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WHAT IS TRUTH?

The Question Answered

IN

EIGHT DISCOURSES.

BY THE REV. T. WHITE, M.A.

PRICE 2s. 6d.

36.

272.



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EIGHT DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED AT

ST. JAMES'S CHAPEL, MARYLEBONE.

BY

THE REV. T. WHITE, M.A.

INCUMBENT OF THAT CHAPEL, AND RECTOR OF EPPERSTONE, NOTTS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED, BY REQUEST,

A SERMON ON THE PREPARATION OF THE STONES

FOR SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

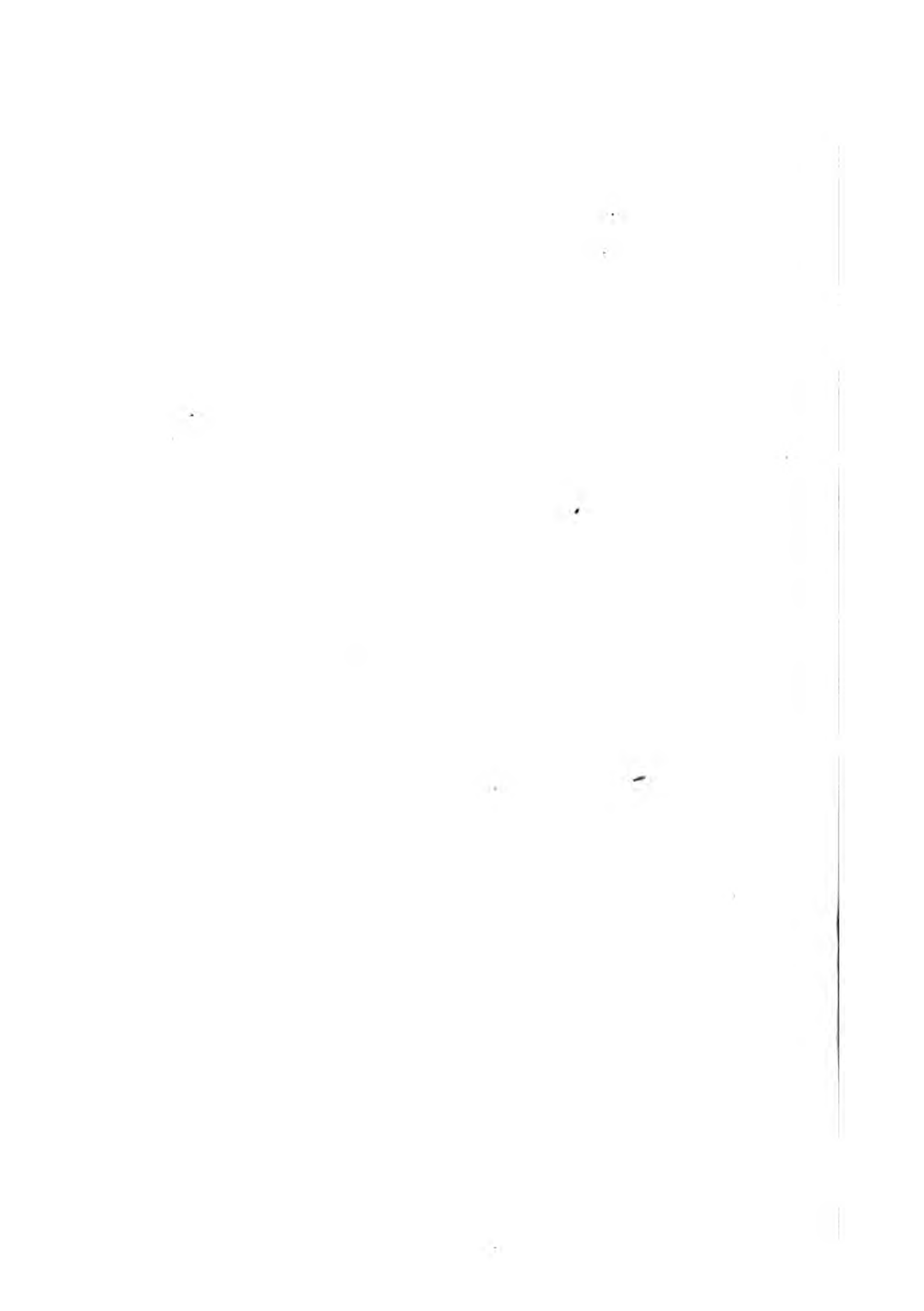


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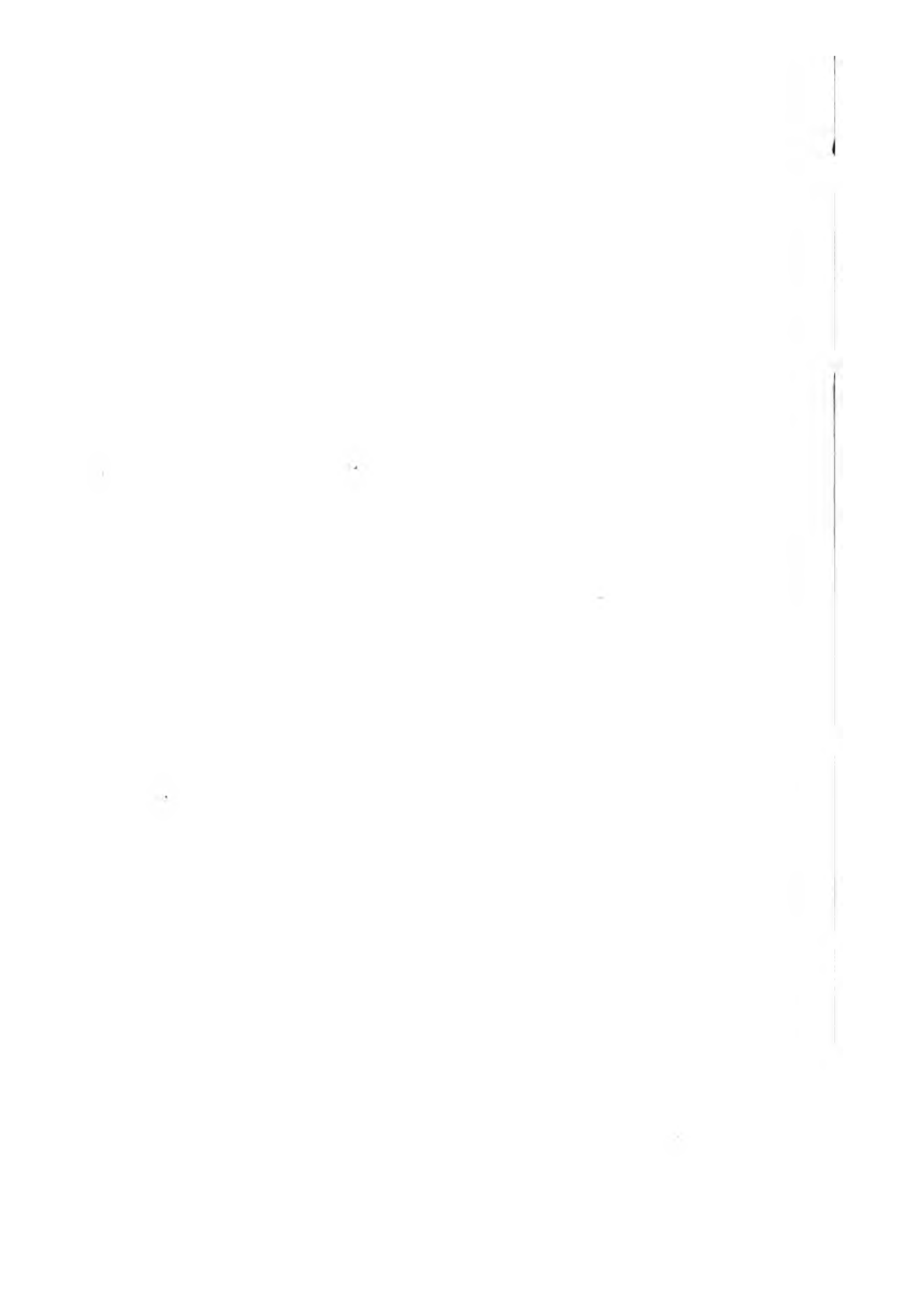
272.



CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE	PAGE
I. WHAT IS TRUTH?	1
II. CHRIST THE TRUTH	17
III. JESUS CHRIST THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE	31
IV. INEFFICACY OF LEGAL SACRIFICES	47
V. THE ROMISH CHURCH NOT CATHOLIC — THE POPE NOT THE HEAD	63
VI. OUR LORD'S REPROOF OF THE PHARISAIC TRA- DITIONS APPLIED TO THOSE OF POPERY	79
VII. THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH PROMISED AS A GUIDE INTO ALL TRUTH	97
VIII. EXHORTATION TO AVOID INSTABILITY, AND MAINTAIN TRUTH IN LOVE	111

A SERMON ON THE PREPARATION OF THE STONES FOR SOLOMON'S TEMPLE	126
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WHAT IS TRUTH?

JOHN, xviii. 38.

Pilate saith unto him—What is truth?

THIS question of the Roman governor has been repeated in our own day, in a manner which would seem to imply that there is no definite standard of truth, nor means of ascertaining it. Yet, surely, whatever excuse may be made for the heathen, who had not the means of ascertaining that standard, none can be alleged for those who possess, but neglect to improve, the advantage of divine revelation. Pilate spoke to One who was both able and willing to afford him satisfaction, and we know not why he neglected to improve the opportunity. Perhaps the impatience of the Jewish rulers, who clamoured for the instant condemnation of Jesus, abruptly terminated the conversation. But we are in very different circumstances; and nothing need prevent us from ascertaining what truth is, and where it is to be found.

It may be feared that too many turn away, like Pilate, instead of devoutly waiting for an answer; because they have no sincere love for truth. When that love has really gained possession of the heart, it is not a dread of labour, nor any slight impediment, that will

hinder the pursuit of it. In these days of liberality, so many new opinions have been disseminated, that the careless have been easily misled; and it is esteemed bigotry and intolerance to censure their levity. To contend for a fixed standard, before which the reasonings and opinions of men should bow down, is deemed superstitious usurpation. Yet it surely must be most desirable to discover such a standard; and most needful for those who believe they possess it, to hold it up before the eyes of all men. Our Lord said to Pilate, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." His ministers, in like manner, have been set apart to bear the same testimony. Having themselves attentively hearkened to the voice of their divine Master, they are bound to repeat his instructions, and enforce obedience to his authority. They are not, for one moment, to admit that there is any doubt concerning the *nature* or the *seat* of truth; but must stand forward as its unflinching advocates, assured that all who are of the truth will hear them—that their cause is just, and will prevail.

Relying, then, on His aid in whose name I minister, I desire, my brethren, this day to excite you to a sincere inquiry after truth. This will be the main object of the present discourse, which I hope to follow up by others, in which the truth may be asserted in opposition to the various forms of error most prevalent and most dangerous at the present period.

Allow me, then, to entreat your attention whilst I endeavour to shew—

I. The great importance of knowing the truth.

II. That it can only be known by the communication of God, in whom it essentially dwells ; and

III. That we ought on that account most thankfully and diligently to study the revelation he has given us.

I. *The importance of knowing truth* must be evident *from its very nature*. Truth is *reality—solidity*—that which indeed exists—that on which we may place our confidence. The Hebrew term for it signifies firmness, or constancy, or a foundation—the Greek, that which is opposed to deceit. Truth is light as opposed to darkness, wisdom to folly, strength to impotence.

“ He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.” How dangerous as well as distressing his condition ! Enemies may surround him, stumbling-blocks may lie in his way, but he perceives them not. His path, uncertain at the best, may lead in precisely the opposite direction to that he wishes to pursue. The various beauties spread over the face of nature yield him neither enjoyment nor information. If such be the inconvenience of physical, how much greater that of *mental* darkness, of that darkness wherewith “ the god of this world blinds the eyes of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them.” If the sight of the eyes be precious, and the light which shines on them instructive and exhilarating, how much more that light which, shining inwardly on the soul, dispels the mists of prejudice and the delusions of misguided fancy, displaying every object in its real form and character. Truth is this light ; and if we are destitute of it, our condition is worse than

that of the physically blind, who can employ their other senses, and grope their way to safety.

Falsehood, be it remembered, is not the mere privation of knowledge, but the prevalence of error. It not only conceals the right, but shews the wrong way. It teaches men to call evil good, and good evil; to put darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. If such mistakes are injurious in temporal, how much more injurious must they be in spiritual concerns! If our religious sentiments be perverted, our moral principles depraved, so that we are led to pursue the very things we ought to shun, and reject those which ought to be cordially embraced, the consequences may be fatal not only to our temporal, but to our eternal interests. The mariner whose charts are incorrect, or whose chronometer keeps imperfect time, may run upon shoals and quicksands at the very moment that he hopes to steer safely into his destined harbour. Serious, indeed, will be his loss; but how much more serious must his be whose *religion* has been superstitious or heretical, and who, when called to the bar of God, finds that he has a lie in his right hand, instead of that truth which would secure his safety!

I have said that truth is *wisdom* as opposed to folly, and strength to impotence. What is speculative wisdom but an acquaintance with truth; and practical, but conduct consistent with it? We know how much science enlarges human power—we know that persons of feeble frame may often, by their mental energy, overcome difficulties, and produce effects, to which the brute strength of multitudes would be wholly unavail-

ing: much more does this take place in moral and spiritual labours. "The wisdom which is from above" unspeakably surpasses in value the highest sagacity that reaches only to the summit of this world's advantages. To be ignorant of truth in things which concern the soul, is not only to forfeit the supreme good, but to incur the extremity of evil. "They that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," are threatened with "everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power." Surely, then, it must be madness to remain wilfully ignorant, with the means of information in our reach.

Will any dare to say that the threatening will not be accomplished? The infidel may *reject*, but he never can *disprove*, the divine declaration. He never can be *certain* that the doctrines he opposes may not be established by the fullest evidence. He cannot, therefore, proceed beyond *scepticism*—at the least a most uncomfortable, and, if Christianity be true, a most dangerous state of mind.

You will recollect that my argument is designed to prove *the importance*, the infinite importance, of religious truth. Few deny the value of an acquaintance with physical and moral truth. But I am contending for that which has its bearing on eternity. O, then, my brethren, let that solemn word awaken your attention! What is eternity? and what have we to do with it? Eternity is unlimited duration, a life which will never end. Can it be a matter of indifference whether there be such a life, or whether it shall be spent in happiness or misery? No man would be indifferent to the

question, whether the remainder of his days on earth should be days of health or of irremediable sickness, whether passed in affluence and comfort or in abject poverty. No man who, by any effort, could determine such a question in his own favour would neglect to do so. Even the most stupid and careless would probably be roused to some exertion. If, then, all take an interest in that condition which a few hours *may*, which a few years *must*, bring to a close, how is it that reasonable beings can be careless about that which will have no termination? Will any of you banish the consideration from your minds, and leave to chance the solution of this momentous problem? O, my brethren, if we *are* endowed with reason, let us use it for the promotion of our best interests — let us see what are our prospects, and what course we are steering — let us inquire whether there is any chart or compass by which our voyage may be guided to a port of safety.

Away with the idle *pretence* (for *argument* I will not call it), that, amidst the many jarring opinions prevalent on religious subjects, we have no means of being sure that we shall adopt the right one. In all *essential* points enlightened and consistent Christians are agreed; the differences are, for the most part, concerning matters of unspeakably minor importance.

Truth is *somewhere*. Whether we know it or not, it is worth seeking; infinitely more worth than that imaginary stone in pursuit of which so many self-styled philosophers have spent their lives and substance. Did such a stone exist, it could not be put in competition with divine truth, which can shew us how to exchange

the dross of earth for the precious things of heaven — the unsatisfying pursuits of time for the solid joys and glories of eternity.

Where, then, must we seek for truth? Man cannot reveal it to us. I answer by asserting—

II. That we can only know it by the communication of God, in whom it essentially dwells.

The seat of truth, its birth-place and its home, is in his bosom. He, the great First Cause of all, the maker and sustainer of all things, must possess it as an inalienable attribute. Nothing can be hid from him. The plan by which the universe was formed was with him from eternity; all the substances that exist, material or immaterial, their relations and mutual agencies, were ever present to his mind; nothing can take place without his observation and permission. That *which has been*, that *which is*, that *which shall be*, he most fully understands: so that he can be liable to no mistake, and meet with no surprise. It is impossible that he should *err*. It is as impossible that he should *deceive*; for error and deceit are inconsistent with the perfection essential to the very notion of a supreme deity. God, therefore, being in perfect possession of *all* truth, must be able to impart it to his intelligent creatures in such measures as they are capable of receiving. Their limited nature will, of necessity, limit that capacity; but to its full extent he must surely be able to replenish them. *From him*, then, as from its living fountain, truth must be sought; and vain will be the attempt to discover it without his assistance. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” If we have fellowship with him

we cannot walk in darkness. As the beams of the sun render discernible all things on which they fall, so will the irradiation of the Divine intellect reveal to intelligent creatures whatsoever it is his purpose to declare. The natural faculties of our minds are his gift, and he has rendered them capable of comprehending a considerable measure of physical and moral truth. By observation, by experiment, by induction, we learn the qualities and uses of material substances. By experience we are enabled to form some judgment, though not in all cases an accurate one, of our relations, interests, and duties in civil and social life. But the things of God we are unable to search out. We can know nothing of them, except so far as he condescends to reveal them. Yet *this* is the most important branch of truth. It is of unspeakable moment to us to know the nature of God, so far as creatures can know it; our relations and our duties towards him; the origin and design of our being; the purposes for which we were created and placed in this world; and the destiny which awaits us when we quit it. Is there any life beyond the present? If there be, how may we hope to secure its happiness?

When we look into ourselves, we find the most astonishing contradictions:—a perception of good, and yet a constant propensity to evil: an ardent longing after happiness, and yet an inclination to those things which we are conscious must be destructive of it: longings and desires which earth cannot satisfy, combined with a grovelling tendency to the things of earth,—a sordid sensuality predominating over higher aspirations. How came we into this state? Could an infinitely wise,

and good, and powerful Being create us in such inconsistency ? or have we degenerated from our primitive condition ? That we have degenerated can scarcely admit of doubt, even in the minds of those who reject revelation. Are there any means, then, by which we can be rescued from this debasement ? Is there any possibility of attaining that purity and perfection which must be the ambition of every generous soul ? Inquiries such as these occupied the minds of ancient sages. But they had no means of obtaining the solution of their doubts. The volume of nature, which they assiduously studied, could not furnish it. They might thence derive sublime and pleasing glimpses of the Divine attributes ; but they could not learn to explain the mysteries of their own condition. They felt that this was not enough ; and longed for a divine Instructor, who might make known the true character of God, our relations to him, our offices in time, our prospects in eternity.

If we, my brethren, had never heard of such a communication, or such a teacher, ought *we* not also to wish for them ? Might we not reasonably look up to God for such a revelation ? Would it not be fair to argue that He who has endowed our minds with such faculties, must be able to provide suitable objects for their exercise ? And might we not hope that he would be willing ? Shall He who gave us the light of the sun to guide and cheer us in our daily occupations, refuse the light of truth to guide us in those unspeakably nobler employments which belong to spiritual and immortal beings ?

That infinite benevolence must be essential to the

Deity can scarcely be denied. The heavens declare not only the glory but the goodness of our God; and the earth bears testimony to it, filling our hearts with food and gladness. He, then, that is so bountiful in inferior matters, shall he not be bountiful in that which most concerns us? Will he, indeed, leave us to grope our way in wretched uncertainty, knowing neither how to please him, nor how to secure our own felicity. He will not—he cannot—*he has not*, my brethren. There must exist *somewhere* a revelation of his will. If we search with sincerity and diligence, we must find, that, from the beginning, communications have been given to men concerning religious truth and duty.

I trust that those who know and love their Bibles will forgive me for what may seem a waste of their time in proving what *they* so fully and joyfully acknowledge. But I am at present engaged with persons who inquire, What is truth? *as if there were no standard* to which an appeal can be made. I wish to shew such persons that there must be such a standard; and that those who are ignorant of it, are ignorant through their own wilful blindness and neglect of inquiry. The argument to be used with them is little different from that which might be addressed to a learned heathen, who, acknowledging the existence of a supreme God, still doubted whether he had given any revelation. I would shew to such a man, that in every age there have been persons who professed to have received such revelation. It was not because God *concealed himself* from the Egyptians and Chaldeans, the Greeks and Romans; but because they did “not like to retain him in their knowledge,” that

they were given over to "a reprobate mind." *All* Noah's children knew the true God; the family of Shem long retained that knowledge; the descendants of Abraham were selected to preserve it—to them were "committed the oracles of God;" and they were so brought into contact with the other nations, that all might have obtained the light of truth, had they been really desirous of it. That light is now diffused around us by the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness; and none who do not wilfully close their eyes, fail to partake the illumination. In this land, most assuredly, if any are ignorant of divine truth, it must be through their own wilful blindness. That there are such persons, however, the revival of Pilate's inquiry makes but too evident; and therefore it is needful to admonish them.

