highest messenger of God, leads to the knowledge of thy eternal Father and to everlasting bliss. We worship thee as "the Son of the living God," who brings us to the knowledge of the truth which "makes us free;" we praise thee as our Propitiator with God, who has "shed his blood as a ransom for many;" we trust

[i] 1 Thess. v. 21.

in thee, as the conqueror of death, who "brought life and immortality for us to light." Thy Divine Gospel possesses an inward power to bless every one that trusts in it; whom else should we follow but thee? "Thou hast the words of eternal life." Amen.

SERMON XIV.

BY MAREZOLL.

ON THE HARVEST.

SERMON XIV.

ON THE HARVEST.

O God, Father of men, Father of all things in heaven and earth, thou openest thy bountiful hand without wearying, and fillest and rejoicest and blessest all that live with good things. Thou hast this year also not left us without witness, but hast graciously given us what we need for our support. Thou hast preserved the fruits of the field by thy guardianship, and permitted us to gather them in in undisturbed tranquillity under the protection of peace. Thou hast again done great things for us, and by all thy gifts hast laid upon us the obligation to praise thee with emotion of soul. O then that our thanksgiving were not merely the work of the lips, but the effusion of the heart! that we perceived and felt what new and just claims thou hast acquired thereby on our love, our trust, and our obedience! that we might present to thee on this festive day an offering worthy of thee, agreeable to thy will and to our duty! Yes, to extol thy good-

ness, and revere the ways of thy Providence, to be contented, and not as dissatisfied creatures, not as guilty rioters in thy kingdom, to rebel against thy established regulations; to limit our wishes, and to enjoy with wise moderation, with a calm mind, in innocence and virtue, what thou bestowest on us; this becomes us as men and as Christians; let this therefore be our sincere resolution and our earnest endeavour. And let us be encouraged and strengthened thereto in the present hour, consecrated to thy worship, let us be forcibly reminded of it by the call which the harvest now addresses to us; let the fruits of the earth thereby become beneficial to our mind, beneficial with regard to our higher destination. Amen.

JOHN iv. 35—38.

Say not ye, There are yet four months and then cometh harvest? behold I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour; other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

IF we did not behold the works of nature in our earliest childhood; if the view of its great and admired phenomena, following each other in regular

succession, were not of common and daily occurrence; if we entered the theatre of the creation at once as educated men with exercised and developed understandings, and sensitive and expanded hearts, what an impression would it not make upon us! with what force would it strike upon our senses and our mind! with what irresistible power would it attract us, and rivet our attention! What a solemn tone of mind would the manifold scenes and changes in heaven and earth impart to us! How lively and ardent would be our sensations, how instructive and earnest our meditations, how devout and fervent our songs of praise offered up to the Deity! Yes, man can become indifferent to every thing, even to the greatest and most sublime object, when it has lost the charm of novelty; and therefore we must carefully guard against our taste for the beauties of nature being gradually blunted; therefore we must never enter her fields without thought, but always as rational creatures, always as men and as Christians; therefore we must open our ears to her voice, and consider it a sacred law thankfully to regard her warnings, her admonitions, and her sources of consolation.

And this is most especially applicable to the harvest, which calls to us every year, and reminds us of truths, the importance of which deserves the most serious regard. For these truths, if we rightly comprehend and faithfully follow them, are the real

and lasting, the spiritual and moral profit, which we may draw from the earthly harvest. They are an encouragement to wisdom and virtue, and call to mind our destiny and our duties. They shew us our dignity and our weakness, our relationship with God and our dependence on him, what we may and what we may not expect. They have reference to objects, which must be highly important to us all, because they equally concern us all. For this reason we find also in so many places of the Bible allusions to the harvest, and images, comparisons, and expressions, which are taken from it. For this reason the Apostle says, " Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap ;" in order to indicate, that the proportion between that which we sow and the fruits we gather, must point out to us the intimate connexion of the present life with the future. For this reason Jesus speaks in our text of a moral harvest, after his disciples had spoken of the natural one, and thereupon takes occasion to direct their thoughts to their high calling, and the honourable office committed to them. Your harvest, he gives them to understand, is now already ripe, and the field of truth and virtue awaits only the hand of the reaper, for others have laboured before you, and ye are chosen to complete the work. Go then into the field already white, that ye may receive your appointed wages, and gather fruit unto life eternal.

The remembrance of the harvest may prove full

of instruction to us also; we also may find in it much that is encouraging and comforting, if we attend to the voice of the Lord, which speaks to us through it. Let us accordingly listen to its call to-day, the festival of the harvest; let us hear the important truths which it inculcates, and commit them to good and obedient hearts. It will then not be necessary for me particularly to prescribe to you the duties which this year's harvest demands of you; it will itself, and so loudly speak to you, that it is to be hoped you will not refuse to obey its injunctions. The first important truth which the annual harvest inculcates for our instruction and encouragement is this; *What cannot the activity of man perform?* The activity of man—that indeed says much and little, according to the point of view, from which it is contemplated. For what is it, and what can it achieve, how little and insignificant it appears, when compared with the efficiency of God, whose power is infinite, and whose mere will is creation, whose mere will is preservation! with the efficiency of the Highest, who does all things from himself and by himself, and never can fail in his purpose, nor ever be fatigued! Yes, O man! when thou returnest from the thought of God and his greatness, when thy mind has been engaged in the contemplation of that perfect and adorable mind, which calls worlds into existence and governs worlds, then feel thy nothingness and thy impotence; then full of hu-

mility acknowledge with the Prophet, that mortal power, in respect of God, resembles but the drop which hangs on the bucket.

And nevertheless the activity of man, when measured by a more humble standard, is very great, very manifold, very comprehensive; and nothing is more adapted to remind us of it, than the sight of the harvest. For who has tilled and cultivated the land? Who has tended and cherished it? Who has given it its present form, so suitable, so favourable to fertility? Who is it, whose hands assist nature, and still gain treasures even from the poorest soil? Who is it, that makes heights as well as depths habitable, beautifies the most waste places of the earth, transforms the wildest regions, and converts dismal inaccessible wildernesses into smiling plains and rich pastures? It is man who has done all this and continues to do it; man, who disregards all opposition and is deterred by no obstacle; man, who contends against all seasons, all elements, all influence of adverse circumstances, and by industry and perseverance generally attains his end. Yes, if we reflect, that our harvests are our work, and that we must multiply the productions of nature, in proportion as population increases; if we reflect, that all the field and garden-fruits of our quarter of the globe are the produce of other remote climes, which could not be brought to us but over dangerous seas; if we

reflect, what industry must have been employed, in order to make plants of this kind grow and flourish, even in countries where the land that should nourish them was often totally different from their mother-soil; we are furnished with an incontrovertible, and sensible proof, how true is that which the holy Scripture says; "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him," that he should "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth;" in order to derive advantage and pleasure from every thing which surrounds him.

And still how little is all this activity of man! How little is all this in comparison with that, which, in other ways and in so many other respects, he has attempted and executed! What numerous fields of science, of art, of trade, of commerce, of industry, has he not cultivated, all of which required no small exertions! What difficulties were to be overcome, before our states, our civil constitutions, our school and education establishments, our domestic and social relations could attain the present, though but moderate degree of perfection! And yet all these various labours had not power to bind the indefatigable mortal to this earth; he has raised his searching look to the heaven also, measured its spaces, found the most distant suns, discovered the track of wandering stars, and determined the laws of their course; his artificially

aided eye has carried him even beyond the bounds of the visible creation, and opened to him the prospect of new worlds, an access to the greater sanctuary of God. Respect then, O man, respect thyself and thy race, and discern what thou art and canst become. Honour the inestimable gift of reason, which the gracious Creator has bestowed on thee, and never in any case forget, that the excellence of thy nature rests upon that alone. For without it thou wouldest be the weakest and most wretched of all the creatures of the earth, and destitute of all means of preservation, all weapons for thy defence, and all instruments of thy pleasure. Without it thy activity would be blind and without rule to guide it, and the sight of fruits grown by thyself, the enjoyment of the finest plants, and the blessing of the harvest, would not delight thee.

But much as the industry of man is able to perform, yet have we little cause to be proud, and to consider ourselves the sole authors of our successful works. No, we attain with all our labour only that, which it is permitted to us from above to attain; and on this point also the harvest may afford us an excellent lesson, if we attend to its instruction. For it loudly and audibly cries to us, in the second place, It is God, who must make every good thing to prosper. We cultivate and appoint the land, we sow and plant, we nourish the soil to which we have entrusted our hope; but he alone can fulfil

this hope; he alone can give growth and fertility, sunshine and warmth, early and late rain in their season; he alone can faithfully and annually guard the harvest from injury. We have no power against wind and weather, against the devastations of destroying insects, against all the accidents which may deprive our fields and gardens of their beauty and abundance. If he shut up the bosom of the earth, if the faint and parched land languish in vain for refreshment, if the swollen clouds burst asunder and desolating torrents drown the seed, if unseasonable frost or scorching heat, noxious moisture, or crushing hail, disappoint our fairest expectations; it is to no purpose that we exert all our judgment, and unite all our powers to produce a contrary effect. For we may indeed assist nature, but not change its fixed course, its eternal laws. We may learn much from it to our advantage, but cannot escape from its power and dominion. We may follow its track and avail ourselves of its hints, but not absolutely make it subservient to our wishes. It is therefore God, the Lord of nature, to whom we are in subjection; it is God, who must bless that which is sown, protect our fields, and cause the fruits of the earth to thrive.

And it is just the same, my Christian hearers, in the moral world also, with every undertaking of man that is good and of general utility. They sow and plant, they form plans and concert measures,

they prepare and begin the work; but the issue of their labours is not in their own hand, but in the hand of the Highest. They often think they have considered every thing most carefully, arranged every thing in the best manner, and exactly calculated every thing, even to the smallest circumstances, and yet see their designs thus or thus frustrated. They enter into alliances, they impart to each other of their courage, their strength, their acquirements, their abundance; they act with foresight, with prudence, with firmness, with public spirit, and yet fail in their purposes. But this is the lot of mortals, and no wisdom can protect us against it, no virtue raise us above it. As many good, as evil, acts are unsuccessful; as many beneficial, as pernicious attempts; as many intentions of benevolence as of wickedness. For if the Supreme Being has determined otherwise; if that, which appears to short-sighted man as most necessary and most useful, is in reality not of that nature; if the world is not yet ripe for the reception and enjoyment of certain benefits, if our ways are not as the ways of God and our thoughts are not his thoughts; then his inscrutable judgments frustrate our doings, and no industry, no exertion, no perseverance, no sacrifices are effectual to bring us to the desired end of our labours. We have in such cases the merit of a good will and an honest heart, we have performed our duty and may console our-

selves with the applause of our consciences; but God alone guides our fate, and we must acquiesce in his dispensations, in whatever his unsearchable counsels promote or impede, facilitate or obstruct.

Yes, all things, O man! all things depend on God and his providence, on his guidance and government; and as he sends fruitfulness and scarcity, he sends also prosperity and adversity, light and darkness, peace and war, times of tranquillity and times of disturbance. As the inanimate creation obeys him, and every element executes his commands, he has also mankind and all their hearts, all their thoughts, all their energies, all their treasures in his power, and makes use of them according to his pleasure. We forget this but too easily, and let it surprise us, when wishes are unsuccessful for what we esteem highly salutary and profitable; we far too willingly believe, that God, who only wills what is good and always that which is best, must by all means will that, which we ourselves hold to be so: but remember, O dejected one, remember the course of nature, and behold its now plentiful, now deficient harvests, and learn from them, that it is God who must make all which is good to prosper, if success shall attend it.

And well it is for us, Christians, that it is God! Happy are we, that with our wants and hopes we do not depend on ourselves, on our limited understandings, on our variable wills! Happy we, that

we stand under the inspection of him, who overlooks the whole, and best knows what is good for us! He denies us perhaps much which we think desirable, and sends us much that we would willingly have been spared; but he has also (and this is the *third* important instruction which the harvest makes evident to us) he has also provided, that there shall be seasons of gladness, seasons of reward and encouragement, for all orders and classes of the people. For every harvest that does not entirely fail is such a season to the countryman, who then celebrates his brightest and most festive days. Is he, what according to the will of God and his destination he ought to be, a free man and not degraded by bondage? does he labour for himself and his family, and not for a hard, self-interested tyrant, who unfeelingly oppresses and cruelly ill-treats him? does he live in a state, where he enjoys equal rights, equal security, equal protection with the other citizens and subjects, and may trust in the support of the laws and the reigning prince? such an one feels indemnified by the gifts of the harvest for all his previous trouble, and enjoys the remuneration for his exertion, the fruits of his toil and his laborious calling. Hence the loud acclamation, with which the produce of the field is received and collected, hence the stirring activity with which the whole business is carried on, hence the universal satisfaction with which all is concluded. For this

reason the Prophet says, "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest[a];" for this reason, all things have then a more inviting form and wear a gayer appearance, amongst the inhabitants of the country; for this reason, the more refined and informed townsman delights then to mix in the joyous ranks of the children of nature. But these times of gladness, these seasons of reward and encouragement, are not the portion of the countryman alone; they are given in one way or another, more or less frequently, to all conditions, and render, in due proportion, all classes of the people happy. For whatever good we do, whatever useful act we devise in our private and public sphere, that is a sowing on hope, a gain for futurity; and every order of society, every honest man intent on his duty, sooner or later celebrates his harvest. The prince and the statesman celebrate it when they see the fruits of their activity, their watchfulness, and their care matured; when they see the regulations, which they have established for the public good, answer their purpose and become fixed and durable; when they see the people placed under their government, grow more diligent and enterprising, more sensible and judicious, better and more contented. The teacher of sciences celebrates his harvest, when he experiences gratification from his pupils, and multiplies his efficiency through them; when he forms scholars, who redound as

[a] Isaiah ix. 3.

much to his honour as they are an ornament to the church or the state; when he sends forth into near and distant regions heralds of the truth, promoters of virtue, priests of righteousness, benefactors of men, who have become what they are chiefly by his tuition. And what a harvest for parents, when they behold the son, whom they have educated with all possible care, and for whom they have spared no pains nor cost, in an important office or in some useful calling, as a serviceable citizen, a support of their age, and the comfort of their lives; or the daughter, over whose innocence they have watched, and whose heart they have preserved pure, as the deserving wife of a worthy man, as the glad mother of hopeful children, in a happy state of life, and one which accords with their wishes; or when they see all the branches of their family collected around them on certain days consecrated to joy, and on all sides bright countenances, thankful hearts, and eyes beaming with affection! And where is that condition, to which a wise and kind Providence denies every harvest of this kind? Where is the teacher of the people and of youth, where the merchant, the artisan, the tradesman, who in his situation has not had the ability and the means, who as a friend of man has had no incitement and opportunity, to prepare for himself similar scenes of reward? Where is the occupation, mean and ordinary as it may seem, which may not be adorned

by a virtuous disposition, in which a man may not deserve well of his brethren, and feel himself at times more than commonly rewarded and encouraged? And thus it is only necessary that we sow plentifully in our circumstances and vocation, in order sooner or later to reap plentifully; we must take pains to be and to do that which, in our condition, we ought to be and to do; we need only, according to the advice of the Apostle, do good and not be weary in well-doing, in order to rejoice in due time in the fruits thereof. Yes, it is our own fault, if we only feel the burdensome and painful, and not the agreeable part and the advantages of our situation. It is the fault of our indolence, our selfishness, our sordid passions, if we produce nothing upon the ground that we should cultivate, which might make it valuable and dear to us; for the wise and good Creator has on his part provided with fatherly care, that there shall be for all orders and classes of the people seasons of gladness, seasons of reward and encouragement.

But as the truths, of which the harvest reminds us, certainly abound in instruction for the understanding, and afford us much matter for meditation, so they may not be less beneficial for our hearts and our duties. For every harvest is at once the strongest encouragement to virtue; every harvest cries to us, lastly, Act suitably to thy relations towards God, and forget not what thou owest him.

One is distinguished by the richness of its gifts, by abundance and blessing; it loads us with the good things of the earth, and returns hundred-fold what we had committed to it; it relieves all necessities, supplies all wants, repairs every loss, and leaves no reasonable wish unsatisfied. And what an obligation is not that, to thank God with all our hearts, to acknowledge with emotion of soul his fatherly care and love, to trust unreservedly in him and his providence, and fervently to rejoice in him and the thought of him! What an obligation, worthily to apply his plentiful gifts, to enjoy them with wise moderation, and thereby to become better, more perfect, and more happy! What an obligation, to let our poorer brethren, his children also, share in these his benefits; to open our hearts to philanthropy, to compassion, to a desire of serving others; after his example to comfort the indigent and make them happy, and thus to present to him those offerings of gratitude, which alone are well-pleasing to him!

But there are also doubtless scanty and gloomy harvests, there are years of scarcity and trouble; there is almost always some country, whose inhabitants see their hopes disappointed. And where this case occurs, it should teach men patience, courage, constancy, and resignation to the will of the Highest; it should promote industry, activity, frugality, abstemiousness, and restriction in the pleasures of sense; it should be a school of exercise, a school

of trial, a school of affliction, and produce moral advantages, wholesome fruits of righteousness to those who have been tried and improved by it. And how many harvests are there which can neither be ranked amongst the most plentiful, nor amongst those which have entirely failed! those, in which one description of crop yields well, and another miscarries; those, which from these or other causes may be called moderately good. And such harvests call to us, Be satisfied O man, and contented with what thou hast; do not always ask for every thing in abundance, as if thou hadst a right to it, and couldst prescribe laws to the Lord of nature; modestly receive what he gives thee, and dispute not his goodness, on account of that which he withholds. They cry to us, Think on this and that fruitful year, on that extraordinary produce of thy fields and gardens; compare thyself with so many others, who, in certain districts, have gathered in far less than thou; demand nothing impossible, and desire not that the great expectations which the first view of blooming fruits excites, shall always be fulfilled. Such harvests call to us, Know that nature operates according to eternal and invariable laws; that the same weather which favours one crop, is often injurious to another; that it is, therefore, folly and want of sense not to take seasons and things as they are.

