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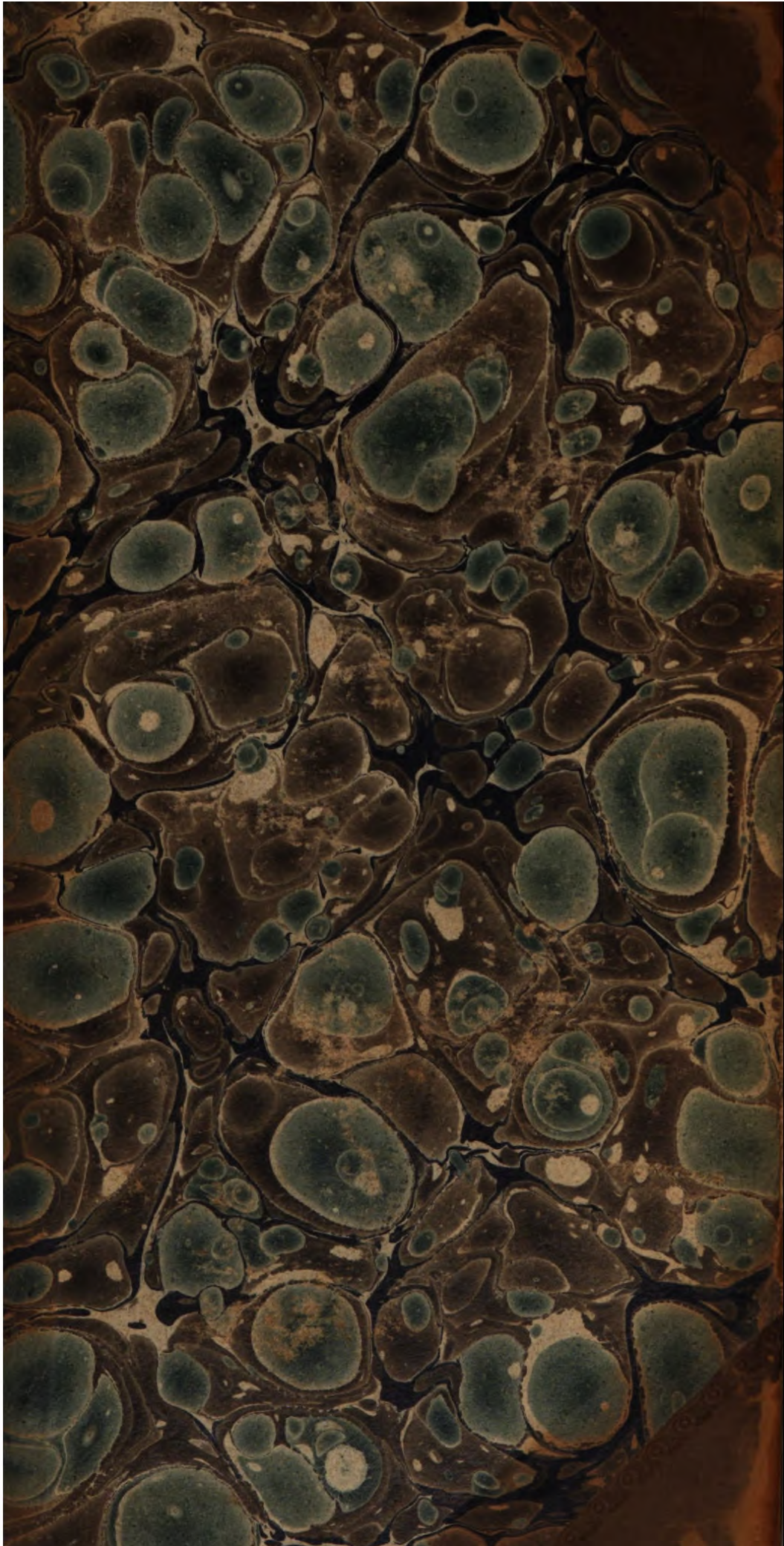
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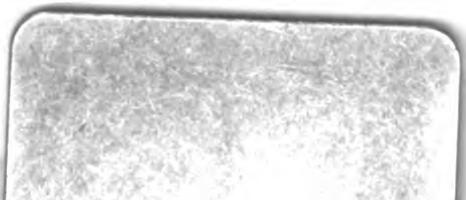


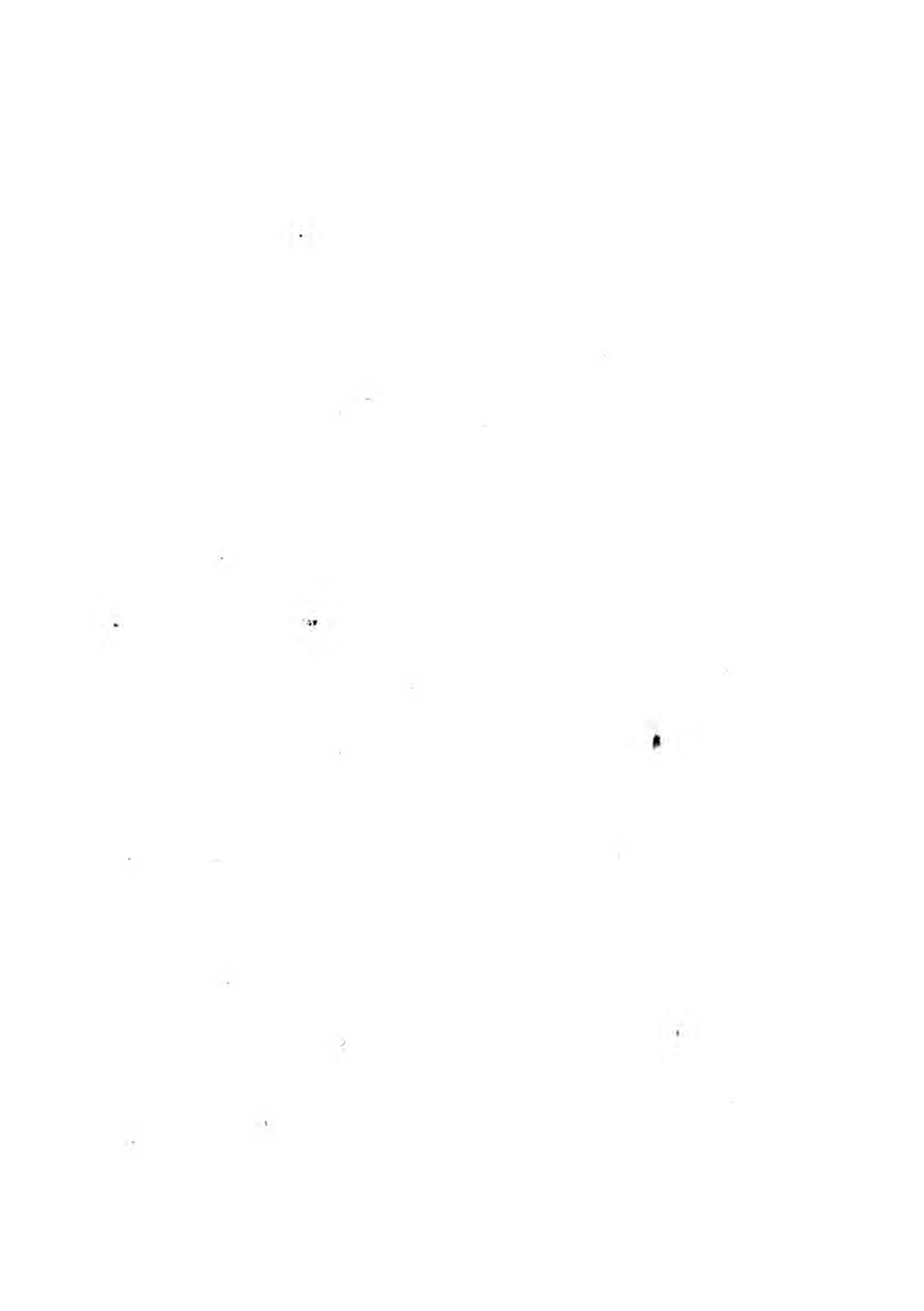


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SERMONS

PREACHED IN

THE PARISH CHURCH OF TALLOW.

DENNETT, PRINTER, LEATHER LANE.

SERMONS,

PREACHED IN

THE PARISH CHURCH OF TALLOW,

CO. WATERFORD, IRELAND.

BY

THE LATE REV. HENRY BROUGHAM,

RECTOR OF THAT PARISH.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET, BERNERS STREET.

M DCCC XXXII.

28.



TO
THE PARISHIONERS
OF
TALLOW AND KILWATERMOY.

MY DEAR AND KIND FRIENDS,

YOUR desire to possess this memorial of your beloved Pastor is gratifying as a farther proof of your attachment to him; and I trust that your wish "to preserve his word and doctrine in your own memories, and hand them down to your children," is an evidence that his labour among you was not "in vain in the Lord."

Our friend, Mr. DEVEREUX, in communicating your request on the

subject, mentioned, that some persons, not belonging to the Parish, had expressed a wish to have the Sermons, in consequence of the moral improvement visible among the people to whom they were addressed. May you continue, my beloved friends, to bear this testimony that you have received the Gospel, “not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in all that believe.” You have engraven on marble your sense of his value; oh! may your lives, as consistent Christians, raise a better monument to his memory—one which will endure when “the fashion of this world has passed away.”

You will grieve, with me, that his EVENING Sermons having all been extempore, scarcely a sketch of them remains. The first Sermon in this volume, is the first you heard him

preach ; alas ! I have not his last ; it was extempore, but I give you the last written one, preached just twenty-eight days before he entered on “ the rest that remaineth for the people of God.”

I have limited the selection to a small volume, thinking an expensive one would not answer for general distribution among his flock.

Although, in committing them to the press, these Sermons become public, I have endeavoured, in selecting them, to consider ONLY YOU, and, therefore, have not regarded their touching on some points disputed in the religious world : and in addressing them to you, my dearest friends, I must thank you, and bless you, for all your affection and kindness to him who is gone, and to those who remain. There is, at least, one spot in Ireland where party

spirit and division were banished by brotherly love. Never was the bond of affection closer between a minister and his flock, and never was the kindly intercourse of man with man less limited by distinction of rank or denomination.

May the Lord continue to bless the preaching of his own Gospel among you, prays your grateful friend.

C. A. M. B.

October 26, 1831

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SERMON I.

PREACHED SEPTEMBER 14, 1828.