III. I proceed now to the third point which I undertook to establish—that we ought most thankfully and diligently to study the revelation God has given to us.

There is no need to argue this with sincere Christians, such as I trust compose the majority of this congregation. But the sceptic (if any such be present) may be ready to stop me by the objection—"Amidst the many pretences to Divine revelation—the many books which it is alleged have been sent down from heaven—the many contending sects, not only amongst heathens and Mahometans, but even amongst Jews and Christians, how can I have a hope of certainty? You tell me to search for truth; but I repeat the question, What is truth? and how shall I distinguish it from error?"

Unhappy indeed were the condition of mankind, if there were no criterion; and most difficult would it be

to vindicate the wisdom and goodness of God, if we supposed him unable or unwilling to authenticate his testimony. But such is not the case. I hesitate not to affirm, that the book which we call *the Bible*—the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, do contain a revelation of the mind of God, possessing such evidence as must satisfy every candid and diligent inquirer. Compare them with any other volumes which lay claim to inspiration—the Hindu Vedas—the Zend of Zoroaster—the Sibylline Oracles—the Koran of Mahomet; how unspeakably do they excel, not only in sublimity of style and probability of narrative, but in heavenly wisdom and sanctity! Where else will you find such exalted and consistent descriptions of the Divine character—such an explanation of the contradictions in the human heart? The Bible teaches *precisely such a religion as man wants*, but *utterly unlike any that he would have invented*. Those which men have devised are replete with *absurdity, immorality, and cruelty*, and afford no prospects suited to satisfy an enlightened and spiritual mind. But the religion of the Bible is *full of consolation and of peace*. It presents to us a God infinitely worthy of our love and veneration: it teaches us to offer him the most rational and exalted service: it inculcates duties in the highest degree promotive of personal and social happiness: it inspires *a hope full of immortality*. If *the Bible* does not contain a revelation from God, then certainly none has been given. But whence, on that supposition, could it originate? Would wicked men or wicked spirits promulgate any thing so holy? Yet, if it be a forgery, it must be the result of the most

daring wickedness. But it is no forgery. It carries on its face the most indelible stamp of truth; and the more carefully its evidences are examined, the more abundant and convincing will they be found. On those evidences our exhausted time will not permit me to enlarge. But there is one (that derived from the prophetic parts of Scripture) which shines with continually increasing lustre, and might alone be sufficient to establish its Divine original.

Do any, then, still repeat Pilate's question, "*What is truth?*" I answer, it is *the mind of God*. If they ask, "*Where is truth?*" I answer again, *In that blessed book which reveals his mind*, and which is ever most valued by those who most devoutly study it. Let me then press upon all who hear me the obligation of thankfully and diligently studying the word of God. Many, I doubt not, daily perform this duty. They can testify, by happy experience, concerning the light, and joy, and peace, which thence result. They know that the Lord Jesus Christ is their all-sufficient Saviour—that the Holy Spirit is an infinitely powerful Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter—that faith in Christ does purify the heart, elevate the affections, and impart peace and joy, such as nothing earthly can afford. Be persuaded, all of you, to follow their example, and you will share their comfort. Let those who never studied the Scriptures, begin that study from this very day—let those who *have entered* upon it, redouble their attention. Be not deterred by the difficulties which will at first present themselves, especially in the prophecies; but read on with order, attention, and a careful comparison of one

part with another. Put away from your heart and conduct every thing which might make you unwilling to receive the Divine testimony. If you find yourselves reproved—if you find a painful light thrown upon your character—turn not from that light; but turn from the sin which makes the light unwelcome.

Surely, those who profess to be sincere in the inquiry, What is truth? cannot reasonably refuse to pursue such conduct. If you had any earthly good in contemplation, concerning the means of obtaining which, a diversity of sentiment prevailed, you would not on that account abandon the inquiry. If foiled in one direction, you would try another; nor cease until every avenue which might lead to it had been explored. Thus do men act who wish to make discoveries in earthly science. But the science *you* are called upon to pursue is *heavenly*. It holds out, not limited and transient, but *boundless* and *eternal* benefits. It has been most cultivated by the best and noblest of mankind, and has amply recompensed their labours. Make, then, the experiment for yourselves: search the Scriptures, and in them you will find eternal truth—implore Him who is declared to be their author, to assist your examination—be sincere, be humble, be diligent—resolve to follow up any convictions you may receive by correspondent conduct: and most certainly you *will* be successful. The God of truth will reveal himself to you—he will make himself known not only as a just and holy God, but as the Saviour of penitent sinners—their portion—their benefactor and protector—the fountain of their felicity in time and in eternity.

Possessed of this truth, you will find it accompanied by peace that passeth all understanding—light will shine upon your path with continually increasing brightness—heaven will open wide its everlasting gates to receive you, and there, admitted to the immediate presence of Truth itself, you shall know even as also you are known—you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

That such may be the happy portion of all who hear me, may God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

CHRIST THE TRUTH.

JOHN, xiv. 6.

“ I am the truth.”

It was the object, my brethren, of a former address, to overcome that carelessness and indifference with respect to religious truth which appear so prevalent in these days of liberality. That liberality is not content with allowing full toleration to conscientious difference; but deems it uncharitable to contend for any prescribed form of doctrine. It is argued, that amidst such various sects, and such discordant tenets, the truth with respect to *doctrine* must be so difficult to ascertain, that we had better confine ourselves to *practice*. If we do our duty to all around us, and fill our respective stations properly, we may be assured of finding acceptance with a God of mercy.

Such is the language of what the world calls liberality. Now, my brethren, if there were no means of ascertaining truth—if it were quite certain that God had vouchsafed to us no revelation of his will—then doubtless we could not be censurable for adopting the best standard that reason could discover. Even in that case, how few could pretend to have reached, or even endeavoured to reach, that standard! how few could prove

that they had sincerely striven to know their duty, and improved to the utmost the measure of light which they enjoy !

But should it indeed appear that light exists, of which they have not availed themselves—that a revelation has been given, supported by the clearest evidence, and possessing the strongest claims to regard—evidence, however, which they have refused to examine, and claims which they have wilfully disregarded,—would not such persons be without excuse ? Such a question cannot safely be left undetermined. If God has indeed afforded us means of knowing his will, it must be our duty both to know and to obey it.

He who possesses all truth in himself must be able to communicate it to his intelligent creatures. That He has done so in that series of writings called the Bible, has been already maintained ; but, as the time did not permit me to do justice to the subject, I shall now present to you some of the arguments by which that assertion may be supported : I shall also endeavour to illustrate the important declaration of the text (the declaration of Him whom Christians venerate as the Author and Finisher of their faith), in which he claims to be himself *the truth* in the highest sense.

I. It may be proper, before I attempt to establish the position that Christ is *the truth*, to prove that he is *true* ; or, according to his own assertion, “ the faithful and true witness,” the “ teacher sent from God,”—that he is the revealer of the Divine will, as well as the channel of the Divine mercy, to those who, but for him, must be lost and ruined sinners.

This argument has been so often and so ably handled, that it would be scarcely possible to place it in a new light. Were I sure that you would read some of the many admirable and unanswerable volumes which have been written on the subject, I should gladly refer you to them; because, in one short head of a discourse like this, the utmost that can be done, is to afford a glance at some of the leading topics. Yet even such a glance may shew that we are provided with abundant evidence, and have only to claim for it serious and candid examination. That there was such a person as Christ, who taught doctrines of high importance, which soon gained strong empire over the minds of men, and have in every succeeding age possessed considerable influence, will not be disputed. An account of his life and character has been transmitted to us by four writers, who profess to have been personally acquainted with the facts which they record, or to have received them from eye-witnesses.

These writers describe Christ as an eminently wise and holy character, who spake as never man before spake, and wrought such miracles as none before attempted. For though Moses displayed miraculous powers in the presence of Pharaoh—commanded the waves of the sea to divide for the passage of the Israelites, and brought them “water out of the flinty rock;” though Elijah and others performed miracles; yet they avowedly did so by a delegated power. But the miracles of Christ claimed to be wrought by his own. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, cleansed the leper, walked upon the waves of the sea, and recalled the dead from the

grave. His miracles were not only proofs of his authority, but also manifestations of his unspeakable benevolence. Their reality was never disputed by his adversaries, who could only allege that they were performed by the assistance of evil spirits, with whom they represented Christ to be in league. Of all his miracles, the most stupendous, and, at the same time, the most fully attested, was his own resurrection from the grave. That resurrection, and the time of its taking place, had been previously foretold by himself: the care which his opponents in consequence took to prevent any delusion on the subject, proves such delusion to have been impossible. The ponderous stone, the high priest's seal, the guard of Roman soldiers, must have prevented all attempts of his disciples; but nothing could restrain his own power: at the appointed time he rose, and shewed himself alive by many infallible proofs—eating and drinking with his disciples—and, upon one occasion, being seen by more than five hundred witnesses—he ascended to heaven in the presence of many, and appeared from thence to Stephen and to Saul—to Saul, whom he thus converted from a furious persecutor into a zealous champion of the faith which he had been so anxious to destroy. The fact of our Lord's resurrection, with all its circumstances, and the miraculous conversion of St. Paul, have been discussed in admirable treatises, which have carried conviction to the minds of many, and which none have ever refuted.

The more the miracles of Jesus have been examined, the more fully has their reality been established;—the more his character and doctrines have been discussed,

the more apparent has become their claim to universal admiration. If no miraculous attestation had been given to Christianity, its own unspeakable excellence, and perfect suitableness to what we may well believe the character of God, and what we know to be the wants of man—its unspeakable superiority to every system of human invention,—must dispose every candid inquirer to wish and to expect that it may be proved to be of Divine origin.

What other origin can be assigned to it? Could human wisdom have devised so admirable a provision for reconciling the mercy with the justice of God in the pardon of sinners? Does not human wisdom rather revolt from a plan of salvation which requires so much self-abasement, such complete renunciation of that pride and independence of spirit which we all naturally indulge? Yet, what system of doctrines can be more suited to promote the highest attainments in virtue; what more suited to promote purity, justice, truth, generosity, and the tenderest charity? What better calculated to fill the soul with the sublimest devotion, the most entire self-consecration to God, the most kind and beneficent dispositions towards man?

Were it possible that Christianity could be an imposture, it would be the most astonishing and beneficial imposture that ever was devised. But could such sublime and holy sentiments proceed from any mind capable of falsehood? Impossible. Every principle, every precept of Christianity, carries with it evidence that it originated with that "King of saints," all whose ways are "just and true."

The astonishingly rapid and general propagation of Christ's religion can receive no other explanation. How could the son of an obscure carpenter, and a few poor illiterate fishermen, have established a religion which should supersede every other—even the Mosaic, the Divine authority of which it acknowledged, but whose shadows were to give place to its substance? How could they have triumphed over the Jewish priesthood, the philosophers of Greece and Rome, the ministers and the votaries of Gentile idolatry? How? but by the manifest power of truth, and by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, which, even in so licentious a city as Corinth, rendered multitudes, addicted to the basest sensuality, pure, and spiritual, and heavenly-minded? Compare the weapons of Christian warfare with those employed by Mahomet, or any other teacher of false religion. Compare the influence of their respective systems: see what is the character and effect of Mahometanism; what that of genuine Christianity. Alas! I speak not of the spurious Christianity too generally prevalent—I speak not of Christianity as debased by Popish superstition, or by worldly and inconsistent professors of a purer creed; but I speak of Christianity as exhibited in the lives and actions of its first disciples; ay, and as exhibited now in many humble holy characters, who silently tread in the footsteps of their Saviour. They know, by infallible experience, that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation; and those who witness their behaviour must at least confess that in them it is a truly efficacious principle—a principle by which it were happy were all mankind directed.

I would appeal to the most sceptical amongst my hearers (should any under the influence of scepticism be present); what would be the state of mankind if the precepts of the Gospel were universally received and fully acted on? Would there be any more war—any more oppression—any more injustice—any more licentiousness? Would slavery exist? Would abject poverty prevail? Would there be tyranny on the part of rulers? sedition or treason on the part of subjects? Would not all the world form, as it were, one great family, living as children of the same bountiful Father, and rivals only in their endeavours to resemble him, and advance the common happiness? Surely, Paradise would be restored. Surely, any one nation completely governed and peopled by real Christians, would be the most powerful and the most blessed of the nations of the earth. O that Britain were that nation! It would be, were the religion we profess the vital principle of all our actions. With our natural and political, our scientific and commercial advantages—with the influence we possess, and the far greater influence we should acquire,—to what an elevation of greatness, and still more of beneficence, should we not attain!

Alas! that this should be but an imagination—that the real picture should be so lamentably different! But this is because we *are not what we profess to be*. Let us indeed become a truly Christian nation, and blessings more than imagination can conceive will flow down upon us.

But if Christianity be thus excellent, what must its Author be? Can he be other than the source of excel-

lence, the fountain of truth? Can we hesitate for a moment to admit him to be true, whom none could ever convict of falsehood or of sin — whose doctrines have triumphed over the opposition of men and devils—whose declarations are daily receiving fuller attestation? Yes, I say fuller attestation; for all that Christ declared concerning the kingdom which he was about to establish in the world, is either accomplished, or in a course of accomplishment. How soon was fulfilled his apparently improbable prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and her temple! and is not the mysterious vision, which, after his ascension to glory, he gave to his Apostle John, receiving daily fresh light? a vision which will probably ere long be fully understood and universally acknowledged to be an anticipated history of the Church, and a most exact description of the Messiah's kingdom.

I shall not press this part of the subject further; but shall maintain as proved, that Christ is true, and that every assertion made by him is entitled to the most unreserved acceptance.

II. I proceed, therefore, in the second place, to explain the declaration of Jesus—“ I am the *truth*.”

He is so in the highest sense; for to him is given the title of the “ Word, or Wisdom of God.” “ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” He is “ the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” “ In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” “ He is the brightness (the effulgence) of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.”

I fear, my brethren, to attempt any comment on

these most important declarations, lest I should “darken counsel by words without knowledge;” for I feel that they convey ideas far surpassing the grasp of human intellect. Perhaps, therefore, it may be better to let the sacred writers speak for themselves; and only observe, that, as in God truth dwells in its very essence, so by his uncreated and co-existing Word that truth is made manifest to intelligent creatures. All, therefore, who would discover truth must seek for it in him. He condescended to take our nature, not only that he might redeem and purify it, but that he might impart so much of the knowledge of his Father as that nature is capable of receiving. The Evangelist says — “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” The same Evangelist tells us that “the law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Here is a contrast between the condemnation pronounced by the moral law against all who transgressed it, and the grace revealed by the Gospel; between the types also, and shadows of the ceremonial law, and that real substantial truth, which is only to be found in the Messiah. The law was but our schoolmaster, to lead our minds to him. Its threatenings shew our need of his salvation — its ritual in every part prefigured him. He is the true priest—the true sacrifice—the temple—the altar—the scape-goat—the light of the sanctuary—the bread which came down from heaven—the near kinsman, who redeems the lost inheritance. “The blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sins;” but “his blood cleanseth from all sin;”

his meritorious intercession is that sweet incense which makes the service of the saints acceptable; his righteousness affords that clothing in which alone they can be admitted to the Divine presence. I can only glance at these topics, for the elucidation of which volumes have been written, and on which the more we meditate, the more will our souls be edified.

As Christ is the truth of all the types, so is he the substance of all the prophecies. From the first consolatory assurance vouchsafed to Eve, that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head, we have a continued series of predictions, describing more and more fully the character, the offices, the inestimable benefits of the Redeemer.

He is the Shiloh foretold by Jacob—the Star and Sceptre seen by Balaam—the anointed One whom David typified and predicted—Isaiah's Man of sorrows—Zachariah's Branch—and Malachi's Sun of Righteousness. “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

I am thus led to another sense of his declaration, which is supported by the other parts of it; for the whole saying was, “I am *the way—the truth—and the life*. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” He is the *true* way and the *true* life. If any man hopes to gain access to God except by his mediation, he will be fatally disappointed. Whether he rely on his own righteousness, on his repentance, his resolutions of amendment, his prayers, or his alms-giving, all will be vain—Christ, and Christ only, is the door of entrance.

The boasting Pharisee, the superstitious ascetic, will ineffectually seek admission; whilst the poor broken-hearted penitent, who looks to Jesus, shall find him able and willing "to save unto the uttermost all that come to God by him." Such are the declarations of that holy book, which I have already shewn to possess the clearest proof of a Divine original. It declares to us that there is no "salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

This, my brethren, is *the* truth—the truth which, as dying sinners, we are most concerned to embrace. Other truths may be of value as respects our temporal well-being; but this alone can lead us to eternal happiness. It is no matter of indifference or of curious speculation. As Moses said to Israel concerning the *Law*, we can much more emphatically say to you concerning the *Gospel*: "Set your hearts unto all the words which we testify unto you this day; for it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life." Ask yourselves, then, I beseech you, whether you have cordially received this truth. Have you sought and found your Saviour? Can you say of Christ, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire?" "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day?"

If any answer, "I have not believed, nor am I yet convinced;" I would ask once more, Have you carefully and candidly inquired? Have you a real love for truth? "Wherefore," as Solomon says, "is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath

no heart to it ?” You would be offended were this applied to you. You would not bear to be esteemed foolish. Yet can there be greater folly than to disregard that instruction which would make you wise and happy for ever ? Surely it were well to make the experiment ; to examine whether there is any foundation for the Christian hope—any substance in the Christian doctrine. O be persuaded to “ taste and see how gracious the Lord is !” He never has disappointed the hopes of those who have sincerely come to him. He will not disappoint you ; but will give you blessings which will amply compensate any sacrifices you may make to obtain them.

Let none, however, think that a mere profession of faith is all that he requires. He says, “ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” “ Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ?” Surely, if Christ be the truth, we must receive his testimony implicitly, and with a full determination to yield obedience. He has largely described the character of his true disciples, and has promised assistance for the attainment of it. It becomes us, therefore, to shew that we are his genuine disciples by the most scrupulous conformity to his precepts. “ My sheep,” he says, “ hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” If we pretend to hear his voice, and do not follow him, we cannot be his sheep, nor enjoy their privileges. Those privileges are inestimable. “ If any man enter in by me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” “ I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” “ I give unto them eternal

life, and they shall never perish ; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." These are only a few of the " exceeding great and precious promises " left on record for the encouragement of Christ's true disciples. They are given unto us, that, by embracing them, we may become " partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Let us, then, cordially receive them, and yield our hearts to their influence. Let them excite us to set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth. Let our " conversation be in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour ;"—that Saviour who shed his most precious blood for our deliverance from endless ruin—who has left us " an example, that we should follow his steps,"—and who has promised to be " our shield " on earth, and our " exceeding great reward " in heaven.

Believing him to be *the Truth*, let us never be ashamed of him or of his words, in this sinful and adulterous generation ; but faithfully confess him before men, that he may confess us before his Father and the holy angels.

We have many reasons for believing that the glorious day of his second advent is at hand : we know not, however, what trials may take place, what a night of darkness and tribulation we may have to pass through, before it dawns upon us. We certainly are warned in Scripture to expect a season of most severe tribulation ; and, if it should be the will of God that we live to encounter it, we should endeavour to be well prepared, by putting on that whole armour which he has provided for us. Especially should we seek to have our " loins girt about with

truth ; and to have on the breastplate of righteousness, and our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace :” then shall we “in nothing be terrified by our adversaries ; which will be to them an evident token of perdition, but unto us of salvation, and that of God.” Then also may we, with the Apostle, esteem it a gift and privilege, “in behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake.” The season of suffering will be short—the happiness and glory which shall follow it will be eternal. When the God of our salvation is revealed, it will be to the confusion of his enemies and ours ; but it will be to our unutterable joy. He will acknowledge us as his good and faithful servants ; he will completely transform us into his image—“we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” No clouds will in that glorious day intercept the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. We shall know by blessed experience that he is the truth ; for he will not only fulfil, but will surpass our largest expectations.

To Him, therefore, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c.

JESUS CHRIST

THE

TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE.

1 JOHN, v. 20, 21.

“ We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true ; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

THE soul which retains some consciousness of its high original, and aspires to regain primeval rectitude, must ever feel an ardent longing after truth. Such a soul will rejoice to hear of One who is not only capable of imparting this benefit, but came on earth for the express purpose of revealing to us “ the only true God,” whom to know is “ life eternal.” John, xvii. 3.