And now, my Christian hearers, make the ap-

plication to yourselves, and to this year's harvest; hear its call and lay it to heart, in order faithfully and willingly to follow it; resolve here under the eyes of God, in this temple dedicated to his worship, and in this hour sacred to your duty, to preserve this delightful contentedness. Forget not how much good a but moderate harvest comprehends, and what cause you have, even in the present year, to be thankful to your heavenly Father. Consider, that those fruits, which, as the most indispensable of all, maintain the highest value, and regulate the price of other necessaries of life, have nothing less than failed, but rather on all sides have richly prospered: consider too the fact that the late unusual dearness has not been occasioned by the parsimony of nature, as if this liberal mother had now exhausted her stock; but that the all-wasting war unavoidably brings with it this evil also. Be not then distrustful of God, whose bountiful hand is still, as formerly, opened to do good; and acknowledge it to be a proof of his providential care, that so many years of the most sanguinary contest, and the most terrible devastation, have not swallowed up far more good, and been productive of much greater and more general misery. No, be not distrustful of God, who has furnished us with such various means for our welfare, and for the cheerful enjoyment of life; and to this end recollect to-day, on the feast of

the harvest, what the activity of man can effect. Feel, indeed, your dependence on Him, who must make every thing prosper if it shall succeed; but rejoice also in his superintendence and government, since he manifestly provides for all conditions and classes of the people seasons of gladness, seasons of reward and encouragement. And honour him, therefore, by grateful contentment, by a filial pious disposition, and by a wise and appropriate use of that which is allotted you. Let the harvest of this year encourage you to a faithful and conscientious discharge of your duties. Let it be and remain to you the voice of God, an incitement to reflection; and may it bring you profit for the understanding and the heart, fruit unto life eternal! Amen.

SERMON XV.

BY SCHOTT.

AUTUMN—A PICTURE OF HUMAN LIFE.

SERMON XV.

AUTUMN—A PICTURE OF HUMAN LIFE.

GREAT and striking, my Christian hearers, is the variety of human opinions respecting the real signification and worth of the life of man; and the human character displays itself in the manner and light, in which life is accustomed to be viewed. It commonly never enters into the mind of an inconsiderate, thoughtless person, to propose the serious question, whether this life possesses any value, and what should be its aim? Yielding to the impulse of the present, absorbed in trifling cares, enchained by the diversions of the world, he fancies he adopts the best method, when he leaves his resolutions and actions to be determined by the moment; he will not be reminded of the future portion of his life, nor of the connexion of the whole, he will not be disturbed in his ease, nor torn from the slumber of his idleness. The worldly wise man, instructed by certain experience, but ruled by an earthly propen-

sity, by some passion or other, strikes out for himself a plan of life, contemplates it frequently in all its parts, and fixes a value on it. But his contrivances and exertions are directed to what is vain and transient; the more plentifully the fountain of sensual enjoyment flows, the more the world offers him of its treasures, the more willingly all things near and around him accord with his ambitious plans and projects, so much the higher he estimates the worth of life, but any thing sublime and great in existence he has no idea of. The abandoned wretch, tortured by the consciousness of evil deeds, or the discontented and sorrowing being, who cannot raise himself with genuine religious disposition above the disappointments and woes of earth, despises life as a vain labour, as an illusory phantom, as an inconsequential exertion, as a burden which weighs one down from the cradle to the grave. Shall this be our view, my hearers, who call ourselves the redeemed of Jesus and enlightened by his Spirit? Or is it Christian duty and Christian sentiment, with all our sense of the imperfections of this mortal life, nevertheless, to embrace it with an affection, a cheerfulness, a regard, which is grounded on a true and worthy conception of its value, and its sacred destination for eternity? We assuredly know, as Christians, how we ought to contemplate life, for he himself, the "Founder and Finisher of our faith," has brought to light the true life that

fadeth not away. But we are also at all times, and in all places, reminded and strongly urged by manifold appearances and changes around us firmly to maintain a wise and refined, a pious and Christian view of human life. For certainly the earthly creation around and before us, like a temple of God, is open to us, not merely that we should with sincere joy perceive the beauty of nature; not merely that we should feed the eye with the sight of its moving life, its varying forms, its nameless magnificence; we should also perceive the voice of the Eternal, as it resounds, holy and awful, in the temple of nature; we should with a collected mind behold what is invisible in that which is visible. Serious and important is the aspect of nature, if we regard the spirit which its works reveal, the connexion which, out of individual forms and appearances of the exterior world, composes a wonderful whole, and the instructions, hopes, and feelings, with which the creation of the Eternal illumines and penetrates the inquiring mind. In its everlasting order the life of man, in its highest signification, is represented. And now the fleeting course of the year invites us to a grave, an affecting, an elevating, to a truly Christian contemplation of our life. For, in fact, my hearers, the renewed impression which the falling leaf, the fading splendour of the flowers, the desolate field, the diminishing light of day, the sight of fruits, which here are collected

in rich abundance, and there are advancing to maturity; the impression which all this makes upon the mind, is not the only and highest consideration, which nature in its autumnal dress should present to us. Autumn points to something spiritual and invisible in this fading away and departing, in this ripening and growing to maturity, in this wonderful mixture of death and life. It teaches us, in significant images, so to contemplate the life of earth, as a Christian must contemplate it. Let us observe them more closely; and do thou thyself enlighten us, Lord of our life, that we may comprehend and keep the serious language of nature, thy word, O Infinite, in thy creation.

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1 Peter i. 24, 25.

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever: And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth! This observation we also make, when we see the moving, flourishing life of nature gradually disappear. And can we see this life disappear, without thinking of the transitoriness of every thing earthly, without melancholy and serious, but at the same time highly

elevating, contemplations on the dignity, the course, and the end of the life of man? May then the autumn, as an instructive picture of terrestrial life, now occupy our attention!

First. Transient and fleeting is earthly existence, its outward charms vanish, and a limit is placed to its duration; this is the first thing, of which nature in its autumnal garment admonishes us. The spring adorns our earth with a thousand various charms, and the warm summer matures the magnificence, the life, and the richness of nature. A bright variety of colours is unfolded to the eye, the blooming tree scatters fragrance around, the seeds are clothed in youthful green, the flower glitters in its gay hues, and speaks to us the expressive words of the Redeemer, "I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these[a]." The young grain shoots joyously up, the Lord gives growth and increase, the ears are richly filled, a hopeful life waves in all the fields. After the hours, in which night veils us with its shades, the great day-star breaks forth in his sea of flame, lights up the beauties of waking nature, sends an animating warmth into the creation; and, late in the evening, when every labour of the day is finished, and all things hasten into the arms of refreshing sleep, completes his course. In every place to which the eye is

[a] Matt. vi. 29.

turned or the ear inclined, wherever a human sense of enjoyment exists, sounds of pleasure salute us, kind feelings penetrate us, laughing images surround us. We would gladly secure them for ever, we could wish to stop the flying year in its course. But it regards not our wishes, it hastens on, hastens unceasingly forward, and with it fly the charms of nature. Look out into our fields! what silence, what a waste, what solitude, where but a few weeks ago all was life and motion! The green meadows languish, the flower has sunk its head, the blast of rough winds deprives the tree of its ornament, the songsters of the wood are mute, and wonderfully conducted depart to a far distance; and the sun-beam penetrates us with abated warmth, the new day comes on with lingering step, the dark shadows of evening rise with increasing celerity. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth." And canst thou see them fade without dwelling with musing seriousness on these images of decay, without saying to thyself, "The outward charms of my life also vanish, and its flowers fade away?" The spring of life is risen upon thee, hilarity, health, and the full feeling of strength, shine upon thy countenance; full of stirring susceptibility for the enjoyment of life, yet unacquainted with manifold cares, enslaving circumstances, and bitter delusions, thou speedest on thy path with light step winged with joy; and a golden futurity

smiles to thee, and life looks bright with the rosy tints ofhope.

Rejoice in this beautiful season; but rejoice discreetly and wisely. Fancy not that thou wilt for ever possess what once must decay. Just as quick and unobserved, as those delightful days disappear, in which the tree is decked in its bloom, will the spring also of thy life terminate, and with it ends that undisturbed cheerfulness, that happy inexperience of the oppressive relations of civil life, that liveliness and strength of feeling, which gives to youth its enchantment. Every thing then appears more serious and important. Hot beams often fall on thy head, and thou faintest under the burden of the day. But thou feelest still the vigour of vital energies, thou seest many of thy youthful hopes and wishes fulfilled, thy earthly connexions take a firmer and more consolidated shape, and rivet thee more strongly to the present. The summer also of thy life entwines pleasant garlands around thee. But "the grass withereth, the flower fadeth!" Time, inexorable time, bears away thy summer too on its waves. And what does it bring thee in its stead? A life, whose form is of a still graver cast, whose outward efficiency is more contracted, whose tenour grows ever more fruitful in fatigue and trouble, and more barren in the pleasures of sense. The longer thy pilgrimage to the grave lasts, so much the more weary is the way, so

much the more monotonous appears the journey, so much the oftener thou seest now this, now that companion of thy youth descend into the tomb, so much the more still and solitary it becomes to thee, so much the more expressively and loudly the fading colour of thy face, the extinguished fire of the eyes, the tottering step, the diminished activity of the senses announce to thee, (thou mayest hear it with repugnance or with resignation) The autumn of life is come, the day is declining, and evening draws near!

And when evening is come, the night is not far off. Nature in autumnal attire performs its last work, it prepares for slumber, and gradually covers itself in its shroud of death. The last flower of the year fades, every trace of it disappears, and the last fruits fill our barns; soon will the exploring eye, whithersoever it turns, fall upon desolate hills, deserted fields, and trees stripped of their foliage. Then solemn and awful sounds the great death-bell of nature, and tolls to rest; the life of nature passes into a state of torpor; the stillness of the grave is spread over the country; the earth, in white apparel, sleeps its sleep of death. And sinking to repose it speaks significantly to mortal man, like the voice of a spirit; Thou too, who yet walkest above me in the fulness of life, thou too shalt yield to the universal lot of this lower world, sooner or later I shall receive thee below! Know, consider, feel the impressive truth, with which a holy Bard

of grey antiquity spake, "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more." The life of man passes quickly, "for it is soon cut off and we fly away." Blooming youth! the colour of thy cheeks protects thee not, death numbers not years; and though he now, silent and sparing, passes by thee, every day brings thee nearer to the grave, and time hurries unceasingly on. Cultivate, therefore, and instruct thy mind, be quick in improving thyself, believe and live, as if thou must this day depart. Man in thy full vigour! thy spring is fled, thy autumn approaches with speedy step; and who may say whether thine eyes will not be closed, even before it arrives? Live, as, when thou diest, thou wilt wish to have lived. Old man with the silver head! thou hast seen many a one depart, thou hast experienced in thyself the fleetness of time, the autumn of life has already made thee familiar with thoughts of death; contract a still closer intimacy with them, for thy end is not far.

Secondly. Is there then nothing which can bind and retain thee, O winged life of man? Art thou nothing but an unsubstantial dream? Does the stream of existence incessantly carry away our possessions and enjoyments, whatever we mould and execute within and without us? Alarming, annihilating thought! No, my hearers; he only can

conclude thus, who looks but to the outward appearances of life, having no foresight of what is invisible, which operates in mysterious profundity. No, there is in mortal life an enduring quality, which resists decay, and shall be perfected in the flight of seasons with increasing glory: in this respect also nature in autumnal dress is a striking picture of life. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; nature ceases to be adorned with new charms, and the recent splendour is obscured.

But has the earth lost its power? Does not the young corn shoot up from its bosom? Do not its secret energies, in the midst of the wintry sleep, cause it to thrive and increase? Does not the sun send forth its rays with equal majesty, whether it shines upon the flowers of spring, or on the falling foliage, or on the plains covered with snow? And is it not the departing summer, which, according to the eternal order of nature, fills our barns with food and gladness? Is it not the abundance of the blessing which comes from above, bent down by the weight of which the tree lets fall its branches, when the storm of autumn already blusters around and sports with the withering leaf? Are they not the most useful, the most perfect, the most refreshing of all fruits, with which the autumn furnishes us? O be welcome and blessed, sublime image of life! Henceforth be wrapt in darkness, ye stars of earthly prosperity! Henceforth fly away, ye cor-

poreal charms, which adorn the fragile covering of the mind! Life has its ever-shining stars and never-fading flowers—endowments and good things which we *can* retain if we *will* in earnest; which no change of flying years can injure or deprive us of; which must continue to gain firmness, greatness, and heavenly strength to make us truly happy, the nearer our earthly course approaches its end. Holy principles and convictions, pious and Christian feelings, generous virtues, which we have acquired partly in the calm occupation of the mind with itself, partly in busy action and labour in the exterior world, partly in the violent tempests of the time; and the rewarding satisfaction of conscience, the cheering remembrance of past years, the exalting proofs of love and honour, which tribute upright and good men pay to tried virtue; these accompany us as true friends through the path of life, they are ever fresh and perfect, when every thing else grows old; they teach us to vanquish the power of time, the mighty destroyer; the declining day of existence is made beautiful by them; with them we appear before the throne of God. Behold the pious old man in his quiet and peaceful world! With what reverence, with what confiding affection his family approach him! With what attention his advice is received! How persuasive is the instruction, how impressive the warning and encouragement, how tranquillizing the consolation, which

proceeds from the lips of an experienced old man! How elevated one feels in his presence, when his heavenly look penetrates us also with serious thoughts of eternity, and inspires us with holy resolutions! How his eye brightens up, when he views the seed in its maturity, which sooner or later he had sown with affectionate care for those who belonged to him, and with diligent zeal in his sphere of action, and an internal friendly voice speaks to him, "Thou hast not lived in vain!" What sweet peace is shed over his whole existence! And how could it be otherwise? The age of childhood, in its higher and spiritual signification, returns again, when the pilgrim on earth draws near the end of his wanderings. The storm of passion is stilled; the contest with sensual appetite is over, the palm is no longer distant, the great and elevating thought, "the word of God endureth for ever, though heaven and earth pass away," fills his whole heart. With sincere love, milder and kinder than formerly, he contemplates the world of man; with entire faith he soars to invisible heights; with fervent hope he addresses his God, when the angel of death approaches, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," my failing eye shall see the Saviour.

Thirdly. But life is perfected and attains to this degree of satisfaction, this peace of God, this pure and devout state of mind in him only, who strives with unwearied diligence to serve the Most High. The

character of the latter years of our life depends on that of the former ones. Nature in autumnal clothing reminds us in serious and significant language of this great connexion of life. Could we ever reap the blessing with which spring and summer cover our fields, could we gather in the fruits of autumn, unless the earth had with wonderful power brought the seed-corn into life, unless from invisible depths it had supplied invigorating nourishment to the green blade, and to the blossoming tree; unless the Lord of the harvest had sent warm sunshine, refreshing rain, and fertilizing dew; unless human industry had tilled the land in the sweat of the brow, scattered the seed, and promoted the growth of the tender plant with watchful care? Discern, O man, as long as the spring of thy life blooms, the warning, the awakening, the encouraging voice of nature. "Whatsoever a man soweth," saith the Scripture, "that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting [a]." A fearful evening of thy existence, a joyless autumn barren of fruits, is appointed thee, if thy youthful strength slumbers in idle repose, or is wasted in wild debauchery, if thou as youth or as man accustomest thyself to have no foresight nor desire of any thing higher than

[a] Galatians vi. 8.

what belongs to the earth, if thou art not watchful of the affections and inclinations of thy heart, not firm and persevering in contending against thyself, in order that serene cheerfulness may not become thoughtless levity, the inward feeling of strength an insolent wantonness which mocks at holiness and virtue, the emotion and warmth of sensibility a consuming fire of turbulent passion.

Look with contemplative and grave earnestness at the aged man, whose days decline so calmly. The wisdom, the judgment, and experience which fall from his mouth, were they not gradually ripened, as the mellow fruit of quiet communion with himself, of assiduous zeal in searching into the truth, of the unwearied attention, with which he had, when a youth and when a man, observed the vicissitudes of his life, the impressions which his mind received, the consequences of his resolutions and actions, mankind near and around him, and the ruling spirit of the age? The holy tranquillity which beams from every look, does he not owe it to the constant fidelity with which in his youthful and mature years he performed his duty, to the devout earnestness with which he suppressed the stormy ebullitions of passion, and to the works of charity, by which he dispensed welfare and blessings around him? And would his faith, his love, his hope be so firm, so sincere, so fervent, so gratifying to himself, so elevating and inspiring to others, if he had not been

well acquainted with religious truths in the spring of life, if he had not in serious hours, in decisive moments of his existence, often and deeply felt in himself, that the peace of God is superior to any peace which the world can give, and to love Christ is better than all knowledge? Does a longing desire seize thee, on the cheering view of this good man, that so pleasant, so mild, so blissful an autumn may also be thy lot? Go then, and scatter the good seed, cherish the verdant corn, willingly bear the heat and burden of the day, where the Lord calls thee into his vineyard; and to the latest period of life thou wilt reap fruits, which will refresh both thyself and others; thou shalt reap a faith which never wavers, a love which never grows cold, a hope which is never defeated. Immoveable hope! even when the last ray of the evening sun departs!