2 CORINTHIANS, v. 19.

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

THE office of the Christian Minister is an embassy of peace; its banner-word is the angel's song, "Behold I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord, (Luke ii. 10, 11.) If he reminds you of the thunders of Sinai, it is not to alarm your imagination, but that you may fly from its terrors to him, who has fulfilled the law in your place. If he brings home to your consciences your own transgressions, it is not to awaken vain repinings, but to direct you

to "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." If he lays before you the Scripture standard of that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," it is not to draw forth an unavailing regret for your own deficiency; but to shew you what graces you must ask God, to pour by his Spirit into your hearts. Your minister cannot point out a want, for which God does not point out a supply; he cannot warn you of a danger, from which God does not open a way for you to escape. To guide your feet into the way of peace, and to open to your view the everlasting doors of glory, is his duty, and his privilege; and he comes to you full of anxiety for your spiritual and temporal welfare, as the flock over whom God has made him overseer; and full of love to your immortal souls, as the dear purchase of Immanuel's blood. He bears you a message from his Master, the King of kings, replete with mercy and consolation, "that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

In this declaration, two facts are presupposed; there cannot be pardon without previous guilt, or reconciliation without previous enmity; and these facts are

in accordance with the whole tenor of Scripture, us well as with our daily experience.

It is true that man was created in the image of God, pure and sinless ; but when he listened to the voice of the tempter, and broke the only commandment given, he became the willing slave of him whom he obeyed, and fell at once into “ sin, which (we are emphatically told) is the transgression of the law.” He fell from the holy likeness of his Maker, and became the creature of passion and self-will. His son was begotten in his own image ; the fallen nature of his parents was transmitted to Seth : and if we trace our own descent through the patriarchal ages, through the histories of ancient times, down to our own ; and compare what we have seen or heard of our own immediate predecessors, and what we know of ourselves, we shall find that the same fallen nature is our own, and that it is truly said, “ In Adam all died ;” that is, all his children inherit from him a character whose end is everlasting death ; for such has been the determined wages of sin, ever since it entered into the world, down to the present day. Yet even at that early period did God “ devise a way, that

his banished should not be expelled from him." To the first offender, he gave the momentous promise that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." St. Paul says, (Gal. iii. 16.) He spake not of *seeds* as of many, but of one, that is Christ;" who "should destroy the power of that old serpent, which is the devil." Even then "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" and this precious, though mysterious promise was preserved amidst the wreck of the world, in the breasts of his chosen servants. At length a clearer light began to dawn, when with "a mighty hand and with a stretched-out arm, he had delivered his people out of Egypt, he graciously revealed to them, through lively types and shadows, that the promised salvation was to be wrought by a mighty sacrifice, itself guiltless, but made an offering for the sin of others; and that without shedding the blood of a guiltless victim, there could be no remission of sin, or acceptance of the polluted vows or offerings of the sinner. Who that victim was to be, the prophets more plainly declare, "Let thine hand, (said David,) be on the man of thy right hand; and on the Son of man, whom thou madest strong for thyself." By the mouth of

Isaiah, the Lord declares, "I, even I, am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake. I, even I am the Lord; besides me there is no Saviour." And again, "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor, therefore his own arm brought salvation." "In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son made of a woman;" his "name was called Immanuel, God with us; CHRIST, the anointed, and JESUS, a Saviour. "God was manifested in the flesh." He bore our nature, that he might bear our infirmities. He remained in the world, "going about doing good," that he might "set us an example that we should follow his steps."

"Despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," he drained to the very dregs the cup of human misery, and at length closed a life of woe, by a death of ignominy and torture; and for what? What awful cause drew the "Holy One of God" from the bosom of his Father? What made the Creator of all things a sufferer, and cast on him the weight of that mysterious woe, that wrung the perspiration from his frame at every pore? It was *sin*. "He died, the just for the unjust." He "bore our sins in his own body on the tree."

“ He was made sin for us who knew no sin.” “ He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.” “ God laid on him the iniquity of us all.” He made “ his soul an offering for sin.” Thus, as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive. God does not now impute to us our trespasses, but in Christ is reconciled to us ; and ready for his sake to receive every returning sinner.

But our text contains another very awful picture of the state of man by nature ; he is not only under the displeasure of God for sin ; but it is his nature to be at enmity with God. “ The carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Of this truth, also, Scripture, experience, and our own hearts amply testify. When Adam and Eve had sinned, their first desire was to hide themselves from the sight of that God whose presence had hitherto been the sun of their paradise. They feared his justice ; they shrunk from his holiness ; his very mercy stung them with a painful remorse. We seldom now meet a blasphemer bold enough to say, that he hates the character of God. Yet, otherwise, whence the murmurings at his dispensations ? Whence the disregard of his commands ?

Whence the over-ruling fear of death? Whence the general ignorance of God's will and ways, but from this same enmity? To that, also, we must trace our own distaste for spiritual things, and preference of the meanest trifles of earth. We naturally dislike whatever is very different from ourselves, and we feel how totally opposite are the characters of God and the sinner. It seems as if there could be no point of union, and we are ready, shrinking into our native darkness, to exclaim with the Israelites, "Let us not look upon God, lest we die!"

"But God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself!" He brought the divine nature to the level of our apprehension, that seeing his divine perfections through the veil of flesh, we might regard them without fear. In his awful sufferings we behold the flaming sword of unchangeable justice turned upon himself, to keep open for us the way of life. In him we see the holiness of the Deity, not as an illumined planet from which we hide our dazzled eyes; but as the life-spring of daily and hourly mercy to our own species. Who can follow the steps of Jesus of Nazareth, to the abodes of sorrow and death, and penitence, and thence to the

mountain of prayer, and refuse the homage of his heart to holiness, as exhibited in his example? His mercies were free to the unthankful and the evil; and his last breath was spent in imploring pardon for their ingratitude. He took our nature upon him, that he might suffer in our stead, and make our "peace with God by the blood of his cross." To reconcile man to God, his divine nature was abased; to reconcile eternal justice to man, his human nature suffered; and was raised again, in testimony that the debt we owed to Divine justice was fully paid.

In Christ there were benefits conferred, and perfections displayed, sufficient to draw together every particle of love in our hearts, and concentrate them all on him: but even this the enmity of the fallen spirit could resist. Witness, while he remained on earth, the persecution of his enemies, the desertion of his friends, and witness, in the present day, the avowed opposition of many to his life and doctrine, the careless disregard alike of the holiness he inculcated, and the sin for which he suffered, and the heartless indifference of many who profess to be his friends.

This evil was too deeply rooted in our

hearts for any outward cause to act on it. But when Jesus ascended up on high, he “received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also.” Ere he left this world he promised his disciples, that when he had ascended, he would send them his Holy Spirit, to bring to their remembrance the words he had spoken; to lead them into all truth, and to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to their hearts and understandings. Accordingly we find, that after his resurrection he appeared among them, and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” He who first breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul, now breathed into their hearts the Spirit of life, to quicken them who were “dead in trespasses and in sins.” The fruits of this Spirit were manifest; it transformed the denying Peter into the boldest and firmest champion of the cross; it changed the proud and persecuting Saul of Tarsus, into a minister of Jesus. Hence he sought not his own glory, but was gentle among his flock, “even as a nurse cherisheth her children.” It made the trembling jailor of Philippi to rejoice in the open confession of Christ’s name; and to this day the same Spirit performs the same

office,—changing the vain lover of pleasure into the self-denying servant of God; humbling the proud, giving strength to the weak, and making all who are influenced by its power, joyful, loving, peaceful, long-suffering, gentle, good, faithful, meek, and temperate, however opposed these virtues may be to their natural character.

The promise was early made; “I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.” “I will put my Spirit within you.” Then the renewed heart is indeed reconciled to God, to his character, to his will, to his ways; it sees, and glories in the harmony of the divine perfections, uniting them together as the mystic colours in the celestial bow of promise. It bows in filial reverence to his will; it finds that “wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness,” and delights to “run the way of God’s commandments.”

This is the reconciliation Christ has effected, and this is the message of peace which his ambassadors declare to you. And now, brethren, what can we add? “We, then, as ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” The alternative is

awful : there is no other way of reconciliation open ; therefore, if we reject this, we are enemies of God, whose end is destruction. There is no middle course ; “ He that is not with me is against me,” says our blessed Lord. He acknowledges no half friends. If we are not reconciled through him, we remain in our native enmity, and have our portion with his enemies for ever ! But, if we have made him our refuge, the covenant is sure.

His word is pledged, “ Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” Then are we fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God—then are we his sons, and he our reconciled Father ; and if sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,” of an “ inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” laid up in heaven for all who are “ kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” Which, then, among you, will choose to “ dwell with everlasting burnings ?” Which will seek the crown of glory, which God will give to all them that love his appearing ?

SERMON II.

PREACHED ON TRINITY SUNDAY, 1829.

2 CORINTHIANS, xiii. 14.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

SCRIPTURE is the revelation of the will and character of God; displaying his nature and attributes, just so far as is necessary for the salvation of man, and no farther; it is not its intention to gratify a vain or presumptuous curiosity; and therefore, when it speaks of the mysteries of the eternal world, it does not condescend to explain *how* such and such things are, but simply asserts the fact, and then goes on to build on that fact our duty concerning it. We are all assembled here this day, as professed members of the church of Christ, to com-

memorate, and derive personal benefit from the contemplation of that doctrine, which distinguishes Christianity from every religion of man's device ; the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, to which, as members of the Church of England, we each give our assent in the language of the first article.

Our belief in this doctrine is not founded on any researches of human wisdom ; it stands fixed on the Rock of Ages, the word of The Unchangeable ; if we believe the Scriptures to be his word, we require no farther evidence ; we wish for no collateral proof of a fact which comes to us clothed in the simple, but glorious panoply of his truth, " Thus saith the Lord."

We bend the pride of reason before his throne, where angels and archangels bow and veil their faces ; and the admonition comes as a cloud to quench the burning torch of human wisdom, " Be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken." Let it be but proved that this truth is *once* asserted in Scripture, and then a doubt of it in any of its parts, involves—not a distrust of an isolated doctrine, but—a disbelief of that revelation, without which we are thrown back into the gloomy chaos in which heathen nations are still in-

volved: but with the added condemnation that "the light shined in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not."