The Apostle, in the words before us, presents to us this most gracious Instructor and Deliverer—the Son of God, who both makes known to us his heavenly Father, and also secures to us the enjoyment of his favour. St. John does not speak of what he had heard from others, but of what he and his brethren had themselves experienced. “ We *know* (he says) that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may

know him that is true ;” asserting that he not merely is capable of bestowing, but that he actually has bestowed, that knowledge. This was a subject respecting which the sacred writer could not be mistaken. He well remembered his original state of blindness and ignorance. He had felt the beams of the Sun of Righteousness shining in upon his soul. He had received “ the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. iv. 6), and could testify to its transforming efficacy. Others could support that testimony, both by declaring what they witnessed of the grace bestowed upon this favoured disciple of Jesus, and that of which they had been themselves partakers.

Here, then, my brethren, we have additional answers to the inquiries which I have already urged you to make —What is Truth? and Where is Truth? Here, also, we have another witness that “ the truth is in Jesus,” and that he is both able and willing to declare it to us. Having in two former discourses endeavoured to excite you to search for truth in this, the only right direction, I am desirous now to prosecute the subject, by shewing what is truth, in opposition to the doctrines of Arians and Socinians, who deny the deity and atonement of our Lord and Saviour.

The error which I am anxious to expose is peculiarly dangerous, because it subverts *the very foundation* of our hope: it takes away the only assurance we can have that our sins are pardoned, and a way opened for our restoration to the Divine favour.

If Christ be not *God*, as well as *man*, then he cannot be a saviour; for salvation is not a work which even

the highest creature can accomplish. Unless his nature, and consequently his merits, are infinite, he can neither make an infinite satisfaction for sin, nor procure for us eternal blessedness. The subject, therefore, to which I would now call your thoughts is one in which we are all most deeply interested. We are all sinners, both by nature and by practice, and as such have become exposed to endless ruin. The Apostle truly affirms, in the verse preceding my text, "We know that the whole world lieth in wickedness." It did so till the Son of God came to establish a righteous kingdom in the hearts of men. He has begun to establish it, and the work is proceeding; but, alas! we see only the dawn of that glorious day when it shall be completed. In the hope of becoming, in his hand, a humble instrument to carry on that work, I shall endeavour to set forth the instruction contained in the words before us.

I. The Apostle declares, "We know that the Son of God is come." Let us begin by inquiring what the Scriptures teach us by this title, "the Son of God." It is a title which, in an inferior sense, is given to others besides our blessed Saviour. Thus, we read (Gen. vi. 4) of the sons of God taking wives of the daughters of men; which, I apprehend, must be understood of the intermarriage of the descendants of Seth with Cain's unholy offspring. In the book of Job, the elect angels appear to be called by this name. "There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord." At the creation of this world "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Our Evangelist says, in a former chapter, "Be-

hold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John, iii. 1). "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name" (John, i. 12). We are admitted to this blessed relation by virtue of our union with Christ, to whom the dignity more especially and absolutely belongs. He is not merely called the Son, but *the only Son* of God,—"*the only begotten* of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John, i. 14). This title is given to him (as respects his human nature) for several reasons : 1. His miraculous conception. To his virgin mother the angel said, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke, i. 35). 2. His miraculous resurrection is another reason for giving him this title. So Paul argued with the Jews at Antioch (Acts, xiii.) : "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again ; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee." In like manner he described the Gospel, in the opening of his epistle to the Romans, as "concerning his Son Jesus Christ, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 3, 4). 3. But there is a yet stronger reason for ascribing to him this high dignity. As man, he was the

Son of God in a far more exalted sense than any other human being. But before he became man, before his conception in the virgin's womb, he had existed from eternity as the Son of God. I shall not enlarge upon this part of the subject at present, because it will fall under another head of my discourse; but content myself with referring to the first chapter of Hebrews, where the Apostle says, "God hath in these last days spoken unto us *by his Son*, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."

The Evangelist says in the text, "*We know that the Son of God is come.*" He and his brethren knew it by many infallible proofs. "We beheld (he says) his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John, i. 14): and, "of his fulness have all we received even grace for grace" (John, i. 29—34). When John the Baptist bare witness to him as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," he declared that he had seen the Holy Spirit descending on him in the likeness of a dove, and heard a "voice from heaven saying, This is *my beloved Son*, in whom I am well pleased." Therefore he said, "I saw and bare record that this is *the Son of God.*"

The Evangelist John was admitted to peculiar intimacy, as appears from the beginning of this Epistle: "That which was from the beginning, which we have

heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life, declare we unto you." He heard the heavenly discourses—he witnessed the holy life—he saw the stupendous miracles—he beheld on the holy mount the transfiguration, of Jesus—he was overshadowed with the same bright cloud, and heard, like the Baptist, the same heavenly voice: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. xvii. 5). He also saw him alive after his resurrection, and witnessed his triumphant ascension to the right hand of God: nay, he was even yet more highly favoured; for during his exile in Patmos, he was transported in ecstatic vision to the heavenly sanctuary, beheld his living throne, and heard the songs addressed to him by the heavenly host and by the spirits of those who were redeemed from amongst men. Well, therefore, might St. John declare, "*We know that the Son of God is come.*" Well also might he add,

II. "And hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true" (John, i. 18). But for that revelation, he could have had no knowledge of God: as he himself says, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Jesus, in his hearing, said to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father: how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" (John, xiv. 9). Upon another occasion he said, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and 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" (Matt. xi. 27). He *did* reveal the Father to his disciples, not in his person (for that they were incapable of beholding), but in his glorious character and perfections. He revealed his infinite purity, holiness, and justice; above all, his unutterable love, and the manner in which that love could be exercised without derogation from his truth and justice.

III. The Evangelist not only testifies that "the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true," but adds, "We are *in* him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ." We are in the Father, because we are in his Son; being grafted by faith into Christ, who is the true vine, and made "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephes. v. 30). "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God; and we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John, iv. 15, 16). Such is the lively hope to which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us again, "according to his abundant mercy, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter, i. 3). His resurrection is the efficient cause of ours—of ours to a new life in the present world—to an eternal life in the kingdom of his Father and our Father, of his God and our God.

Wonder not, then, to hear St. John declare,

IV. Concerning him by whom we receive these blessings, "This is the true God and eternal life." Yes, my brethren, Jesus Christ *is* the true God; and he

who said, " Little children, keep yourselves from idols," would neither have worshipped Jesus himself, nor encouraged us to do so, if he had not been fully persuaded that He and the Father are one—one being; though distinct in person, yet of the same " substance, power, and eternity" (Art. I.); as is also the Holy Ghost, who claims from us equal reverence.

This is the doctrine which the Socinians, unhappily for themselves, deny — unhappily for themselves; for, as I have already intimated, by that denial they lose all well-founded confidence in the power of Christ to deliver them from eternal ruin. Denying his deity, they very consistently deny his atonement, since the one doctrine cannot be held without the other. But if Christ has not made atonement for our sins, how can we look for pardon — how escape the curse of the violated law — how hope that the righteous Judge of all the earth will acquit us in the day of trial ?

The text bears so decided a testimony to the great truth which I am anxious to establish, that I see not why we should fear to rest our souls upon it: but numerous other passages confirm the doctrine; so numerous, indeed, that the difficulty lies rather in selecting and arranging, than in discovering them. If I have been successful in my endeavour to prove that Christ is true, nay, even truth itself, we must believe his assertion (John, xiv. 9), " He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." " I am in the Father, and the Father in me." (John, x. 30), " I and my Father are one."

The Jews were well aware that the title " Son of God," which Jesus had claimed, was an intimation of

his divinity ; nor did they deny that the Messiah would be entitled to that appellation : but they did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah—they were not aware of his miraculous incarnation ; nor could they, in the humble form which he assumed, recognise that glorious personage whom they had so long expected, and whom, if he had manifested the fulness of his glory, they would have gladly worshipped. Such a manifestation, however, was not consistent with the purpose for which Christ came into the world. Though he was in truth “the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person” (Heb. i. 3), yet he saw fit to veil that glory, that he might “by himself purge our sins :” though “being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” yet he “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Philip. ii. 6, 7). Here, you observe, St. Paul declares him to have been equal with God. So, also, our Evangelist says of him, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John, i. 1). Elsewhere we find it said, that “Christ is over all, God blessed for ever” (1 Tim. i. 1). Paul describes himself as an Apostle, by the commandment of God “our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.” He calls him “God our Saviour,” “God manifest in the flesh.” He speaks of his second coming as the “glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. ii. 3 ; iii. 16). St. Peter addresses those who have “obtained like precious faith, through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter, i. 1). If I go back to the old

prophets, I find Isaiah seeing his glorious throne, and exclaiming, "Woe is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts" (Isaiah, vi. 1—5). With this compare St. John's declaration (xii. 41), "These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." Jeremiah foretells him as a righteous Branch raised up unto David; and adds, "This is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness" (Jerem. xxiii. 6). Time would fail, were I to attempt quoting the places in which divine titles and attributes are ascribed to him. We are told that "all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John, i. 3). He knew the hearts of men, (John, ii. 24; comp. Mark, ii. 8.) which Solomon declares to be the incommunicable privilege of Jehovah (1 Kings, viii. 39). "Thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men." He was able to say, "before Abraham was, *I am*" (John, viii. 58)—taking the title by which the eternal God revealed himself to Moses; and to which Stephen referred when he declared it was he who appeared to Moses in the flame of fire in the bush, and sent him for the deliverance of Israel. When he revealed himself to John in Patmos, it was with this address,—“Fear not, I am the First and the Last. I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Rev. i. 17, 18).

I am well aware that the Unitarians, as they unjustly call themselves, (for we hold the unity of the Godhead as sacredly as themselves,) attempt to evade the force of

these and other passages, by asserting that they are incorrectly translated, and substituting their own version. The most able Greek scholars, however, have shewn their cavils to be unjust, and have proved, both from the idiom of the language, and from the context in which the several texts occur, that they can have no other meaning than that which the general Church has always given them.* It was not till 300 years after our Saviour's time that any sect ventured to deny his deity: his humanity had been disputed; but all the early Christians worshipped him as God equal to the Father. Nor, indeed, was the doctrine of a trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead disbelieved by the early Jews.† It has been abundantly shewn, by an appeal to their oldest writings, that they assented to it, and that the term "Word of God," by which they understood a divine person, was familiar to them. It is true they denied the Messiahship, and therefore the deity, of Jesus; they accused him of blasphemy for calling himself the Son of God, and applying to himself Daniel's prophecy of his coming on the clouds of heaven; but they never denied that the true Messiah would indeed be a divine person. In that blessed day when the veil shall be taken from their hearts, and they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, they shall no longer deny his Godhead, but exultingly exclaim, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us—this is Jehovah; we

* See Bishop Middleton on the Greek Article, and Granville Sharp's Remarks on the Uses of the Definitive Article, &c.

† See Allix's Judgment of the Jewish Church against the Socinians, chapters xvi. xvii. xviii.

have waited for him ; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

I have now endeavoured to explain the Apostle's meaning in the text, and to confirm the doctrine by referring to other passages which seem to me most fully to establish it. Sufficient arguments have, I trust, been adduced to prove that the Socinians must reject or pervert the testimony of Scripture, if they would justify their denial of our Saviour's Godhead. Quitting, therefore, the controversial, I would proceed to the practical part of my subject.

1. Allow me then, my brethren, to press upon you the consideration of God's amazing goodness in sending his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. “Herein indeed is love ; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” We *have* not loved him ; but surely the moment that this great truth is applied by the Spirit to our hearts, it must kindle the flame of love within them. We cannot be so insensible, so dead to every generous feeling, as not to wish that we may be enabled to make a due return for such amazing mercy. The return which God asks is, that we should give up our hearts to him—that we should return love for love. O let us not hesitate to make this consecration of ourselves to him ; let the love of Christ constrain us ; and, as he came to give us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, let us most thankfully receive his instructions.

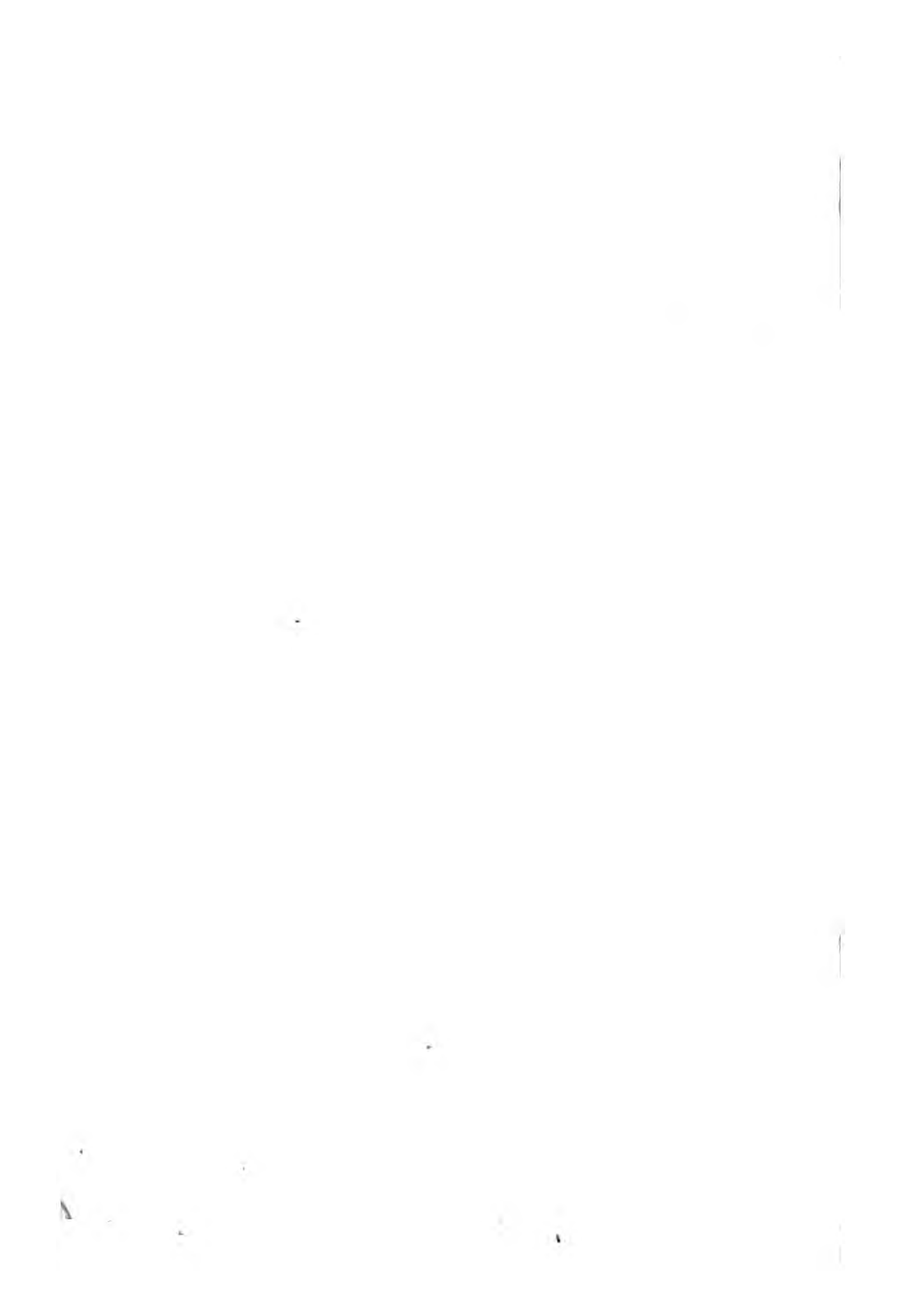
2. Those instructions have been so long familiar to us, that they ought to have produced their due effect.

But have we received from the Son of God that understanding which he is so ready to impart? Do we know Him that is true? Do we know God as he is described in Scripture—a just God and a Saviour—perfectly hating sin, and yet pardoning penitent sinners—keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, though by no means allowing sin to go unpunished? Have we sought and found reconciliation with him through the atoning blood of Jesus? Can we each of us say that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is my God and Father also—I know in whom I have believed; I know that he has adopted me into his family, for he has given me the spirit of adoption, whereby I can cry Abba, Father. O, my brethren, how blessed is it to have this filial spirit; how blessed is it to have the love of God abiding in us! Let the worldling seek for happiness in his low pursuits and gratifications, he never can find it in them. But here is true happiness; here is unpolluted joy; here is that hope which maketh not ashamed, but will be infinitely surpassed when we come to full fruition. If, then, you have not hitherto received this understanding, resolve to seek it from this moment with the utmost earnestness; for, be assured, our Lord has truly said, “This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” When you obtain some measure of this knowledge, you cannot but desire to abound more and more: and it is promised that you *shall* know, if you follow on to know the Lord (Hosea, vi. 3). His going forth is prepared as the morning, and will increase more and more until the perfect day. The best evidence of

your progress will be your advancement in love to God and man; for he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him; and when love is made perfect, you will have boldness in the day of judgment, and not be ashamed before him at his second coming.

3. Let me, finally, exhort you to hold fast the inestimable doctrine of our Saviour's deity. "This is indeed the true God and everlasting life." He could not be *Life*, if he were not *God*: our natural life was imparted by him at the creation—it was recovered by him at his resurrection—it is renewed in us by the regenerating power of his grace—and it will be preserved by him, if we continue stedfastly to cleave unto him. Listen not, then, to those deceivers who would seduce you from this sure foundation of hope and peace. Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering. The Socinian's God is an imaginary deity of his own devising. He is not the God of the Bible—Jehovah Elohim—who has revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in one undivided Godhead. In the name of these divine persons you were baptised, and to each you owe the most devoted service. The Father gave his only begotten Son to deliver you from endless ruin—the Son came into the world to take our nature, to atone for our sins, to purchase for us a title to eternal happiness—the Holy Ghost condescends to enter into our souls, that he may quicken them from their death in trespasses and sins, and make them his living temples. Let nothing, then, move us to renounce the blessings of the new covenant, the faith of the Church into which, at our baptism, we were engrafted; and the inestimable privileges to which

that holy sacrament admits us. Keep yourselves from idols, from all gods of human invention; and never hesitate to testify against all corruptions of that faith which was once delivered to the saints, and for which every Christian ought to contend, not with the weapons of carnal warfare, but with those which the Gospel armory affords, and with that sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Above all, let us endeavour, by the holiness of our lives and actions, to shew that the understanding that we have received is not speculative, but practical; that it is really the gift of the Son of God, conforming us to his heavenly tempers, and enabling us to purify ourselves even as he is pure.



INEFFICACY
OF
LEGAL SACRIFICES.

HEBREWS, x. 4.

“ It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

THE object of the course of sermons in which I am at this time engaged, is to set forth the truth of God, as revealed in his holy word, in opposition to some of those errors which appear most prevalent and most dangerous at the present period. Amongst these, I consider that of the Socinians, who deny the Godhead, and, as a natural consequence, the atonement, of our adorable Saviour, to be one which it is peculiarly needful to combat. I have already endeavoured to present to you some of those arguments which prove the Deity of Christ; and I would now maintain both the necessity of an atonement for sin, and the inadequacy of any created being to make that atonement. With this view I have selected the words of the text, in which the Apostle asserts the inefficacy of those sacrifices which the law of Moses ordained, for this important purpose.

“ It is not *possible* (he says) that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

In examining this declaration, we may consider,

I. The necessity that exists for taking away sins.

II. The inadequacy of the legal sacrifices for that purpose.

III. The efficacy of the true sacrifice, which they shadowed forth.

I. The necessity of taking away sins may be proved by two considerations; the one having respect to the honour of God, the other to the happiness of his creatures.

1. The honour of God is most deeply concerned in the restraint of moral evil. He is the great Lord and Governor of the universe. If he permits sin to prevail unchecked, it must appear that he is either indifferent to it, or unable to prevent it; either of which suppositions would be highly dishonourable to him. If an earthly ruler were to tolerate the commission of crime, he would in fact encourage it, and his government would be a curse rather than a blessing to his subjects. Much more if the great King of kings, the source of all authority, were to manifest no displeasure against sin, we might be tempted to doubt the holiness and rectitude of his nature. But the Scriptures present to us abundant testimonies on this subject. When the prophet Habakkuk expostulated with the Lord concerning the oppression of his people by the Chaldeans, he made this the foundation of his argument:—“ Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. i. 13). So the Psalmist declares,

“Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee” (Ps. v. 5). “Oh, do not this abominable thing, which I hate” (Jer. xliv. 4), was the earnest exhortation which the Lord continually pressed upon Israel. Nor did he testify his hatred of evil only by protesting against it, but also by most awful denunciations of vengeance. He has ordained a law, which requires an entire consecration of the soul to him, and the observation of the most exact truth, purity, justice, and benevolence, towards our fellow-creatures. This law denounces a curse against all who violate its minutest precept. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things” (Deut. xxvii. 26). It is declared, that if any man, “when he heareth the words of this curse, shall bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart; the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven” (Deut. xxix. 19, 20). We need not doubt, therefore, God’s abhorrence of evil, nor can we doubt his power to execute his threatenings. “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished” (Prov. xi. 21). “Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him” (Nahum, i. 6). The destruction of the old world by the waters of the deluge—of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven—of Pharaoh and Sennacherib, with their respective

hosts—the desolation of his own city, Jerusalem—of his own people, the descendants of Abraham,—shew that God has both the power and the will to punish those who rebel against him.