For, Fourthly, nature now admonishes us also, that life withdraws from these earthly relations, in order to ascend to a better world. Why do unsought for images of spring so connect themselves with the appearances of autumn? We confidently hope that nature will again awake from the slumber into which she gradually sinks; the leafless tree will be decorated with fresh youthful charms, the songsters of the wood, whose cheerful notes are silenced, will hasten back to our fields, and announce a new spring. In the midst of the ruins of decay, with which nature in autumnal dress encircles us, the

young corn springs from the earth, and we hope with pleasing confidence, that it will not perish in the winter's frost, that it will one day fully bloom, ripen, and reward human industry. The sleeping earth collects fresh strength, in order to be renovated in youthful fulness, when the Lord of life shall summon her to rise again. Nature, after she has finished her work, advances in invariable order through the grave of winter to the flourishing spring. And shall we look forward to the autumn of our life with anxiety? Could we doubtingly ask if a delightful spring shall follow our winter? Shall not the great and sacred system and coherence, which prevails in the earthly creation of God, attach a future to this present, a resurrection to our death? No! even at the departure of autumn your souls tremble not, ye grey heads, ye who with devout seriousness, give ear to the voice of nature, to the revelation of God in the heart, to the Gospel of peace. Ye complain and mourn not, that here below there is no everlasting spring, no undecaying summer. Ye rejoice in the Lord, for that in many a severe conflict with yourselves and with the world ye have acquired a perseverance in good, a humility of heart, a firmness of faith, which fit you for a better world. It is the true and imperishable life, the life of God, the holy germ of which is contained within the mortal covering, which overcomes autumn and winter, death and the grave, and all their

terrors. No! pious Christian, thou canst not tremble at the reflection: 'the approaching winter will perhaps also be the winter of my life; the flowers of the coming spring will perhaps blow upon my grave.' In the kingdom of immortal spirits there is a life which never grows old, a spring which never fades, a sun which never sets. To pass through corruption to this incorruptible existence, to enjoy the delights of this ever-flourishing spring, to behold this everlasting sun in its glory, do thou render us worthy, O divine Redeemer! Sanctify us, illumine the dark path of our life, arm us thyself with the power of thy Spirit, that we may dedicate our spring, our summer, and our autumn to thee and the Father; and be with us—be with me, when the day declines, and the evening of my life is come. Amen.

SERMON XVI.

BY RÖHR.

FOR CHRISTMAS.

SERMON XVI.

FOR CHRISTMAS.

We are come, O Father in heaven, to adore, and to pour out our thankful hearts before thy holy presence. For that thy only begotten Son came into this world, that he took upon him our flesh and blood, and "was found in fashion as a man," in order to diffuse light and truth amongst his brethren on earth—this is the dispensation of thy compassionate grace for our benefit. Make us rightly to discern his heavenly greatness and glory, and bring before our eyes in the purest splendour the sublime and radiant form, in which he walked on this dark earth, that our souls may be filled with true Christian joy on his holy festival, and that our mouths may glorify him. "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." In this joy we name thee with increased fervour our heavenly Father, and pray, "Hallowed be thy name," &c. &c.

LUKE ii. 8th and six following verses.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

THIS Gospel for the festival, devout hearers, relates to us a most singular and wonderful event: it leads us into a wretched hut in the town of Bethlehem, and there makes us witnesses of the birth of a child, for whom at first no human being, save his parents, felt any concern, and for whom even they, being poor pilgrims in a strange inn, could only prepare his first earthly couch in a manger. But while this takes place, a light from heaven shines through the darkness of night which envelopes the city and country, and the glory of the Lord shines round about the shepherds in the neighbouring plains, who abide there with their flocks, and voices of angels bid the terrified to be of good cheer, for even now the Saviour of the world is born, and the moment is come for crying, 'Glory to God in the

highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men!' As wonderful and extraordinary as this may be, yet its inward import is as simple and significant. The light from above, which encircles the mean birth-place of our Lord, how aptly does it express his high destination to be the light of the world! The heavenly brightness that illumines the night in which he enters into mortal existence, how pleasantly it indicates the spiritual illumination, that he should bring to mankind lying in darkness! The sea of radiance, which was poured forth over the vicinity of the city of David, amidst the cry of joy of divine messengers, how obviously does it point out the bright kingdom of truth, which this great scion of the house and lineage of David was sent to establish amongst his brethren, benighted in conceit and error!

And has not this fair presage been abundantly fulfilled? Does not the whole Christian world revere Him, who entered into life amongst them as the Son of the Highest, who, mightier than all who preceded or followed him, lifted up the torch of truth and light, to disperse the darkness which rested on the minds of men, to enlighten their understandings respecting matters of the most sacred interest, to bring their knowledge of divine things to the highest point it can attain, and to enrich them with all that intelligence, on which the dignity and likeness of man to God depends? Are you not

yourselves assembled to-day in the presence of God, to thank him for having made you through Jesus "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," and for having "delivered you from the power of darkness, and translated you into the kingdom of his dear Son[a]?" Did you not all come here, summoned by the bells of the holy Christian festival, in order to rejoice with one another that you walk in the light, which was kindled by Christ, and that you participate in the grace and truth, which poured forth from him over the earth?

Now if you will do this with becoming cordiality, keep in view the image of our Lord and Saviour, principally as the image of a celestial bringer of light to the world, and collect yourselves round that holy form of it, as, awe-inspiring, it stands at the entrance of the history which begins with him, and devoutly join in the meditations to which it gives occasion, *Meditations on the light, which arose to mankind through Jesus.* Light, devout hearers, light is the excellent and significant expression, with which the holy Scripture denotes the state of that clear knowledge and discernment of man respecting his relation to God and his destiny, in which alone he can esteem himself and feel happy as a rational being. In this sense then perfect light once arose to mankind through Jesus our Lord; for

[a] Colossians i. 13.

he came down from heaven to earth for this purpose, to communicate the fullest measure of that clear judgment to his earthly brethren.

In indulging in these reflections on the subjects to which this holy festival invites us, we cannot in the first place deny, that this light was highly necessary to mankind, for they sat in darkness and the shadow of death. This was asserted even by the holy prophets of that people, on whom the rays of an earlier divine revelation had shone; and much as they laboured to diffuse amongst this people a purer knowledge of God, generous zeal for virtue, and the sense of a higher destiny; yet they continually remained in thick spiritual darkness and estranged from all effectual enlightenment until the last of their prophets rose up amongst them. Thus their learned in the law sat in Moses' seat, and taught unfruitful subtleties, instead of the plain truth, on which rests the belief and conduct and hope of man. Their priests then performed an idolatrous temple-service, instead of inculcating a reverence for God, to be manifested by a pious mind and good deeds. High and low had then the wise oracles of their inspired men in their hands, and knew not how to make use of them properly for the benefit of either their minds or hearts; and as the guides of the multitude were struck with blindness, so the latter followed perverse ways, being abandoned to pernicious delusion and deplorable ignorance. And the

other nations of the earth, how far were they also removed from all knowledge that enlightens the mind, improves the heart, and directs the thoughts to things above! They might justly boast, in individual instances, of their sages, their poets, their orators, their artists, their heroes and statesmen; but what acquaintance had the great majority of them with that wisdom, which teaches to fear God, to do right, and to look forward with cheerful hope? How could faith find sufficient nourishment among them in a senseless mythology; endeavours after virtue, in a universally prevalent immorality; and the longing for a better futurity, in the fabulous kingdom of an obscure world of shadows? How could a clear insight into the most sacred concerns of man be ever even spoken of, where heathen blindness possessed the whole mass? In this state of things, the light which broke over mankind through Christ our Lord, was most urgently needed; and nothing more fortunate could happen to them than this, that God, who is willing that all should be saved, and all come to the knowledge of the truth, sent him on earth with this commission, "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house[b]." For there was every where wanting that simple and clear discourse of heaven, in which he proclaimed God as the God of

[b] Isaiah xlii. 7.

all gods, and the Father of all men; that earnest exhortation, with which he enjoined man, created after his image, to resemble him in deed and in truth; that sweet solace, with which he directed the hope of the oppressed, the wretched, and the dying, from earth to heaven; that portrait of improved mankind, which he exhibited in himself as a pattern for imitation to all his brethren; and that holy kingdom of God, into which only the enlightened and pious children of their heavenly Father should be admitted. From thence proceeds the high delight, with which his Apostles saw the beams of light, that went out from him, more brilliant even than that of his holy birth-night, illumine the darkness of the earth; the unconcealed joy with which they cried, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand [c];" the heartfelt warmth and energy with which they gave the converted from Judaism and Paganism, to understand "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord [d]." They knew from their own experience and observation, what the review of ages preceding the appearing of our Saviour teaches, that the light which arose to mankind through him, was most needful, because they "sat in darkness and the shadow of death."

In following up our meditations on this light, we

[c] Rom. xiii. 12. [d] Eph. v. 8.

must also acknowledge that it threw out a bright refulgence, for a considerable part of mankind was in the course of time enlightened by it. Yes, it was not in vain, that the Saviour announced himself to the people of that age, with the words, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth me, should not abide in darkness[e]." For as healthy plants, tenacious of life, involuntarily turn towards the bright sunshine, in order to imbibe from it strength and nourishment, so thousands in the native land of our Lord, and out of it, in a short time most ardently joined themselves to him and to the faithful ones, whom he had chosen to be the bearers of his light into the world, in order to satisfy their long and vainly-cherished thirst for spiritual illumination. Jewish temple-service, and heathen idolatry, soon gave way to the preaching, which inculcated the worship of God in spirit and in truth, and which proceeded from Christ; and where, hitherto, altars had been built to empty phantoms, and fruitless sacrifices offered to creatures of their own imagination, there men bowed at the word of Jesus, with clear understandings and pure dispositions, before the living God, who hath made heaven and earth, who supports all things with his mighty word, and embraces all men as his children with paternal love. The spark of that

[e] John xii. 46.

feeling lying in every breast, that man is formed for honest exertion to preserve purity of soul and an unspotted course of life, and that, in consequence of his divine relationship, he must raise himself above animal lusts and grovelling vices, was every where kindled, where the preaching of the truth that Christ taught, penetrated into a bright flame, and united his worshippers in churches, which were holy and without reproach, and sought not only to pay him reverential homage, but also faithfully to follow him as their pattern, beaming with full Divinity. Belief in a heavenly country, which puts an end to all earthly trouble, and renders the deserved recompense both to virtue and vice, soon possessed the minds of those who attended to the Gospel of Jesus, and supported the believers under the most oppressive hardships, and regulated their lives in the midst of the seductive examples of an evil and untoward generation. And as the brook, which a copious spring sends forth, becomes in its further course a stream, that brings blessing and prosperity to the most distant regions; so the at first small number of the enlightened through Jesus grew, in the progress of time, into a large people of God; and the light of the Lord, which first shone only within the narrow limits of the Jewish land, was raised by degrees into a pillar of fire, illumining all countries, and sent out its rays to the east and the west, to the south and the north, and invited all nations to enjoy its celestial

splendour, and to partake of the spiritual vital power, that streamed from it. Thus we also stand, as late-born children of the light which proceeded from Bethlehem centuries ago, before that heavenly Father, who caused it to shine in the earth's darkness; we find in all quarters, wherever we turn our eyes, brethren in the spirit and fellow-believers; we see the world-enlightening Gospel propagated in its remotest ends; we hear how the sound of it penetrates among the rudest and most savage nations; we observe that the church, of which Jesus Christ is the foundation and corner-stone, grows more numerous and flourishing from year to year, and ever seeks to make an improved use of its spiritual advantages; and we gratefully lift up our hands to God in union with the millions who know "no other name whereby they may be saved, but the name of Jesus," and exclaim with joyful emotion on the festival, on which once the angels announced the rising luminary; 'That which was promised by the mouth of the old prophets, is accomplished,' "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising[f]." Gratifying result of the contemplations to which the entrance of our Saviour into the world gives occasion! The light that arose with him over it, has thrown out a brilliant lustre, for a considerable portion of mankind was, in the course of time, enlightened by it.

[f] Isaiah lx. 3.

But these reflections lead us also to a less pleasing result: for if we are quite impartial in our inquiries, we shall find, that the light which arose with Jesus was in various ways obscured, because men "loved darkness rather than light." Thus our Lord himself complained, while he yet visibly walked on earth, though he took the greatest pains to enlighten the minds of those around him; thus the servants of darkness assiduously contended against him, because this better suited their evil deeds, and rested not, until they thought they had extinguished his light together with his life. And had then the messengers of light, whom he sent out into the world, other and better experience? Were not the powers of darkness amongst Jews and heathens,—false opinion, superstition, malice, and wickedness,—arrayed in hostility to them also, when they propagated the knowledge of the kingdom of God, that the brightness of the dawning day might not endanger their lucrative situations? And when the light of the Gospel, nevertheless, forced its way under the mighty protection of God, and spread its radiance over the whole of our quarter of the globe, how active were not even Christian hands to obscure and extinguish it! How cunningly and boldly did not the chief bishops of Christendom contrive, for their personal advantage, to set up new idols for adoration together with the Lord of heaven and earth; to convert the spiritual

worship of God into a new heathenish temple-service; to promise his favour, not to virtue and morality, but to outward works of superstition; to convert the glad prospect beyond the grave into the means of gain by disquieting timorous hearts; to pollute the clear fountain of truth which flowed from the mouth of Jesus and his disciples with the muddy waters of fraudulent institutions of men; and to bring on a new eclipse over the divinely illumined kingdom of Christianity, in which the very last glow of the light which came out of Judah seemed ready to disappear! You know, however, this was not permitted: on the contrary, the light was invested with new splendour. The powerful breath of our Luther blew it again into a bright flame, and countless generations of Christians walked afresh in its rays, and we ourselves rejoice and believe, act and hope in it, as the divine Master taught. But is not the enemy, who would deprive us of this light, still active? Do not the powers of darkness still rage against it? Do they not still send out their servants to entice away those, who confess our evangelical faith, to their brilliant deceit, and to undermine our Church, built upon the foundation of the Apostles? Do not even many members of our Church stretch forth their hands with unaccountable blindness, to assist in putting the light of evangelical truth under a bushel, to confound men's minds with delusion and irration-

ality, to render them weak in moral energy, and thus to surrender them as a fit prey to the prince of darkness, who has no part in Jesus? Are not our ears assailed in every quarter by voices, defaming the luminous information of this age, which has its origin in the light of Christ, as a misleading light, dangerous to the state and pernicious to men? Are not those who seek to keep themselves in their sworn fidelity to the Lord, calumniated and persecuted in the bitterest manner, as apostates and enemies of his cause? Is it not openly asserted,—that the welfare of mankind will then first commence, when the truth, through which Jesus made the world free, shall have given way to the lie, by which it was once so deplorably entangled? Yes, Christians, we are now compelled to witness this. Thus must we complain on a day, in which we rejoice before God, as the day on which for the second time he said, "Let there be light, and there was light!" The considerations to which we are led on this occasion, shew us, that the light which appeared to the world in Jesus has been in various ways obscured, because men, from the beginning until now, "loved darkness rather than light." Shall we then in consequence of this go mournfully before the presence of God, and let our joy in Christ be converted into disquietude? By no means.

The reflections of this day teach us also, lastly; That the light, which dawned on the human race

through Jesus, shall never expire, for it came from above, from the Father of light. Or do you think, that this Father of light, who sent his Son to take our flesh upon him, in order to enlighten the earth lying in darkness, will and can leave his compassionate work unfinished? He, whose glory burst through the night, in which the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person "was born in the world," shall he and can he permit the return of that spiritual night, which was driven away through him? He, who every morning makes his sun to rise over us, that every thing in nature may be invigorated by its beams, and imbibe from them strength and fulness of existence, shall and can he find pleasure in gloom and darkness in the world of man? Did not the eternal luminous stream of truth flow from the beginning out of his Divine fulness? Did not his powerful finger prepare the ways in every century, by which it should penetrate to nations and men? Did he not give to our race, in the Divine gift of reason, the ability to perceive its sacred rays, and to make them its own? Did he not always guide external relations and circumstances for the promotion of its great cause? Did he not constantly assist with his power him, whom he called in times of danger to labour and contend for it? Did he not most abundantly bless the exertions of those, who, from Moses down to Jesus, from Jesus down to Luther, from Luther down to

our days, were friends of the light and heralds of the truth? No, fear nothing, Christians! Let the prince of darkness now or at any time ever so much rage and threaten; the Father of light keeps faithful guard over his peculiar kingdom, and knows how to keep in subjection the dark powers, that array themselves against it. The Church of Christ, which bright and clear looks up to him, maintains its course according to his will, and looks forward with hope beyond the grave, is safe under his celestial protection, for he himself has founded it, and will not let the sacred inheritance of his Son perish. Do you only on your parts be worthy members of this Church, and watchful citizens of his heavenly kingdom of light. As such "let your light shine before men," and advance the cause of Christ, who made you children of light, as you have power; and avoid delusion, error, and superstition, wherever they may meet you, and receive willingly, and gladly, whatever may enlighten your minds respecting their most sacred concerns, and lead you to the possession of the truth which came from heaven through our Saviour; and nothing shall be able to rob you of the glad confidence, that the light of him, whose birth we commemorate, shall never be extinguished here below, but shall shine ever brighter and more brilliant, and sooner or later to all who dwell on the earth—as the universal and daily light of the sun.