In the services of this day we have already heard this truth twice asserted by the inspiration of God. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and "God said, let *us* make man in *our* own image after *our* likeness," (Gen. i. 26.) Who the persons alluded to in the plural number, are, we learn from the 2d verse, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," compared with John i. 3, where it is declared of the essential *Word*, Jesus Christ, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

These are the three divine persons who revealed themselves to human perception at the baptism of Jesus, when God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost, bore their united testimony to the divinity of God the Son.

The prophet Isaiah relates the commission delivered to him by the King, the Lord of Hosts, whom he saw "sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filling the temple of heaven, (Isaiah vi.) while the beloved disciple declares, that "these things said Esaias,

when he saw the glory of Christ and spake of him," (John xii. 41.) And the Apostle Paul adds his testimony to the same message, when he says, "Well spake the Holy Ghost by the mouth of Esaias the prophet," (Acts xxviii. 25.) Thus, when Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall *I* send and who will go for *us*," it was the voice of the triune God he heard, and his glory he beheld.

Again, St. Peter, "filled with the Holy Ghost," (Acts iv. 10—12,) declares, that "Jesus of Nazareth, whom God raised from the dead, is become the head of the corner, neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Isaiah, also, long before, inspired by the same Holy Spirit, records these words—"Thus saith the LORD, before me was there no God formed, neither shall there be any after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and besides me there is no Saviour." But how are these two declarations to be reconciled? Evidently by that word of Jesus, "I and my Father are one:" and he who thus makes himself equal with God the Father, combines the Holy Ghost in the unity of the same God.

head, where he commands his disciples to "baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt, xxviii. 19.)

Proofs, I mean Scriptural proofs, of this truth, multiply before me; but I recollect that I stand here, not in the armour of controversy, but as a shepherd, whose office it is to "feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood:" and my object should be rather to impress on your hearts the doctrine to which, as professing Christians you cordially assent, than to defend that doctrine from the attacks of cavillers and sceptics. If, on the ground of Scripture, any present doubt this truth, I invite them to join me in private to examine the subject; and above all, I beseech them to address the Lord, in humble prayer for teaching from above, "to search the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so." If leaving the rock of Scripture truth, and standing, or rather falling, on the quicksands of his own wisdom, which (be it remembered) is "foolishness with God," any question this truth, let him come and explain to me the nature of the union between his own soul and body; or between light and heat; truths, which are

alike above our comprehension, yet forced by daily observation on our belief, and then I will give him the aid of my puny reason in the search he has entered upon—but not till then; for sooner should we seek by the aid of a rush-light to discover the secret tabernacles of the sun, than attempt to discover the nature of the Deity by unaided reason. “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” (Job. xi. 7.) “Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? for after that the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” His word is the only light to glory, and without it “we grope in the dark as at midnight.” Be it ours, then, my friends, not to reason, but believe what is written.

Let Reason prostrate herself in humble adoration at the feet of revelation; and then will Revelation, as the angel in the Apocalypse to the blessed John, raise her from the ground, and say unto her, “*Fear not*, come with me, and I will shew thee things to come;” and will open to her delighted eyes the temple of heaven.

It is not revealed, and therefore it be-

comes us not to enquire, how far the distinction of persons in the blessed Trinity, is essential to the nature of the Deity ; or how far it might be assumed in their dealings with this world. All we know is, that such a distinction now exists ; and that the three several offices and characters of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are equally and indivisibly necessary to the salvation of the sinner. The love of God the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, are the causes whereby every soul redeemed from among men is brought to glory. The mercy of the Son is the channel through which the love of the Father flows to mankind ; and the communion of the Holy Ghost opens an entrance for that love into the human heart, and exhales it back again in the sweet incense of gratitude to the throne of grace, from whence it came. Enthroned in his own essential perfection ; dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto ; whom no man can see, or hath seen, perfect in holiness, justice, and truth ; God the Father reigns high above all heavens ; the object of worship to myriads of intelligences, high above our comprehension ; high above even the soaring wing of our adoration : yet this

glorious Being “ so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “ He devised a way that his banished ones should not be expelled from him,” in which he could be holy, and yet the friend of the unholy: in which he could rescue the prey from the captor without the compromise of his own perfection; that perfection which holds together the whole intelligent universe; and which, diverging in the smallest degree from its path of light, would cause a spiritual convulsion, a shaking of all the celestial powers; commotion among all spiritual intelligences—compared with which the dissolution of our whole material system, by the fall of that glorious luminary which now regulates its motions, would be but as the destruction of a village, compared with the conflagration of the world. No; he forsook not his kingdom of glory, where righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne;” but, like that glorious orb which is his fittest emblem, he maintained himself in heaven, while he sent forth the beams of the morning—his own Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person—to irradiate our benighted world; and cause

the light of his glory to shine from the face of Jesus Christ on us, who sat in moral and spiritual darkness, and “in the shadow of death.” And thus God the Father remained as undiminished in his own essential glory, as does the sun while his beams are enlightening the chambers of poverty and wretchedness.

My friends, I need scarcely enter on a detail of the glorious work of redemption, which from Sabbath to Sabbath is sounded in your ears; “*Ye know* the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich:”—who “endured the cross, despising the shame;”—who “was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities;”—who “in his own body on the tree, bore the punishment due to our guilt;—who, as our surety, bore for us the penalty of the law; that we might stand perfect in his righteousness;—that he, having borne our sins, we might appear sinless in the eye of justice. By the one offering of himself he “made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and atonement for the sins of the whole world; he threw open the prison doors, and cried, “turn ye to the

strong hold, ye prisoners of hope ; return unto me, for I have redeemed you ; I have opened the gates of heaven to all believers."

But wherefore is not the call obeyed ? wherefore are the prisoners still lingering in the bondage of sin ?

Alas ! an evil heart of unbelief, a nature which cleaves to guilt, and hugs its chains, is keeping us back. Our iniquities separate between us and our God ; our sins hide his face from us ; even when that face is turned to us full of love ; even when he stands ready to lift up the light of his countenance upon us, and give us peace. Yes, the work of redemption is finished ; but we will not accept it ; yes, the character of God is revealed to us in all its beauty, but we will not admire it ; yes, heaven is thrown open to our view, and we are called to enter the gates of righteousness, but we *cannot* ; for holiness alone can inhabit there, and we are unclean and vile : we *will not* ; for sin is our element ; we have loved idols, and after them we choose to go.

A remedy must be found that will enter the seat of the disease, that is, the heart ; that will remove unbelief from our souls ; that will cause us to love holiness,

and turn away from sin ; this remedy is provided in the “ communion of the Holy Ghost.” He reveals no new or strange things to the soul, but he “ takes of the things of Christ, and shews them unto us.” He takes the gospel as a lever by which he removes the rock of unbelief ;— he renews the soul in righteousness after the image of him that created it ;—he makes it meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light ;—he fills it with new desires, new perceptions, new motives ;—he bestows that “ holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord ;” for except a man be thus born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh ; and enables us so to behold the love of God, and the grace of Christ by the communion of his Holy Spirit. Thus the whole soul is prepared to join in the song of the redeemed, and to sing “ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power ; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Worthy is the lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God by his blood. They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,

which was, and is, and is to come!"
(Rev. iv. 8, &c.)

It is thus, my friends, that we must "worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance." Thousands fancy they worship the Author of creation and providence, who never offer the homage of the heart to the God of redemption and sanctification. Many expect to be saved simply by Christ's atonement, without any sanctifying application of it to their own hearts; while, on the other hand, some place the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, as the *cause* of their justification before God; that justification freely purchased by the blood of Jesus. But none of these truly worship him who alone is to be worshipped, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; one God, world without end. "This God is the God of our salvation," and "his glory will he not give unto another," or suffer it to be limited to one portion of his essence. This God must reign in our hearts in undivided dominion, exalted alike as our Creator, by whom we exist,—as our Redeemer, by whom we are saved from guilt,—as our Sanctifier, who will enable us to enjoy an existence of ho-

liness and bliss ;—as the Three in One, to whom all the powers of the intellect, and all the feelings of the heart combine to offer worship and thanksgiving, for ever and ever.

May this God be now revealed to every soul present, as its Benefactor, its Redeemer, and its Sanctifier :—and be assured, that as we each learn for ourselves the extent of our necessity, as sinners, we shall each learn to appreciate the “love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.”—May they be with us all evermore ! Amen.

SERMON III.

PREACHED ON CHRISTMAS DAY, 1829.



JOHN, I. part of ver. 14.

“ The Word was made flesh.”

FEW and simple are these words ; yet they epitomize the whole object of revelation ; they display God in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself ; they supply the connecting link between the “ *from* everlasting and the *to* everlasting,” of redeeming love. They reveal a fact so sublime in its nature, so stupendous in its results, as the mind of Deity alone could conceive.

Neither men or angels, through countless ages, could devise such a scheme of mercy ; nor could the boldest imagination, unauthorized by the Spirit of God, ever dare to glance at the idea of an incarnate

Deity, of "God manifest in the flesh." When called to contemplate the glorious work of redemption, the mind naturally reverts to the scene of its completion, "lovely, mournful Calvary;" but though it was finished there, amid the tumults of material nature, and the extremity of human guilt, and the acme? yes, the acme of even divine love, yet let us not overlook the period when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

Let us, on this day peculiarly, my friends, in spirit go to Bethlehem, and offer the homage of our hearts to the infant Redeemer.

Had he passed through this world, without a pang, and left it in the triumphal chariot of heavenly hosts, without one sensation of human infirmity; just dwelling among us, as the light of the world, and sanctifying the earth by the mere fact of his presence—even in this there is a length, a breadth, a depth, a height—in the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; which we can never appreciate, until we behold "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was."

Speaking in his character of "the wisdom of God," (Proverbs viii.) he declares "The Lord possessed me in the begin-

ning of his ways, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was: when he prepared the heavens I was there; when he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep; when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundation of the earth, then was I by him, as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." And the beloved Apostle John, following up this sublime retrospection, continues, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He could not be exalted by the homage of man. Perfect in his own nature, perfect in felicity, perfect in glory, "Can man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself!" Nor could his glory be diminished by the annihilation of the whole human race:—"Look unto the heavens and see, and behold the clouds, which are higher than thou: if thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of

thine hand? (Job xxxv. 5—7.) No: nothing could be added to his perfection; nothing diminished from the “fulness of God.” But “he remembered the work of his own hand, and it grieved him to see it in the dust.” No sooner had “sin entered into the world, and death by sin,” than the blessed Trinity entered into a covenant of redemption, whereby God, the triune God, could be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly.