Yet he does, notwithstanding, bear long with transgressors. He endures, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. He allows to all *space*, and gives to all *opportunities* and exhortations to repentance. This forbearance causes some to entertain a doubt of his inflexible determination to punish sin of every kind. But they forget that the impenitent are reserved *for the day of judgment* to be punished—that this world is the scene of *education* and of *discipline*—the next will be that in which God's justice will be fully manifested. Sufficient examples of severity are afforded to prove the Divine hatred of evil ; sufficient patience and kindness is shewn to encourage those who can be persuaded to turn away from it.

2. But here a difficulty presents itself. If *all* sin be hateful to God, and if he who is truth itself has denounced a curse against every violation of his law, how can any escape perdition ? For “ all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ” (Rom. iii. 23). “ There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not ” (Eccles. vii. 20).

Some persons will answer, that repentance and amendment will procure forgiveness. But such an answer is not consistent with that righteousness of God, as a moral Governor, which I have asserted, nor with the express declarations of Scripture. To advert once more to the conduct of an earthly ruler ; would he be

justified in pardoning every offender who should profess repentance? Would not such lenity encourage others to transgress, and thus produce an increase of guilt and misery? Is it not necessary that the authority of the law should be established, and that such punishments should be inflicted as may deter others from transgression? This cannot be denied with respect to human government, and surely it must be no less applicable to the Divine. Repentance cannot undo the evil which has been committed, nor can the most exact obedience for the future compensate for the guilt which has been already incurred. *The honour of God's law must be established*—an example must be given to men and angels of the dreadful effects of its violation. In a word, *punishment* must be inflicted, or else the justice of God is liable to be called in question.

3. And yet it might be hoped that the benevolence of God, so apparent in the works of creation and of providence, would devise some means for the prevention of such awful, such universal misery as must be produced by inflicting the deserved punishment upon all transgressors. Hence arises a most natural inquiry—has any hope been given to man that his guilt may be expiated, and the favour of God recovered? Before we appeal to Scripture, we may briefly notice, that in every age and country attempts have been made to propitiate the Deity by offerings and sacrifices; not by such offerings as might be presented to an earthly king in the way of tribute or compensation, but offerings of a peculiar nature,—offerings which implied the transfer of the guilt of him who presented them to the victim sacrificed in his

stead. Human victims were not unfrequently offered. They were so by the Druids in this very land; and Cæsar says, “the Gauls thought that unless the life of man were given instead of the life of man, the anger of the immortal gods could not be pacified.”* It was customary both amongst the Greeks and Romans, in case of any extraordinary pestilence or calamity, to sacrifice some man, whose ashes were thrown into the sea, with the expression, “Be thou a purification for us;”† and to this St. Paul seems to allude when he says (1 Cor. iv. 13), “we are made as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things:” the word rendered “offscouring” being precisely that used when such sacrifices were offered. The prophet Micah records the inquiry made by Balak, king of Moab: “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Mic. vi. 6, 7.)

That God *might* be propitiated by sacrifices was therefore an opinion universally prevalent amongst mankind; and the more costly the offering, the greater was the hope of acceptance. Whence could this opinion be derived? Whence arose the persuasion that the substi-

* De Bell. Gall. lib. vi. c. 15. vide not. in edit. Delph.—Outram de Sacrif. lib. i. c. 20.

† See Whitby and Doddridge in loc. and Dr. H. More's Theol. Works, book iii. c. 16; also Parkhurst's Lexicon on *περικάθαρμα*.

tution of an innocent victim in the place of a transgressor would obtain his pardon? I see no rational mode of accounting for the fact, except on the supposition that sacrifices were originally of *Divine appointment*.*

That they were so, seems evidently declared in Scripture. Our first parents, after their fall, were clothed by God himself with the skins of animals, which he probably taught them to offer in sacrifice. We know that the *expiatory* sacrifice of a lamb, presented by Abel, was accepted, when the *eucharistic* offering of the fruits of the earth by Cain was rejected. We know that Noah, Abraham, and the patriarchs, offered sacrifices before the law was given; and that the institution was perpetually observed by the descendants of Abraham until the destruction of their temple. In a word, we know that St. Paul said with truth, "almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission."

It seems, then, clearly established, that the necessity of finding some means by which sins could be taken away, and satisfaction be made to the justice of God, was felt in every age, both by Jews and Gentiles; and that however they might hope that their repentance and amendment would find favour in his sight, they also felt that some kind of expiatory sacrifice must be offered before they could look for pardon.

II. I proceed now to maintain, in the second place, the inadequacy of the legal sacrifices for the purpose typically intended by them. This the Apostle distinctly

* See Berriman's Boyle Lectures, Serm. iv.; Shuckford's Conn. of Sacred and Prof. Hist. b. ii.

asserts in the words before us : “ It is not *possible* that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” It must be evident to every reflecting mind, that there was nothing in the sacrifice of an animal victim which could make satisfaction for transgression.* It could not answer the demands of God’s law, which denounced condemnation against the offender. It could not shew forth his glory as a righteous Judge, if he were to allow the guilty to escape because they slew some innocent creature, *whose value could bear no proportion* to the ransom of an immortal soul ; which could give *no consent* to the substitution of itself in the place of the guilty party ; which had *nothing in common* with the nature of him whose person it was to represent, and of whose crimes it was to bear the punishment. It is true, God might consent, and for a season did consent, to allow of this substitution ; but it was always in such a manner as to shew that *something infinitely more important* was intended. The Apostle justly argues, that the “ sacrifices which the Jews offered year by year continually could never make the comers thereunto perfect ; for then,” he says, “ would they not have ceased to be offered ? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.” But *their consciences* were not satisfied, nor *their fears* allayed, if they were really awake to the infinite evil of sin, unless they were able to look forward to that infinitely better expiation which all these typified.

But we not only argue from *the manifest inadequacy*

* See Waterland’s Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, c. ii.

of such offerings to make expiation, or from the *repetition* of them, which shewed that the work was not completed; we appeal *to the testimony of God himself*: “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of lambs, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats” (Isaiah, l. 11). So he speaks by the Psalmist: “Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?” (Ps. l. 7, &c.) The same inspired penman introduces the Messiah speaking thus: “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God.” (Ps. xl. 6.) To this we find the Apostle referring in the verses which follow my text, and arguing thus: “When he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure in them, which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Heb. x. 8—10.)

III. We are naturally led by this argument to the *third* particular proposed for consideration: *the efficacy*

of the true sacrifice, which those ordained by the law shadowed forth.

The object was “ *to take away sins* ;” that is, to take away *the dishonour* which they had cast upon the law of God ; the *punishment* due to those who had committed them ; and the *disposition* to renew the offence in those whose guilt was to be pardoned. I have already endeavoured to shew that the justice of God, as the great Governor of the universe, required that the honour of his law should be established, and the penalty which it denounced against transgression enforced. Yet, at the same time, it was eminently desirable that means could be found to accomplish these objects, without involving the whole human race in that endless misery to which their sins had exposed them. But how to accomplish this was a problem which no finite intellect would have been able to solve. The wisdom and the love of God, however, provided the solution, which is thus stated by our Apostle, in the 3d chapter of his Epistle to the Romans : “ By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight : for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets ; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe : for there is no difference : for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus : whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance

of God ; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness : that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Here we find it asserted that the blood of Christ accomplishes that object for which the blood of bulls and of goats was wholly insufficient ; it sets forth the justice of God, and takes away the guilt of man. But how does it possess this efficacy ? If Jesus Christ had been only a man, like those for whom he died, how would he have been capable of accomplishing their redemption ? Redemption signifies a price paid for the deliverance of a captive. How could the death of any single man have been a sufficient ransom for the whole human race ? Even on the supposition of his perfect innocence, and complete performance of every part of God's law, still he could have possessed no superabundant merit. As a *creature*, he must have owed the most devoted service to his Creator. His obedience might justify *himself* ; but it could never extend to justify *others*. And even if his punishment might have been fitly accepted on behalf of *one* that had transgressed (though it seems difficult to understand how such transient suffering should be put in the place of eternal misery), yet it could not avail for *more than one* ; it could not be considered a sufficient compensation for the guilt of *the whole human race*.

In saying this, I am not intending to speak of the death of Christ as merely the payment of a debt, or as a satisfaction to the vindictive justice of God ; as if so much sin required so much suffering, and that the substitution of his person was to take away the guilt of those for whom it could avail. Far otherwise ; it was an

exhibition of *the infinite love of God*, as well as of his strict and inflexible justice. But I still maintain that the punishment of no one individual man, no, nor even of the highest of created beings, had one been found willing to endure it, would sufficiently have manifested *the infinite evil* of sin, or satisfied the demands of the law, which required full atonement. But Christ was not a creature, except as to his human nature ; *that* certainly was created : but he was infinitely more than any creature ; he was the eternal and only-begotten Son of God. He was God manifest in the flesh. He was that Word which was “ in the beginning, which was with God, and was God.” This divine “ Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” He condescended to become the second head of the human race ; that, as Adam, the *first* head, ruined all his posterity, so he, as the *second* head, might restore that ruin, and regain the happiness which was forfeited by the first transgression. In my discourse on 1 John, v. 20, I brought forward what I would hope were sufficient arguments to prove the Godhead of our Lord and Saviour. If, then, we believe him to be God as well as man, we must acknowledge that this union of Deity with humanity gave infinite value to the person of him in whom these two natures were combined. The blood of Christ was not the blood of a mere man, but of the man united to the Godhead. It was, therefore, a sufficient ransom for the whole of that race with whom he condescended to identify himself. By this union of his nature with ours, gathering us all, as it were, into one body, he made himself responsible for all. He consented to take upon himself

the guilt of all. As the husband becomes answerable for the debts of her to whom he is espoused, so did Christ become answerable for the debts of his spouse, the Church, and by his obedience and sufferings he completely discharged them.

In this mystery of godliness we see a manifestation of *the infinite justice** of God, which is not less affecting than the punishment of the whole human race would have been. Surely, when the Son of God condescended to hang upon the cross, a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men, an exhibition was made of the infinite evil of sin, and of God's determination to punish it, surpassing any other that could have been devised. If God spared not his own Son, when found in the place of transgressors—if, when so found, it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief—how shall any hope to escape who hereafter are found rebellious? Here is an example which must strike terror into the hearts of all who consider it rightly,—an example sufficient to make them tremble at the thought of disobedience.† But here also is a manifestation of the infinite love of God, which, rather than men should perish, provided so astonishing a remedy. Herein, indeed, “is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

* See Owen's Dissertation on Divine Justice, c. vii.; Grotius de Satisf. Christi, c. 4, 5.

† Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. b. ii. c. ix. § 16; b. iii. c. vi. § 4.

Surely, if any thing can teach men to hate sin, and to love their Almighty Benefactor, it must be this amazing, this unutterable mercy. Who can contemplate the Son of God leaving the glories of heaven and the bosom of his Father, taking the form of a servant—taking not only the likeness but the nature and the guilt of man—enduring the punishment of man—bearing on his own devoted head the iniquity of us all;—who, I say, can contemplate this astonishing mystery without the most fervent gratitude, the most devout affections, the most anxious desire to make a suitable return? What expedient could be found so admirably suited to win back the hearts of those who had been alienated from the love of God, and at the same time to remove that despondency which must for ever have prevented any effort to return? Here, indeed, is a plan of salvation which glorifies all the attributes of God—his wisdom—his truth—his righteousness—his love—and which revives the hopes and excites the love of man. If this will not engage us to obedience, surely every other expedient must be vain. No fear of punishment, no hope of reward, will act upon those whom the love of Christ, thus dying for them, does not constrain to live no longer unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.

Yet it is of this blessed hope, of this most powerful motive to obedience, that the Socinians would deprive us. And what have they to substitute? What assurance can they present to pacify the terrors of the broken-hearted sinner—to pour balm into his wounded conscience—to give him the certainty of being at peace

with God, and animate him in endeavours to regain his favour? They have nothing to offer but a description of the Divine benevolence, such as tarnishes his glory as a just and righteous Governor—such as makes sin appear of little danger—such as presents but feeble excitements to gratitude and self-dedication to his service. By denying the Godhead of our Saviour, they diminish, beyond expression, our sense of obligation to him. His amazing condescension and humility—his tenderness, his love, his infinite merit also, which presents the only valid claim that we can urge to the Divine favour—all these are withdrawn; and for what? not that the truth of God may be supported, and the declarations of his word believed, but that the suggestions of human reason may be exalted above the testimony of revelation, and that the clearest declarations of Scripture may be explained away.

Let us, my brethren, beware, lest, being led away by the error of the wicked, we fall from our own steadfastness; let us resolve to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; let us glorify our God and Saviour, who loved us, and gave himself for us.

It will little avail, however, to maintain the most orthodox opinions on this most important subject, unless we prove, by our abhorrence of sin, our devotedness to God, and our benevolence to man, that the truths of which our understandings have been convinced, are, through the power of Almighty grace, indelibly engraven on our hearts. Let it, then, be apparent that the blood of Christ has not only availed to take away from us the guilt of sin, but the love of sin. Let the remembrance of

the infinite price paid for our redemption engage us to devote ourselves without reserve to Him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost we should continually ascribe, &c.



THE ROMISH CHURCH NOT CATHOLIC— THE POPE NOT THE HEAD.

COLLOSS. ii. 18, 19.

“ Let no man beguile you of your reward in not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.”

FALSEHOOD is by no means in all cases the denial, it is more commonly the perversion or misapplication, of truth. Hence, indeed, results its greatest power to injure, because its resemblance to truth gives it currency, and when the error is detected, it causes the truth itself to be undervalued.

We shall see the force of these remarks, if we consider the mischief done to religion by a misapplication on the one hand, and a disregard on the other, of the doctrine inculcated by the text. The Apostle, in the chapter from which it is taken, has admonished the Colossians “ not to be spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” In the verses before us he warns them against the superstitious worship of angels, and other errors arising from being “ vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind.” This would prevent them

from holding fast by the Head of the spiritual body, our Lord Jesus Christ; and the result would be the loss of that heavenly nourishment, which, flowing from him into all his members, causes them, whilst closely knit together, to increase with the increase of God.

We may deduce from this (especially when we compare it with other similar passages*), that the Church is but *one body*, and can have but *one Head*; that, to derive advantage from the Head, we must be knit together with the other members of the body; and that if we are separated from this union, we lose the increase we might obtain, and are in danger of forfeiting our reward. That Christ is “the Head of the body, the Church,” is distinctly asserted both in the foregoing and present chapters, as well as in the Epistles to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and many other places. That if separated from Christ we can do nothing good, he himself most distinctly declares. (John, xv. 5.) It follows, therefore, that whosoever, by heresy or schism, is detached from the body of Christ, incurs serious evil in the present life, and is exposed to eternal ruin in the next. These great and important truths have been grossly perverted by the Church of Rome, and have in consequence been too little regarded by many, who, not content with renouncing her errors, have also forsaken the primitive form of discipline and worship, which, though she had corrupted, she had not wholly destroyed.

It will be the main object of this discourse to shew the fallacy of those arguments by which the Church of

* Rom. xii. 5; 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13; Ephes. ii. 16—22, iv. 4—6, 15.

Rome attempts to establish the charge of schism against us, on account of our renouncing the errors with which she has deformed the face of pure Christianity. It will be another object, if time permit, to prove that the pleas by which we justify our separation cannot be fairly urged by those who have withdrawn from our communion.

The supporters of papal authority maintain, not only that there is only one true Catholic and Apostolic Church, for in this we agree with them, but that the Romish is that Church, and that all who quit her pale are schismatics, and consequently in danger of forfeiting salvation. They assert also, that the Pope, as Christ's vicar upon earth, is the head of the Church, and that all who do not preserve communion with him, and submit to his authority, are divided from the head, and forfeit all his benefits. If these two suppositions can be proved untenable, we shall subvert the whole foundation of Romish error. May He, therefore, who is indeed the Head of the Church, assist us by his Spirit in that endeavour, which has in view the advancement of his glory, and the true interest of his believing people.

I. The first position to be considered is, that the Church of Rome is *the one Catholic and Apostolic Church*, and that all Christians are bound to unite themselves to her communion. Now, this position cannot be supported by any scriptural evidence. That "there is one body and one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism," we readily admit; and that Christ "is the Head of the body, the Church," by God's express appointment, we

know to be declared by the Apostle. But what Church did he mean when he held this language? Was it the society of Christians in some particular city, and under the guidance of one ecclesiastical ruler; or was it "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven"—the whole company of God's elect, from the foundation of the world even to the very last convert which shall be admitted into its society? The latter most undoubtedly; for God has revealed his purpose, "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and in earth." God "created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God; according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The term *Church* is applied in Scripture to the believing members of a single family. Thus St. Paul (Rom. xvi.) says, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila . . . likewise the Church that is in their house." So in Coloss. iv. 15, "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the Church which is in his house." The same Apostle addresses an epistle "unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the Church in thy house." Sometimes the word describes a particular society of Christians in any city, as appears from the Epistles addressed "unto the Church of God which is at Corinth"—"the Churches of Galatia"—"the saints in Christ Jesus which are at

Philippi, with the bishops and deacons"—"the Church of the Thessalonians"—and others. The Apocalypse was addressed "to the seven Churches which are in Asia." These and many other passages shew, that though there were many particular Churches, of which several were founded before there was one at Rome, still they were all considered as joint members of one body, and none was described as entitled to exercise dominion over the rest. If any Church could have been authorised to make such a claim, it surely must have been the Church of Jerusalem, which was, beyond a doubt, the mother of all the rest. It was upon the small body of disciples there that the Holy Ghost was first poured out; it was there that the most memorable conversions took place; it was there that the Apostles and elders held their assembly, and from thence that they sent out some of their members (as, for example, Paul and Barnabas, Acts, xiii. 2) to the "work unto which the Lord called them." Thither also, when any question of doubt arose, did those who wished for direction resort, as we read Acts, xv., where we are told (ver. 22, 23) that it pleased "the Apostles and elders (assembled at Jerusalem), with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas; . . . and they wrote letters by them after this manner; The Apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia." Throughout the Acts of the Apostles we read of no Church established at Rome, but only of certain brethren who came to meet Paul on his journey thither. No bishop or ruler of that society is men-

tioned ; nor is the Epistle to the Christians of that city addressed "to the Church which is in Rome," but only "to all that be in Rome beloved of God, called to be saints ;" of whom we may well believe that there were many both of Jewish and Gentile origin, who, having been at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, or having been since converted, had established themselves in that great metropolis of the empire before any regular Christian teacher had visited it. This, indeed, may be inferred from St. Paul's earnest desire to visit them, "that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift, to the end that they might be established."

The unity of the Church, then, did not consist in the subjection of all the various societies of believers to one human head, but in their being "called in one hope of their calling, having one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all ;" and having received the grace of the same Holy Spirit, by whom all, whether Jews or Gentiles, "are builded together, for an habitation of the living God." Of this unity we partake with them ; we believe in the same Lord ; we hold the same articles of faith ; we are, like them, baptised in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; and though we possess not the same spiritual gifts which were conferred on the first believers, still, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we hold fast to our one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and derive all our consolation and support from him.

II. But the advocates of the Romish Church assert that this is not sufficient. They maintain that our

blessed Lord appointed the Apostle Peter to be the foundation on which the Church was to be erected; that he gave to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and that he, having been the first bishop of Rome, bequeathed his authority to the Pope, his successor, with whom all Christians are in consequence bound to hold communion. If we ask for scriptural evidence to support this doctrine, they allege the words of our Lord recorded Matt. xvi. 17—19: “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,” (that is, the doctrine he had just before confessed, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,”) “but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” They also refer to the threefold charge given, John, xxii. 15—17, “Feed my lambs, feed my sheep.”

Now, in discussing the first of these passages, we must inquire what our Lord meant when he said, “Upon this rock will I build my Church.” Did he mean Peter, or the confession which had been made by Peter, “Thou art the Christ?” If we read the words in the original, we shall perceive the difference of gender between the word Πέτρος, which signifies *a stone* (a portion of a rock or building), and Πέτρα, which signifies *the rock* itself. The term “Rock” is exclusively applied to God in Scripture. Thus, Moses says, “He is the Rock, his

work is perfect: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." (Deut. xxxiii. 4.) So, David declares, "Jehovah is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer." "Who is God save Jehovah? or who is a Rock save our God?" (Ps. xviii. 2, 31.) We read in Is. xxviii. 16, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste," or, "shall not be confounded." This passage we find Peter himself applying in his first Epistle to our Lord and Saviour. Peter would never have dared to describe himself as the rock, or the foundation, of the Church; but would have taught, like his brother-apostle Paul, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

It was, then, *the doctrine asserted by Peter, and not Peter himself*, which constituted the foundation. This was held by the earliest and most approved Fathers of the Church. Thus, Justin Martyr* says, "Christ bestowed upon Simon the name of Peter, because, by the revelation of his heavenly Father, he confessed him to be the Son of God." Augustine says,† "The Church

* Καὶ γὰρ υἶδν Θεοῦ Χριστὸν κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Πατρὸς αὐτοῦ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐπιγνόντα αὐτὸν ἕνα τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ Σίμωνα πρότερον καλούμενον ἐπονόμασε Πέτρον.—*Dialog. cum Tryphone*, p. 255. edit. Commelini, 1593.