But to thee, O Father of light, from whose bosom the light of the world descended to us, thou who in that hour of night, when the angels announced Jesus Christ to be born, madest the hour of illumination break forth for all times and nations; to thee be its dominion henceforward committed in fervent prayer! Banish with thy divine power the clouds which overshadow it, and throw down the bulwarks of darkness which tower against it, and make the bounds of the kingdom of light, which he founded with thy mighty aid, from year to year wider and more comprehensive, and lead us all hereafter from the shade and obscurity of this earth into the everlasting empire of light. Amen.

SERMON XVII.

BY SACK.

THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

(PREACHED ON ASCENSION-DAY.)

SERMON XVII.

THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

JOHN xviii. 36.

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.

MY devout hearers! as long as Jesus, our Lord, lived on the earth, the erroneous opinion was constantly entertained by his disciples, that he would establish an earthly kingdom, and that they would rule in it together with him. This supposition, according to their Jewish prejudices, was so intimately interwoven with their hope of a deliverer of Israel, that neither the lowliness and unassuming humility of our Saviour's life, nor the nature of his doctrines and precepts, could entirely divest them of it. Jesus bore this weakness also of his chosen witnesses with patience. He knew that hereafter they would have quite different notions of the object of his mission, and that the trust they reposed in him would purify them from all hopes of an earthly sovereignty, which they still so much che-

rished. And especially the event, of which they were witnesses soon after his resurrection, must have this effect. By his removal from the earth their thoughts and hopes must now at once receive another direction. Other and higher expectations must arise, since he whom they honoured as their Master had quitted the earth.

A similar effect must the remembrance of the ascension of our Saviour produce in us all. And since the dominion of Jesus is still in various ways assimilated to an earthly dominion, I will endeavour on this Festival to shew how little there is in common between them. The words of the text afford the best guide on this occasion. They contain the answer, which our Saviour gave to his judge Pilate, when he had questioned him, if he were the King of the Jews. Jesus replied, that he certainly was the head of a kingdom, but that this kingdom was of quite another nature and quality from that of earthly empires. "My kingdom is not of this world;" and he immediately adds a proof, which might convince the Roman governor, that he had never aimed at obtaining an earthly sovereignty: "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but now is my kingdom not from hence." Of what kind is it then? What power, what dominion, what government is it, which was allotted to Jesus Christ by the will of God? and which he

has also acquired, and possesses, and will maintain even to the end of the world? How does he reign? And who are his subjects and members of his kingdom? And to what laws are they subject under his sceptre? And what may they expect and hope of him and through him? These are certainly very important questions for us who own the name of Jesus! Let us turn our attention to them today, and if we, in the first place, shall have formed a just idea of the nature of the kingdom of Christ, let us, secondly, take to heart the instructions as well as the consolations to be derived from it.

First: When Jesus our Saviour speaks of a kingdom, of which he is the supreme head and ruler, every one at once understands, that he possesses a befitting power and government, and that he must have subjects, who are governed by his authority. But when he immediately adds, that this kingdom is not of this world, that therefore it has no resemblance to worldly dignity and sovereignty; we learn, that we have here to understand only a spiritual power and government. In a spiritual sense we may justly ascribe a kingdom to him, who rules even over souls, who by the benefits which he conferred, the knowledge which he communicated, the sentiments which he inspired, the hopes which he awakened and fulfilled, has erected a throne in the heart itself. Has he acquired gratitude, willing obedience, and unlimited confidence; are his laws

executed, not from compulsion and fear, but from conviction and experience that they are wise, kind, and benevolent laws; and are there countless numbers who belong to him, who are inwardly ruled by him, who live to his honour and according to his will, and suffer and die in reliance on him? O then he has undoubtedly a kingdom; and such an inward and spiritual kingdom has Jesus established. How has he established it? The kingdoms of this world are usually founded by force of arms, the servants of those who aspire to them fight for this end; not so the kingdom of Jesus; that is founded only by a spiritual power, by the force of truth, justice, and love. Jesus taught to know, to love, and to worship God the Father of men; he proclaimed mercy and forgiveness, and assured us of the providence of God, of his assistance to do what is right, of his never-forsaking love; he "brought life and immortality to light," he "went about doing good," he called sinners to repentance; he delivered us from the most terrible enemies of human peace and happiness, from ignorance, superstition, the dominion of sinful appetites, the sting of conscience, and the fear of death. He came, not to rule as a worldly prince, but "to seek and to save that which was lost." And that he did in humility, in meekness, in self-denial, in abasement. It was not for him "to be ministered unto, but to minister," and to sacrifice his life itself in these most

beneficent services. He gave himself willingly up to the atoning death, through which, by the decree of God, men should be blessed with heavenly and eternal felicity. And thus he founded his kingdom by good deeds, and by shedding his blood on the cross. Nor is it his purpose that it should ever be extended but by the force of truth and by the preaching of faith in him. For this reason he chose inconsiderable, mean, and poor men to be his Apostles. They were constrained to go abroad in the world through persecution and distress, and to preach him, the Crucified, and by this preaching to win hearts, and collect subjects for him out of all nations of the globe. The arms, which they were to use, were not fleshly, but spiritual, namely, a demonstration of the truth on the consciences of men, a power of God, before which all human power must bend, the voice of his word, the working of his Spirit. Now as the kingdom of Christ was not of this world in respect to the means by which it was founded, so also it differs entirely from the kingdoms of this world in its inward properties. Here is no external sway and government, here no pomp and splendour strikes the eye, here are no bounds confined by space and time, here are no worldly claims and contentions, here are no laws influencing only the outward actions, no earthly rewards, no corporeal punishments. This kingdom comes not with exterior features, not

with audible noise, not with visible signs—*it is in you,* says our Redeemer, it is in the invisible region of your thoughts, your inclinations, your sentiments. Where faith, where godliness, where love, where peace and joy in the Holy Ghost operate, there is the kingdom of Christ; renew thine heart and live according to the instruction of Jesus, repent and believe the Gospel, and thou becomest a subject of this kingdom. The laws, which are there in force, regard not this or that outward work, they require purity of heart, pious dispositions, and an unstained conscience; the good things which are there offered and enjoyed, are spiritual good things, forgiveness of sins, peace of mind, hope in God, which never disappoints; the protection to be expected from it is not a protection against bodily enemies; it is a safeguard against that which is injurious to the internal welfare of our immortal soul. The whole design of this supremacy of Jesus is not that we should enjoy temporal prosperity in this world, possess riches, acquire earthly honours, and indulge our sensual desires. No, devout friends! there is a higher purpose, a nobler aim, namely, that it should go well with our souls, that we may become reformed servants of God, men willing and active in the practice of all which is right and good, and as such worthy to attain a better world. Of this description is the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is not of this world, neither in its origin, nor in its laws, nor in its object, nor in its happiness. It is a kingdom of truth, of righteousness, of love, and blessedness.

On that very account it has nothing to do with the kingdoms of the world; it is not in the least detrimental to their institutions and rights: is no obstacle to them, it contends not with them, it never injures them; it rather consolidates them, since it makes good and faithful subjects, who are willingly obedient to temporal authority for conscience sake, and gladly promote all its just designs by integrity in their vocation and by prayer. But if such is the nature of the kingdom of Christ, my devout hearers, then is the empire of our Saviour partly far more glorious, partly far more extensive, and partly far more lasting, than any empire of this world. It is in the first place more glorious. For what sovereignty can be compared in dignity and excellence with that which extends even over the souls of men? In that not merely external order and tranquillity, but internal improvement and everlasting happiness are considered: it is more glorious, for it is founded on truth and grace alone, and has the same laws, the same object with the all-wise government of God himself. It is, secondly, more extensive than a kingdom of this world. This is always limited to a certain people, and to a very small part of the globe. Not so the kingdom of

Christ; that is not confined to a particular nation, or a particular country; but in every nation, he that will fear God and do righteously may become a subject of it. No earthly distinctions exclude from it. All may be happy under His sceptre, who is exalted to be Lord over all. The light of the Gospel can illumine all regions of the earth with its beneficial beams; it is also certainly destined by God to be diffused more widely and to shine more unobstructedly, as a guide to human souls on the way to heaven.

What a countless number of those, who, as subjects of the kingdom of Christ, have already come to God and to salvation, and of those who shall still come till the end of time! St. John saw them in the spirit; "a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands." Yet the kingdom of Christ is, thirdly, also more lasting than any kingdom of this world. The empires of this world cease after a certain period, however mighty they may be; and if they nominally continue to exist, yet death, which removes both kings and subjects, puts an end to the subjection of the one and the dominion of the other. But the spiritual kingdom of Christ endures from generation to generation, the truth which he taught, the merit which he won, remains,

and lasts for ever. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not his words. Death has no power over him and his government; for he lives, and they that are his shall also live. Death cannot separate them from him: "of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Let us now contemplate, in the second place, some of the instructions and consolations, which the fact, that the kingdom of Jesus has this spiritual quality, points to our notice.

The first instruction, my devout hearers, to which we will attend, is this: if the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, it can never be enlarged by those means, by which earthly empires acquire strength and increase. Here no power, no wealth, no bodily constraint can have the smallest influence. Here nothing can be forcibly effected by orders, threats, or penalties. In the kingdom of Christ, as we have seen, the necessary qualifications are faith, piety, and regard to the truth. But these depend not on worldly power and human artifice. Faith admits of no compulsion; force of arms will not make way for truth, nor procure its admission into the soul. As often, therefore, as men have sought to extend the kingdom of Christ by persecution and violence, they have confounded it with a worldly kingdom, they have not known or would not know its real nature. Men have been more studious to found or to preserve an earthly sovereignty, than to gain subjects for God and Jesus. To teach, to admo-

nish, to bring the word of God near to the understanding and the heart, that is the only thing, except a good example, which men can and ought to do for the propagation of the true religion. Where is worldly sway and command, there is an earthly kingdom of God, not the gentle, secret, spiritual dominion of Jesus. As the latter cannot be spread abroad by worldly power, so neither can it be assaulted and destroyed by force and violence. And that is a very great consolation for all sincere Christians. The trial has been made; men have attacked and sought to subvert Christ's kingdom with temporal weapons, as if it were an earthly supremacy; authorities have raised up their powers against it; imprisonment and torture, fire and sword have opposed the dominion of Jesus. But with what little success! As convictions and sentiments cannot be imparted by force, so neither can they be taken away by force. No threats, no torments, can stop the truth in its progress. What is visible cannot reach what is invisible, and therefore cannot injure it. The kingdom of Christ lies in a territory, into which no human power can penetrate. Thus experience has also shewn that all the persecutions, which Christians have suffered, have not occasioned the least detriment to the kingdom of the Redeemer. Not only has this kingdom remained immoveably firm, but it has internally strengthened itself under all the afflictions which

the eternal church has undergone. The blood of so many thousand martyrs has not extinguished the light of faith and the flame of love towards Jesus, but has rather made it brighter and stronger. From hence we learn how secure we may be, should it please Providence again to try and to purify the congregation of the Lord by persecutions and by sorrows, and should all the mighty of the earth unite to extirpate Christianity. For this they are far too weak. We shall have nothing to fear from all their aggressions. Not thus will Christ's throne be shaken, not thus will it be subverted. Then only will it be shaken, when a teacher appears upon earth, who brings from heaven yet more salutary truth to men, than Jesus; a benefactor, who will do still more for them than he did; a succourer, who will labour for the salvation and happiness of sinners, with more entire devotedness and with greater love, than he laboured. Then might they who inquire after truth, and thirst after righteousness, turn to him, who rules with more wisdom and goodness, and in whose kingdom more peace of mind, more trust in God, more incitement to do good, more blessedness is to be found. But as that never can and never will happen, O, then, we need never apprehend, that men who can do nothing against God, will ever destroy a kingdom which he has founded.

But I pass on to a second lesson of instruction to

be drawn from this truth. Christ's kingdom is not of this world; we then, as subjects of it, have not to expect worldly felicity. That is, we cannot promise ourselves, that we shall be freed from temporal evil and inconvenience, because we are Christians, or that we shall attain to earthly honour, earthly riches, or earthly prosperity. Affliction and need are so far from a proof that a man is not a good subject of Christ, that the Redeemer has distinctly warned his first disciples, that they must be prepared to endure them under his government. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Good days, such as the world desires, he has not promised. He himself had none: how can *we* demand them? I do not mean to say by this, that an upright Christian cannot also be prosperous in what relates to the body; but merely, that he ought not to consider and desire this well-being as a blessing of the kingdom of Christ, and that it must not surprise him, if he is obliged to go through many sorrows and troubles.

To strive after temporal happiness alone in the way of piety and virtue, to seek earthly felicity in this path, is to lower the kingdom of Christ to a kingdom of this world. Christ promises and gives his subjects other and better gifts. He promises and gives them a glad consciousness of the grace of God, a serene contented heart, a pure unstained

conscience, a soul full of philanthropy, full of patience, full of resignation to all the decrees of Providence, full of hope in a superior everlasting happiness in heaven. Are you blest with these good things? Then you will bear the want of all worldly prosperity without envy and without pain, nor will you think or say, on account of any sufferings which you may have to sustain, that as servants of your Redeemer you are not blessed, infinitely blessed. You will not, like the disciples, ask with worldly-minded views, "Lord, what shall we have if we follow thee, adhere to thee, and submit ourselves to thy laws?" For you possess the most inestimable good,—an honest heart, and the assurance that nothing can separate you from the love of your God, and from the bliss to which he has called you. But lastly, my brethren, the kingdom of Christ is not of this world. It rests, therefore, on the obedience and fidelity which we have to shew as subjects of this kingdom, and not on eye-service, not on bodily exercises, not on outward works. All this has its value in the governments of the world, where the wisest ruler cannot see the heart, cannot search the thoughts. But in the kingdom of Jesus all should be mind and life; here the heart itself, not this or that work, is required. Here, therefore, no name is valued, no church communion, no forms of devotion, no worship of the lips, no cry of 'Lord, Lord,' no baptism and Lord's supper, no penance,

prayers, and fasting. All this is worthless if thy heart is not concerned. Let not this be thought a hard saying, for the Scripture declares it, and the nature of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus confirms it. Nothing avails, it is expressly said, but a new creature in Christ Jesus. But what is that, a new creature? It is a heart cleansed by a change of disposition, and sanctified by faith. That first makes us good subjects of our exalted Mediator, that gives to all our adorations and good works their true Christian worth.

May we, then, make a particular application of all these considerations; that we may try ourselves with impartiality, whether we belong to those who can sincerely rejoice and confide in the quality and advantages of the glorious kingdom of our blessed Redeemer. Let every one of us take those resolutions before God, to which he shall be instigated by this examination. I will only add this single representation: How must they who do not wilfully rebel against him, whom God has made both Lord and Saviour, how must they be impelled to do homage to him, with their whole soul, and to devote themselves entirely to his service, when they are mindful what a sacred right he has acquired to their love, their obedience, and their eternal gratitude, by his sufferings and his death! Has he not purchased us at an immense price to be his property? Can we think of his sorrows and his

death on the cross, can we, especially, celebrate the solemn and affecting memorial of his love in the Lord's supper, and not form this resolution? Yes, I will live unto him who died for me, I will take his instructions for my law, his Spirit for my guide, his conduct in life for my pattern. I will be so minded as he was; neither sin, nor my own corrupt will, nor the estimation and example of men, nor the world and its pleasures shall henceforth have dominion over me. He alone, to whom I entirely belong, shall live and reign in me. Let us keep this holy festival with these thoughts and resolutions. Let thanksgiving and joy fill our souls, that our Saviour has not established a kingdom of this world, that we, as redeemed by him, are subjects of a better and more lasting kingdom; and let our most zealous diligence be exerted, that we may not forfeit the blessedness of this kingdom. An apostle thus warned the first Christians, and with this admonition I will conclude: "Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

BY SCHMALTZ.

THE MEMORY OF THE EARTHLY SUFFERINGS OF OUR DEPARTED FRIENDS.

SERMON XVIII.

THE MEMORY OF THE EARTHLY SUFFERINGS OF OUR DEPARTED FRIENDS.

It appears a strange result of experience, my brethren, that notwithstanding the natural repugnance of human nature to pain and mourning, many purposely nourish, often for years, not unfrequently during their whole life, the very bitterest grief,—lamentation for the dead whom they loved. Whilst their hearts in general struggle against melancholy sensations, they are ever tearing open these old wounds afresh, and they studiously cherish their remembrance of those loved ones, whom no longing nor complaining can recal. It is true, such recollections must necessarily be often involuntarily awakened. Connexions, which formed our happiness in life, father and mother, who prepared for us the first refreshing tokens of love on earth; benefactors and friends, who had a favourable influence on our destiny, and acquired the strongest claims to our

gratitude; dear children, who opened to us bright hopes of the future; it seems scarcely possible to forget these: and had they not raised a lasting monument in our hearts, the visible world, and what passes immediately around us, will be sufficient to remind us at times, and renew our remembrance of them.