In the secret councils of heaven, God the Father spake in vision to his Holy One, and said, “I have laid help upon one that is mighty:” for, “He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness it sustained him.” And God the Son stood forth as the mediator of our fallen race, and said, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!”—for “no man can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him.”—I, even I am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour.” And God the Holy Spirit also declared, “I am the Lord, thy God, which teacheth thee to profit; which leadest thee by the way which thou shouldest go. And what was decreed in heaven was fulfilled on earth, “God so

loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." And "when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And when the Lord Jesus was baptized, "the Holy Spirit, descending from heaven like a dove, abode on him:" and then a voice from heaven testified, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Then all the splendid promises of the Old Testament, all that prophets told, and all that the Spirit dictated of the designs of sovereign grace, were fulfilled, when "the word was made flesh," when Jesus lay an infant in the manger of Bethlehem, "in all points made like unto us," sin only excepted.

"For thou wert born of woman! Thou didst come,
Oh Holiest! to this world of sin and gloom,
Not in thy dread omnipotent array;
And not by thunders strewed
Was thy tempestuous road;
Nor indignation burnt before thee on thy way;
But thee, a soft and naked child,
Thy mother undefiled,
In the rude manger laid to rest
From off her virgin breast."

MILMAN.

The great Teacher of the world came not at once in the state of manhood : he condescended yet farther ; he passed through all the stages of infancy and childhood. No parent's heart will ask Wherefore ? for, oh ! how sweet it is to be permitted to repose the little wants, the sufferings, the bodies, and the souls of our children, on him, who was once for their sake the babe of Bethlehem !

From the first cry with which the infant enters a world of sin to the last, the extremest point of human suffering, " we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Thus in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God ; for in that he himself had suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Man, as a sinner, totally lost all sympathy with God. He might regard the Majesty of heaven afar off with sensations of fear, of awe, even of admiration ; but he never could feel towards the Deity, whose wrath was suspended over him, and who sat enthroned in his own

ineffable, incommunicable glory, the sentiment of love, and of filial affection.

From the throne of his holiness God may command obedience; but it is only by partaking of our own nature that he addresses himself to the feelings; that he enters, as it were, into the recesses of the heart, and takes captive every thought and every imagination—not by compulsion, but by love. And for this purpose it was necessary that he should not only assume our nature in its maturity, but that he should pass through its various stages, and endure its various trials of human nature, even previous to the vicarious offering made, once and for ever, on Mount Calvary, when he “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” It is chiefly in contemplating the infancy of Jesus, that we feel the *reality* of the wonderful fact, “The Word was made flesh.” Great, great indeed, is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh; justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.” Jesus took not on him, my friends, the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham: wherefore he saith, “a body hast thou prepared me,” and that body, that lite-

ral, palpable, human body, is now in glory.

And wherefore this? Christ partook of our human nature, that we might partake of his spiritual nature, and his life must and will be, perfected in every believing soul. As he was born of the flesh, so must our souls be born again of the Spirit of God. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." As he became a child, and was subject unto his earthly parents, so we must renounce all self-will, and as little children sit at the feet of our Heavenly Father, to learn his will; saying with the holy infant Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." So Jesus expressly declares, (Mark x. 15,) "Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." A child has no anxiety for itself; it leaves all its wants and all its desires to the paternal care, and in this sweet resignation of all selfish pursuits, will the child of grace calmly rest in the cradle prepared for them, namely, the state of life in which it hath pleased God to place them.

His manhood, his passage through the world, must be matured in the believing

soul, which must grow up into him, says the Apostle, (Eph. iv. 15, &c.) "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." "As my Father sent me into the world, (said Jesus to his Apostles) *even so* send I you into the world;" and how was that? He came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him; he "went about doing good;" he endured every temporal privation for our sake; and even so his disciples must "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord."

My friends, there is nothing beyond our calling in the expression of the Apostle, "That the life also of Jesus might be manifest in your bodies;" nor is there any thing beyond the calling of every professing Christian in the declaration of St. Paul, (Gal. ii. 20,) "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:" for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts."—They have nailed their sins to the cross of Jesus, and put their own former practices to open shame: and though the death of sin be slow and lingering in the

soul of the believer, it is certain. Christ died for our sins, that we might die unto sin, and live unto righteousness; and he rose again that we might be partakers of his resurrection; for "if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

Thus, my dear friends, ere we enter into his glory, must his life and death be, as it were, acted over and over again in each of our souls; and for this purpose, as the Apostle Peter tells us, (2 Peter i. 4,) "are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that we might be partakers of the divine nature."

But let us follow, and profit by the wise institutions of our church, which has appointed seasons for the peculiar consideration of the several doctrines of our most holy faith; and as this day commemorates the birth of Jesus in the flesh, O, may some among us be this day born of the Spirit! may some among us become as little children! "for of such is the kingdom of heaven." O, that some one individual may now be

prompted by the Spirit of God to stop his worldly course, to enter on the spiritual life; to cast away all his own preconceived ideas, prejudices, pleasures, pursuits; in short, to leave *himself behind*, to deny himself, and to come as a little child to learn of him, who for our sakes laid aside his glory, forsook the scenes of celestial bliss, where cherubim and seraphim cease not day and night to sing his praise; who made himself of no reputation, but entered this world of sin and sorrow, a helpless babe, whose cradle was a manger, and who had not where to lay his head. May we who are carnal then become spiritual, since for us "the eternal Word was made flesh," to dwell amongst us.

I cannot conclude without wishing you all, my dear and kind friends, a happy Christmas, a *truly* happy Christmas; not such festivity as too often profanes the period it pretends to honour; but such happiness as arises from the influence of our common feeling of love to the Redeemer, and to our fellow-Christians; binding each family, and the whole neighbourhood together, in the bond of Christian love. Blessed may you be in your homes; blessed may you be in your families; "blessed be your basket,

and blessed be your store." May Christ dwell in your hearts by faith, and be the chosen guest and ruler of your feasts. "The Lord bless you, and keep you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and be merciful unto you. The Lord bless your going out and your coming in for evermore."

SERMON IV.

PREACHED GOOD FRIDAY EVENING, 1830.

ROMANS, IV. 25.

He was delivered for our offences.

AMONG the various devices by which affection loves to perpetuate the remembrance of a beloved object now removed from sight, none has been more general, none is more gratifying to the human feelings, than the setting apart certain seasons, in which they are in a peculiar manner present to memory: and most particularly, those days, which have formed marked periods in the history of ourselves and families.

The mother will never pass unnoticed the birth-day of her deceased child: the widowed heart can never forget the day when "the desire of her eyes was removed at a stroke:" and however present the memory of these lost ones may be

at other seasons of the year, there will be, on these days especially, a pouring out of the feelings, a yearning of the heart, which almost bursts through the gates of the tomb, and, for the moment, re-unites the mourning friend with the departed. Then will tenacious memory recal with graphic precision, every minutia of the days gone by, and pause on every incident, which the diamond-pin of affection has engraven on her tablets. To these general and natural feelings of the human mind, our church appeals when she appoints particular seasons for the contemplation of those events in the history of our redemption, which address themselves peculiarly to the hearts, and feelings, and sensibilities of the Christian.

At every season of the year, Christ crucified should be the first and dearest object of our thoughts, but surely we awake with a new emotion—we, in a manner, realize the dying agonies of him “who suffered for our offences” on this day which commemorates his death; which commemorates the most awful, most sublime, most heart-stirring event, which even the power of God could perform—the Creator dying for the sins of the creature.

Oh! let us leave for a while the busi-

ness and the pleasures, the noise and tumult of the world, and follow the procession that moved from Pilate's judgment-hall; oh say, "Is it nothing to you, all, ye that pass by?" "Is there any sorrow like unto his sorrow wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger," when all the sins of mankind were made to meet together, as it were, in our load of guilt; when the "Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all;" when all the wrath of God against sin, when all the vengeance of justice against transgression, all the abhorrence of infinite purity against the defilement of iniquity, were brought to a focus; all the burning rays of divine judgment brought to one point, and that point hurled against the unsheltered head of him, who stood as the sinner's substitute!

Yes:—"He was wounded for *our* transgressions; he was bruised for *our* iniquities, the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him;" the just one was delivered for the unjust; and he who "knew no sin was made a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Yes: such an High Priest became us, and such an one alone could offer an atonement commensurate with

our guilt: for he had not, as the Jewish Priests, to offer up atonement for himself, and then for the sins of others; but pure and spotless, the Lamb of God could take away the sin of the world:—not only “bearing their iniquities,” like the typical scape-goat, “into the land of forgetfulness;” but imputing to them the infinite merit of his own perfection, of his own obedience unto death, even the death of the cross.

“No man,” saith the Lord, “can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him:” and why? Because all that mortal man could offer or could endure, would be insufficient to wipe away one stain of his own guilt; far less could it be imputed to another. But when Jesus once suffered for sins, and bore the punishment denounced by divine justice against transgression, he had no sins of his own to answer for; and therefore all his sufferings, and all his merits were laid up in the treasury of heaven, to be claimed, and applied, and imputed to every repenting sinner. This benefit is to be sought by prayer, and received by faith; but it is offered to all “freely,” “without money and without price.” It cannot be purchased—like the surplusage of human merit,

deposited in the chambers of imagery of the Church of Rome—with any works, or any merits, or any alms-deeds, or any morality, or any act of ours. The imputed righteousness of Christ is offered freely, and must be accepted as a gift of divine and sovereign grace, with no attempt to add to its perfection by any thing we can do, which would detract from its freeness and its fulness; above all, with no presumptuous attempt to defile its holy purity, by imagining we can be partakers of the gift, and yet continue in sin.

Our faith must be like that of Abraham, (recorded Rom. iv. 20—22.) “He staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.”

“Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself,” said the prophet Daniel, (chap. ix. 24, &c.) “He shall finish transgression and make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.” And as Daniel states the object, so, with equal plainness of speech, does Isaiah

foretel the nature of his sufferings, (chap. liii. 3, &c.) “ He is despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ; and we hid, as it were, our faces from him : he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth : he was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation ? for he was cut off out of the land of the living ; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death ; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief.” While the royal Psalmist (his father according to the flesh) enters into the details of the awful scene with the de-

scriptive accuracy of one who beheld it all. And “that the scripture might be fulfilled,” and the testimony of his identity with “the Messiah” of Daniel, and “the man of sorrows” of Isaiah, and “the anointed one” of David—be confirmed, he bore, amid the grand and sublime characteristics of his sacrifice, these minor points, which yet his human nature felt as acutely as our own would do—the scorn, the spitting, the crown of thorns, the dividing of his raiment, ere the suffering frame it covered had ceased to live.