† "Ecclesia, quæ in hoc sæculo diversis tentationibus, velut imbribus, fluminibus, tempestatibusque, quatitur, et non cadit, quoniam fundata est super petram, unde et Petrus nomen accepit. Non enim à Petro petra, sed Petrus à petrâ: sicut non Christus à Christiano, sed Christianus à Christo vocatur. Ideo quippe ait Dominus, 'Super hanc petram ædificabo Ecclesiam meam:' quia

is founded upon the rock from which Peter derives his name : for the rock is not named from Peter, but Peter from the rock ; as Christ is not so called from the Christian, but the Christian from Christ. Therefore truly the Lord said, ‘ Upon this rock will I build my Church,’ because Peter had said, ‘ Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Upon this rock, which thou hast confessed, I will build my Church. For the rock was Christ, upon which foundation even Peter himself was built ; since ‘ other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.’”

Chrysostom gives this explanation of the passage.* “ Upon this rock, πέτρα. He said not, upon Peter, Πέτρω; for not upon the man, but upon faith in himself would he build his Church. What, then, is the faith? ‘ Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”

If, then, these ancient Fathers may be allowed to decide the question, it must be evident that no argument can be drawn from our Lord’s declaration to St. Peter in favour of the Pope’s supremacy. If that Apostle

dixerat Petrus, ‘ Tu es Christus, filius Dei vivi.’ Super hanc ergo, inquit, petram quam confessus es, ædificabo Ecclesiam meam. Petra erat Christus, super quod fundamentum etiam ipse ædificatus est Petrus. ‘ Fundamentum quippe aliud nemo potest ponere, præter id quod positum est, quod est Christus Jesus.’”—*August. Expos. in Evang. Johannis*, tract. cxxiv. de cap. xxi. vol. ix. p. 572. Basil. 1569.

* Ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οὐκ εἶπεν, Ἐπὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ. Οὔτε γὰρ ἐπὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τὴν πίστιν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ, ἐκκλησίαν ὠκοδόμησε. Τί δὲ ἦν ἡ πίστις; Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος.—*Chrysost. Serm. de Pentecost., Opera*, vol. vi. p. 233. Paris, 1624. Cited by Faber, *Difficulties of Romanism*.

could in any sense be called a foundation, so also must the other Apostles; for we are told of the wall of the new Jerusalem, that it "had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb," Rev. xxi. 14.

With respect to the keys of the kingdom of heaven being given to Peter, by which is understood the power of absolution and excommunication, that power was equally given to his brethren. Our Lord "breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Peter, indeed, was eminent amongst the Apostles; was made the instrument of converting vast multitudes on the day of Pentecost, and afterwards of admitting the first Gentile converts into the Church; but he did not, on this account, claim, nor was he allowed, pre-eminence. St. Paul asserted himself to be "in nothing behind the very chiefest Apostles," and was so far from allowing Peter's supremacy, that, upon one memorable occasion, he, in the presence of the Church, "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed."

But we may carry the argument still further, and assert that, even had Peter been chief amongst the Apostles, he could not transmit his primacy; and certainly that the bishop of Rome can lay no just claim to it. It is by no means an established fact, that Peter ever was at Rome, and certainly not that he was bishop there.* On the contrary, the writers of ecclesiastical

* See Barrow on the P. S. Supp. iii. p. 79. London, 1700.

history represent him to have been bishop of Antioch. The first bishop of Rome appears to have been Linus; the second Anacletus; the third Clemens.* The bishops were inferior to the Apostles; and as St. Peter died before several others (especially before St. John), the survivor must have been superior to any bishop, because the episcopal office was far inferior to the apostolic.

It is vain, therefore, for the Pope to derive his claim to the headship of the Church from St. Peter. He neither succeeded to his apostleship, to his faith, nor to his holiness. Alas! the history of the Church records but too few good bishops of Rome; whilst it relates the enormous vices, the cruelties, the heresies, and even the atheism of some amongst them.† It records also, that there were at one period two, and even three, Popes, each pretending to be the head of the Church, and each supported by zealous adherents. The Greek Church never acknowledged the authority of the Roman bishop; neither did the Syrian, nor the ancient British and Irish Churches. In truth, the pretence to supremacy, which was supported by real or forged edicts of Roman emperors, was at no period universally acknowledged; whilst many of the doctrines of the Romish Church were in all ages opposed by those Christians who adhered to the unsophisticated teaching of Christ and his Apostles.

When, therefore, after the revival of learning in Europe, the invention of printing, and the publication

* Barrow *ut sup.* p. 86.

† Mosheim's *Eccles. Hist.*, Cent. xiv. c. ii. part ii. § 14, 15, 16, &c.

of the Scriptures in the language understood by the community in various countries, the mists of superstition and imposture, which had prevented men from discovering the truth, were rolled away, the foundation on which the chair of the Roman pontiff was established was found on examination to be defective ; a faithful testimony was borne by Wickliffe, Huss, Luther, and others, against the doctrinal and practical errors, as well as the usurpations, of popery ; and from these the reformers separated. But they did not separate themselves from *the Church of Christ*. They cleansed their respective portions of the sanctuary from the idols and abominations by which it had been defiled ; but they did not pull down nor forsake the sanctuary. They held fast the apostolic faith, and in most cases the apostolic discipline ; above all, they held fast by the Head, our Lord Jesus Christ ; and readily sacrificed their lives in defence of the truth which he had delivered to them.

Let not Protestants, then, be accused of schism— for they have not been guilty of it. They have separated themselves, indeed, from the Pope, the pretended vicar of Christ, because they are convinced that he has no title to that office. They have separated themselves from the usurped dominion of the Church of Rome, because that dominion was tyrannical and unjust. But they have not separated themselves from the Church, which is the body of Christ, nor from the Lord Jesus, who is the true Head of the body, and who has evidently bestowed his grace upon them. The separation was, indeed, involuntary on their part, and compelled by their adversaries, who insisted on unlawful terms of

communion, anathematising those who would not worship a consecrated wafer, nor bow down before the material cross, the images of the Virgin and other supposed saints, nor rely on any other intercession than that of our one great Mediator. If there has been schism, the papists are the schismatics. When the Council of Trent excommunicated all who would not yield to its decrees; when Pope Pius IV. added twelve new articles to the Nicene Creed, and insisted that all Christians must believe them, on pain of damnation,—*they* caused the schism, by refusing to hold communion with those who rejected their abominations. Let it, then, no more be asked, Where was your religion before Luther? for we can answer, It was in the Bible; in the Nicene Creed; in the decrees of the first four Councils; in the writings of the earliest Christian Fathers; in the hearts and in the confessions of the faithful witnesses, who preserved one unbroken succession of testimony, in the Syrian, the Bohemian, the Waldensian, and other Churches, during the whole period of papal domination; nay, even in the bosom of the Romish Church some were to be found who held fast all essential truths, and were in a great measure free from the errors which so commonly prevailed. Ours, then, is no *new* religion, nor are we members of any *new* Church; but we hold fast the primitive religion, and are members of the ancient Church, which is built not upon St. Peter, nor his supposed successor, but “upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.” We *do* hold “fast the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having support”

(for so the original word signifies, rather than nourishment) "ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

Whilst we vindicate ourselves from the charge of schism, unreasonably brought against us by the papists, we may, at the same time, protest against those who justify their real schism by our involuntary separation. I feel it needful to do so, though time will not permit me at present to enter at length into the argument. But I hope on some future occasion to prove, that those who refuse conformity to our national Church have no such cause for separation as that which compelled us to quit the Church of Rome. If, indeed, it could be proved that we insisted upon false doctrines, or required unlawful practices; if our worship could justly be called superstitious; or we could be convicted of tyranny over the consciences of men, they might have a better plea for separation. But, whatsoever they may allege, they cannot establish any such charges. We can shew that our doctrine is the same with that of the Apostles and their early followers. The same may be asserted with regard to our general form of ecclesiastical polity. In our worship we have endeavoured to preserve all that was edifying, and to reject that which appeared erroneous in the liturgies to which the people were accustomed, adding such supplications and thanksgivings as were appropriate to particular circumstances and occasions. Separation, therefore, from our communion can derive no warrant either from the course pursued by our reformers, or from any of the terms they have imposed. But if it cannot be proved *necessary*, there can be no

good *excuse* for it ; nor will it be vindicated by those who feel the importance of maintaining “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and charity.”

After all, my brethren, whatsoever be our views of ecclesiastical authority or discipline, the lesson taught by the text must be acknowledged most important by every real Christian. Not to hold the Head—that is, not to have communion with Christ by a true and living faith—is to sacrifice the only well-founded hope of salvation. From whatever else we may venture to separate, there can be no life in us if we are separate from *him* ; he is the source of life, and health, and growth, to all the members of his body. Let us, then, carefully examine whether we are indeed united to him ; and never rest till we are assured of that union by the presence of his Spirit in our souls, and by the transformation of them into his holy image. Let his words be always present to our minds : “ He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for separate from me ye can do nothing.” And let us always remember, that if we would cleave to the Head, we must cleave also to the mystical body ; for the whole must by joints and bands, the bands of charity and close communion, be supported and knit together ; that, by the effectual working in the measure of every part, we may increase with the increase of God.

Cultivate, therefore, I beseech you, fervent charity, as well as lively faith in Jesus. “ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” “ Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of

mind, meekness, long-suffering ; and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called, in one body ; and be ye thankful." Thus shall " we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." To Him, our glorious Head, be ascribed, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, &c.



OUR LORD'S REPROOF

OF THE

PHARISAIC TRADITIONS APPLIED TO THOSE OF POPERY.

MARK, vii. 9.

“ He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.”

OUR blessed Saviour, whose general deportment was full of mildness and tenderness,—who never brake the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax,—yet on many occasions treated the Pharisees with great severity. Though they were the most powerful sect amongst the Jews, and most capable of advancing or of injuring his cause, had that cause depended upon man for its success, yet he never scrupled to expose their hypocrisy. For they *were*, for the most part, hypocrites, making great pretensions of zeal for the honour of God and the observations of his worship, but in reality substituting their own unauthorised traditions for his just and righteous laws.

We have an example of this in the passage from which my text is taken. Though by no means scrupu-

lous about inward purity, yet were they most strenuous promoters of outward cleanliness : to return from market, and eat without previously washing, was in their estimation a grievous crime : the washing of cups and pots and brazen vessels and of tables, was much more insisted upon by them than the cleansing of the soul from moral defilement. The commandment of God, which enjoined men to honour and support their parents, was superseded by the declaration, that, if their substance were made *corban*, which means a thing dedicated to the service of the temple, they were released from the obligations of filial piety. They persecuted Christ, because he performed his works of mercy on the Sabbath as well as on other days. Whilst they scrupulously paid tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, they neglected the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and faith. In short, as whited sepulchres look beautiful without, but are inwardly filled with uncleanness, so they, “ outwardly, appeared righteous unto men, but, within, were full of hypocrisy and iniquity.” Such were the causes of those severe reproofs which Christ, who knew their hearts, so frequently addressed to them. Upon the present occasion, the chief subject of his complaint is their “ making the word of God of none effect through their tradition.”

This, be assured, my brethren, is an offence of no small magnitude. When we consider the infinite wisdom and righteousness of God, we must acknowledge, that every revelation made by him to his creatures must be of the highest importance. It must be perfectly fitted for the end which it was designed to answer.

Nothing, therefore, can be added to it, and nothing taken from it, without the utmost criminality. To *add* to his word, is to intimate that we are wiser than God, and can improve his declarations or injunctions : to *take* from it, must argue a disbelief of his veracity, or a contempt for his authority. Surely such conduct is little short of *atheism* ; for to impeach the *wisdom* or the *truth* of God can hardly be less audacious than to deny his existence : and those do impeach his wisdom or his truth who make his word of none effect. The traditions of men may have *some* weight in matters wherein *man* only is concerned ; opinions and customs which have the sanction of antiquity, or the acquiescence of the wise and virtuous, should not be lightly disregarded ; but where *religion* is concerned, the authority of Divine revelation must prevail over every other. In saying this, I do not mean to impeach those forms of worship or outward ceremonies, which, though not enjoined in Scripture, do not contradict it, but rather harmonise with its general tenour. But I do contend against every doctrine which places the precepts of men upon higher authority than the word of God—which leads to a disregard of that word—which opposes its fundamental doctrines—or imposes a yoke on men's consciences inconsistent with “ the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free.”

Such a yoke has been imposed by the Church of Rome. It appeared so intolerable to our forefathers, that, in order to cast it off, they deemed it necessary to withdraw from her communion. That they were justified in doing so, has been already maintained ; and will

appear more evident, if we contrast the traditions of Romanism with the pure and holy precepts of the word of God. With that word the supporters of tradition do not allow the laity to become acquainted. They discourage as much as possible all translations of the Scriptures into the vulgar tongue, and do not permit any persons to read or even to possess such translations, without an express license from the bishops or inquisitors. Thus, with respect to the greater part of the members of their communion, they make the word of God of none effect. But a very small portion of Scripture is read in public worship, and that in Latin, which the generality do not understand. In consequence, the members of the Romish Church labour under a grievous ignorance of the word of God.

In the meantime, the authority of tradition is strenuously maintained. The Creed of Pope Pius IV., which contains a summary of the doctrine maintained by the Council of Trent, declares, " I most stedfastly admit and embrace the apostolical and ecclesiastical traditions, with the rest of the constitutions and observations of the Church." Again, the same Council of Trent asserts that " all saving truth is *not* contained in the holy Scripture, but partly in the Scripture, and partly in unwritten *traditions*; which whosoever doth not receive with like piety and reverence as he doth the Scriptures, is *accursed*."

Let us now consider some of the chief of those traditions which are asserted to be of so much authority.

I. *The supremacy of the Romish Church* over all others is one of the leading articles. The Creed of Pope Pius IV.,

already cited, because, since the Council of Trent, it is the standard of doctrine, holds this language: "I acknowledge the holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church to be the mother and mistress of all Churches; and I promise and swear true obedience to the *Pope* of Rome, who is the successor of St. Peter, *the prince of the Apostles, and vicar of Jesus Christ.*" Now, if any Church could justly have claimed to be the mother of all others, it must have been the Church of Jerusalem; because there the Christian religion was first promulgated, and from thence the Apostles went forth to evangelise the world. But our Lord prohibited all disputes concerning pre-eminence amongst his disciples. Peter and John allowed themselves to be sent forth to minister by the other Apostles; Paul declared that he "was not a whit behind the chiefest amongst them," and upon one occasion publicly reprovod Peter, which he would not have presumed to do, had he owed subjection to him. *Christ alone is the Head of the Church*; that Church is *one*, howsoever dispersed its members may be throughout the earth; and no one portion of it has a right to claim dominion over another: but in every city or country those who profess the faith of Christ constitute the Church of that city or country, and are subject only to their own lawful rulers—the bishops and pastors who by the providence of God, and by regular ordination, are set over them.

II. As a natural consequence of this assumption of authority, the Romish Church asserts, that *out of her pale is no salvation.* Now, that out of the Catholic

Church of Christ there is no *assurance* of salvation, we may readily admit; but then *the Catholic Church* comprehends *all true believers*, whether in Rome, in England, in India, America, or any other part of the world. Of these, many never were subject to the Church of Rome; and some never perhaps heard of the existence of that Church. But of *the Church, which is the body of Christ*, they are willing members, and rejoice to hold fellowship with him and with each other.

III. Our Lord Jesus Christ ordained but *two sacraments*; *baptism*, by which we are made members of his mystical body; and *the holy supper*, by which we commemorate his dying love, and spiritually feed on his most precious body and blood. But the Papists have added to these five others: viz. *confirmation, penance, extreme unction, holy orders, matrimony*. None of these have the essential character of *a sacrament*, the being ordained by Christ himself: nor can it be said of them, that they are “generally necessary to salvation.”

Confirmation appears to have been a practice of Apostolic institution, and to have been a medium of conveying spiritual gifts to those who worthily received it. But though a lawful and most profitable ordinance, it is not *a sacrament*, because not of Christ's institution. *Penance* may be enjoined by the Church to the offending members of her body, before they are restored to communion; but it is no *sacrament*: neither is *extreme unction*, which, as practised by the Romanists, is a superstitious custom, holding out deceitful hopes of benefit to the departing sinner, and too often creating a false and dangerous

peace, instead of that true peace which can only result from the application of the blood of Christ by the Holy Spirit to the soul.

Holy orders cannot be a sacrament, because not *generally* necessary. It should be *conferred* only by those who are duly authorised, and *received* only by those who are called and sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Whilst, therefore, we deny the *sacramental* character, we agree in maintaining the high *sanctity* of this institution; the danger of all who profane it; and its efficacy in setting apart the ordained to the administration of the word and sacraments.

In like manner, *matrimony* is a holy state of life, and typical of the spiritual union betwixt Christ and his Church, but is no *sacrament*; because, though highly sanctioned and approved by him, it is not generally necessary to salvation. While speaking of this ordinance as a holy state, I cannot but take occasion to testify against the injustice and sin of the Romish Church in prohibiting the clergy from marrying, and encouraging many of the laity also to live in celibacy. The doing this is classed by St. Paul with those "doctrines of devils" which characterise the apostacy of the latter days.

IV. Next to the error of the Papists in *increasing the number* of sacraments, is the still more fatal error of *corrupting the sacrament of the Lord's supper* into an occasion of idolatry. They maintain that by the consecration of the elements, a change, which they call *transubstantiation*, is effected: that is, that the bread and wine not only become spiritually and sacramentally, but

really and literally, the body and blood of Christ. The bread is no longer *bread*, but *flesh*; the wine is no longer *wine*, but *blood*. To use the language of Pope Pius's Creed:—"In the most holy sacrament of the eucharist there is *really* and *substantially* the body and blood, together with *the soul and divinity*, of our Lord Jesus Christ; and there is a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into his body, and of the whole substance of the wine into his blood, which conversion the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation." Now this doctrine is altogether of modern invention. It can be proved not to have been held by the Apostles and first Fathers, nor indeed by any till long after the days of Augustine;* and appears to have been first propagated in the 9th century; but not generally received even in the Romish Church till a much later period.† It never can be cordially received by any man who credits his senses and uses his understanding; and it certainly receives no support from the Holy Scriptures. Our Lord, it is true, said, "*This is my body*;" but he could not mean to teach that he was then holding his body in his hand, or that he brake his body into fragments, and gave it to be eaten by his disciples, whilst he was sitting alive at table with them. He called himself a door, a vine, as well as a lamb and a shepherd; but he never meant the language to be understood in any other

* See Faber's Difficulties of Romanism, book i. c. 4.

† Mosheim dates the first authoritative introduction of it as late as the fourth Council of the Lateran, held in 1215. See his Eccles. Hist. Cent. xiii. p. 2. At the same time the duty of auricular confession to a priest was enjoined by Pope Innocent III.

than a spiritual sense.* He had long before spoken of himself as "*the bread of life,*" and declared, that except men ate his flesh and drank his blood, they had no life in them. But he said at the same time, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." It is evident, therefore, that his language on this subject, recorded by the Evangelist, must be understood not literally, but mystically; as intimating that by the believing participation of this ordinance, we spiritually eat his flesh and drink his blood, and become sacramentally united to him, so as to be "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

What shall we then say of the cruelty of men who persecute to the death those that cannot receive this absurd and unfounded doctrine? Shall we not say, that they make the commandment of God, which teaches us to love our neighbour as ourselves, of none effect by this unjust tradition? And, when they not only require us to believe what no man in his senses can cordially and really believe, that bread is flesh, and wine is blood, but also require us to worship that bread to which they have chosen to ascribe the character of divinity, must we not confess that this is not only an absurd, but a blasphemous tradition? Christ, in conformity with his Father's own command, said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Would he then

* This is well stated by the learned Bertram, in his celebrated letter to the Emperor Charles the Bald, written in the ninth century. This letter was first translated into English in 1549, and was again published at London in 1686.

have allowed a *wafer* to be worshipped ? His Scriptures assure us, with respect to his bodily presence, that it is withdrawn from earth to the throne of his heavenly Father, and that "the heavens must receive him until the times of restitution of all things." How, then, can his body be in heaven and earth at the same time ? how in ten thousand places upon earth at once ? It is true, that he does promise, that where two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them ; but this is by a spiritual, not a bodily, presence. Let us, then, reject the idolatrous notion, that the wafer is his body, and entitled to our worship. Let us spiritually eat his flesh and drink his blood, lifting up our hearts to that glorious throne on high, where he is seated at the right hand of God, and "ever liveth to make intercession for us."