But in the mean time the apparent contradiction in our experience is not yet explained; because certainly the better sort of persons are not carried away by the blind force of natural affections, nor by the changes of external appearances, but even here are masters over themselves, and act according to their own choice and determination. They do not leave it to the chance, that a passing thought of their dear deceased may arise; they rather purposely invoke it, and study to retain a lively impression in their minds. The picture that they set up in their daily place of abode, the predilection with which they frequent places that were once witnesses of their happiness, the anxious care with which they preserve and guard any precious gift, the deep feeling with which they repeatedly visit the grave, as a holy place, and the pleasant decoration of flowers, with which, full of tender affection, they distinguish it; all this forbids us to doubt, that they *will* not extirpate their melancholy; much as their hearts may be opposed to it, they *purposely* maintain their grief wakeful and

vivid. But this experience, if closely examined, bears in itself, my friends, the solution of the apparent contradiction. It makes it, namely, incontrovertibly certain, that these repeated reminiscences of the departed, notwithstanding the melancholy which they renew, cannot be afflicting, but must have in them something very pleasing and grateful. For that it is possible to suppress them, and when they are involuntarily obtruded, to banish them again, we learn from many a living example. There are children of the world in plenty, who know how to indemnify themselves for domestic solitude, in the diversions of life, to comfort themselves after the most painful loss in the diminution of their cares, or even quickly to forget their severed alliances in the charms of new connexions. That which is removed out of sight, is soon absent from the mind. Their volatile unsteady tempers cannot be fixed, their hearts cannot be moved; deep and lasting affections of the mind are foreign to them; they view the seriousness of life as their enemy, and employ all means to drive it from them; and should they be compelled to go to the burial-place itself, they would leave it without being more deeply impressed, and perhaps would succeed the very next hour in laughing away the superficial emotion. Better men justly scorn such worldly-mindedness, as unworthy, and such conduct may appear to feeling affectionate souls quite inexplicable. But still

they are men, and cannot as such naturally like pain. The melancholy which they entertain and cherish, must be sweet, must be of a pleasing nature. Agreeable recollections of the past, views full of hope of a glorious futurity, a blissful foretaste of heaven, mix with his painful remembrances, and impart to them the most refreshing consolation for the gloomy present.

What the world calls pleasure, is not, in general, an object of their desire. Their's rests with their beloved in the grave. Their mind has become more heavenly, their faith more lively, their hope firmer through their loss. Because they gain much for this higher aim of their mind and heart by thinking of the deceased, they, therefore, often and cordially renew their remembrance. And thus is the experience above spoken of completely explained. Yes, it is exactly the most painful recollections which here most strikingly prove their beneficial power. A true blessing on our spiritual life is to be gained by the remembrance of the earthly sorrows of our glorified friends. Our attention is drawn to-day to this truth. Let it be a sacred employment to us to consider it devoutly. May the God of all comfort give peace to our minds, that the voice of his truth may resound, and good resolutions be matured amongst us!

JOHN xvii. 4, 5.

I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was.

JESUS' last evening was come, and the last supper with his disciples finished, and the solemnity, fruitful in blessing, in remembrance of him already instituted, my hearers! when he uttered the prayer so full of mind and spirit, from which the words of our text are taken. They transport us, therefore, to that terrible night, when the Lord went forth to meet the most dreadful agonies of sorrow. It may surprise many of you, that we should just now return to this subject. We had ascended the glorious summit from which we saw him that is risen again come forth, as the bright and genial sun; and soon again we shall be witnesses of a solemn ascension into heaven. 'Why then,' you might ask, 'why again bring him to our view, in this calm interval of time, as the suffering and the dying? Why remind us of his humiliation in the days consecrated to his exaltation?' But consider, yourselves, the words which we have this day to examine. Not depressed and humiliated, but truly exalted, Christ stands before us. His work is finished, the glorification of God on earth is completed, the victory

over the world is won, he has past in the spirit beyond the hour of death, as if it were already undergone, and the glory which he implores of the Father, already shines round him with its heavenly splendour. Thus he stands celestially glorified before our eyes. It may then prove very beneficial to us to look back on his afflictions. Thus the text and the season unite in leading our meditation to a very fruitful subject, the remembrance of the earthly sorrows of those who are now glorified in heaven. To what are we to direct it? And how are we to profit by it? Each deserves a particular consideration.

First. If the remembrance of the earthly sorrows of our friends now glorified is to be of a beneficial and elevating character, we must, above all things, be careful that it takes a right direction: and for this we have sufficient instruction in our text. We learn, namely, from it, that we should, first, regard the glorification of God through their painful trials. Secondly, diligently inquire into their efficiency by means of pious endurance; and, lastly, devoutly consider the connexion between earthly abasement, and heavenly exaltation. "I have glorified *thee* on the earth," thus says Jesus, my brethren, with noble self-confidence in his prayer to God. And, in fact, all his worldly labours had been directed to this great end. The covering was to be taken from the eyes of

men, and the unknown God, whose real nature was hidden, even from the chosen people, to be made manifest to all mortals in his pure celestial brightness. To make known his eternal power and unlimited perfection, his infinite paternal love to men, his mercy to the fallen, his law and his promises, was his first and highest purpose in all that he taught and accomplished. God's greatness and glory should be exhibited with bright perspicuity; the Father should be glorified through him. And this was effected chiefly by his last afflicting trials. He had always inculcated this, and these are his sentiments even now in his prayer. He is still among the living, yet he calls his work finished; but he does it for this reason, because in this moment of devout elevation, already entirely with God in heaven, he imagines his sorrows ended, his mortal conflict fought out. "I have glorified thee on the earth," he says, and it cannot be mistaken, that he directly and especially alludes to his earthly trials. Blessed is he, whosoever can say with him at the end of his course, "I have glorified thee on earth, my Father!" None indeed of his mortal brethren can reach the heights of the Only-begotten. But to follow him at a distance, those beloved ones who slept in the Lord, laboured; we could not else conceive of them as glorified in heaven. And if they have succeeded in doing any thing on earth towards the glorification of God, it will become most visible and

perceptible to us in the recollection of their worldly afflictions.

As tribulation forms us most surely for heaven, and best developes and proves what is divine in us, so the power of a pious communion with God is most visibly displayed in the days of sorrow, as well as the beatific presence and protecting love of our Father in heaven. Alas, my brethren, it is a bitter lot and one of the most poignant griefs of affection, to see one's dearest suffer, perhaps hopelessly suffer. When we witness their misery and distress, painful feelings so violently assault us, that, incapable of all composed thought, we not seldom entirely lose sight of the higher tendency and full signification of their trials, and often are nearly wavering in our faith, and disputing with the Deity. But when the struggle is over, and they have entered into the mansions of the glorified, how much softer and more truly glorious their hard lot on earth then appears! That which, when viewed separately, was inexplicable to us, is now satisfactorily solved, when we regard it in connexion with the whole. But, the light which clears up the darkness comes from above. To whatever point we look in their night of sorrow, there arises every where a radiant sun in God, the All-merciful. We admire the composure and peace of mind, with which they bore the terrible calamity that overtook them; but it soon becomes evident to us, that their pious disposition, their filial submission to their Father in heaven

supported them. They saw death before them and knew themselves to be his certain prey; but that they did not dejectedly despond, nor inconsolably lament, was the effect of a devout communion with God, and an upward look of faith towards their heavenly Father's habitation. They saw many a fair wish frustrated, many a sweet hope annihilated, the truest affection repaid by treacherous ingratitude, and their hearts were lacerated by the death of a dear, fervently loved child, or more painfully still by a prodigal son; but a superior, invisible Power stood friendly at their side, that they should not sink under their trouble. The blissful presence of him, who is least distant from us in the greatest need, was manifested at one time by an exhilarating prospect of futurity, at another by a sympathizing, consoling friend, now by unlooked-for help in distress, now by the invisible thriving of the good seed they have sown on earth, now by the warm attachment of a faithful one, and now again by an unexpected favourable turn in their fortune. O how beneficially must the remembrance of our glorified friends operate upon us, if we studiously reflect on this glorification of God through their tribulations!

Secondly. They were, however, by no means lost to the world. Blessed effects are often wrought, not merely by showy and noisy activity, but also by pious endurance; into which we have now to inquire further, whilst considering the earthly trials

of the departed. Thus says Jesus in the text, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." We all know that the crowning termination of this work was his painful death. His object was to reconcile the children with the Father, to bring rest and peace to their souls, to expel fear through love, and to raise them to the confident belief, that God is merciful to the fallen, and is willing to receive the lost again into his favour, when they return to him with faith and repentance; and this redemption he has established by his death.

It was to be made manifest, that there was something in our race on which the eye of the Most Holy could rest with satisfaction; and he has exhibited it in his obedience even unto death, and his virtue perfected at the cross. Mankind stood in need of a guide, an unspotted model and pattern, that should go before and lead them to the sublime object of their wishes; and he has become that guide by his trials and sufferings. "In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted[a]." Thus his work of redemption is completed in his afflictions and death. Our departed friends also, my brethren, have not in vain struggled and suffered. We are all born to active duties, and some work is given to every one to do. But many a one has done greater and more

[a] Heb. ii. 18.

lasting good by pious endurance and an exemplary death, than by a long and happy life.

Thou once thoughtest little or not at all on God and judgment, and heaven was to thee a strange unknown land; thou wert a worldling totally absorbed in visible things, and reposed thy whole heart on what is vain and perishable; but behold, God led thee to the death-bed of one that belonged to thee; then thou sawest with alarm his daily torture; it was evident to himself that death only could release him; but yet his faith held him up, he trembled not, he despaired not; he calmly awaited his last hour, and his eyes closed in peace as his life had been peaceful; then wert thou surprisingly affected, and perhaps for the first time hast opened thy heart towards heaven, and from that period hast more and more allied thyself to it. Thy wife perhaps attended thee for years, patient and submissive, without thine heart being warmed with gratitude and love, and thou hast always persisted in thy inflexible disposition, and every apparent or trivial offence has excited in thee irreconcilable hatred: but when painful disease seized her, when thou sawest her suffer calmly and without murmuring, when in the agony of death she tenderly and conciliatingly held out her hand to thee—then wert thou powerfully affected, and thy soul was softened to gentle and generous affections, and thou becamest from that time milder and more friendly, more in-

dulgent and conciliating towards thy companions through life. Anxious doubts once interposed between thee and the future better world, thou lookedst not on high with joy and confidence, because thou hadst not yet felt a lively faith; but when thy warmly loved child smiled to thee sweetly even in death, and lay before thee in the coffin with the angel face of innocence; then wert thou wonderfully affected, as if thou hadst seen the heavenly glory visibly displayed; and, since that, the gates of the home above stand more open to thee, and the ardent wish of affection has firmly rivetted thee to the bright world of re-union. O what blessed effects ye work upon us from above, ye glorified spirits, when we duly reflect on the noble and lasting efficacy of your earthly trials!

But, thirdly, they themselves, having glorified God on earth and promoted his work in pious endurance, cannot go unrewarded; there must be a necessary and intimate connexion between earthly humiliation and heavenly exaltation. To this Jesus lastly adverts, "I have glorified thee on the earth, and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." "Thine eyes beheld me before I came into this world; yea, before it was founded, it was from eternity thy will, that I should enter into thy glory. Now I have finished thy work and glorified thee; do thou also glorify me in thine

heaven." And thus he every where represents his humiliation as the way to celestial exaltation. Christ, he says, must "suffer these things, and enter into his glory." And with the cry of anguish, "It is finished," he joins the prayer of confidence, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."

And the Apostle expressly says, "Because he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, *therefore* God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name[b]." We cannot imagine it otherwise, my beloved, in a sacred order of things. If already in the visible world no seed consciously sown is entirely unproductive, surely abundant sheaves of joy must be the fruit of the precious seed of tears. A man of noble mind, indeed, will not live, nor strive, nor labour, nor suffer, nor die for the sake of the reward: but the less eagerly he seeks it, the more certainly will it be given him. Whilst we call to mind your earthly trials, ye perfected in heaven! we see you adorned with glorious, imperishable crowns of victory. Your souls were more and more purified from earthly dross in the furnace of affliction, your view was directed more steadily and fixedly to the treasures of heaven, your hearts reposed more ardently on the Father of love, and the stronger was the sense in calamity of the insufficiency of your own power,

[b] Philippians ii. 9.

with so much the more filial submission ye resigned yourselves to the care and will of the Eternal. Ye took this heavenly maturity with you, as a rich reward of worldly trials. And he who sent you to the conflict, whose eyes beheld you when ye wept and sighed here below without murmuring, when ye endured and suffered, without abandoning the paths of light, the witness of your last struggle and your deserving death; he himself opened to you the everlasting mansions, and led you, his faithful servants, to the joys of the blessed, for which this earth has neither words nor signs. O how salutary must your memory be to us, when we devoutly consider the heavenly exaltation, which has sprung from your earthly abasement!

The remembrance of the worldly trials of our friends now glorified may certainly operate most beneficially upon us, if we give it this high direction. Let me now point out, in a few words, the blessing of it: for a detailed representation is needless; your own hearts bear witness to it: such recollections must mitigate the pain of separation, must console and raise us above the troubles of earth, and must incite and strengthen us to a courageous contest for the crowns of glory beyond the grave. It often seems, my dear hearers, as if we thought we could testify and cherish our affection for the deceased solely by our mourning. They have entered into a sanctuary, whither our view

and our tenderest care cannot penetrate. Tears, bitter tears, are the only poor gift which we are yet able to offer them. Like that mother who would not be comforted, because her children were no more, we often purposely sharpen the stings of our grief. We think vividly of many a fair wish, which they longed to see fulfilled on earth. Whenever any good fortune occurs to us, we form a lively imagination of the joy they would have felt, and paint with the freshest and most glowing colours the blissful hours, which we could now have passed in their society. But are we right in this? Is it an honour to our beloved, when we degrade their memory into an instrument of our distress? Can it enhance their heavenly happiness, if they know us to be disconsolate on earth, and devoid of all strength and fortitude whilst inconsolable? Christ prays in the text with his disciples, with the friendly intention of raising them above the pain of separation. He therefore reminds them of the conflicts which he would now soon have surmounted, of the laborious work, which he would soon have finished. Our departed ones have also suffered and contended to the end. Our joys perished, but our sorrows also and all afflictions and storms of this earth reach them no more. Let us often, very often, remind ourselves of this. Let us frequently recal a lively remembrance of the troubles of life which they had to contend against in various ways. The

cares which formerly so painfully disturbed them; the anxious contests, in which their own hearts engaged them, because they aimed at the highest virtue; the fear with which the vicissitudes of earth, and anxiety respecting the future often filled them; the tears which they wept, the losses they lamented; when we think often and deeply on all this, how much is our grief for the beloved dead alleviated! how happy shall we esteem them, that, exalted above mortal tribulation, they have arrived at those blissful heights, where it is eternally calm and serene, where the refreshing, unalloyed peace of heaven reigns, where the victor-crowns of the just are their portion, remunerating them for sublunary trials!

At the same time there falls from above a cheering ray of light upon our own path of sorrow. In the ocean of life, my brethren, are frequent agitations and storms. The passage is to no one always easy and gentle, always safe and free from peril. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble." Alas! how often are we all painfully sensible of this! Whence do we derive strength and courage for the conflict? Thou must seek them from high, in the land of celestial glory. The angels of peace come from above to refresh thee. Call them down to thee with a heartfelt remembrance of thy glorified friends. Think of the difficulties which once obstructed their

course. How soon were they ended, and the haven of rest disclosed to them! Beautiful fields of light spread themselves before their blissful view, on emerging beyond the dark labyrinth of life. When earth's gloomy gates closed upon them, the doors of heaven were opened to them. 'Up, weary wanderer,' they cry to thee from above, 'up, be of good cheer!' It is worth the trouble to strive for heaven, to suffer for heaven. A Father's eye numbers all tears, and those which thou weepest with irreproachable heart, thou wilt find again as unfading pearls in the wreath of victory, which is kept for every honest combatant. Thy soul now soon becomes calm in God, thou bearest afflictions more resignedly, and angels of comfort, in thy sainted dead, beckon to thee from their distant eminence, when thou rememberest their earthly trials. But they must also prove angels of strength to thee, must serve as models, and summon and invigorate thee for the arduous contest. Yes, whoever knows but one dear being in heaven, whom he once called his own on earth, true love fills him with a longing desire not to be eradicated. His most fervent wish, and the aim of his life and conduct, is once again to be with them at all times, to find them again and to possess them for ever. They have won the crown of celestial glory in their earthly warfare. They had honestly finished their work, and worthily sustained their share of affliction,

therefore God has heard their last groans, and glorified them with heavenly glory. Thus they are amicably united with us, as guardians of our virtue. Lively zeal in honourable actions, cheerful fortitude to struggle and endure, cordial love and tender care towards the companions of our pilgrimage, who yet walk by our side,—all come to us, when we look up with eager desire to our friends in bliss. What is the glory of life? What are temporal sorrows? They are not worthy to be compared with the blessedness which awaits us on the other side. Your delights flow round you, ye beloved, whom our hearts still designate with a tender name. They yearn to pass over to you with an inextinguishable longing, and will be fondly mindful of you, as long as they beat. Steep and thorny was your path through mortal life. To sigh, to suffer, to struggle, was your lot. But ye entered through tribulation into the Lord's glory. The thorns of life are now made less painful to us, the temptations of worldly pleasure less dangerous. Ye have been proved on trial; and we will also seek the same approval. So shall we think of you with joy in our last conflict, and whilst we quit the earth, you will extend to us a hand from above. Father, receive then our spirits, and lead us into communion with our beloved. Amen!

SERMON XIX.

BY BRETSCHNEIDER.

THE ENDOWMENTS, INFIRMITIES, AND DUTIES OF MAN.

SERMON XIX.

THE ENDOWMENTS, INFIRMITIES, AND DUTIES OF MAN.