Yes, my friends, his human nature was in all points (sin only excepted) like our own; and every pang of suffering humanity, bore with its full force on the man Jesus; for never did he use the power of his divinity to avert one stroke from his suffering humanity: never did the impassable shield of Deity defend his devoted head from one arrow of the Almighty. He offered up his humanity, as a perfect and entire sacrifice, on the altar of his own divinity: the altar sanctified the gift, and while the fire of divine justice consumed the victim, the altar remained untouched.

But his human nature *felt* in every tortured limb, and quivered in every

agonizing nerve, and it is as man, we should consider the pangs endured upon the cross. Crucifixion was the most ignominious death to which a criminal could be exposed; and therefore "the preaching of the cross," a religion founded by, and on One, who suffered this death of shame, was "to the Greeks foolishness;" while the Jews esteemed the man adjudged to such an end, not only abandoned of man but accursed of God; and therefore this same cross was to them "a stumbling block," which stopped them in their first approach towards Christianity.

Every mark of infamy that malice could suggest was accumulated on him, who for our sake "despised the shame." Lacerated with the stripes inflicted in Pilate's judgment hall, faint with loss of blood, exhausted by repeated insults, and oppressed with the weight of the cross on which he was to be suspended, was he urged along the road to Calvary. The cross was composed of two beams, crossing in the top at right angles; to this the naked body was suspended, by fastening with nails to the transverse beam the hands, and to the upright beam the feet: and on these members, filled with nerves, and peculiarly sensitive of

pain, the weight of the whole frame was suspended. To this cross, then, our Lord was nailed by four Roman soldiers, each fastening to "the accursed tree," a limb quivering in all the vivid suffering of manhood; and it was during this dreadful moment that he breathed the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

"Behold, the man!" at this crisis, for now "the hour is come," the cross is suddenly elevated—fixed into the earth; and by a wrench every fibre of the frame which hangs on it, is forced to its utmost extension.

Behold the man! weep for the tortures of a body like thine own; feel for him as a fellow-creature; and then, when the fountain of thy tears begins to dry, ask of the surrounding multitude, Who is this? "It is Jesus of Nazareth!" He who fed the multitude in the wilderness, providing by miracle for even their temporary comforts. Ask yon aged widow, "Who is this?" "It is he who raised my son from the bier, and restored the child of my old age." Ask that ruler of the synagogue, "Who is this sufferer?" "It is he who restored my daughter from the arms of death." Ask that man whose eyes are fixed with such intensity

on the scene of woe "Who is this Jesus?" "One thing I know," would he say, "that whereas I was once blind, now I see; and it was He who opened mine eyes." He made the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the lame to walk: those hands were ever stretched forth in deeds of mercy:—those feet went about doing good." "Then *why*," is the mysterious question, "Why is he there?" Ah! in that multitude there were perhaps a few who could answer, "He is delivered for our offences, and he will be raised again for our justification." He has bared his breast, that the sword of justice which is suspended over us might be sheathed in his bosom. He dies, that we may live. He suffers, that we may rejoice eternally.

But there was a cross, which the eye of man saw not, and of which that which racked the quivering body was but an emblem; it was that mental agony which burst forth in the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" As the sinner's substitute he bore the hiding of his Father's face, that hereafter the sinner might behold the countenance of a Father reconciled.

Oh! behold him as "God manifest in the flesh." Let the eye of faith pierce

for a moment the sacred veil of his humanity, and conceive the objects present to his soul in that moment; hell and heaven: the long, long vista of eternity opened to his view; the whole race of Adam hastening to their destiny; the gates of hell yawning wide to receive them; the sword of justice ready to slay them; while he, and he alone, partaker at once of the nature of God and man, stood between the living and the dead; and there was an awful pause, a silence in the full choir of heaven awaiting the result;—but “It is finished,” the last pang has been endured—the work of redemption, the costly purchase of souls is now complete:—that was the last sigh—the last struggle—“he bowed his head and gave up the Ghost.”

My friends, this is no fiction to awake a vain emotion, to call up a sentimental tear; it is a fact that appeals to every feeling, every hope, every fear, every principle of action within you. It is a fact, that “God has thus commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” It is a fact, that nothing less than the substitution of one whose merit outweighed the accumulated guilt of all mankind could avert the sentence, “The soul that

sinneth, it shall die." It is a fact, that if Christ had not died we should be still under the curse; and it is equally a fact, that if we believe not in his finished work, and if we attempt to justify ourselves before him, he is for us dead in vain; and we stand in our unpardoned guilt as though no Saviour had ever suffered for us.

But oh! my friends, the subject of this day's consideration appeals to a feeling stronger than even hope or fear; it appeals to our *love*; "We love him because he first loved us," and this day we have beheld, as it were, the tokens of that love in every stripe, in every wound, and heard them in every sigh.—It was for *us* he bore the cross and despised the shame; and shall not we for his sake take up our cross, and follow him out of a "world that lieth in wickedness," "bearing his reproach," and seeking only that he who once suffered for sins may be exalted in us, and in all around us. Shall we hug to our bosoms the enemy that slew him, Sin? Shall we join the multitude in the cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" Should we, as the spectators of the tragedy on Calvary, join in railing on him; should we give another spear to pierce his side? should we supply other

thorns to rend his brow? Our every feeling revolts from the awful thought. Yet oh, my friends, remember this awful truth of Scripture, "If ye sin wilfully after ye have received the knowledge of the truth, you crucify to yourselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame." (Heb. vi. 4—6.) And in the language of prophecy we find him displaying, as his severest sufferings, "the wounds wherewith he was wounded in the house of his friends." (Zech. xiii. 6.)

Remember this, and if any feeling of gratitude, any sense of "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," has been awakened in your hearts this day, —oh, let it not evaporate in a vain emotion! oh, let it not be "as the morning cloud, and as the early dew, that passeth away" without effect.

SERMON V.

PREACHED ON EASTER SUNDAY, 1830.

ROMANS, IV. 25.

Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

WE have lately been led to consider the sacrifice and death of Christ; our feelings have been wrung by the recital of his sufferings; the cross seems still before our eye; we see the blood that flowed from his side; the wounds seem bleeding afresh before us; the sound of the cruel mockings, the railing with which he was assailed; the cries of "Crucify him, crucify him," still ring in our ears; we hear his dying groan; we behold his lifeless body extended on the tree; and then follow it to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and there we have

left it. But ah! is this "He who should have redeemed Israel?" is this He upon whom our hopes for immortality were fixed? He has suffered for our offences—but is the sacrifice accepted? Shall we seek the living among the dead? Shall we hear a voice that bids us live, issuing from the tomb? Hopeless hope!

Never in the annals of time—not even when the Patriarch was called to raise the sacrificing knife over the child of promise; never was human faith put to a trial so severe, as that under which the disciples laboured, when they had seen their Lord crucified and slain—delivered for their offences, and given over, as it appeared, a prey into the hands of death.

One anchor yet remained for hope to cling to. He had said, "It is finished." He had drank to its dregs, the cup which his Father had put into his hands. He had trodden alone the wine-press of his Father's wrath, and he had declared the sacrifice complete. Some there were who "hoped against hope," whose faith pierced even the gates of death, and while they knew not how it was to be accomplished, yet clung to his word of promise; and while hope seemed buried in the grave of Jesus, the lamp of Christian

love was burning there, illumining the darkness of the tomb, and guiding thither the feet of the believing few.

Doubtless they believed and trembled :—doubtless they had to cry, “ Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief: doubtless, Satan whispered in their ears, “ Your Saviour is dead—your faith is in vain—you are yet in your sins.” But Faith replied, “ Yet will I trust in the name of the Lord, and stay myself upon my God. To whom *can* I go, for he alone had the words of eternal life!” Love stronger than the grave, and faith that tramples over death, yet wept and watched at the Saviour’s tomb, “ For as yet they knew not the Scriptures that he must rise from the dead.”

But this day, my friends, commemorates the event which proved the sacrifice complete, and the offerings accepted, which tore asunder the bond that was against us. The sinner’s surety was set free. Therefore the debt must have been paid; the hand-writing that was against us, “ The soul that sinneth it shall die,” was blotted out with the blood of Jesus, and in its place we receive the signal stone, engraven, “ It is finished.” —“ He was delivered for our offences, and is raised again for our justification :”

therefore, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. iv. 23. v. 1.)

Your sins were imputed to him, therefore he died, bearing your sins in his own body on the tree. He stood as the substitute of the sinner in every respect; "The Word was made flesh," that "flesh might partake of the divine nature."—"He died the just for the unjust." "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." His blood "cleaneth from all sin." He "taketh away the sin of the world." Our guilt was cancelled by his punishment, just as the debtor is set free when his surety has paid the debt. Nor is this all: had we stood in our own strength, our ground would have been as precarious as that of our first parents; and, standing in our own strength, like them we might have fallen: but Christ was raised again for our justification:" and every believing sinner stands justified in the sight of God, as if he had himself died with Christ, and had then been raised from the dead with him, and by the same Almighty power: still farther; to man, in himself considered, supposing his sins already blotted out and "cast into the depths of the sea," no reward could be adjudged by the hand of justice; for he

could never do more than it was his imperative duty to perform; and having done all, he must still say, "I am an unprofitable servant." But as the guilt of the sinner was transferred to the surety, so is the righteousness of Christ imputed to the sinner; and while in himself, the most exalted saint, will cover his face and say, "Behold I am vile," yet the weakest and humblest believer in the Lord Jesus, may stand fearlessly before the judgment-seat, and plead the finished work, the perfect obedience, the spotless purity, the life and the death of Jesus, the sinner's friend, as his *claim* to the inheritance of the saints in light, which becomes his right, only as the purchased possession of "the Lord our Righteousness."

The active and passive obedience of Christ, whereby he perfectly fulfilled the law and satisfied the justice of God, being imputed to the elect, and received by faith, their sins are pardoned, their persons accepted, and they are brought to eternal glory. This righteousness, by which a sinner is justified, is called in Scripture "the righteousness of God," because it was performed by him, who is God as well as man; and as it is op-

posed to the fancied righteousness of works, it is called also "the righteousness of faith," because faith applies and apprehends it. It is compared to a garment, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus:"—"He hath covered me with the robe of his righteousness:"—and it is so called, because, clothed in it, the justified sinner stands pure and spotless before the divine presence.