V. Another Romish doctrine is, the withholding the cup from the laity, though Christ has commanded the *wine* as well as the *bread* to be taken in remembrance of him, and the Apostle Paul declares, that "the cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ," of which we are to drink, that we may shew forth the Lord's death till he come.

VI. Before we quit this subject of the Lord's supper, I must protest against the Romish tradition, which asserts, that "in the mass (the name they give to that ordinance) is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the quick and dead," and denounces a curse against those who deny the doctrine. The Scriptures represent him as declaring that his work was *finished* when he died upon the cross, and that by that "one offering he hath

perfected for ever them that are sanctified." But the Papists make a continual repetition of that sacrifice, and thus virtually deny its efficacy. They also sell for money that salvation which is offered to every penitent believer "without money and without price."

VII. From this corruption we naturally proceed to that most dangerous error maintained by the Romanists concerning the great doctrine of *justification by faith*, which Luther truly asserted to be the very article of a standing or a falling Church. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the ancestors of those who so awfully perverted the truth, maintained that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." To the Ephesians he said, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." The same language was constantly held by him, and also by the other Apostles; for though St. James says, "By works a man is justified, and not by faith only," it is evident, from the whole tenour of his argument, that he is speaking of the justification of our *sincerity before men*, and not of *our souls before God*. But the language of the Council of Trent is, "If any one shall say that men are justified by the imputation of Christ's righteousness alone, or by the remission of sins, to the exclusion of grace and charity, which is poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and which is inherent in them, or that the grace by

which we are justified is the favour of God alone, *let him be accursed.*"

In like manner, that Church insists on the merit of good works, and that a man can "really *deserve* increase of grace, eternal life, the enjoyment of that eternal life, if he dies in a state of grace, and even an increase of glory." Nay, she asserts the possibility of doing more good works than are sufficient for a man's own justification: so that he can merit on behalf of others. These works of *supererogation*, as they are called, (these superabundant merits of the saints,) are treasured up, and kept as it were in bank, by the Pope; so that he can dispense them to those whom he favours, and thus supply the defects of their obedience.

This was the doctrine which especially excited the indignation of the reformers, and which they combated with unceasing earnestness. It is a doctrine which we also must combat, if we are determined to hold fast the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, and prevent the foundation of our hope from being destroyed. If, either in whole or in part, we are to be justified by our own works, who can tell that his works are sufficient to gain acceptance for him? Rather, I should say, who can avoid being sensible of such deficiencies, even in his best endeavours, and of such offences in his daily conduct, that, instead of being justified by his obedience, he must be condemned for his disobedience, unless God will graciously impute righteousness without works, and bestow on him the blessedness of those "whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered?"

VIII. This most baneful error naturally paves the

way for the doctrine of *purgatory*; the place (says Cardinal Bellarmine) “in which the souls of those persons are purified, who were not fully cleansed on earth, in order that they may be prepared for heaven, wherein nothing shall enter that defileth.” In this purgatory the Council of Trent declares, “that the souls there detained are helped by the masses, alms, and other good works of the living.” It is easy to perceive, how gainful a doctrine this is to the priests, who pretend that they can, by their prayers and masses, obtain the mitigation and shortening of the pains endured in this awful place of suffering. But, my brethren, the Scripture teaches us that “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin;” that “by him all that believe are justified from all things;” that “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Away, then, with a notion which invalidates the merits of the Saviour; which contradicts the assertion, that “as the tree falleth, so it must lie,” and that there is a great gulf between the saved and the condemned, which cannot be passed over; which denies also that blessed proclamation, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.”

IX. If I were to attempt an enumeration and refutation of all the errors of this corrupt Church, I know not when I could conclude. I must not, however, omit a reference to those concerning *image-worship* and *the invocation of saints and angels*, which are directly prohibited by the two first commandments. Surely, when we are taught to worship the Lord our God and him only, we are forbidden to pray even to the highest of

his creatures. When Cornelius fell at the feet of Peter, he said, "Stand up ; I myself also am a man." When John fell down before the angel to worship him, he said, "See thou do it not : I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." With respect to *image-worship*, it is evident, by the omission of the second commandment from their catechisms, that the papists feel it to be condemned by that commandment ; another instance of their rejecting the precept of God, that they may keep their own tradition. It is true, that they make a distinction as to the kind of worship, and deny that they worship the image, but only him whom it represents ; and sometimes they say, that they only worship before it, that their devout affections may be excited. Even if the more enlightened amongst them do this, the unlearned and ignorant do not. Besides, God has said not only, "thou shalt not *serve* them, but thou shalt not *bow** thyself to them ;" and therefore no excuse can avail for the toleration of such a practice.

Yet if the lawfulness of this, or of any other of the doctrines or practices insisted upon by the Church of Rome, is denied, he who ventures upon that denial is declared a heretic. And though, in the present day, the advocates of that Church disclaim her authority to punish heretics with death, yet is it most distinctly

* The original word in the commandment for *bowing down* is the same as that used Gen. xxiii. 7, where it is said that "Abraham bowed himself to the children of Heth." It was lawful for him to bow to fellow-creatures in courtesy ; but it is not lawful to shew any such mark of respect to an image.

asserted in her catechisms and authorised formularies of doctrine. To the question, "Are heretics justly punished with death?" it is answered, "Yes, because forgers of money, and other disturbers of the state, are justly punished with death, *therefore also* heretics, who are forgers of the faith, and, as experience testifies, grievously disturb the state." As an argument to support this doctrine, the papists quote the example of the condemnation of John Huss by the Council of Constance: but we have no need to go abroad for evidence. The cruel martyrdom of Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, of the hundreds who were burnt in the bloody reign of Mary, shews how the Church of Rome deals with heretics. Nay, even in Ireland, at the present day, her priests excite the people to murder those who distribute the Bible, or dare to oppose their authority.

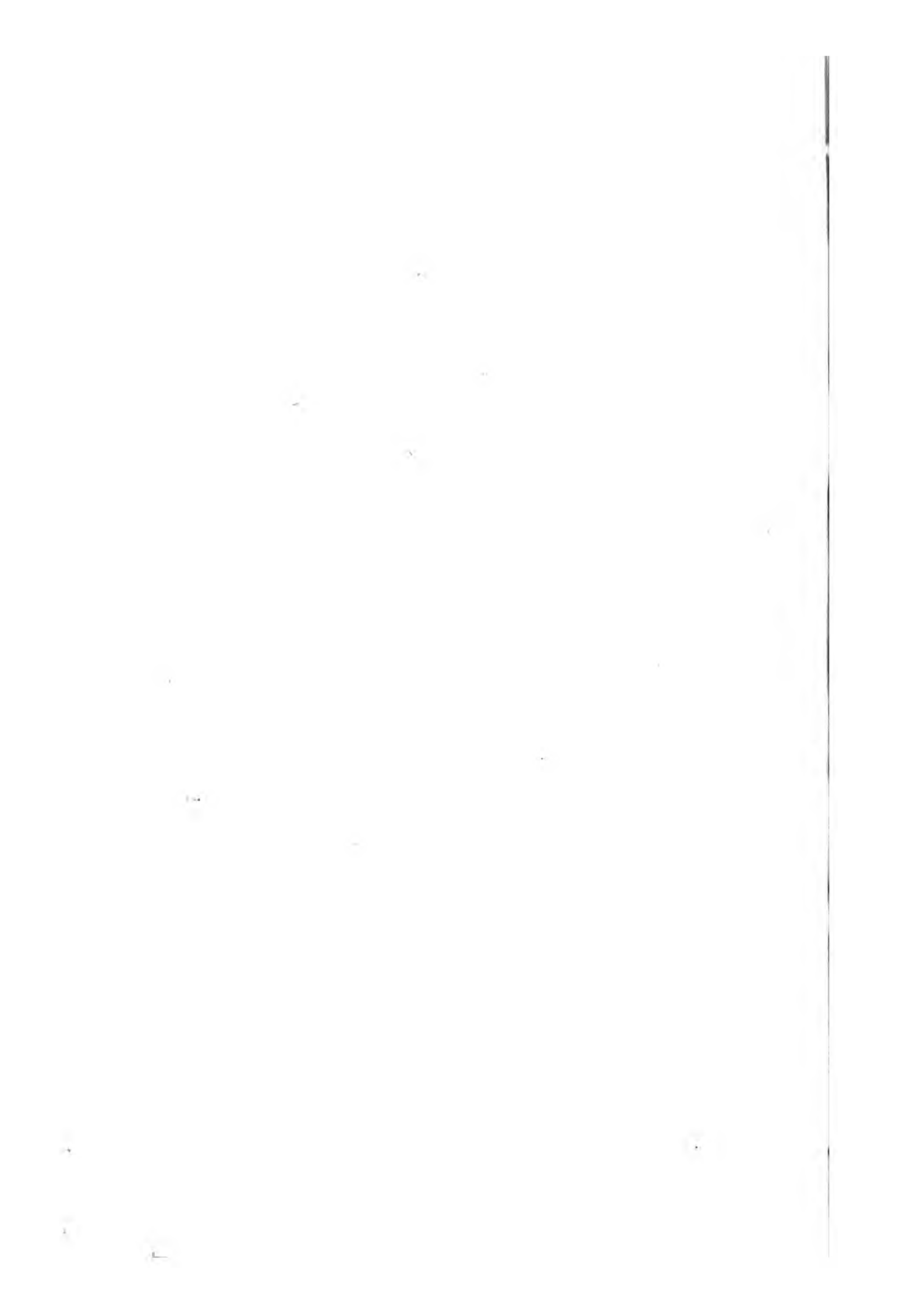
As an effectual mode of maintaining that authority, and fastening the yoke on the neck of all her members, the Romish Church pronounces a curse on all who deny the necessity of *confessing* their sins to the priest alone, and receiving absolution from him. To what an extent of evil this practice is carried cannot be described. Modesty forbids an allusion to the horrible questions put by the priests to females when they come to confession, suggesting the most hateful thoughts even to the purest mind. It is, indeed, made an engine for instilling every kind of evil suggestion, under the pretence of asking whether such an imagination has ever been indulged; and it is manifest, that where no evil intention exists, still, the necessity of disclosing the most secret thoughts, as well as actions, to any fellow-creature,

must be a bondage intolerable to a generous mind, and which must enable the priests to exercise the most baneful tyranny. Thus are they made acquainted with the secrets of families: thus are they enabled to keep all their votaries in subjection to their power. Blessed be God, my brethren, we are not subject to that power. We confess our sins to God alone, and are assured, that if we repent of and forsake them, we shall have mercy.

In conclusion, then, I must exhort you to adore his great goodness, which enabled our forefathers to separate from that corrupt Church, with so much reason called *Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth*. She is endeavouring to regain her influence, and the infidel liberals of the present day seem willing to assist her in doing so,—for, wonderful as it may seem, there has always been a close alliance between infidelity and popery. Infidelity rejects the Scriptures—popery corrupts them, or substitutes tradition for them. But let us hold fast the truth as it is in Jesus, and cleave to that blessed book which alone reveals to us the way of salvation. Let us diligently search the Scriptures, for in them we know that we have eternal life. Let us take care that we receive not the mark of the beast, whatever that mark may be; for all who have it shall perish in the day of our Lord's appearing. Let us seek, on the contrary, to be sealed by the Holy Spirit of God with that seal which bears the inscription, "The Lord knoweth them that are his; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." By departing from all iniquity, and practising those things that are good and holy, we shall make it

known to all that we are indeed Christ's disciples; and when the day of separation comes, when "the Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth," then shall we be numbered with the righteous, who shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Let him take heed; let him obey the warning voice, which proclaims concerning Babylon, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." That we and all our countrymen may hearken unto this call, and be enrolled amongst the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, may God in mercy grant, for his son Jesus Christ's sake!

On the subject of this Sermon, the author would particularly recommend two tracts by his excellent and learned friend the Rev. T. Hartwell Horne, of which the titles are, "Romanism contrary to Scripture," and "A Protestant Memorial for the Commemoration of the 4th October, 1835." Of the latter he has freely availed himself on the present occasion.



THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH PROMISED AS A GUIDE INTO ALL TRUTH.

JOHN, xvi. 12, 13.

“ I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.”

WE have been for some time, my brethren, engaged in considering the importance of religious truth, and the duty of searching for it in that repository—the Holy Scripture—wherein God has placed it for our benefit. The claims of the Scripture to our full belief have, I trust, been established. We have weighed their testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ, as being, in the highest sense, “ *the Truth*,” “ the true God and everlasting life;” the only Mediator between God and man; the sole and all-sufficient sacrifice for human guilt; the one Head of the Church, by union with whom our spiritual life is sustained. In the opposite scale we have weighed the pretensions of his self-styled vicar, the Pope, and of the Church falsely called Catholic, to exercise dominion over us. Whilst the invalidity of those pretensions has been exhibited, the duty of adhering to the Church which is

truly Catholic has been maintained, on the same high authority.

To bring arguments which, to the sincere inquirer after truth, may appear sufficient for the confutation of the Atheist, the Deist, the Socinian, and the Papist, is by no means difficult. But it *is* difficult to dispose men to that candid and diligent inquiry which can alone be successful. For this end a greater than any human teacher must put forth his power. Such a teacher was promised by our Saviour to his sorrowing disciples in that parting address from which my text is taken.

He knew the inveterate prejudices under which they laboured; and, well aware that if the full blaze of light were at once poured upon their minds, they would be dazzled and blinded rather than illuminated, he patiently bore with their infirmities, until the time ordained in the counsels of his Father for sending unto them the Spirit of truth. The Spirit of truth! How grateful the sound of that title to the sincere lover of truth! to him who, having vainly laboured by his own unassisted faculties to comprehend the deep things of God, hears that this heavenly Teacher is promised, to be his guide into all truth!

That we may venture to appropriate the promise will, I hope, be apparent, before I close my present address. Let us, then, in humble dependence on his aid, consider these words of our blessed Saviour:

- I. As they had respect to his original disciples.
- II. As they are applicable to our present circumstances.

I. That Christ with reason declared to his Apostles, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," was fully proved by their backwardness in receiving his former instructions. Those instructions had been, in general, elementary and preparatory. He exposed the emptiness of a mere external and ceremonial righteousness, like that of the Pharisees, and most beautifully described the features which should characterise the true children of God. He declared the willingness of his heavenly Father to pardon every real penitent. He spake many parables concerning the nature of his future kingdom, "as the disciples were able to bear them." He also foretold his own humiliation and suffering. But their ears, as well as the ears of the multitude, were dull of hearing; and those who enjoyed the closest communion were revolted by every declaration which contradicted their hope of a present glorious earthly kingdom. They expected a *Messiah*, but not one who was to *suffer and to die*. They looked for victories to be accomplished over the *persons* rather than the *hearts* of men; to be accomplished by carnal weapons, or perhaps by miraculous agency, not by the converting grace of the Holy Spirit. When Peter, taught of God, confessed him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God," fuller teaching was needful to make him acquiesce in the decree, that Jesus must "go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee," was the exclamation which drew upon him the severe rebuke, "Get thee

behind me, Satan ; thou art an offence unto me," from the same gracious lips which had pronounced, " Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Even to the last, we find them disputing which should be the greatest. On the very evening of his resurrection, he had occasion to say to two of them, " O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ; ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ?"

These, and many other instances, prove, that to minds not prepared and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the instructions even of Christ himself were inefficacious. After his resurrection he continued with them forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God ; yet at the close of these days, as he was about to leave them, they still inquired, " Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel ?" forgetting all that he had foretold concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of their nation. He answered, " It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power : but ye shall receive *power*, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

We are this day, my brethren, met together to commemorate the fulfilment of this most gracious promise, — a promise corresponding with our Lord's declaration in the text, " When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth ;" or rather (as the original

words signify) all *the* truth—all the truth respecting Christ's person, character, and offices, the nature of his kingdom, and whatsoever else constituted those glad tidings which it would be their blessed office to promulgate in the world.

Behold them, assembled at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and "waiting for the promise of the Father." Hear that "sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, which fills all the house where they are sitting." Observe the "cloven tongues, like as of fire, that rest on each of them." Filled with the Holy Ghost, who gives them utterance, they speak in their respective languages to the multitudes assembled from every region under heaven, "the wonderful works of God." Can this be the same Peter who denied his heavenly Master at the challenge of a servant-maid? Hear how he bears to him the most convincing testimony. He scruples not to accuse his murderers of their guilt. He proves from Scripture, now at last fully opened to his own mind, that "God has made that same Jesus whom they crucified both Lord and Christ." Pricked at the heart, they exclaim, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" He exhorts them to repent and be baptised; and no fewer than three thousand obey the exhortation. In a few days the number is increased to five thousand; and soon a great company of the priests become obedient unto the faith. The boldness which he and his brother Apostle John afterwards exhibited, and the wisdom with which they spake, astonished the rulers of the Sanhedrim, and filled Jerusalem with believers.

How the prejudices and the bigotry of Saul of

Tarsus were overcome—what light was infused into his soul—what an acquaintance with Divine truth was conferred upon himself, and what power of communicating it to others, you can scarcely fail to remember. Study his admirable Epistles, especially those to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Hebrews, and you will there see how fully he was initiated into “the truth as it is in Jesus.” You may also observe how admirably he imitated the example of our Saviour, in teaching men “as they were able to bear instruction.” To the Corinthians he says, “I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.” To the Hebrews, “We have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing;” and then he endeavours to excite them to go on from this childish state, which only admitted an acquaintance with the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, “to perfection” in that doctrine. It would be easy to illustrate this part of the subject by many examples; but I am more anxious that we should all feel our own concern in it; and will therefore proceed to shew

II. The applicability of the doctrine of the text to our present circumstances.

The Bible might address many, who have long had an opportunity of knowing what it teaches, in our Saviour’s language, “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” What St. Paul said of the Corinthian sophists is true of worldly-wise men in

every age: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

When we look at the writings of Voltaire, and Hume, and Gibbon, or listen to the conversation of other infidels, who esteem themselves, and are esteemed by many, as philosophers, we find them utterly destitute of genuine wisdom. They may exhibit acuteness of intellect, and display considerable stores of human learning; they may overpower the judgment, and perplex the minds of the unstable; but as they evidently possess no real love for truth, so is it manifest that they have no discernment of it. When they scoff at the Scripture, it is certain that they are deriding their own misconceptions of its statements, rather than the information which God has communicated,—not indeed to them, for they have no faculties capable of receiving it,—but to the humble and unprejudiced inquirer, whose heart He has opened. The case of infidels, however, need scarcely be adverted to: their conduct generally proves, that it is not the doctrine of the Gospel, but the holy course of life it prescribes, from which their minds revolt. They feel, as it has been often said, that the Bible is against them, and therefore they are against the Bible.

And what shall we say of those who, professing to believe in Christianity, dispute its most essential doctrines? Do the Socinians, when they endeavour to explain away every text which asserts the Godhead or the atonement of our Saviour, prove that it is their pre-eminent discernment of truth which causes them to

reject the doctrines they call errors? Is it not rather evident, that the pride of human intellect, the vain conceit of their own morality and sufficiency, has blinded their eyes, so that they cannot see what God has written in the most radiant characters concerning each of them, "Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting."

But not only the decidedly heretical, many who esteem themselves strictly orthodox, revolt from the humbling doctrines of man's utter corruption and impotence; the insufficiency of his best works to merit justification before God, which can be attained only by faith in Christ's atonement and imputed righteousness; the necessity also of complete renewal through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Such persons esteem as foolishness the faithful preaching of Christ crucified; they deem those enthusiasts who insist much on the necessity of spiritual influences—the doctrine of Divine predestination and election—of vital union with Christ; every thing, in short, which surpasses the standard of human reason and human morality has in their eyes a sectarian character. Whence arises this incapacity to receive doctrines most plainly revealed in Scripture? Is it not from the pride and prejudice of the carnal heart? Is it not from an exaltation of human reason above Divine authority—from a reliance on the traditions of men—from a dislike to the humble holy character which is held forth as the highest distinction of Christ's true disciples, but which is incomprehensible by those who rest in a mere form of godliness? Let each one search his own conscience on this subject, and

consider whether he is indeed willing to bow down to the authority of Scripture, and to receive all truth, however it may seem opposed to the opinions he had before adopted.

Perhaps such a question may not improperly be addressed to some really pious persons, who having embraced an orthodox creed with respect to the leading doctrines of the Gospel, feel displeased if they hear any statements which appear to them inconsistent with what they have learned from their favourite teachers, or from the books they esteem standards of sound divinity. I advert chiefly to those prejudices concerning parts of the prophetic Scriptures which relate to the future restoration and pre-eminence of Israel; to the nearness and the glory of our Saviour's coming kingdom; the prior resurrection of those who have been slain for the testimony of Jesus, &c. These, and various other topics, are disregarded or misinterpreted by some, who, without adverting to the literal sense of Scripture, think it more profitable to give all such passages an exclusively spiritual meaning. I am not disposed, however, to dwell on these topics, and only advert to them for the purpose of shewing, that even the most sincere Christians may *possibly* find that the Scriptures have discoveries to make which at present they are unable to bear; but which the teaching of the Holy Spirit may render fully manifest.