Eternal God! Creator and Lord! adored by all heavenly spirits, glorified by all people! With delight my soul praises thee, for thou art the first and the last, thou art the supreme good, and to thy creatures thou art love. Every morning telleth the evening, and one day telleth another, how adorable thou art in thy infinite power and love! My heart feels blest in thee, thou most gracious, who hast given life and joy to all from the fulness of thine everlasting inexhaustible might. To thy throne ascends my warm thanksgiving, that thou hast called me forth from the night of non-existence into the light of life, that thou hast given me ability to discern thee and thy glorious temple, the universe, to admire thee and thy works in their grandeur, and to love thee, the source of all life, and to be blessed in this love. O how I thank thee, that thou hast made me man, man after thine own image! Eternal God! because I know thee, so will I also

live in thee, seek my happiness in thee, and expect and intreat the bliss of my existence, both on this side and beyond the grave, from thee. Our requests are known to thee, O Omniscient, before the lips utter them. Thou hast permitted us to pray to thee. We implore thee, therefore, with filial trust. Bless, O fountain of all salvation, bless all our fellow-creatures, from the high throne even to the meanest hut! Grant to them all, to feel in its fullest value the happiness of being men, who know, love, and honour thee; grant them to live worthy of their destination, willingly to obey thy sacred laws, and whilst they become ripe for death, to be at the same time ripe for the glory of a better world. But, O my Father, train *me* up through joy and pain, through prosperity and adversity, through hope and fear, as it may seem good to thy wisdom. Let me but know thy truth and revere it, love thy holy law and obey it, rejoice in thy hope and grow worthy of it. Do thou thyself sanctify my heart, O God, and let my life be a continual exercise in the way of perfection. Let it be without honour in the eyes of the world, so that it be but worthy in thy sight. Let it be wanting in greatness and in fame, so that it be not without profit to my fellow men. I ask not of thee honour nor riches, greatness nor power; but deny me not a share in the happiness of the wise and good. Remove from my heart all intemperate wishes for external advantages and enjoy-

ments, which so often do not make us happier, but entice our easily seduced heart from the path of virtue. Thy creature supplicates thee, O Father of life, only for content and serenity, for wisdom and virtue, for tranquillity and peace of mind. Refuse me not these good things, and lead me and all men to the knowledge of thy love, to faith in thy word, to the hope of the quiet mansions of the perfected in thy heavenly kingdom. Whither he, whom thou hast sent to be the guide of our souls into life, Jesus Christ, points out the way; with whose words we further pray, Our Father, &c.

MATTHEW viii. 5—13.

And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a Centurion beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The Centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed: for I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, &c.

BY what sentiments the philanthropic warrior, recorded by our Gospel, was animated, what moved him to go even to Jesus, and thus urgently to implore aid for his sick servant, he himself expresses with the words, 'I am a man.' He felt as a man,

he knew that the servant, although much beneath him in circumstances, was yet a fellow man, and that he, although having a command over many, was still as dependent on the assistance and love of others as the meanest of those who were under him. O that every one among us resembled this worthy soldier! that the consideration, 'I am a man,' might constantly accompany every one in the path of his earthly life! For this thought reminds us of the endowments, the weaknesses, the dependance, and the end of humanity. The consideration, 'I am a man,' tells us, 1st That we possess the natural endowments of human nature, that we and all men bear about us the image of the Creator; that we also possess reason, that ornament of the human race, and moral liberty, that noble property of the human soul, and a feeling heart, that source of the higher degrees of human happiness; that we are also endued with qualities, which impart to man his superior dignity; that we and all men have the high calling to become wise, good, and happy. This reflection, felt in a lively manner, will be a powerful encouragement to us, never to forget the Man in ourselves and others in the fortuitous outward relations of life, but to treat with respect, and to cultivate with care, what is human in ourselves and others. When the king, delighting in his crown and the splendour of his throne, the man of rank in his dignity, the mighty man in his power,

the favoured man in the sense of his outward distinctions, the rich man in his abundance; when these forget the man in themselves, when they know nothing higher, and honour nothing more, than the advantages of their station, their birth, their circumstances, their prosperity; O then may they remember the saying of the good centurion, 'I am a man;' then may they feel in these words, that they are not merely kings, lords, magistrates, great, rich, and distinguished in external relations, but also *men;* that they first were men, and that the being man is the brightest ornament of our race. Then they will acknowledge that the first care of man should be to aspire to bear the name of man with honour, and that this is only done, when the natural endowments of the human race are cultivated in themselves to perfection; then they will acquire strength of mind, that they may not be enticed by the riches, the possessions, the honours, the occupations and advantages of their outward condition, to lead an unworthy life opposed to the destination of man. But when one prides himself on his exterior casual advantages, and does not honour the man in others; when the monarch, instead of being the father and defender of his people, uses his power as an instrument to gratify his passions; when the man of rank, instead of protecting his humbler brethren, treats them with scorn; when the rich man, instead of being a benefactor to his

poorer fellow-creatures, is severe, unkind, and haughty towards them, and oppresses the indigent in order to indulge his covetousness; then might resound in their ears the words, I am a man! a man like my humble and necessitous brethren, who have the same godlike powers, the same eternal destiny as myself. And should not this reflection prove of the greatest force in urging us to humility, justice, charity and benevolence? Should it not manifest to every one, that we honour ourselves when we respect the endowments of human nature in others; but that we pronounce sentence against ourselves, when we despise the man in our fellow-creatures? In the same manner let the lowly, the inferior, the weak, the poor man often address to himself the reflection, 'Thou art a man, and partakest of the natural endowments of man;' for he will thereby be reminded of his divine destination, and respect himself in his lowliness, so that, if outward honour be wanting, he may not dishonour himself as man. But whoever thinks that it does not degrade him to manifest base propensities, because he lives in a low condition; whoever is not ashamed of deceit and fraud, of stealing and lying, because he has no external honour in civil society; whoever indulges in curses, lasciviousness, drunkenness, rudeness, and in rough behaviour, because he does not belong to the well-educated orders of the state, let him say to himself,

Thou art a man! thou sharest in the natural endowments of man as well as the highest and mightiest; thou also shouldest become wise, virtuous, and like unto God.

Although thou art not in high honour before the world, yet art thou honoured as man in the sight of God; and thou shouldest not, by a bad life, degrade thyself and lose thy worth as a human being. But this consideration will arm him, who is placed in unfavourable outward circumstances, most surely against that envy and ill-will, with which the mean man so often views the advantages of his superior, the poor the abundance of the rich, and he who has no influence, the power of the mighty. Every one must, indeed, be aware, that these external advantages cannot be common to all, because in that case they would cease to be advantages, and that their existence is altogether unavoidable, because the welfare and order of society absolutely require them. But the thought, 'I am a man, I enjoy human endowments as well as the highest and most learned,' affords him a higher degree of satisfaction; for these endowments are the most important, they alone are imperishable, whilst every thing external is subject to change; they alone lay the foundation of our happiness here and in eternity, whilst outward advantages are so frequently an ever-flowing source of trouble and sorrow; they alone accompany us into eternity, whilst death

strips us of all power, rank, honour, and riches, as of an occasional garment. For it is not the ruler, the high in rank, the superior in station, the learned, the rich, who is immortal, but *the man*. And that which will be essential on the other side the grave, is not what place you occupied on earth, but what you were as a man; your eternal destiny will be fixed, not according to the rank, the power, the splendour, or the riches which you here possessed, but according to the wisdom which you gained, the virtue you acquired, and the fidelity with which you performed the duties of your outward condition, be it what it might.

But if the thought, 'I am a man,' reminds us of the natural endowments of human nature, it calls our attention, on the other hand, secondly, to the natural infirmities, which we as men bear about with us. Noble and precious, indeed, is reason, the divine light in us, which is able to take a wide survey of the dominion of truth, penetrates deeply into the mysteries of heaven, and the hidden workings of nature, and, what is the most to be admired, views itself in its own light; it has, notwithstanding, certain limits which it cannot pass; its view is not free from delusion and error, it advances but slowly in the knowledge of truth, futurity is for the most part veiled from its sight, and many a mystery in heaven and earth, many an enigma in our inward frame, is not to be unravelled by it. Great and honourable,

indeed, is the moral power of man, and his ability to execute the Divine commands from unconstrained choice and love; admirable is the greatness of virtue, to which individuals of our race have raised themselves; but still what weakness cleaves to human virtue! How frequently the best men err! How often we commit acts which, when accomplished, we ourselves condemn with shame!

Richly and excellently (it cannot be denied) has the Creator endued the human heart with generous feelings; they are not seldom powerfully and wonderfully exhibited, glorious as the morning dawn breaks forth from the dark night; every thing good and fair finds in the human breast a congenial chord of feeling, responding in harmonious unison. But here also weakness is the lot of man. Too often the human heart cherishes contrary feelings, too often it contemplates what is unworthy of it with pleasure, and becomes the seat of ignoble sentiments; too often it is the prey of the moment, and verifies that saying of Scripture, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it [a]?" Never forget then that you are a man; so will you also never forget that human weakness adheres to you. Be not, therefore, so presumptuous as to suppose, that you alone discern the truth, and all others are involved in error. Never persecute those, who, in religious matters,

[a] Jerem. xvii. 9.

on conviction of any kind, are of a different opinion from yourself; urge not on any one your faith and your persuasion with violent measures, and never in any case consider error as a crime, unless it is accompanied by evident wickedness; but let the truth prevail by its own peculiar power, by which it ultimately compels all minds to obey it. And if you find a brother immersed in manifest error, you may, indeed, instruct him, as far as God has qualified you to do so; but to despise him, to hate and persecute him, if your instruction is fruitless, that must not be. For he is a man, and consequently exposed to error, and you also are a man, and you too, therefore, may err. But when you say to yourself, 'I am a man, and as man not devoid of faults and infirmities,' you must never presume on your virtue, never justify it as spotless, nor judge with severity the faults of others. Be not, therefore, proud of such virtues as you have, and think not that you possess *all* virtues, because several belong to you, or that you are free from *all* faults, because you are free from many. Thou art a man, and weakness is the lot of man. Never, therefore, trifle with sin, esteem not thyself exalted above the possibility of falling; never cease to guard thyself against the seductions of example, of the passions, and of circumstances, and to use the means which religion furnishes for the confirmation of thy virtue; and suffer it, when thy faults and

imperfections are pointed out, however it may wound thy pride. Be not so presumptuous as to justify thyself before God, who sees through thy heart; remember that thou, as a fallible man, standest in need of the grace of God; humble thyself before him, who alone is holy and perfectly righteous, as the humane soldier humbled himself before the superior virtue of Jesus, when he exclaimed, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof." But be also mindful that others who err, are men, and that thou too art a man, who judgest them. Forgive offences committed against thee; judge not without mercy and charity those who, in an unfortunate moment, have forgotten themselves, and yielded to passion and temptation, but be kind in thy judgment; for they are men and cannot be without spot, and thou also art a man, thou also requirest indulgence and pardon for thine own faults.

And because imperfection is the portion of man, bring not human goodness and excellence into dishonour by seeking out and exposing the blemishes and defects of distinguished men. For every one may assure himself, that even the most excellent are but men, and have their dark side. Instead, therefore, of searching out their foibles, and strengthening the faulty in their failings by great examples, rather draw into the light their brilliant virtues, in order to encourage others to follow their example.

The reflection, 'I am a man,' should remind us also, thirdly, of our human dependence. We feel ourselves as men dependent on God, dependent on the assistance and love of our fellow-men. Our foot rests on the earth, the earth on the universe, the universe on God, who supports all things with his almighty word. From him proceeds all life, all motion; but on him also all life depends: his will preserves our breath; his divine power pervades all created things, keeps every thing in activity and order, guides every thing to the end for which he made it; "in him we live and move and have our being." Even in death our soul sinks into his paternal arms, and expects that he will conduct it to his heavenly kingdom. We are, therefore, and continue, dependent on his laws and decree, and in need of his love and assistance. Be thou then ever so high, so mighty, so rich, so prudent, and ingenious, still you are not so high, mighty, nor wise, as not to require the aid of God, nor to be able to change error into truth, wrong into right, vice into virtue, evil into good. However thou mayest resist and wantonly insult God, nature, and the human heart, thou art nevertheless a man, and, therefore, subject to the laws of God, which thou must obey, or perish. But be not on the other hand too disheartened, when men act in defiance of truth and right; they are men, and, therefore, shall be overthrown. Do not despond, if human violence per-

secutes thee, if the future has a threatening aspect, if the course of thy life is mysterious; thou art a man, and thy heavenly Father is not far from thee, with his support and his consolation. Only be careful to render thyself worthy of his help by love, trust, and obedience to his laws, for only then will the feeling of dependence upon God comfort and bless thee, when thou livest in conformity to the will of God. But we are also, as men, in need of human charity and assistance one towards another. For not only the wretched being rivetted to his bed by debility, not only the pauper who is maintained by the affluent, not only the subject, the low and mean man, who enjoys the protection of him that is higher and stronger; but even the happiest, the freest, the most powerful, ever remains dependent on the love and good-will of others.

The rich needs the labour of the necessitous, and the defence of all, if he would not suffer from envy and malice; the exalted personage would not be exalted, unless others stood below him; the mighty would not be mighty, unless he had dependents who obey him; and even the king on his throne would not be king, were there no people; he would not be powerful, safe, and happy, unless the strength, the fidelity, the obedience, and the love of his people upheld and made him prosper. The benevolent warrior, whose intercession for his sick servant is commended by the Gospel, acknowledged this;

he acknowledged that he would have no authority, unless he had others subject to his orders, and that he could not do without the obedience and love of those who were placed under him. Say then, to thyself, 'I am a man, and in many ways dependent on the help of others: therefore will I be humane, just, kind, friendly; I will strive to gain the love of others, even the love of my inferiors, and the lowest of my fellow-creatures, and all pride, all severity, all contempt shall depart far from me. I am a man, others therefore have a claim upon my assistance. I will then be ready to serve, willing to help, determined to save. No poor man shall intreat me in vain for support, if I can relieve him, no one in difficulty ask in vain for advice, no sufferer implore in vain for consolation, no unfortunate for help. What is in my power I will do, and do with pleasure, for I am a man and therefore bound to love mankind.'

And thus, my brethren, speak to yourselves especially at this time, when so many thousands of our fellow-creatures in our own and in other countries are thrown into the greatest distress by an unusual scarcity. Now is the time to remember, what tie of necessity and mutual help binds rich and poor, high and low, those who command and those who obey; now is the time to shew by our acts, that we have humane feelings, and that we who are more fortunate, have no desire to separate our prosperity from the welfare of our bre-

thren; now is the time to shew that we are worthy disciples of him, whose first and last, whose special command was, "Love one another;" of him, who avowed, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another."

This love will be so much the easier cherished in our heart, if with the reflection, 'I am a man,' we also remember, fourthly, that an end common to man awaits us all, that we are beings devoted to death, but designed for immortality. To put forth blossom and to become dust, is the lot of all who are born of the dust. "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return;" that is a law which has been in force from the beginning unto this day, and will continue as long as men shall be born. Could man indeed ever forget that he is mortal? He cannot possibly forget it, for on all sides the spectacle of death surrounds him; but we must not only *know* that we are destined to death, but also *consider* this truth well, and allow its full influence over us. It is foolish then to shun the thought of death as a thought of terror, and endeavour entirely to forget it in the noisy traffic and the pleasures of life. For unwelcome as this thought may be to the prosperous, it is nevertheless necessary to make ourselves familiar with it, for we are men and devoted to the grave. And whatever pains the voluptuary may take to smother it by the continual intoxication

of sensual pleasure and dissipation, still the thought intrudes in the midst of his joys, 'Thou art a man, therefore thou must die.' Nothing else then remains for us, but to make ourselves familiar with this thought since we cannot divest ourselves of it; nothing else but so to live, that we may be always prepared to give an account of the use of our days on earth; nothing else, but to act in conformity to that saying of a pious writer; "So live, as at the hour of death you will wish to have lived." You are a man, therefore it is your lot to die. Think of this, when husband or wife, children, or friends, are torn from you by death; especially if in the flower of their age. Sorrow certainly becomes human feelings, but in the midst of your grief you must say to yourself, they, whom you lament, were men, they too must be turned into ashes. You knew that they were mortal whom you loved; let it not then surprise you, that they have fulfilled their destiny. Unnumbered millions who lived before us, the greatest and best of men, whose renown will last to the end of time, could not escape death, because they were men; the line of our ancestors, from whose blood we descend, has sunk into dust; even Jesus, the honour and ornament of the human race, submitted to death; and do you expect any other fate? Would you complain that the lot of mortality falls upon yourselves, or on those you love?

You are men, and must therefore come to the end of all men, and be turned again to earth.

But the same reflection which points to the grave, directs us also beyond the grave. 'I am a man, and am, therefore, a being destined for immortality. I have, as man, a rational mind which the brute has not; I can be virtuous, I alone on the earth; I have qualities for immortality, which are a property of man alone; I think of the Deity and immortality, of which no other creature has any conception. Thus I possess faculties above every thing with which I am acquainted, which alone are a sure pledge to me, that I shall continue after death. My foot, therefore, treads triumphantly on the graves of former ages, and the words, I am a man, change the lamentation of the dying into a cry of victory. Yes, because I am a man designed for immortality, I cannot live here always, and my spirit must cast off its earthly covering, as the insect emerges from the chrysalis, that with unfettered wing it may soar aloft to a better world. Because I am a man, and shall be born for a new heaven and a new earth, I must depart from this earth.' And thus for us, who feel that we are men, "death is swallowed up in victory," and "to die is gain;" thus have we "here no continuing city, because we seek one to come." Let then the grief of our hearts be silent, when we stand by the remains of

those we love; let the fountain of tears be dried up at their grave. They were men, and must die from the earth, because they shall live in heaven.

But let this reflection also sanctify our whole earthly existence, that it may accord with the consummation, which awaits us beyond the grave. As we are men, we shall die; let not then our hearts adhere too closely to what is terrestrial, let us not build our happiness upon worldly circumstances; situations and advantages, which are still more transient than life itself. We are men, and called to a higher state of being; let us then live as mortals who shall pass into immortality, mindful of our heavenly calling, that we may be found worthy of the joys of a brighter existence before the Judge of the dead.