Every justified or pardoned soul, stands like Joshua, the High Priest; (Zech. iii. 1, &c.) Satan, the accuser and the adversary of mankind, standing at his right hand, as his accuser—"And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and the Lord said unto those that stood by, "Take away the filthy garments from him: and unto Joshua, he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I have clothed thee with change of raiment. So they set a fair mitre on his head, and clothed him with change of raiment." Even thus must every soul of man be "stripped of the filthy rags of his own righteousness," and clothed in the seamless robe of Christ's righteousness. Then shall he

“ greatly rejoice in the Lord, his soul shall be joyful in his God ; for he hath clothed him in the garments of salvation, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels.” Then shall he become a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a regal diadem in the hand of my God. He shall be “ made a King and a Priest unto God, and reign for ever and ever.”

This imputed righteousness ; this righteousness performed in the nature to which it is to be imputed ; wrought by Christ as man, in our nature and in our stead ; this was proved and acknowledged complete by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ; and now the same unchangeable, incorruptible, immutable justice, which required the sacrifice, stands voluntarily pledged to accept it. Our covenant Lord is “ a just God and a Saviour ;” he is not only merciful, but “ *faithful and just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” His own sacred word is pledged that, wherever the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world is applied by faith to the heart, the destroying angel of his wrath shall pass it by.

The unswerving truth of God, which to the impenitent sinner speaks the certainty of coming vengeance, to the believer, confirms the promises, which are "Yea and Amen, in Christ Jesus." The justice before which the sinner trembled, as sealing his condemnation, is now pledged to accept the returning penitent in Christ. The sovereign authority, which dooms the rebellious to irrevocable punishment, takes the believer out of the power of Satan and of self, and declares, "None shall pluck thee out of my hand." Thus the very perfections of Deity, which seal the fate of the rebellious, form a canopy of defence around the believer; the character of God, which is to the sinner clouds and darkness, is light and life to the believer: even as the pillar of cloud was darkness to the Egyptians while it gave light to all the tribes of Israel.

If, then, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead speaks peace to our hopes, while we look forward to eternity, our surety set free, and our ransom accepted, equally does the same fact support and nourish those hopes, and give them a substantial form, while we regard him as our brother according to the flesh; and read the promise, "that

as Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." Oh! what a thought is this, to the widowed heart, to the bereaved parent, to the lamenting friend, to the orphan. Your treasures are removed from mortal sight; but "in the garden" of life "there is a sepulchre," and then your fairest plants, perhaps the parent stem on which you leaned; perhaps the flower just opening into blossom; perhaps your fig-tree and your vine, what seemed the very aliment of your existence, are all shut in there, and you see them no more on earth.

But "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept;" and at his coming, he shall gather an abundant harvest. All that sleep in Jesus shall "arise and sing," though now they "dwell in dust;" and the doors of the sepulchre shall be unclosed, and you shall behold your loved ones, not indeed as they removed from your sight, but "made like unto the Lord;"—glorified and fitted for the heavenly garden, where there is *no sepulchre*, no death, neither sorrow nor sighing. *If* they sleep in Jesus! Oh! what an awful *if*! It were worse than vain to carry the inquiry, "who sleeps in Jesus?" to the

silent tomb; or raise the shroud to examine the character, and thence adduce the fate: we know not how the Lord may have remembered them at the eleventh hour. But oh! let us put this awful question to our own hearts, Am I found in Christ? If I am, I shall awake from the dust of the earth to everlasting life; if not, I shall awake to "shame and everlasting contempt." Oh! let us so live, that we may indeed fall asleep in Jesus, and be found his, when they that are Christ's shall arise to welcome his second coming.

These two doctrines, my friends, that is, the completeness of our redemption, and the resurrection from the dead, are especially presented to your consideration this day, which our church appoints peculiarly to commemorate that event, of which every Lord's day, the first day of the week, is a memorial.

The fields of poetry have been searched by orators, to find imagery to express the blessings it brings to remembrance. It has been compared to the first creation of light, as its radiance broke on a darkened world; to the renewing vigour of spring, when nature bursts from her winter sleep; but human eloquence sinks into nothing, when it attempts to add

decoration to such a truth as this. In all its glory, in all its sublimity, it stands recorded here: "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;" and if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Let us answer in the language of Scripture, "This is the day that the Lord hath made, we will be glad, and rejoice in it; I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. Thanks be to God which hath given us the victory through Jesus Christ. God is the Lord who hath shewed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.—Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; Thou art my God, I will exalt thee."

SERMON VI.

PREACHED ON THE SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION,
1830.

MARK, xvi. 19.

So then, after that the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

COMPASSION—even divine compassion, would seem to have done its utmost, when the Lord Almighty veiled his glory in human nature; assumed a frame in all points like unto ours, and in that frame, filled with human sensibilities, acute in the sense of pain, for us endured “the cross and despised the shame.”

That he should, even for a season, have inhabited such a house of clay, displays the loving-kindness of the Lord, in language beyond what the tongue of an archangel could express. And, had we traced his history to this point, and seen

him expiating our guilt by suffering in our nature, and then rising in the same form, at once to prove our redemption finished, and to assure us, in the emphatic language of fact, of the resurrection of the justified ; we should receive the sacred record with hearts so replete with gratitude as scarcely to leave room to conceive a farther proof of his eternal mercy : we should imagine the glorious spirit casting aside the mortal coil, the divine essence dropping for ever its tabernacle of flesh—

“ His human form dissolved on high
In its own radiancy.”

But no ; having loved his own which were in the world, he loves them unto the *end* ; “ the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting ; ” and though the work of redemption was completed, yet divine love still devised another means by which his banished ones might be brought nigh to God ; he carried to the heaven of heavens the form of man, purified indeed from all the dross of humanity, but still that form, that nature in which the Majesty of heaven was first offended, is now borne in the Holy of Holies, by that Saviour who once as-

sumed it to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness. No change took place; (at least none is recorded in the pages of revelation;) no change took place in the body of our risen Lord, between the time when he confirmed the doubting faith of Thomas, by exhibiting the wounds of the spear and of the nails, and that glorious moment when, while in the act of blessing his disciples, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

We may look back as on a finished work, on his sacrifice for our sins, and his resurrection for our justification; but we are at this moment living under another dispensation, of which JESUS, as our Mediator, is "the Alpha and Omega; the beginning and the ending."

Our great High Priest has offered the sacrifice. He has burned the incense of his own merit on the altar of his divinity, and its perfume has covered the mercy-seat of heaven; he has clothed himself in the spotless robe of his obedience unto death. "Holiness to the Lord" is inscribed on his forehead, and on his breast-plate are the names of all his people, borne upon his heart before the Lord continually. He is the Christ, the

anointed one, and the oil of gladness is upon him. And now he has entered into the Holy of Holies ; and the golden bells of the Gospel ring out the joyful sound, that we have “ a Great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.” “ For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us.”—“ Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” There is something at once awfully sublime and deeply comforting in this truth, my friends ; that the incarnate Son of God is *now* pleading our cause before the eternal throne ; that at *this* very moment Jesus is making intercession for us ; that “ if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ;” that every prayer which has been uttered in spirit and in truth in this congregation, has already been presented before God, by our Mediator ; that “ the lifting up of our hands, has been as incense,” perfumed by the sweet odour of a Saviour’s merits.

It is not as a vain repetition, my friends, that our Church concludes her

every petition with these words, with which we are become so familiar, that they often convey scarcely any meaning to the ear; "through Jesus Christ our Lord."—It is through him, as the conductor, that every blessing we enjoy descends on us; He is the "one Mediator between God and man," in whom the Father is well pleased. As man by sin had forfeited every claim to even the common bounties of Providence, it is only through him, who "is our peace," that we can receive any token of compassion. Sin closed every avenue of communication between the sinner and his God; but Jesus opened "a new and living way, through the veil: that is to say, his flesh," by which the mercies temporal and spiritual of the God of love, can be conveyed: every blessing of Providence and grace passes, as it were, through Christ, who placed himself between the living and the dead; and as he is the only medium through which God draws nigh to us, so is he the only way by which we can draw nigh to him. "I," saith the Saviour, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but through me." As the Israelites were commanded to direct their eyes toward the Jewish temple when they

prayed, so we are commanded not to dare to approach the unveiled majesty of the Eternal, but to approach with confidence in the faith of him of whom that temple was a type; and as the Almighty promised that the warrior in the day of battle should be defended, and the penitent forgiven, and the stranger accepted, and the captive remembered, when they prayed unto the Lord, toward the temple made with hands (“which is the figure of the true,”) so does he now promise that “Whatsoever ye ask the Father” in Christ’s name, he will give it you. Not merely in Christ’s name as an expression of the lips; but with a deep conviction of the heart, that it is only through him, for his sake, by his abounding grace, that any mercy can be vouchsafed to us. Have you in this manner asked the Father in his name for the pardon of sin, the conversion of heart, the redemption from iniquity, without which we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven? Have you thus in his name besought the gift of the Holy Spirit—the fulfilment of his own promise? that he will bestow on you the Spirit of truth to guide you into all truth?—Jesus is now exalted at God’s right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to his people for the

remission of their sins : have you asked him to pour forth on you that Spirit of grace and supplication ? to give you repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of ?” Or have not your prayers too often evaporated in empty sound, addressed in a vague and general way as a homage to the Deity, with no recollection that Jesus stands at his right hand, ready to hear every sigh, to interpret every wish, to catch every half-formed breathing after holiness, and to present your petition ; not as it leaves your lips, the imperfect utterance of a creature, who through his ignorance cannot, and through his conscious unworthiness dare not ask—but to present it in his own name, to make your cause his own, and to shower down upon you blessings beyond what you either desire or deserve ? May it not be said of you, “ Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name ?” Oh ! for your own soul’s sake, obey the summons, “ Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

It is impossible thus to contemplate Jesus as our glorified Intercessor, wearing our nature in the very heaven of heavens, without casting forward a glance of faith and love to the hope set before us, as the consummation of his work of

mercy. While the disciples beheld him departing into heaven, the promise was given, like the mantle of Elijah, to strengthen and encourage them; "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." He shall revisit our favoured earth again, and for what purpose? No longer to suffer; for he hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; but to take to himself his mighty power and reign; to subdue his enemies, and to gather together his own elect, that they who have suffered with him may be "glorified together;" that they may see him as he is, and be made like him; that they may behold his glory, and be for ever with the Lord." This my friends, is the point to which Prophets, and Evangelists, and Apostles, direct our hopes, "Unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation:" and henceforth there is laid up a crown of glory, which the Lord the righteous judge, shall give to all those who love his appearing.