Most assuredly the Spirit of truth does lead the sincere inquirer into all truth; not indeed at once, but progressively. He begins by convincing us of our own exceeding sinfulness, and the perfect righteousness of our

adorable Redeemer. He judges and casts out from our hearts the prince of this world. He establishes within them his own kingdom, of "righteousness, and peace, and joy." He opens our understanding, that we may understand the Scriptures, and enables us not only to receive the milk which is suitable for the nourishment of babes, but the strong meat which is provided for men and fathers in Christ. Those things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man—the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"—these things does God "reveal to us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." As our Lord declares in the remaining words of my text, the Spirit does not speak of himself; "whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak;" he takes of the things of Christ and of his heavenly Father, and shews them unto us. He *will* shew also, indeed he *has* shewn, the things that are to come. He revealed to the Apostles, especially to the Apostle John, the whole plan of God concerning the Church even to the end of the world. All the opposition which his kingdom would encounter—all the triumphs it would achieve—all the glory and blessedness it would impart to its faithful subjects, are described, in symbolical language, it is true—in characters as yet imperfectly developed,—but whose brightness is even now apparent, and whose full meaning will doubtless be in due time discernible.

All the truth which, as the redeemed and renovated children of the living God, we are concerned to understand, is placed within the reach of every one who humbly

seeks the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The promise of the text belongs not to the first disciples only, but unto their children also, and to all that were afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Why, then, will any continue in doubt and perplexity? Why should any hesitate to avail themselves of this heavenly Teacher's guidance? He is a Sanctifier and Comforter, as well as a Guide; and how blessed are they who enjoy his presence in their souls! What a contrast do they exhibit both in knowledge and in practice to the wise men of this world! They are distinguished by "simplicity and godly sincerity;" theirs is "the wisdom from above," which is "pure and peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

To them the doctrine of Christ crucified presents no stumbling-block, but rather occasion for grateful joy and adoration. Dear to them is every promise of sanctifying grace, and most welcome the expectation of the Saviour's speedy coming. Scriptures which once appeared obscure are now becoming more and more perspicuous; they proceed from light to light, and from strength to strength, shewing continually more of their Saviour's presence in their souls, by their growing resemblance to his holy character, and proving to all the value unspeakable of his salvation.

Can I venture to hope, my brethren, that I have been describing your happy state of mind? Can I hope that

all have devoutly sought the guidance of the Spirit of truth, and are walking with him in the paths of life and happiness? Judge, I beseech you, whether the truth as it is in Jesus is really precious to your souls; whether you are cherishing it for your own edification, and boldly confessing it for his glory and the extension of his kingdom. Are there none who imprison the truth in unrighteousness; or at least, by inconsistent conduct, cause its ways to be evil spoken of? If any such be present, may God give them grace to humble themselves at the foot of the cross—may he restore to them the joy of his salvation, and uphold them in future by his free Spirit!

Thus only is it possible for any of us to be wise, or good, or happy. Every good gift, and every perfect gift, cometh down from the Father of lights, who of his own will begets us anew by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures—an earnest of that glorious harvest which will be reaped after the full effusion of the Spirit in the last days of the present dispensation. If, then, we desire to be as the first-fruits, we must make it our study to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and so commend his good ways to men, that they may desire to partake the same holy influence. In the attempt to bring them to this happy state, we may encounter much prejudice and some unkindness; but we must bear with them, as Christ did with his disciples, and pray for them, until they can be induced to pray for themselves.

The fruits which have been hitherto collected are small indeed compared with the harvest foretold in Scripture. The event we this day commemorate was

but the former rain foretold by the prophet Joel; but the latter rain will be unspeakably more glorious and productive; for then will the Lord pour forth his Spirit "upon *all* flesh." Not only will he take away blindness from the heart of Israel, but "he will destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations." Then shall the triumphs of the truth be completed; then shall the harvest of the whole earth be gathered in. The angel who is entrusted with the everlasting Gospel, to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people—that angel is now flying in the midst of heaven. Soon will he be followed by one crying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city; because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Then shall the voice of a third cry unto him that sitteth on the cloud, "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

May we be esteemed the wheat of the Lord in that day, and find our souls bound up in "the bundle of life" before him! May our joy be as the joy of harvest; and may our Redeemer see in us of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, that we with him may be glorified for ever! The Lord fulfil this petition for Jesus Christ's sake!



EXHORTATION TO AVOID INSTABILITY,

AND

TO MAINTAIN TRUTH IN LOVE.

EPHESIANS, iv. 14, 15.

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

THE Apostle is in this chapter exhorting the Ephesians to walk worthy of their high and holy calling; to exercise lowliness, meekness, and mutual forbearance, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He reminds them that “there is one body, and one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all” the members of Christ’s mystical body. Those members he declares to have received grace, “according to the measure of the gift of Christ” imparted to each; some being invested with the apostolic, others with the prophetic office; some being evangelists, others pastors and teachers; but all appointed for the edification of Christ’s body; so “that we may all come, in

the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

The object for which St. Paul thus laboured will be dear to the heart of every faithful minister. Unity is essential to the spiritual growth and happiness of the Church. Whatsoever may promote it, should be encouraged; whatsoever create division, be most carefully avoided. Every effort, therefore, should be made to resist the progress of erroneous doctrines, to check the growth of schism, to advance the cause of truth and charity. Such has been the object of that course of sermons which I have lately addressed to you, and which I would now conclude by enforcing the important lessons of the text. The Apostle,

- I. Warns us against instability and delusion ;
- II. Teaches us to maintain truth in love ; and
- III. Presents to us the happy tendency of such conduct.

May the Spirit of grace assist us to understand, and enable us to improve by the instruction !

I. We are first admonished to “ be no more children.” This admonition is quite consistent with our Lord’s declaration, that we “ must be converted, and be as little children, if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven.” We must be children in *humility* and *teachableness*, not in understanding. Thus our Apostle, speaking to the Corinthians, says, “ Brethren, be not children in understanding : howbeit in *malice* be ye children, but in understanding be men.” The Hebrews he reproveth for being “ such as had need of milk, and

not of strong meat ;” and exhorts them to “ go on unto perfection.”

That a childlike docility may be united with manly intelligence, is proved by many brilliant examples both in ancient and modern times. The warning here given is against the unsettled and wavering disposition of children, who are credulous, and easily deceived, because they have not experienced the treachery of mankind. Fond of novelty, they are easily diverted from their course by the prospect of fresh amusement or of some new discovery. But we should strive for that maturity of judgment which belongs to those “ who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

It has, I trust, been proved that in the Holy Scriptures we have a perfect standard of truth ; and also that we have an infallible Guide, who will manifest that truth to every sincere inquirer, and direct his faltering steps in the path of righteousness. Whilst, then, we adhere to this standard, and rely on this heavenly Guide, we shall not be led astray. But if we “ hearken unto men more than unto God ;” if, instead of trusting in him with all our heart, “ we lean to our own understanding ;” we shall soon be deceived. We shall be like the feather thrown out to the gale, “ tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” How various are the winds of error, which blow at this time from every quarter ! and how many, who appeared wise and holy men, have become their sport ! Let their example be a warning to ourselves, that we depend not on our own constancy nor powers of discrimination.

Such is "the sleight of men," such "the cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive," that we need continual watchfulness, and constant prayer for Divine direction. Satan "transforms himself into an angel of light." By the appearance of greater spirituality, of higher devotional fervour, of more abundant means of religious improvement, he draws aside those who are not firmly built up on Christ, who, fond of excitement and of novelty, cannot "endure sound doctrine, but, after their own lusts, heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;" and who thus, "turning away their ears from the truth, are turned unto fables."

Too many amongst the Corinthians, the Galatians, and Colossians, exemplified the conduct thus described by the Apostle. The numbers who do so at this time are incalculable. Let us beware of adding to them. We have a form of sound words in the Articles and other doctrinal formularies of our apostolic Church. Multitudes of spiritual children, whom she has "trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," are now rejoicing in his presence. In her communion we possess inestimable privileges. Her worship is, to the truly spiritual, a foretaste of the joys of the celestial sanctuary; her sacraments are those ordained by Christ himself, and in their right participation we receive him into our hearts, and have fellowship, through the Spirit, with his heavenly Father.

The more carefully the pleas for separation from our Church are examined, the more fully, I am persuaded, will their invalidity be discovered. We by no

means deny that there may be room for improvement, especially in the exercise of wholesome discipline. But we may, at the same time, confidently affirm, that for soundness of doctrine, for sobriety and spirituality of worship, for the apostolical succession of her ministers, and for the holy lives of her obedient children, she need not fear comparison with any society of Christians since the primitive times. She has, we confess, numbered unworthy characters both amongst her members and her ministers; and during a considerable part of the last century, her pulpits did not sufficiently proclaim the leading truths of the Gospel: the want also of instructors, and of sufficient church-room for the growing population, caused many to seek after other means of edification. But whilst we make this confession with shame and sorrow, we have reason to bless God that a better day has dawned upon us. The number of evangelical ministers is rapidly increasing, and their hearers have increased in proportion. Our places of worship have been multiplied; and it is to be hoped that the solemn appeal of our excellent Diocesan* will not be

* The Bishop of London's truly important letter on building new churches.

“The following facts and plans are abstracted from the ‘Proposals for the Creation of a Fund to be applied to the Building and Endowment of additional Churches in the Metropolis,’ published by the Right Rev. the Bishop: only it must be borne in mind (what one is apt to forget in these tabular statements), that each unit represents a human soul; that we are not even speaking of the religious destitution of one generation, but of what has been, and what must (but for timely aid) be, and must increase

unavailing. Here, then, are evidences of a revival of religious zeal, which we trust will abound more and more.

—the continually repeated cycle of the spiritual starvation of so many thousand distinct, undying, human souls.”

SPIRITUAL DESTITUTION OF LONDON.

Churches.

Population (omitting parishes which contain less than 7000)	1,380,000
Present church-room for 140,000.	
Calculating necessary church-room at one-third, provision is thus made for	420,000
	<hr/>
Leaving a population, for which there is no provision in the Church, of	960,000

Clergymen.

In thirty-four parishes, containing a population of	1,127,000
there are seventy-five clergymen.	
Calculating two clergymen for every 3000, provision is thus made for	112,500
	<hr/>
Leaving a population, for which no pastoral care is provided, of	1,014,500

General Outline of the Bishop of London's plan, as at present sketched.

1. To build or purchase, and partly endow, at least fifty new churches.
2. Districts to be assigned to each Church, if possible.
3. Nomination (as generally desired) in the Bishop of the diocese.
4. In single cases (if desirable) patronage to be vested in individuals or official trustees.

But that revival of zeal in the Church has stirred up increasing malignity on the part of her enemies. The adversary of all truth and holiness not only excites infidels to open opposition, but also inspires manifold delusions, which beguile the unstable, and will, it may be feared, cause some to make shipwreck of their faith.

It is needful, therefore, my brethren, that we warn you against false teachers. Not only must you be put on your guard against the machinations of the Socinian and the Papist, who, like the Sadducees and Pharisees of old, are forming a most incongruous union for the crucifixion of pure Christianity; but also against the many new opinions, especially of the German neological school, which are propagated at the present period.

5. Sums of 100*l.* and upwards may be paid in equal instalments in four years.

Thus, *e. g.*, one who could only contribute 25*l.* in any one year, might be a subscriber of 100*l.*; one who could give 50*l.* only in a single year, might be a subscriber of 200*l.*

6. Endowment, in many cases, to be provided out of the minor stalls of St. Paul's.

The Right Rev. the Bishop of London expresses a wish to "receive such promises of support as may enable him to accompany the [more specific] proposals with a list of subscriptions which may be an omen of final success."

A clergyman of Oxford has been enabled to hold out promises of contributions of about 7,300*l.* in the following sums:—one of 5000*l.*, one of 1000*l.*, one of 400*l.*, one of 200*l.*, six of 100*l.*, one of 30*l.*, one of 25*l.*, two of 20*l.* Other sums were also immediately notified to the Lord Bishop of London, of 1000*l.*, 500*l.*, 400*l.*, 300*l.*, 200*l.*, 100*l.*, amounting to 4600*l.* The Bishop himself gives 2000*l.*; His Majesty, 1000*l.*; Her Majesty, 300*l.*

On a large plan, it would be desirable to raise 500,000*l.*

Those who assert the innocence of error, and the right of every man to form his own opinion on religious subjects, represent such warnings as bigoted and uncharitable. But so did not our Lord's beloved disciple John, who, whilst he inculcated love to the brethren, bore this testimony against such as abode not in the doctrine of Christ: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. . . . If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

Still, it is our duty to guard against real bigotry and uncharitableness, because they are altogether inconsistent with pure Christianity. Consider, then,

II. The exhortation, "to maintain the truth in love." Our translation, "speaking the truth in love," does not express the force of the original,* which implies an entire devotedness to truth,—a being cast, as it were, into its very mould, so that its character may appear in all our actions and conversation.

As God is the God of truth, his servants will be its devoted followers. They can have no communion with falsehood, as light can have no fellowship with darkness; but will be simple and sincere in their principles and proceedings. In argument they will seek to triumph, not over their *opponent*, but over *error*; and rejoice more in discovering any mistake into which they have fallen, than in making, by skilful sophistry,

* Ἀληθεύοντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ.

“ the worse appear the better reason.” Few distinguish between *discussion* and *disputation*. Discussion is a sifting of the chaff from the wheat—a separation of the truth from those errors which occasionally intermingle with it, or assume its form. Disputation too commonly results from pride and selfishness, which lead men to maintain the assertion they have once hazarded, instead of cheerfully abandoning the position when it is proved untenable. True candour towards those who differ must not be confounded with that instability of mind which allows men to be tossed on the waves of novel opinions, continually fluctuating, because destitute of faith, the anchor of the soul,—because not moored securely to the Rock of Ages. Christ, and his doctrine revealed by the Gospel, presents to us that rock. To it let us cling with holy confidence. Let us constantly bear in mind his words, and those of his Apostles, which (taken in connexion with the rest of Scripture) reveal to us the secrets of genuine wisdom.

St. Paul describes “ the Church of the living God, as the pillar and ground of the truth.” To the Church, then, we should adhere, if we would keep possession of it; to the Church which is truly catholic, because conformed to the apostolic model, and embracing in her arms sincere Christians of every nation. That Church has been one from the beginning. Though partially and transiently overshadowed by the clouds of error and superstition, still she has not departed from the faith. She has, through the goodness of God, in all ages preserved a succession of rightly ordained ministers and faithful members, hidden indeed frequently

from the eyes of men, but known to Him who had reserved to himself seven thousand faithful worshippers during the darkest period of Israel's apostacy. In Bohemia—in the valleys of Piedmont—nay, even in Spain and Italy—in this kingdom also, some were always to be found who would not bow their necks to the yoke of Babylon, nor taste the cup of her abominations. This faithful and persecuted Church, witnessing in sack-cloth, never ceased from her testimony; and of late her voice has been raised so as to fill her adversaries at once with rage and terror. What if, for a short season, those adversaries be allowed to triumph; what if the wild beast of infidelity, re-ascending from the bottomless pit, be allowed to slay the prophets of God,—their unburied bodies shall yet bear witness. The “spirit of life from God, after three days and a half, shall enter into them; they shall stand on their feet, whilst great fear falls on all who see them.” Called up into heaven, they shall ascend thither in a cloud, and their enemies beholding shall be filled with consternation. Join yourselves, then, my brethren, to these faithful witnesses. “The Lord has given a banner to them that fear him, that it may be displayed because of his truth.” It is the banner of the cross; and those who fight under it are sure to conquer. Rallying around this celestial standard in one well-compacted phalanx, let us “hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that hath promised: and let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works.” Other provocations are too often ministered by the enemy of our souls; but this “cometh of him that

called us, even the Captain of our salvation." Let us, then, put away all those selfish carnal tempers which cause division; not looking every man at his own things, his own interest, his own reputation; but every man also at the things of others; above all, every man at the glory of his divine Master.

With this "love of the brotherhood" we should combine love even for our enemies, pitying and praying for them, that God may give them repentance unto the acknowledgment of the truth. Remembering that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," it becomes true Christians to exercise the utmost tenderness and patience towards those from whom they are compelled to differ, making allowance for their prejudices, and labouring "by well-doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men;" for those who cannot be overcome by argument are often won by witnessing a holy and benevolent conversation.

III. As an additional inducement to this conduct, consider, in the third place, its happy tendency. It is, that we may "grow up unto him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."

In the natural body every member is of such importance to the well-being of the rest, that "none can say unto another, I have no need of thee." The same is true of the spiritual body. Union is essential to prosperity—union of each individual with his brethren, and of all

with our great Head. The want of this union has hitherto caused the Church to languish, and furnished much occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. Well might the Apostle say to the Galatians, "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." So our Saviour argued: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth." Many have expressed surprise, that the Gospel, which at first so rapidly and widely triumphed, has in later ages made such little progress. But we must remember how soon strifes and divisions arose. In consequence of these, zeal declined, love waxed cold, and the soldiers of the cross turned their arms against each other, rather than against Satan's kingdom. Considering this, we shall see reason for shame and sorrow, rather than amazement. Our divisions at present furnish to the enemies of our holy cause their most powerful argument. Still they ask, "What is truth? and how shall we discover it amidst such diversity of sentiment?" The question has been already answered; but it needs another answer, of a practical character, which I trust you will afford by shewing that truth dwells in your minds, and regulates all your conduct.

Direct your eyes and affections continually to your great Head, that you may learn of him to love one another. In his name, I beseech you, brethren, as St. Paul did the Corinthians, "that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Implore Him, for

this end, to breathe into your souls his Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth—the Spirit of peace—the Spirit of joy and consolation. He will answer the prayer which corresponds with his own last supplication before his sufferings, that all his disciples might be one: “I in them,” he said, “and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” Whilst Christians were united, their religion was rapidly diffused; but when schisms arose, its influence greatly declined. We hope, however, that the dying prayer of Jesus will ere long receive a more perfect answer. The assaults of the enemy are even now driving sincere Christians into nearer union; they are closing their ranks, and presenting a firmer front to their opponents. If all can be persuaded to “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel,” they shall be “in nothing terrified by their adversaries,” who will see in this “an evident token of perdition, but to us of salvation, and that of God.” When “Ephraim shall no longer envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim, they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines to the west; they shall spoil them of the east together; they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them.” This prophecy of Isaiah, concerning the literal Israel, may seem well to express the case of the spiritual Israel, whose triumphs have been hitherto prevented by dissension, but will be gloriously achieved whenever they combine their efforts. The victory to be thus sought is of no selfish character. It begins, indeed, by the conquest

of self, the mortification of carnal tempers, the subduing of our evil nature: it proceeds, by the exhibition of Christian graces, to win the hearts of those whom no arguments addressed merely to the intellect could overcome. When the true character of our holy religion is made manifest, it can scarcely fail to prove attractive. Men will say, " We will go with you; for we perceive that God is with you."*

* " O divine love! the sweet harmony of souls! the music of angels! the joy of God's own heart! the very darling of his bosom! the source of true happiness! the pure quintessence of heaven! that which reconciles the jarring principles of the world, and makes them all chime together! that which melts men's hearts into one another! See how St. Paul describes it, and it cannot choose but enamour your affections towards it: " Love envieth not; it is not puffed up; it doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. I may add, in a word, it is the best-natured thing, the best-complexioned thing in the world. Let us express this sweet harmonious affection in these jarring times; that so, if it be possible, we may tune the world into better music. Especially in matters of religion, let us strive, with all meekness, to instruct and convince one another. Let us endeavour to promote *the Gospel of peace, the dove-like Gospel, with a dove-like spirit.* This was the way by which the Gospel was at first propagated in the world. Christ did not cry nor lift up his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he did not break, and the smoking flax he did not quench; and yet he brought forth judgment unto victory. He whispered the Gospel to us from Mount Zion in a still voice, and yet the sound thereof went quickly throughout all the earth. The Gospel came down upon the world gently and softly, like the dew upon Gideon's fleece; and yet it quickly soaked quite through it: and doubt-

Christians do well in translating the Bible into the languages spoken by all the families of mankind. They do well in sending forth missionaries unto all lands, and in labouring for the conversion of Jews, Mahometans, and heathens. But they must bear in mind that the Holy Spirit only can give success to these endeavours. The desolations of the earth will continue “until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.” “Then shall the wilderness become a fruitful field;” so that what was esteemed “a fruitful field shall be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the Gentile wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field of restored and converted Israel.” “And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”

This blessed effusion of the Spirit will be vouchsafed in answer to the united prayers of the Lord’s believing people. That union is essential, not only for their own

less this is still the most effectual way to promote it farther. Sweetness and ingenuity will more command men’s minds than passion, sourness, and severity; as the softest pillow sooner breaks the flint than the hardest marble. Let us ἀληθεύειν ἐν ἀγάπῃ, *follow truth in love*: and of the two, indeed, be contented rather to miss of the conveying of a speculative truth than to part with love. When we would convince men of any error by the strength of truth, let us withal pour the sweet balm of love upon their heads. Truth and love are two the most powerful things in the world; and when they both go together, they cannot easily be withstood. The golden beams of truth, and the silken cords of love, twisted together, will draw men on with a sweet violence, whether they will or no.”—*Cudworth’s Sermon on 1 John, ii. 3, 4.* pp. 59, 60. Folio. London, 1676.

happiness, but also for the general diffusion of the Gospel; for bringing together into the fold all the sheep of Christ who are now scattered abroad, and exposed to the ravages of the devouring lion. The weapons to be used for the destruction of that enemy, and the subversion of his power, are not carnal, but spiritual. They are "mighty through God for the pulling down the strongholds of sin and Satan, and bringing every thought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ." Such is the holy warfare in which the Church should engage as one compacted body. Its success will then be certain; for the truth of God is mighty, and must prevail. Soon, we exultingly anticipate, will be heard the sound of that trumpet, and of those triumphant voices, which shall proclaim, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

"Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, beware lest ye, being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness; but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and for ever." Amen.