Now, Lord and Father of our life! praised be thy exceeding goodness, that thou hast called us into being as men, and blessed us with the hope of immortality. Beautiful is the flower of the field, excellent the beast in his strength and beauty, glorious and wonderful the temple of worlds which thou hast created, a testimony of thy omnipotence, wisdom, and goodness. But more excellent than all thy visible works is man! These are fair and majestic, but they know thee not, as man knows thee. These are not sensible of their existence, but man feels his life and the wonders of thy crea-

tion. These cannot hope nor believe, but to us thou gavest faith and hope, and a view of immortal life. They never see thy face full of grace and mercy, but I, whom thou hast made man, but "I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Amen.

SERMON XX.

BY NIEMEYER.

THE PROFIT DERIVED FROM MEDITATION ON DEATH.

SERMON XX.

THE PROFIT DERIVED FROM MEDITATION ON DEATH.

If perhaps not the smallest interval of time elapses, my Christian hearers, in which new comers are not arriving on the stage of life, whilst those who have occupied it for a longer or shorter period, again quit it, yet it sometimes appears, as if the messengers of death were doubled, and as if he more urgently and unsparingly demanded his ever certain prey. This is also actually the case from time to time, not only when on fields of battle he mows off, as the reaper the ears of corn, thousands in a few hours, or when he knows no mercy in frightful disorders and contagious diseases, the consequence of war or of hostile elements. Even in the midst of peace, and when all seems safe and free from care, he often quickly attacks every age, every rank, every generation, and hurries them, prepared and unprepared, out of the number of the living. And if there are some among them, whom we personally knew, with whom the relations of professional

employment, of business, or friendship, or similarity of years and of destination, made us acquainted, a secret consternation naturally seizes us, and the accustomed proportions of life and death appear to us subverted by a greater mortality.

The last days that have elapsed confirm my observation. More frequently than usual the last pomp of death and the funeral bell, which attend the dead to the common resting-place, have reminded us of the departed. Old, well-known, and proved fellow-citizens have attained their end. To others, who a few weeks ago were strong and vigorous in their calling, before they, before we, apprehended it, their final evening of rest is come. Nor has death spared childhood and the flower of youth. You yourselves, my friends, have followed the coffin of one of your brethren to the grave. How is it on all sides confirmed, "The days of man are but as grass; he flourisheth as a flower of the field. When the wind goeth over it, it is gone, and the place thereof knoweth it no more." Whoever does not pass his days entirely without thought, is not unmoved on such occasions. But how dissimilar are the impressions which they leave behind. That which in one person finds vent in empty unmeaning talk, becomes in another abundant matter for earnest meditation. That which fills one only with anxiety and terror, engenders in another calm resignation. Whilst the former strive to efface the

unpleasant impression, which remembrances and admonitions of their end left in them, in wild dissipation, the latter seek retirement and quiet. That which in the one case leads to the undervaluing of an uncertain existence, heightens in the other the sense of the value of every hour. It strengthens the resolution to exert all the faculties in useful activity, " while it is day." And if, lastly, but faint praise or unjust blame is commonly heard at the grave of the dead, yet the better man proves *his own work,* and from self-knowledge proceed justice and fairness. But that the right contemplation of death is a school of wisdom, in this the enlightened men of antiquity agree with the declarations of our holy Scriptures. Which of us does not know those words, so rich in purport, in the 90th Psalm?

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

THESE words shall guide our further meditation. We will, first, call to mind the different impressions, which expected and unexpected deaths create in the majority of men, and secondly, obtain a knowledge of that wisdom, which is the sure profit resulting from a proper meditation on death.

When we dwell, in the first place, on the usual effects which the dissolution of our brethren is wont to produce in the minds of men, we do not speak of those persons, who as declared enemies of all serious consideration, avoid all impressions of this kind by an assiduously nourished frivolity, which they call the wisdom of life, who for the same reason have no other advice to give to the mourner and the wounded in heart, than as quickly as possible to drink oblivion from the drowning goblet of pleasure, and to lose themselves in the dissipations of life. What in the quite uninformed and unthinking is a bluntness of feeling, an insensibility, which neither joy nor pain has power to affect, is in them an artificial indifference, which, however, seldom stands the test of critical moments, since a secret apprehension and fear so often lies concealed under the appearance of undisturbed serenity. We speak not now of these, but of such only as willingly yield to the impressions which the vicissitudes of life make upon them, and in whom the natural feelings are as little deadened, as the expectations of another existence and a higher destination; although neither their mind may have reached that degree of purity, nor their heart that firmness, by which we discern the genuine Christian, the virtuous and the pious. That which is usually first excited by the intelligence of expected or unexpected deaths is a lively sense of our own mortality. He in particular

who discovers a certain similarity of years and circumstances between himself and the departed, so much the sooner finds in every such instance of death a warning of his own. An early decease, therefore, affects most men more powerfully, than the end of one far advanced in life. The order of nature seems violated, the surety of years and of fresh and vigorous life is become unsafe. Apprehension increases, and the most trivial changes and casualties of the body are looked upon as forerunners of imminent danger. Time and diversion are required to give a brighter colour to existence. As if any death could surprise us, any age were not ripe for death! Ye quickly alarmed and desponding, have ye needed to be especially reminded of that which the experience of all ages, which every view of the graves could teach you;—the arbitrary will of nature, which without rule or fixed law makes leaves and blossoms fall off, and permits but few to become fruit and ripen? Or think ye, that the duration of your life depends on any thing else, than on him, through whom all generations of men dwell on the earth, and who in the immutable councils of his wisdom has provided and predetermined for every one living, how long he shall inhabit it?

Yet frequent visitations of death in their circle make another part of our brethren not so much apprehensive for their own existence, as

colder and more indifferent to the value of life. It appears to them vain toil and fruitless labour, that man should exert himself without knowing how long he shall have the ability, or how much he shall attain. Thus a discontent is engendered, which often breaks out into ingratitude, and indulges in complaints against Providence. To what purpose, they say, should we undertake or aim at any thing great and estimable? To what purpose employ all the powers of the mind, in order to acquire a treasure of knowledge? Wherefore deny oneself enjoyment, in order to attempt what one seldom can accomplish, and what those who come after us so often destroy? Who ensures to us the next hour? And how all projects then crumble to pieces, and all extensive schemes dissolve into nothing! Do not all designs disappear with us, which only a state of longer efficiency could have carried into execution? They who have at least understood how to enjoy their uncertain existence, will then ridicule our zeal and sneer at the simplicity, which, in an enthusiastic excitement or in anxious regard to duty, has defrauded us of the sparing gift of nature. Yes, if death seized only the idle, the unserviceable, who have become a burthen to themselves and others! But these he passes by and spares. These, who seem to have the highest claim to attain the farthest limit, the most excellent, the most necessary in their larger circle of action, and in the smaller one of their fa-

mily, the universally loved, he too frequently tears away in the midst of their days. And this discontent, how easily is it turned into a perversion of mind, which at last imagines that sensual enjoyment alone constitutes life, which, according to an unfortunate, and almost customary mode of speaking, reckons the *measure* of life, the *much* or the *little*, by nothing but the quantity of such enjoyments, and finally does not hesitate to exclaim with those whom the Apostle found among his contemporaries, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!"

Far worthier and more beneficial appears a third effect, which *unexpected* deaths especially work in the mind. Whilst the uncertainty of the hour of dissolution is more strikingly exhibited to the soul of man, he thinks he has not a moment to lose in preparing himself for it. Would that the resolution were always adopted in the sense of the Redeemer, would that he proved himself to have that constant vigilance, which he commends in the "servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching, and in the peaceful consciousness of his fidelity always ready to render an account! But this preparation becomes at one time an aimless neglect of all the business of a man's worldly calling, as if it must necessarily disturb a mind directed to eternal things; again, it is a gloomy withdrawing from all connexions with the world, as if every one of them were an impediment to striving with the

entire soul after the kingdom of God; again, when the loss of one beloved has lacerated the heart, there arises often a brooding and sinking of the soul into melancholy, pardonable indeed in the first moments of grief, but reprehensible when lasting, by which men would honour the departed, and make themselves familiar with the thought of dissolution. Every thing puts on the hue of mourning to those, whom the death of beloved friends so estranges from life. All its relations, all even its purest gratifications, in which others indulge, are shunned or bitterly censured. They are determined to die to the world, that they may live for heaven; but they darken this very heaven, and in their erroneous conceit confound a morbid condition of body and soul with life in God and in eternity. No, my friends, all these are not the impressions from which that wisdom emanates, which is called by our text the fruit of meditation on our frailty and mortality. But it will not be wanting, when reflection on the flight of life and on the irrevocable law, "It is appointed unto men once to die," teaches us correctly to estimate the true import of existence, faithfully to fulfil the duties of each succeeding day, and more and more to purify and ennoble the enjoyment of life on earth. We shall, in the first place, grow wise, my dear friends, through the contemplation of death, the more we learn by it to estimate justly the true import of life. For the decease of our

brethren teaches it us with a loud voice. This reminds us, on one side, of all which is vain and transitory, and teaches us, on the other, to discover what is true and imperishable in it. It reminds us of what is transitory. This voice, indeed, is often scarcely necessary in order to make it manifest, how vain and idle is the turbulent struggling and striving of so many around us after riches, after splendour and honour, after the satisfaction of their always increasing and ever less sufficing wants. How often does one observe in the *living*, what little power that which is their highest wish, and which they set up as their idol, has to fill their vacant hearts, and to afford them what they expected from it! That everlasting restlessness which tosses them about, that early satiety which so soon overcomes them, that depression, that inward cheerlessness in the midst of abundance of possessions and the intoxication of pleasures, sufficiently proves how unsatisfactory their life is to them. But when they are suddenly snatched away from this life, then those uncertain and treacherous things first appear in all their vanity and worthlessness. It is as if there blazed before us, by the light of the tapers which surround their bier, the inscription, "The world with its pleasures passeth away! The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life," all is now at an end, all is vanished like a dream! They who were esteemed happy, the en-

vied, the feared, all their happiness, all their glory is now gone! How desolate and void must their minds feel, which know no other treasures than those which the earth bestows, and of which not one can follow them!

But the contemplation of death brings to our notice also what is *real* and *imperishable*. For if we stand by the grave of those, who early began to distinguish the enduring from the transitory, reality from appearance, though they have been called away ever so soon, how entirely different are our opinions then! Though it were the humblest sphere of action which God had allotted them, yet none of the good which they performed in it is lost. The plans and designs of ambition, of a love of rule, of earthly gain, may fall asunder into nothing, if death interferes with the calculations. Designs for public or private benefit, ideas born in noble minds, nourished by affectionate hearts, and communicated to congenial souls, these remain in the world, whether they are brought sooner or later into execution. They are a seed for posterity which infallibly springs up, which makes the life even of the early departed, even on earth, an imperishable life. Think, my beloved, of the many, the earthly part of whose composition has long since crumbled into dust and ashes, but whose fruitful life still flourishes, as in the freshness of youth, in that which they have thought and done, of

whom we reap what they sowed! Think of those wise men, who have deposited in immortal works, the discoveries of their inquiring minds, and transmitted them to posterity! Think of those good men, who were not weary in well-doing, and by their institutions do not cease to be benefactors of mankind! Above all remember Him, who hath bequeathed to us his disciples the most excellent pattern of a godly life. That which made *this* life illustrious—verily it was nothing after which vanity strives, and in which the corrupt taste of the multitude seeks its supreme good. It was consumed in fatigue and labour, in abstinence, in poverty, in persecution, in griefs of all kinds, and his sun went down at noon. But he has acquired to himself an infinite merit! His life has become the *life of the world.* From its inexhaustible fulness we all derive treasures of knowledge, of truth, of ability unto all good. It is the leading star of the pious in good and evil days. It is the highest and most expressive proof, what consequence man is able to give to the shortest existence upon earth, and that no portion of it which belonged to the invisible world shall ever perish.

Thus, my beloved, meditation on death teaches that wisdom which justly estimates the import of life, and knows how to distinguish the fading from the lasting. But it also teaches us worthily to execute the task of every day, every hour, and thereby

to demonstrate in the conduct the genuine wisdom of life.

A great part of mankind lives far more in the future than in the present, and but too often in a future which never becomes present. This is never more commonly the case, than in times of great revolutions in the external world, when the history of each day bears with it the germs of new, and not to be calculated events. Then fear contends in the soul with hope; then men apply, more than at other periods, every thing that happens to their own fate, and an insignificant and most unfounded tale affords nourishment to the most various passions. Almost every other subject of conversation is banished from society, except the history of the day, and the conjectures and prognostications which cross each other in perpetual contradiction. Every one takes only these thoughts with him into the stillness of solitude, and they frequently disturb his nightly rest. O, ye disquieted and full of anxiety, were the *business of the hour* more important to you, ye would not attempt what ye never can accomplish,—to solve the problem of a future hid in darkness. And if you could accomplish it, what would it avail you? Look around, call to mind the many whom death unforeseen, and contrary to all which is called probability, has removed out of the relations of the earth. What have they now, who, anxious only for future days, and vexing themselves

with what they were ignorant of, neglected the business of the moment, or performed it with divided mind and heart, what have they now gained by all these cares? On the contrary, how many precious hours have they irrecoverably lost! Of all which they so anxiously feared, nothing has befallen them. Of all which they hoped, nothing has been granted them.

O, my friends, there is something far more important in life to execute. The outward vocation, the sphere of action, whether large or small, claims our first attention. A due earnestness and activity therein leaves little time over. A faithful, diligent, prudent, well-ordered, and unwearied industry often requires collectedness of mind, even in unimportant matters. And then how much have we to do for our real self, our internal part! How much to improve in our knowledge, to cleanse in our inclinations, to ennoble in our sentiments. How ought we to respect and preserve all the powers that God has implanted in us! for this reason to be much at home with ourselves, and rather to let the external world, which we cannot alter and still seldomer improve, pass by us unobserved, than that the first duty of our life should remain unfinished. That is the right mode of living to the present; that is at the same time the right provision for futurity. For thus we become qualified to meet all which it brings us, and which lies beyond all calculation; if

joy and happiness, worthily to enjoy it; if affliction and want, firmly to endure it; if anxiety and danger, to oppose to it courage and confidence. And should we depart hence before that future comes, which makes others so apprehensive, then is the treasure won, which accompanies us beyond this scene, and every well-employed hour gained for eternity.

Lastly, the proper contemplation of death is also a school of wisdom, inasmuch as it enlightens us respecting the enjoyment of life; and teaches us more and more to purify and ennoble it. Immediately before the words of our text it is, indeed, asserted that this life, even in its best estate, is but toil and labour. And who can deny that, if we except the untroubled years of childhood and early youth, no other lot has fallen to most men, even those who are called fortunate? But what a difference between those who wisely know how to "use the world without abusing it," and those who, much as they fancy themselves masters of the art of the enjoyment of life, yet by their restless exertions derive gratification but for the moment, a gratification, which they must often repent for years. How they toil, how they weary themselves to obtain what is vain and transient! Even better men, how frequently they deprive themselves of quiet and pure enjoyment, because they are deficient in the true wisdom of life! Yes, my friends, though toil and labour be our lot, nevertheless

there is an enjoyment of life in the midst of labour, and toil itself has its joys. Are they not the reward of difficulties overcome, of final victory after a hard struggle, of the end attained after faithful and indefatigable labour, of renewed strength after exhausting exertion? God has thus provided for elevated *self-enjoyment*, in that he has granted nothing great and glorious to man, which must not be acquired by labour and trouble. And thus, finally, have they enjoyed their existence, as in the worthiest and purest, so also in the most gratifying manner, who have not forgotten that sooner or later they must die, and unseduced by the show and glare of false happiness, have sought first the kingdom of God; who, therefore, while here were already blest in hope, comforted in affliction, joyful and grateful for the smallest gift, inwardly secure in the midst of the disturbances of life, which they could not escape, and, if disposed to be dispirited, remembering that the time was not distant, when they should come to the peace of the people of God, and enter into the joy of their Lord.

Lord of our days! Teach, O teach us rightly to reflect that we must die. So shall we certainly become wise unto all eternity.

SERMON XXI.

BY DINTER.

RESPECT DUE TO OLD AGE.

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To inspire man with regard for his fellow man, was unquestionably one of the principal purposes, which the coming of Jesus upon earth, the whole tenour of his life, and his death for all men, were designed to accomplish:—regard between man and man, one of the most natural and necessary consequences of genuine Christianity. God sent him, whom we reverence as his Son, for whom, to whom? for all, and to all, that bear the name of man. His birth was a joy, a benefit, which should be unto all people. Jesus lived, not in partial affection for his nation and country, but in affection for the whole race of his brethren. "Go ye into all the world," teach all the heathen, invite all to share in the enjoyment of my blessings. His blood flowed at Golgotha for the sins of the whole world. He saw that the Jew despised the Heathen and held him to be unclean. To him he was not unclean. The belief of the Centurion at Capernaum, or of the

Samaritan woman, received his approbation, as well as the belief of the Jew. He saw that the Jew despised the Heathen: but he caused light to be spread abroad from Judah over the globe; Jews became benefactors to the heathen, and are therefore honoured unto this day by all Christendom, which has been instructed by Jews. He saw that the high despised the low: but he preached the gospel to the poor, that they too might be enlightened, and participate in the universal benefit. He places a child in the midst of his disciples, and recommends to them the warmest regard for the rising generation. The true Christian must feel regard towards all mankind. To him all are brothers, children of his Father, the redeemed of his Redeemer, companions in his conflict, fellow heirs of his heaven. The unchristian man only can despise Lazarus because he is poor, or Peter, because he fell. The Christian sees in the heathen, in the beggar, in the deeply fallen sinner, the image of his God. He sees it more developed in one than in another, but he sees in all the image of his God. And when I respect all those, whom God has raised with me to the dignity of man, can I then overlook you, must I not especially distinguish you above all who are worthy of my respect, ye, whose weakness deserves my forbearance, whose experience my attention, whose services my gratitude, and whose near impending exaltation merits my most serious re-

gards; ye aged men, who have numbered many years, and undergone many sorrows, who have performed much, and have drawn near to the accomplishment of the best hopes? regard, my brethren, for every man, especially for every old man, in a greater degree for the good, in a less for the bad; but, regard for every one. May the meditation of this hour awaken it in us all! May we not in vain promise attention to God in silent prayer!