The exact time of this glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour is indeed uncertain. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man;" but this very un-

certainty, while it lulls an ungodly world into a false security, keeps the children of God waiting and watching, like unto men that wait for their Lord; because they “know neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh.” The very beams which are now issuing from the sun may form themselves into his canopy of light; the very clouds which hover over us may become *his* chariot, who rideth on the wings of the wind;—and are we ready? would he be welcomed here? Oh! answer truly to your own consciences; would you be ready to go forth to meet the bridegroom, or would you not rather feel that your plans were disturbed, and your schemes broken in upon? Would you not still cling to your beloved gains? Would you not turn a longing eye upon your farms, your merchandize, your pleasures, your connections? And does not this prove that you are not yet numbered among those who “love his appearing.”

Time fails me, for I would not risk wearying your attention; time fails me to trace in detail the practical result of the truth we are this day called to consider, the ascension of Christ, and his office as our Intercessor. But all that man or angel could express is comprised

in the few emphatic words of inspiration: "If ye be then risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God: set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth:"—"Seeing that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, let us hold fast our profession; for we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need."

SERMON VII.

PREACHED ON WHIT-SUNDAY, 1830.

PSALM LXVIII. 18.

Thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

As God is in himself the only, the eternal, the unchangeable source of happiness, so union with him is the essential, and the only means of the felicity of an intellectual creature. All created intelligences derive from him their knowledge and their happiness, as all our planets derive their light and glory from the sun: and if, as has been the case of man since the fall, we are separated from our connection with him, and dependance on him, the soul can never find a resting place until restored again to its connection with the central point of light and glory. It is as impossible, in the nature

of things, for a soul to be happy at enmity with God, as for a planet to enjoy the influences of the sun when fallen from its place in the heavens.

To effect the restoration of our fallen race was the object which drew the Son of God from "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was." He resided on our earth to display to us the lovely character of him with whom we have to do. He died to make reconciliation for iniquity, and by the sacrifice of himself once offered, to make "a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement" to offended justice, for the sins of the whole world. He rose again and ascended up on high to receive gifts for men, even the gift of the Holy Spirit, that "the Lord God might dwell among us."

It is not for us to enter into the secret counsels of the Most High, or examine the terms of the covenant in which the three persons of the blessed Trinity assumed their several offices for the redemption of man: we can only know so far as it has pleased God to reveal his will concerning us; and on this subject we thus read, (John vii. 39.) "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." And again our blessed Lord declares (John

xvi. 7,) “ It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” And lastly, in allusion to this promise, at the very hour when his disciples were assembled around him to hear his last command ; and while the bright cloud, which was his triumphal chariot to the skies, was hovering above them, ready to receive him out of their sight, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem ; but wait for the promise of the Father, which (said he) ye have heard from me, “ For ye shall be endued with power from on high,” (Acts i. 4, & 5.) He lived and died, that man might be brought nigh to God ; he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, that God might be brought nigh to man.

These glorious promises began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, which our church commemorates at the present season : as a stream of light from the throne of God, it has flowed onward to the present day, and it shall be completed when the number of the redeemed is perfected, to join for ever in the song of Moses and the Lamb.

It is true the miraculous gifts of the

Holy Ghost ceased with the occasion which required them. The gift of tongues lasted only until "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, had all heard in their own tongues the wonderful works of God." (Acts ii. 9, &c.) The power of working miracles ceased when so many attestations to the truth of Christianity had been collected together, as to render this mark of her ministers unnecessary ; when the very existence of the church, amidst such flames of persecution as must have destroyed any human edifice, testified, even to her enemies, that "The Lord was in the midst of the bush, which could thus burn with fire, and yet was not consumed."

We find throughout the Scriptures a remarkable *economy of miracles*, if such an expression may be allowed. The Lord usually acts by the means of the ordinary course of things. His wisdom, once for all ordained : and when he reverses, or overrules the appointed course of cause and effects, it is only for some special purpose, and ceases the moment that purpose is fulfilled. The reason of

this is obvious ; no miraculous interference can attest more forcibly the wisdom and power of God, than does what we term “ the course of nature ; ” consequently it is not its superior force, but its novelty, which gives its effect to miracle ; and the most wonderful providential interference which fancy can devise, would, if long continued, rank, in our esteem, with the regular return of night and day. But to continue ; though the power of miracles has ceased in the church, still does the Lord God dwell among us, as a guide unto all truth, a Teacher in spiritual things, a Counsellor, a Comforter, a Sanctifier, and in this sense I would say, in the words of the Apostle, “ Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

Many profess to believe in the necessity of divine assistance, and of the influences of divine grace, who yet have never considered the *reality* of these things, or applied them to their own experience ; yet there is no truth of Scripture more plainly, or more fully revealed than those which concern the third person of the blessed Trinity. It is his office to make us “ meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light ; ” that inheritance purchased for us by the

blood of Jesus : and in order to accomplish this, he effects in the redeemed soul every step of the progress from a death of sin to a life of righteousness ; from a being whose passions, if set loose from outward restraint, would form a hell in themselves, to the inhabitant of glory, for ever offering the sweet sacrifice of gratitude before the throne of God.

His first work is to convince of sin ; “ When he is come,” said our blessed Lord, “ he will convince the world of sin.” Now I venture boldly to state it, at once as a truth of revelation, and as the result of my own observation and experience, that no soul ever did or ever will enter heaven, who has not been convinced of sin by the power of the Holy Spirit : who has not felt the fact, “ *I* am a sinner,” and against God have I sinned.” The sentence of Nathan to David, “ Thou art the man,” sent home to a man’s own heart, with a deep and abasing sense of guilt, makes him to abhor himself in the sight of God, and feel that he is a lost and perishing sinner. But the Spirit not only comes with a tongue of fire to proclaim unto man his iniquity ; he descends like a dove with the olive branch in his mouth, and healing on his wings, to declare a righteous-

ness not our own ; to say, “ Oh sinner ! thou hast destroyed thyself, but in God is thy help.” He “ convinces the world of righteousness,” the perfect righteousness of him who was “ made a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” He first convinces of danger, and then points to the city of refuge opened to us by the blood of the Lamb. He takes of the things of Christ, and shews them unto us ; not revealing any new truths, but bringing home to the heart the truths of divine revelation, and bestowing the faith by which we apprehend their reality and our personal interest in them. Thus he guides the flock of Christ into all truth, he brings all things to their remembrance, whatsoever has been written aforetime for our instruction ; he opens the eyes of the understanding to understand the Scriptures. He is our *teacher* in spiritual things : “ 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 ; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit : for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him ; even so the things of God

knoweth no man but (by) the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. ii. 11, &c.) He is the promised *Counsellor* of his people, ready to guide them in every path of difficulty. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he will direct thy path: thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, or when ye turn to the left," (Isaiah xxx. 21.) He is the Holy Ghost the *Comforter*, "pouring the balm of heavenly consolation on the wounded spirit; binding up the broken-hearted; speaking liberty through the blood of Jesus to the captives of Satan, and teaching the humble and contrite soul to look up with holy confidence, and say, "*Abba, Father!*" for they receive not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but they receive the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, "*Abba, Father!*"—He is the *Sanctifier*. It is his to fit the chosen ones of Christ for his presence; it is his to present them with the marriage garment, provided in the finished work of Christ; it is his to adorn them with the beauty of personal holiness; to anoint them with sweet odours; to pour grace into their lips; to make them all glorious within, and thus to present them to their King, as the purchase of his precious blood. He

cleanses them from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and teaches them to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. “ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God, and such were—“ Alas! such *are*—some of you:” but of every heir of eternal happiness, it is said, “ but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. vi. 9—11.)

Now, my dear friends, let us make the solemn enquiry “ Have we received the Holy Ghost? Can we find among us “ such a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” Have we been convinced of sin by the Holy Spirit? Have we been taught to cry from the bottom of our heart, “ Lord save me, I perish;” or are our confessions of sin only a kind of mock humility, which often veils the most deep-rooted pride? Have we received the Holy Ghost as our guide, or do we trust to our own understanding? Do we seek by our own wisdom to find

out God ; or do we, with the simplicity of children, hear and receive what “ holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ?” (2 Pet. i. 21.) Have we learned from him to discern the value and importance of spiritual things ? Has he taught us to “ count all things but loss, if we can win Christ ?” Have we received him as our Comforter, in the hour of trial ? Do we look to God as our “ very present help,” or do we seek consolation from the world ? Does the Lord God dwell among us as our Sanctifier ? Has he delivered us from our besetting sins ? Has the thief become honest, the covetous liberal, the drunkard sober ? Is he who was once a Sabbath-breaker, found calling the Sabbath a delight ? Does the law of kindness now sit on the lips of the reviler ? Are the melancholy become joyful ; the discontented peaceful ; the revengeful long-suffering ? the violent gentle ? the proud meek ? the luxurious temperate ? Does love, or charity, which is the bond of perfectness, unite all these virtues into a treasury of mercy and kindness towards your fellow-creatures ?

If it be so, my friends, I trust that the Lord God is dwelling among you : but

if there is no such change, oh, remember, that whatever your profession, or your knowledge may be, “ If ye have not the Spirit of Christ, ye are none of his : and it is only those who are “led by the Spirit of God,” that will be acknowledged as “ the sons of God.”

SERMON VIII.

PREACHED NOVEMBER 2, 1828.

JOHN, iv. 24.

God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.

NATURAL reason, unaided by revelation, has, in every age of the world, acknowledged that the nature of worship must be guided by the character of its object. None ever presented the olive branch to the god of war; or sought to propitiate the goddess of peace by human sacrifices. Our blessed Lord, in the text I have read, only refers this acknowledged truth to the intercourse between God and man. Now none will deny that the God we worship is a Spirit,—an infinite Spirit; that omniscience and omnipresence are his attributes; that the God of the spirits of all flesh, knows every movement

of the spirits he has made; that while “man looketh upon the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart;” that the sacrifices of God are a “broken spirit and contrite heart;” and that the “kingdom of God is within us,” firmly established in the souls of his believing people; yet how often do we act, as though he were a being like ourselves, to be deceived by the outward show, and satisfied with the bending of the knee, while there is no homage of the understanding and the heart. How often is it considered as an act of piety to bring the listless body to the house of prayer, while the mind wanders at large after its own imaginations! How often does the hand *hold*, and the eye *peruse*, the word of life, while there is no desire of the soul, to behold wondrous things in his law! How often is the outward form made the *end* instead of the *means* of our devotion! To visit the house of God, or to read his word, is considered a finished offering, while in truth these should only be considered as opportunities of lifting up the heart in prayer, and of learning his will that we may walk thereby.