THE PREPARATION OF THE STONES FOR SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

1 KINGS, vi. 7.

“ And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither : so that there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house while it was in building.”

MANY parts of the Old Testament, which, to the superficial reader, do not appear particularly interesting or instructive, will be found, on more careful examination, and especially on comparison with the allusions made to them in the New Testament, to convey lessons of high importance. Amongst these I would specify the chapters which describe the tabernacle erected by Moses in the wilderness, and the more durable and splendid temple built by Solomon after the complete establishment of his kingdom.

When we consider the amazing magnitude of the latter building, the variety of materials employed, and the elaborate perfection of the workmanship, it may seem surprising that every part should have been so exactly prepared, that “ neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron, should have been heard in the house while it was in building.”

St. Paul tells us that " whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." We may therefore reasonably believe, that the remarkable circumstance mentioned in the text was designed to teach us some useful lessons. Humbly depending on the same blessed Spirit who gave wisdom to Solomon, I would now endeavour to present to you some of those lessons.

I. I shall first offer some remarks upon the nature of the Jewish tabernacle and temple.

We may collect from various parts of Scripture that these were not merely designed to be places of public worship, but were to be esteemed in a peculiar sense the residence, the royal palace, as it were, of the infinitely glorious Jehovah. The heathens supposed their imaginary deities to be invisibly present in the temples erected to their honour, which also generally contained some image or symbolical representation of the object of worship. Such was not the case with the temple of the God of Israel; for he expressly forbade all attempts to represent him by any kind of image or similitude. Yet we know that some visible tokens of his presence were often manifested in the sanctuary. When Moses had finished the tabernacle, " a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon; and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." In like manner, when Solomon's temple was completed, and the sacred furniture and vessels depo-

sited within it, it came to pass "when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." In both cases God seems to have taken visible possession of the whole building, both the holy place and the most holy, that he might consecrate it to himself as his earthly dwelling. This display of his glory was afterwards confined to the most holy place, in which the ark of the covenant, with the cherubim, was established as a kind of royal throne, the mercy-seat forming the footstool, upon and before which the blood of the sacrifice and the sweet incense were presented. The most holy place was entered by the high priest alone, and that only on one day in the year—the day of atonement; but on the golden altar, which stood without the veil, sweet incense was daily burnt, ascending, as it were, together with the prayers of the congregation. With reference to the solemnities of the day of atonement, the Lord said, "I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat:" and in the 29th chapter of Exodus we read his declaration; "I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell amongst the children of Israel, and will be their God." It is evident, therefore, that the temple was in an especial sense the dwelling-place of the Most High. St. Paul teaches us, in his Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. viii.), that the tabernacle was constructed after the pattern which God shewed to Moses

in the Mount, as “ an example and shadow of heavenly things.” It typified the celestial sanctuary, where the fulness of the Divine glory is displayed, and that perfect worship offered, of which the purest earthly services can present only a faint resemblance.

But, whilst the tabernacle and temple were places where the Divine glory was manifested, and the tribes of Israel worshipped, they also fulfilled the yet more important office of symbolising the human nature of Christ, in whom “ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” The original words in which St. John describes his incarnation—“ the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us”—represent him as the Shekinah (which in Hebrew signifies the dwelling of the Divine presence) that appeared in the sanctuary. On this account, when the Jews asked Jesus for a sign, he said, “ Destroy *this temple*, and in three days I will build it up.” They supposed that he meant the material temple ; but the Evangelist declares that “ he spake of *the temple of his body* ;” and that after his resurrection, his disciples understood the saying which had before appeared incomprehensible.

When we say that the sacred buildings symbolised the *literal* body of our Lord and Saviour, we must not forget that the Church is frequently declared to be his *mystical* body. Thus, St. Paul says, God “ hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephes. i. 22, 23). Both Jews and Gentiles have been “ reconciled to God in one body by the cross,” and “ are built upon the

foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom (the Apostle adds) ye also (believing Gentiles as well as Jews) are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

We may, from what has been said, fairly conclude, that the temple, besides being a place of public worship, was also the royal pavilion of Jehovah, his earthly dwelling-place, formed after the model of the celestial sanctuary. It was, at the same time, a type of Christ's body, both literal and mystical; and now the Church, and every individual member of it, is consecrated by the Holy Spirit to be the "temple of the living God."

Some have suggested that the tabernacle, formed of inferior and more perishable materials, which were capable of being taken asunder and removed from place to place, might represent the mortal body of our Lord; whilst the temple shadowed forth that glorious and immortal body which he assumed after the resurrection, and in which he now dwells at the right hand of his Father. Admitting the probability of this application, I think it yet more probable, that the tabernacle symbolised the Church militant here on earth, which is liable to be removed from place to place, and is composed of members capable of separation; whilst the temple represented the Church triumphant in heaven, formed of more costly and durable materials, and not liable to dissolution or removal.

The interpretation of the symbols which I have last

given appears suited to elucidate the text, and to assist us in drawing from it those practical lessons to which I would secondly call your attention.

II. If the temple did indeed symbolise the Church, the mystical body of Christ, then the several separate stones may be considered as typifying individual believers. This supposition is encouraged by St. Peter, when he speaks of them as "coming (unto Christ) as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious;" and declares that they, "as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house," and consecrated to be "a holy priesthood." "Wherefore it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."

This character of *lively* or living stones is not originally applicable to any of the sons of Adam. As long as they remain in the quarry of corrupt nature, they are "dead in trespasses and sins;" as the Apostle declares, not only the Ephesian gentiles, but also himself and his brethren, to have been. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his *great* love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." All, therefore, who would possess spiritual life must "come out and be separate from the world, which lieth in wickedness." Renouncing its corrupt habits and customs, they must come to Christ by faith, that they may receive from union with him that new life which he bestows on all his faithful servants. They must yield themselves up to God, that

they may become "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," and gradually prepared to form parts of his spiritual temple.

It is this *preparation* which seems to have been shadowed forth by the previous hewing and polishing of the stones used for the house of God at Jerusalem. Hence, therefore, we especially learn the important lesson, that if we desire to have a place in the temple of the Lord *hereafter*, we must *here* be fitted and made ready for the position we are designed to occupy.

My brethren, let me seriously remind you, that the present life is the only season of preparation for eternity. If this work be not completed in this life, it must remain unperformed for ever. Consider, then, how needful it is to improve this short and uncertain portion of your existence. Upon the manner in which its few fleeting years are employed depends your everlasting state. You are not like the stones employed in the material temple, destitute of consciousness, or power of exertion, but are endowed with reason and intelligence: you possess powers (fallen and degraded, as all are by nature), which, animated by Almighty grace, may attain to life and happiness. Give diligence to improve the privileges to which your baptismal covenant has admitted you; give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Believe with simple faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, that living Stone, which imparts spiritual and eternal life to all united to him. "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity;" in a word, all those holy dispositions by which your Saviour

was distinguished. It is true, that you cannot do this by your own power ; but he who gives power "to them that ask him," will enable you, out of his fulness, to receive "even grace for grace."

It may perhaps be argued by some, that if they are by nature "dead in trespasses and sins," they are no more capable of exertion than stones in the quarry, and therefore that they must wait until it shall please God to quicken them. But such is not the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles. St. Paul, who thus described the former state of the Ephesians, in the same Epistle says, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead ; and Christ shall give thee light." Our Saviour said to the Jews, "Ye *will* not come unto me, that ye might have life:" they must therefore have had some power ; and had they exerted it to come unto him, they would have received life. The same Apostle to whom I have referred, exhorted the Philippians to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling;" adding, "for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Let none encourage themselves in sinful sloth by a perversion of scriptural doctrines. God is not only able, but willing, to quicken all who desire deliverance from the death of sin. He will work in all who sincerely desire to work out their own salvation. If any say, We have not this desire: I answer, Cease not to pray that it may be excited in you: remember what amazing interests are at stake; and be assured, that though without Christ you can do nothing, yet you may be enabled to do all things through the strength which he is ready to impart to you. Once

more, then, I press St. Peter's desire, that "coming to him as lively stones," (lively by life which he will impart,) you may be "built up" in faith and righteousness.

Be assured, that if you sincerely resign yourselves into the hands of God, with unfeigned desires to be in all things conformed to his will, he will gradually prepare you for his heavenly temple. For this end, he will work in you by his Spirit, by his word, and by his providence. The first motions of divine life are imparted by the Holy Spirit, who rouses the sleeping conscience, convinces sinners of their guilt and danger, and excites them to fly to Christ for deliverance. The same blessed Paraclete will assist your feeble efforts, and gradually transform you into the Divine likeness. He does this especially by the written word, which he applies to the heart, and moulds the affections into the form which it prescribes. St. Paul says, "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This passage evidently teaches, that though the work is divine, *our* endeavours must be exerted. We must diligently look into the glass of God's word; we must exercise watchfulness and self-denial, continually mortifying every evil and corrupt affection, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.

The Holy Spirit dwells not only in the universal Church, but in the hearts of individual believers, so as to make each of them his temple. But woe unto those who defile that temple! Instead of doing so, let us most carefully "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh

and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Unless this is done, there can be no vital union with Christ, no admission into the heavenly temple. Not only must sensual affections be mortified, but all selfish and carnal tempers. Where pride and malice, envy and revenge, are harboured, the Spirit of peace and love will not make his abode. Let those who, while they would seem to be even pillars in the house of God, allow themselves in such dispositions, and indulge in fierce disputation, beware lest they be rejected in the day of trial. In that day God will lay " judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet ;" and no stone which is found defective will be admitted into his building. They must be prepared beforehand ; for neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron, may then be employed.

The Church is not to be built up with noise and clamour. If the stones designed for Solomon's temple had been violently dashed against each other, how much would their beauty have been defaced ! they would probably not only have lost their polish, but have been deprived of some portion of the substance necessary to fit them for the place designed. And can the members of the spiritual temple be improved by strife and contention ? No ! It must be the endeavour of each to promote to the utmost mutual harmony. " Speaking the truth in love, they should seek to grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined and compacted together by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."

We cannot doubt that before the stones of the mate-

rial temple were removed to the place of its erection, they were often fitted to one another, so that the respective parts might exactly coincide. Thus also are the living stones on earth brought into contact and made to coincide, though but for a season, that hereafter they may be joined in a firm and never-ending union.

Christians, however, though they ought to cultivate the utmost peace and harmony with each other, must not expect to enjoy peace with the world around them. Rather must they be prepared to endure persecution, as well as suffering of other kinds, during their season of preparation. One most important consideration suggested by my text is, that we are to be fitted by needful discipline (even as the stones of the temple were by the mallet and the chisel) for our future exalted condition. Archbishop Leighton, in his Commentary on St. Peter, makes this profitable remark: "If some have called those stones happy that were taken for the building of temples or altars, beyond those in common houses, how true is it here! Happy indeed the stones that God chooses to be living stones in his spiritual temple! Though they be hammered and hewed to be polished for it by afflictions and the inward work of mortification and repentance, it is worth the enduring all to be fitted for this building."

Yes, my brethren, it is well worth while to endure all that God in his providence may see it right to do with us for the accomplishment of his designs,—designs which we shall ere long discover to be full of grace and mercy. Perhaps we are now tempted to repine at his dispensations. We think it hard to support the ills of

poverty, the reproach and ill-treatment of the world, the assaults of pain and sickness. We cannot discern God's reasons for exercising us with such sharp trials, and are apt to think that he deals with us in anger rather than in love. But, to every one so exercised he says, as our Lord did to Peter, "What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter." When his glorious plan is completed, we shall perceive that every part of the process has been most wisely and graciously ordained ; and that not a single stroke has been inflicted which was not needful for the perfection of the work. It is here especially that the faith and patience of the saints are to be exercised. They cannot comprehend the design of the great Architect. Let it suffice them to know that he is preparing an unspeakably magnificent temple, in which he purposes to dwell for ever, and of which each individual believer shall form a component part. However various, and even partial, God's dealings may sometimes appear to our erring judgment, they have one correct and undeviating tendency to his own glory and our eternal happiness. He has foreseen and arranged every event which befalls us, and previously calculated, with infinite wisdom and love, our minutest trials. He knows what we are able to bear, and will not lay upon us more than is fit, more than is absolutely needful to accomplish the destined purpose.

Let us, then, resign ourselves implicitly into his hands, not merely *passively*, like the stones, which could neither consent nor make resistance, but *actively*, as being made willing to co-operate with his designs, and desirous, as far as we are able, to hasten their fulfilment.

Consider also, my brethren, how short the season of preparation is, compared with endless blessedness. The whole work is to be done *here*; hereafter there will be no necessity, and therefore no fear, of suffering. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Look not, then, at "the things which are seen, and which are temporal;" but keep your eyes stedfastly fixed on the "things which are unseen, and are eternal."

We have hitherto considered the *preparation* of the living stones for the heavenly temple; let us now, for a moment, contemplate their *removal*. This is absolutely necessary to the completion of the glorious fabric in which they are to be placed. Death is the appointed method. The various ties which bind them to this world must be broken; the remainder of defilement which inevitably cleaves to their mortal bodies must be purged away: this corruptible must put on incorruption. Viewed in this light, death to the believer should present not a terrible but a pleasing aspect. He should consider it as the necessary process for translating him to an infinitely happier and nobler state of being. Though it may be preceded by much pain and sickness; yet, when it arrives, it puts an end, an eternal end, to suffering. It introduces the soul, as in a moment, to a state of life and light and joy. It removes us, indeed, from all that we have loved and valued in this lower world; but only that it may introduce us to a far nobler society, and bind us by the closest bonds of union to the "general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made

perfect;" it brings us also "to God, the Judge of all; and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant." Nor will our separation from those we have justly loved below be of long duration. Soon will they also be transported to the same happy region, and built up in the same celestial edifice. Let us then, my Christian brethren, continually preserve this view of death; and have no anxiety except to be well prepared for it. With this design, let us be continually trying ourselves by the rule and measure of the divine word. By that standard we shall be examined at the last day. By that standard let us now examine ourselves, imploring the grace of God to correct whatever is defective, and fit us for that hour which shall for ever fix our destination.

Blessed, beyond expression, are they whom death shall find conformed to the intentions of the divine Architect! They shall exchange the noise and tumult, the pains and sorrows of this lower world, for the joyful rest of the heavenly sanctuary. Each shall be placed in the situation predestined for him, and each shall be fully satisfied with the position. In the temple above there will be no discontent nor misplaced ambition. The living stones which compose it will be fully sensible that any place in it is unspeakably better than they have deserved; and every one will enjoy such a consciousness of the Divine presence as shall produce the fulness of joy.

In the present life, however, it is lawful to indulge a holy ambition with respect to the degree of future glory for which we may be prepared. This is the season of competition,—not competition with our brethren, but

with ourselves,—an earnest desire after increasing purity, increasing devotedness and love to God, increasing resemblance to and union with our blessed Saviour. Other competitions tempt us to wish that our companions may fall short,—this incites us to promote their advancement, which will assist our own. Let us, therefore, continually strive to grow in grace, and provoke one another to love and to good works.

To animate our exertions for the conquest of our corrupt nature and of our spiritual enemies, a glorious promise is left on record by the Lord of the temple. Whilst he says, “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown;” he says also, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.” Here we have a promise of firm establishment and permanent abode. Nothing can shake the stones of the celestial temple; nothing can disturb their peace, or impair their beauty. When “the tabernacle of God is with men, he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” So glorious is the “rest which remaineth for the people of God.” Let us, then, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into that

rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. Let us diligently labour, ere the short period in which we can labour be past away ; evermore imploring the Lord our God “ to count us worthy of this calling, and fulfil in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power : that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Let us pray :—

O Almighty God ! who hast built thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone, grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple, acceptable unto thee through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE END.

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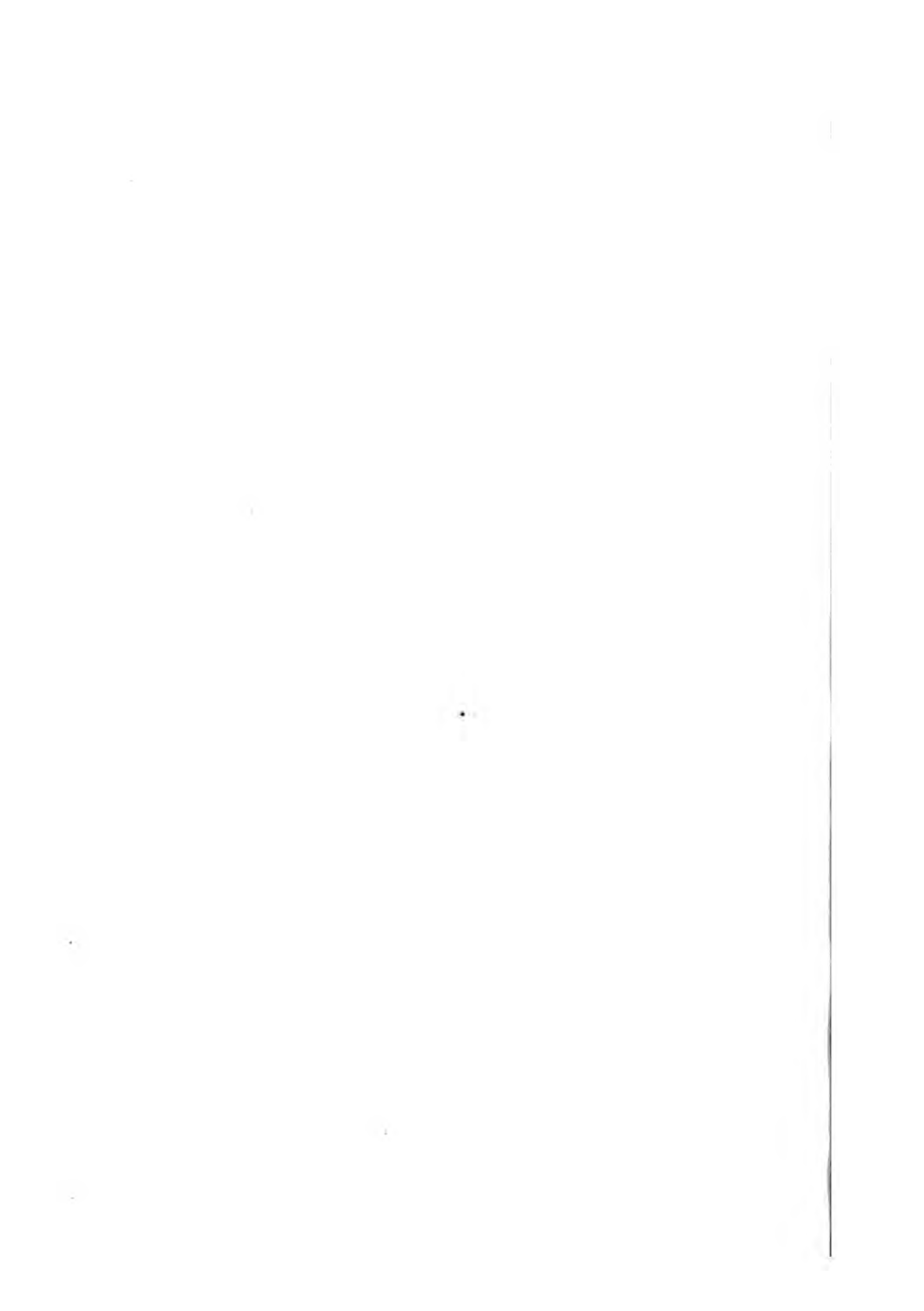
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