PROVERBS xvi. 31.

The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

THESE words do not require a minute explanation. They demand our reverence for the aged members of our kind, particularly for those who walk in the way of righteousness; those, who by their integrity, their wisdom in life, and the sum of their well-employed powers soar high above the levity and inexperience of youth. Our text for this day will remind us that we owe respect to old age. We owe it on account of its infirmities, its experience, its services, and the near fulfilment of its hopes.

There is evidently a twofold respect,—a respect for that strength and dignity, before which we bow in reverence, and a respect for that weakness, which we approach with caution and wariness, for fear of

doing it an injury. This careful regard we owe to children. Their frame is tender, their health a fragile vessel, their innocence, alas! so easily misled, their yet open heart so easily ruined by pernicious impressions. Old age has much resemblance to childhood. Man declines as gradually as he grew up, till he becomes helpless in body, perhaps in mind also, as he was in the first days of life. The old man has just as little power to protect himself. His body is so susceptible, that the slightest assault can throw him to the ground. Should not that induce me to treat the aged with forbearing regard? If I offend a man of middle age, he will take care that I do not go too far: he has courage, he has strength, he resists me. But the old man has only his tears to oppose to the youth that grieves him. None but a villain attacks such an one, who is not able to defend himself. And who amongst us would be the villain to injure defenceless age? The mind also of the old man is more irritable, more sensitive: bodily weakness and the feeling of increasing infirmities may be the cause of this. Every offensive word, every little slight, every invasion of his property and rights, grieves the old twice as much as the youth and the active man. He looks upon it as an attack, which is the more boldly made upon him, on account of his presumed weakness. The youth has his pleasures, the man his business, which soon divert his thoughts. The

old man, the more he is withdrawn from both, the longer he ponders on every offence. The more he feels his inability to add to his possessions, so much the more every loss afflicts him. To the younger and stronger man an injury is a summons to protect himself and to exert his strength. It causes an excitement in him which is often agreeable: it teaches him, at least, to feel his powers. But to the old man every affront is a painful remembrance of his impotency. What, therefore, is in the younger man scarcely a slight hurt to the skin, pierces cuttingly, in the old man, through bone and marrow. And wouldest thou be one of those who mock at his years? That be far from thee. Dost thou think an old man has done thee some ill which he ought not to have done? Treat him not as the youth, who at all events makes some resistance. Remind him of his faults with forbearance, assert thy rights against him with forbearance; he will not be able to vex thee much more. Age has indeed its own weaknesses. It often makes a person capricious and ill-humoured, like a distemper: in a certain sense it is a kind of distemper. The old man has experienced many unpleasant things, he has been deceived by those whom he trusted, he is, therefore, suspicious. He feels that he can no longer acquire, he is, therefore, so much the more anxious to keep what he has acquired, and verges often on parsimony. Every thing is firmer in his sight, he is,

therefore, less easy to persuade; years make him obstinate. Thinkest thou, thou wilt be less so, when thou art old?

It must be of consequence to us all, that an indulgent treatment of old age should universally prevail; the days will come when we shall wish it to be so. Happy we, if our weakness at that time is not our own fault; for it is natural to esteem a man less, who has debilitated himself by youthful dissipation, or idleness, or by any other means, than one whom nature itself has deprived of his strength. In the former case a tender regard must be somewhat forced, and maintained by principle; in the latter it comes as it were of itself; it lies in the nature of a feeling heart. We owe then, my hearers, this kind of forbearing regard to every aged person, as well to an Eli, who dreamt away his days in slothful indolence, and never once troubled himself about the wickedness of his sons, as to a Simeon, who, in enlightened knowledge, in piety, in directing his views to heaven, was a pattern of good old men. But there is another and deeper respect. It springs from the sense of the qualities which are peculiar to old age, and first from the acknowledgment of its abundant experience. The old man has seen long ago what we have yet to see; he has long since measured out the ways which we have yet to travel through. He drank the cup of pleasure and

tasted its vanity; he drank the cup of sorrow, and experienced its beneficial power. He discerned the truth in the promises of virtue, and learnt the deceits of vice; learnt the high power of the religion of Jesus, which strengthens the weak unto good actions, and leads the ignorant through the devious paths of life, and is his light and his solace in the dark valleys of misfortune. That which the youth knows from the mouth of the teacher, or learns from books, the old man knows more impressively from himself, from the agreeable or painful experience of his own life. He has long observed mankind. He esteemed them good, and he found that they were evil, and often worse than he thought them in the dreams of happy hours. He held them to be evil, and he found such numbers of good persons, even more than Elijah once did, who esteemed all Israel corrupt, and learnt that there were more than seven thousand of a better character remaining. Thus his judgments became grave and mild, more cautious, but more certain than the premature judgments of youth. In the long management of his household he has made experiments, and learnt what is practicable or not. He has gone through wars, and weathered tempests in the midst of wars; he has buried brothers and sisters, parents and children, perhaps wives also; and when the young man talks much, wisely or unwisely, of that

which shall be, the experienced old man speaks with more discretion of that which has been.

Youth, my friends, is great, when it rests on the shoulders of experience, which age has gained, and often dearly enough purchased. Do you feel that Solomon is right, when he says, " The hoary head is a crown of glory ?" Would you lightly esteem a man who has acquired so much experience ? You must advance far before you can come up to him. How much might you learn from him ! How much cause have you to attend to him, when he relates how God has led him, with a father's care, from his youth up, how he stretched forth his hand to him in the hour, when he thought he must perish ; how he has seen the end of the wicked and of the good, and has witnessed the illusions of fortune, the fall of the high and the rising of the low ! When, by his superior judgment he would come to the relief of your imprudence, so that you need not attempt on an uncertainty, what he has already attempted with good or bad success, could you then despise him ? Will he, who has a journey to take, not willingly listen to him, who has already performed this journey ? Will he not gladly learn of him, what he has to do and what to avoid, in order to gain his end in safety ? It may be, that the man advanced in years has not been free from follies : Are we then free ? And did he not, perhaps, be-

come more discreet through errors, wiser through follies, more circumspect through faults? Ah! we are but too ready to think of the youthful errors of the old amongst us, that we may have a pretext for withholding from them our respect. Are we willing that our children should one day treat us thus? In the mean time, that we may hereafter the more deserve a high degree of that respect which is due to age, let us walk through life with reflection. Let us be mindful of God and his ways, mindful of ourselves and the bent of our hearts, and of that which improves or impairs, strengthens or weakens, comforts or disturbs. Let us be attentive to men around us, that we may warn where warning is needful, and inspire confidence, where suspicion ought to be eradicated. Let us preside over our household with care, and acquire knowledge and attainments of all kinds, which will remain to us, when we can no longer be useful to the world by our physical strength. Youth will honour our age, when we can be serviceable to it by our advice and our wisdom. If on the contrary it can point to us and say, 'He went through life without any aim or object, he saw and heard not, he noticed and observed not,' then the utmost regard which will be paid to us will be that which consists in forbearance towards our weakness; the higher respect due to superior judgment cannot be ours. Grey hairs are a crown of glory,

glory which is most surely acquired in the way of righteousness. Righteousness, distinguished integrity, and universal love proceed from purity of heart; and blessed effects result from universal love. The highest honour is due to old age, that has deserved well of mankind. Now the old man's hand rests powerless; but it was not always so; it has rendered services to his family and to his country. How much produce did he elicit from the soil, which was the food of men, and of animals which were again useful to men! How did he embellish nature around him, by his industry!

How has another profited mankind in his apparently unimportant employment! At first an honest servant, a blessing to every household in which he lived: then a conscientious workman, who attended to the business of others with a zeal which could not be exceeded in his own affairs. How many has he served, and for how many years! What a neighbour was this old man! what a friend! and I will add, what an enemy! His household was a pattern of piety and order. How many did his example encourage or shame! What relief he administered to the necessitous in his community and neighbourhood! How he hastened to help where help was necessary! How many tears has he dried up! how many widows and orphans has he comforted!—He had an enemy, a man who sought to embitter his life; he defended himself with vigour,

but he injured not, even when he might. His enemy felt the hand of misfortune fall heavily upon him, and he, the offended, was the first to succour him. He was not faultless, but he strove against the weaknesses of his heart, and was victorious, and ascended from year to year to higher perfection. How often has he reconciled enemies! how much good has he promoted by his counsel and his influence! When this can be said of an old man, O then, who is there that can refuse him his esteem? And if, moreover, this old man were thy father? when to the services he has rendered to the community are added those he has rendered to thee, must thou still be admonished to honour him? to honour *her*, who for thy sake underwent much tribulation, and passed many sleepless nights and still more disturbed days, who cherished thee in sicknesses with unwearied love, and saved thee, when the cold hand of death was extended towards thy cradle? to honour *him*, whose advice guided thy childhood and thy inexperienced youth; who gave thee much good instruction and yet better example; who laid the foundation of thy advancement amongst men; to whom thou owest thy health, possessions, information, and, in part, even thy virtue? Reverently bow thy head before every aged person, whose earlier years were marked by good deeds, and by services done to mankind and to thee. When thou despisest an old man who is a stranger

to thee, thou art ungrateful: mankind is much indebted to him. But when thy father or thy mother experiences thy neglect, what shall be said of thee? thou art then amongst the infamous, one of the most infamous.—'Yes, if the old were all such as they have been just described to me.' But how many such are there! Judge not, that thou mayest not be judged. The old man may have effected much good, not a little perhaps that is so much the more meritorious, because it was unnoticed. And his faults—thou ratest them high, and yet the tear of contrition long since blotted them out of the book in which they stood written before his God, and the exertions of amendment have supplied their place by more praiseworthy actions. But indeed that the respect of the young may one day be willingly paid and abundantly offered to us when grown old, we must now in the years of our strength seek to deserve well of our wives and children, of servants and others under our roof, of the poor and unfortunate, of our family and community, of friends and foes, of all whom our God brings near to us. The flower of esteem thrives only in the sunny warmth of disinterested virtue: it fades in the shade of idleness and vice. "The hoary head is a crown of glory" to him, who by his merits has proved himself worthy of honour.

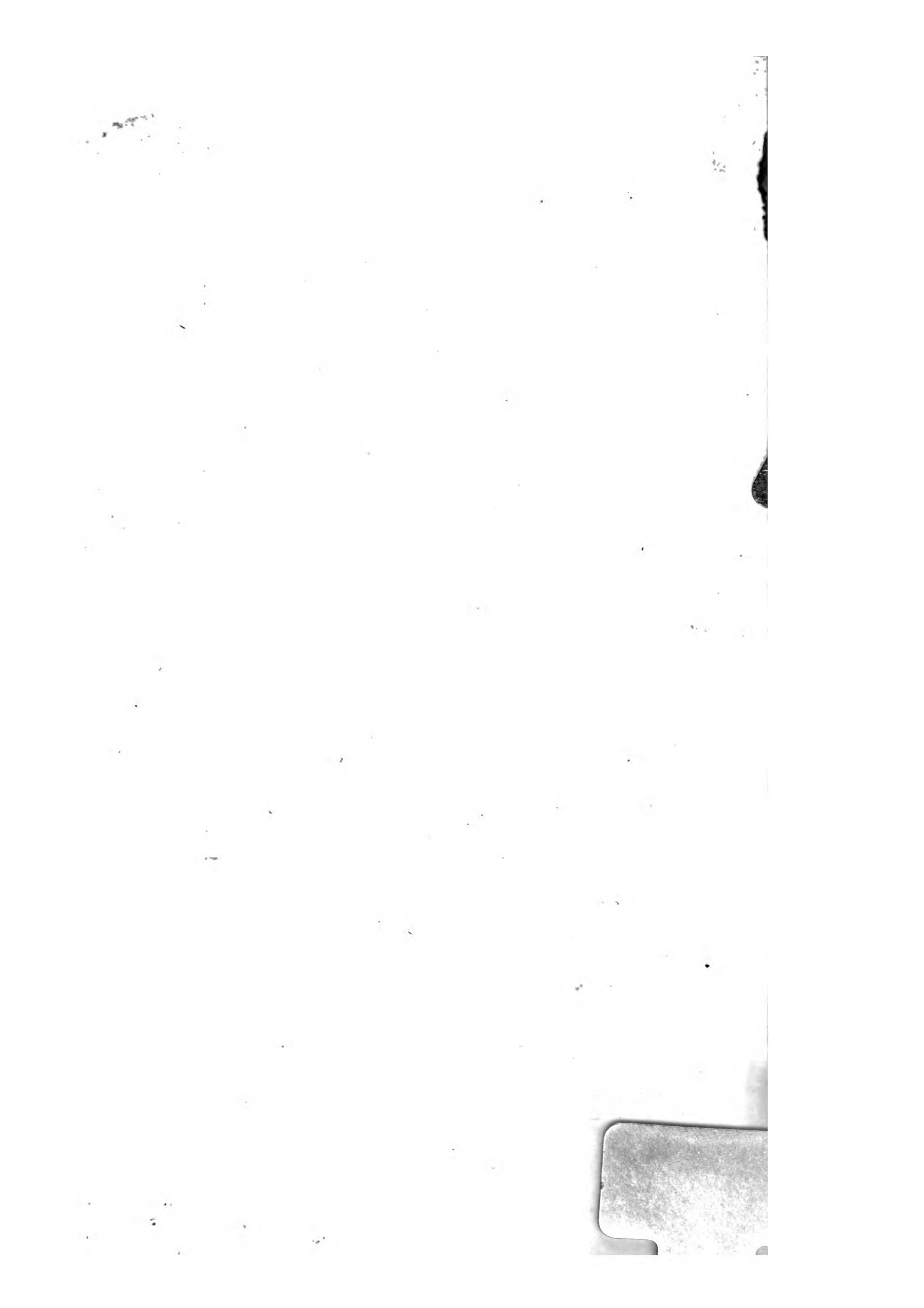
And how highly shall we honour age, when we consider the exalted hopes, to the near fulfilment of which

it looks forward. In every man, O my brethren, we behold the future angel, in the old man one that will speedily become an angel. Thou who with grey head and trembling hands standest before me, soon, soon will thy course be finished. Thou art already bent to the earth, which probably in a few days or weeks will receive thee. Receive *thee?* God forbid! It will but possess thy outward frame, the habitation of thy immortal spirit. Thou thyself soarest then on high to see sublime things, to collect sublime knowledge, and to be perfected in purity, and I, then I shall look up to thee with a longing eye. The weaker thou art, the more must I honour thee. The inhabitant of heaven prepares to quit the earth, where, sent by God, he learnt and performed much and did good, and from whence he now, after his work is finished, returns to his Father. O! I would not be angry with thee for a single hour, thou who standest at the gate of heaven. Thou mightest die! and shouldest thou take with thee these last impressions of bitterness into another world? Shouldest thou complain against me there? That cannot be—the flame of revenge is quenched at the throne of God. But should thy entrance into a better life be attended by any but a happy recollection of me? I will cherish thy age, thou beloved! it is the hour of parting. Thy first song of praise before God shall not be thanksgiving, that he has at length delivered thee from me; if it be possible, it shall be thanks-

giving, that he has connected us together. Thou mayest have the weaknesses of age: but what are they? They are the forgetfulness of one falling asleep, who is but half conscious, and half lost in a delightful dream sees the future smile to him. Soon wilt thou be above, and there behold in a clearer light the wonderful ways of thy God. Then thou wilt no longer feel the affections of sensuality and sin, then thou wilt dwell amongst those, who have long dwelt there. Honour and respect to him, who will soon inhabit a better world! The school-boy will soon leave the school, to enter into the graver occupations of life; the scholars who remain respect him that is so near the end of his time, and look upon him as almost grown up to manhood; and we already view the old man as one of the elect at the fountain of light. If I offend a younger man, I can probably make it good again; if I trespass against an old one,—to-morrow, perhaps, he is no more here, and I cannot requite him! No, aged friend, the close of thy life shall be, as far as lies in my power, a foretaste of heaven for which thou longest. Thou goest before the judge: and shall I by inconsiderate conduct or by ill-treatment provoke thee to sin, before thou goest thither? I will not, I dare not do this. I owe respect not merely to thy weakness, but to thy experience, thy merits, and thy hopes so nearly accomplished.

Perhaps my house may become the quiet abode

of age; perhaps the rising generation will see and learn of me, how old age should be honoured, and will one day practise the same towards myself. At all events I will so live, that my old age, when it comes, shall be truly honourable. I will not make myself old before nature makes me so: I will not desire rest, until nature requires it. I will be useful and live in charity, before old age comes; and when it arrives, I shall reap what I sowed. Then will youth attend to the voice of my experience, and be grateful for my honest exertions for the good of my brethren. Then it will spare my weakness—my strength will be exhausted, but not lost—and when I have long mouldered in the dust, some one of my posterity will stand by my grave, and say, He was a good man. Amen.

THE END.

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