Let the conscience of each present testify in how many things he acts, as though God saw only the outward ap-

pearance, and looked not on the heart ; but on this occasion I will confine our attention to the one important point of public worship.

Among the many blessings and privileges we enjoy, none appears to me a subject of greater thankfulness, than the scriptural Liturgy which the mercy of God, through the means of our church, has provided for our use, It takes the members of the Church of England in a great measure out of the power of man ; whatever the minister may be, however false his doctrine, or however feeble his words, we are sure of having the truths of Scripture presented to our mind, and put into our mouths with the most impressive emphasis. Our Prayer-book is in fact a beautiful compilation from the Bible : it scarcely contains a sentence, whether of exhortation or confession, praise or prayer, which we do not find paralleled in Scripture. Our daily services consist of almost the very words written by " holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," so arranged by the compilers of our liturgy, as to be suitable for the public worship of a Christian congregation.

I hesitate not to assert that no heart uninfluenced by the Spirit of God could

justly adopt the language of our prayers as its own ; but I dare not say, I dare scarcely hope, that in any one congregation every heart echoes the words uttered by the lips. A large proportion of mankind is included in the condemnation—“ This people draweth nigh to me with their mouths, but their heart is far from me.”

Oh, if every spirit joined in the words they repeat, how richly would the incense of a Saviour's merits arise to heaven in our behalf, presented on the golden censer of united hearts ! But *is* this the case ? Do we never *permit* the thoughts of worldly business, or worldly pleasure, to accompany us to the house of prayer, and raise a cloud of earth-born vapours between us and our God ? Too often, alas ! will wandering thoughts disturb the most sincere devotion ; but they are dreaded and resisted by the Christian, while they are *allowed*, if not encouraged, by the mere professor : and if we are tempted to excuse them, because they tend to our lawful engagements, or even our duties, let us remember that the doves and the lambs, from which the temple was purged, were intended for sacrifices to God ; but that was not their place.

It has been well, though quaintly observed, "In time of service seal up both thine eyes, and send them to thine heart." But even where the object for which we meet, does occupy our attention, do we indeed, "in spirit and in truth," *feel* the words which habit teaches us to follow? Do we deliberately, and with deep abasement before God, acknowledge ourselves "sinners," "miserable sinners;" who "have left undone the things which we ought to have done, and have done the things which we ought not to have done," and that for Christ's sake alone we can hope for pardon? Do we "in spirit and in truth," "acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness," so that "the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable?" Do we in truth cry for mercy through the merits of a Saviour's blood? Do we really *wish* to be kept, even this one "day, without sin," though sin should appear in her most bewitching and besetting form? Do the blasphemer, the scoffer, and the drunkard, *desire* to lead "a godly, righteous, and sober life?" Does he who is cherishing resentment as a support of his dignity, pray "in spirit and in truth," "From

anger, wrath, malice, and all uncharitableness, good Lord deliver me?" Does he who looks for the fall of his enemy as the day of his triumph, pray, "Forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and turn their hearts?"—"forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us?" Does the mind which, "glorying in its shame," rejoices in its own haughtiness, pray earnestly to be delivered from "pride and vain glory?" Does he who is "living in pleasure," walking according to the devices and desires of his heart, and desiring nothing better; does *he* in "spirit and in truth" pray to be endued with the "grace of the Holy Spirit to amend his life according to the rule of God's holy word?" Does he who delights in the breach of the commandments, who bows down before the idol wealth, or makes pleasure his god; whose lips only utter the holy name of God in *vain*, and who considers the Sabbath a weariness,—does *he* really think that *that* God heareth him, to whom he offers up this petition, "Lord have mercy upon me, and write all these thy laws in my heart, I beseech thee?" Does the imagination, which loves to revel in its own vanities, pray, in spirit and in truth?—"Cleanse the thoughts of

my heart, by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit ?

Does he, who during the whole week lives regardless of the sufferings of his fellow creatures, come to this house of prayer, to pour forth his heart in their behalf, and cry for mercy upon all according to their several necessities ? Doth the haughty spirit which looks on every blessing as the reward of its own merits : and the discontented mind, which sees no mercy mingled in his cup—Do these join to render “most humble and hearty thanks, for all God’s mercy and loving kindness to them, and to all men ?” Do they whose treasure is in this world, and whose only gratitude to God is as the Giver of temporal good, feel in spirit and in truth, “that he thanks him *above* all things, for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ ? Does this proof of the love of God appear “inestimable” to him, who has never been led to the foot of the Saviour’s cross ?

Now, my friends, do our conduct and feelings during this week, prove that, on each returning Sabbath, these things are spoken by us “in spirit and in truth” as the language of our own hearts ? Surely

if not, your vows here are a solemn mocking of God, as though we could deceive the all-seeing eye by false professions, or introduce unholy flattery to the very court of heaven! What should we think of the man who endeavoured to conciliate the favour of his sovereign, by repeating praises and petitions, to which his heart never responded; who brought him offerings of false gold, fair in the outward appearance, but worthless in reality? How should we shrink from the imputation of insincerity in our professions to a friend; yet which of us can lay his hand on his heart, and say that every word in which he has this day joined in the worship of God, has been spoken "in spirit and in truth?" And yet this deception is offered as an acceptable service to the "Searcher of hearts, who trieth the hearts and reins."

Now to what source can we trace this mockery, this falsehood, of which so many of us are guilty, who never utter a word of falsehood towards our fellow men! Like every other sin, "if we track the felon to his den," we can follow it up through all its windings, to a disbelief of the real character of God as revealed in scripture; and if we mistake

his character, of course we must mistake the nature of the worship he requires : if we regard him as a hard master, “ reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strewed,” then we may offer him the tribute of heartless homage, and say, “ Lo ! there thou hast that is thine :” if we suppose that he requires the service of his creatures merely as a kind of tax, which acknowledges his supremacy, then we may pay our debt with external offerings.

But if we believe the Gospel, and behold God as a loving Father, then every act of his providence, every word of his law, appeals to our whole souls to say, “ My son, give me thine heart.” If we “ behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God,” then we feel that love is the only homage that can reach his throne. If we know and believe what he has done to win our love, then we shall feel what is the obedience he expects. Had the work of our redemption been merely an exertion of power, like our creation, one word of his almighty power might have effected it : but it was a display of infinite love ; and Jesus was made man, and dwelt and walked with us, that we “ might know

and believe the love that God hath to us :” thus he captivates the heart of every believer, and not only teaches it the homage he requires ; but makes that homage the offspring of gratitude. The Sun of righteousness exhales every particle of love in the believer’s heart, and returns it in sweet and refreshing showers on all mankind : “ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.” “ If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another ;” if we believe the love which was manifested on Calvary, we shall be drawn “ with the cords of a man, the bonds of love ;” and every instance of mercy will be as a golden cord let down from heaven to raise our affections thither, and draw them more closely to himself.

“ God is love :”—love, then, according to reason, must be his proper offering ; but the believer need not wait to reason ; the same Spirit which opens the eyes of his understanding to behold what Christ has done for his soul, writes on his heart the “ law of love.” “ The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.” This makes our worship a “ worship in spirit and in truth.” This spirit whispers in our hearts, “ Take with you words and

turn to the Lord, and say to him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render to thee the calves of our lips." Thus we are taught of God, according to our liturgy, that if we would "obtain that which he does promise, we must love the thing which he commands;" every petition for holiness, every confession of sin, arises from the ground of the heart, and every prayer which utters them, only embodies the desire of the believer's soul. When words alone are presented, they are indeed as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal, and it matters little what is the form we follow; but when they are the medium by which the spirit ascends to God, when the sigh of true penitence wafts every confession, and the song of praise is the melody of the heart, then, indeed, is our worship a sacrifice, "acceptable, well-pleasing to God by Jesus Christ."

It is not mine to breathe on the dry bones of a formal profession and bid them live, and clothe them in the beautiful proportion of a Christian experience; this work the Spirit of the Lord alone can perform; but it appears to me peculiarly the office of a minister of the Church of England, to direct his flock to

the consideration of the declarations they make week by week, and to a view of the treasure they possess in the services appointed for their use. This subject I propose to bring before you on the next Sabbath day.

But before I conclude ; let me beseech you in your own houses to reflect on the nature of spiritual worship. If any say, “ *I am no hypocrite ; I do not pretend to be better than the rest of the world,*” let him remember that each returning Sabbath he makes a solemn profession of godliness, in the presence of God and man, which stamps an inconsistent walk and life with the brand of hypocrisy. To the many, who have never yet attached any meaning to the sounds in which from habit their voices join ; whom habit leads to church, and habit teaches to follow the form of prayer ; I would recommend a serious perusal of the words they utter, a deep consideration of their excellence in themselves, and a solemn enquiry whether they ought, and how far they do, assent, “ *in spirit and in truth,*” to their own vows, declarations, and petitions.

To you, my Christian brethren, who count one day in the Lord’s house better than a thousand ; who love the place

where his honour dwelleth, and who come here as an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ; to you, I need only say, pray for a more thankful heart for the privileges you enjoy, remember the promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Enter, then, into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; and may he, whose presence blessed the chamber where the disciples were assembled secretly for fear of the Jews, be with us here, and meet and bless all the true worshippers, who worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth.

SERMON IX.

PREACHED NOVEMBER 9, 1828.

1 JOHN, i. 9.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

THE feelings of “ a broken and a contrite heart” can scarcely be expressed in stronger language than we have all used this day ; and if these expressions be indeed, the language of our hearts, blessed are we ; for God has declared, “ Unto this man will I look, even to him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, and that trembleth at my word :” and “ Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to

revive the heart of the contrite ones.”
“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

But, my friends, is it indeed so with us? Does this spirit of contrition pervade this congregation of professing penitents? Do we really believe what we say, when we acknowledge that “we have erred and strayed from God’s ways like lost sheep?” that “we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts?”—that “we have offended against God’s holy laws?”—that “we have left undone those things which we ought to have done,” and that “there is no spiritual health in our souls?”—Do we really feel ourselves “miserable sinners,” while we so plaintively call for mercy on ourselves as such? What do we consider as the spiritual sorrows which we beseech our God “pitifully to behold?” Do we really feel that we “most righteously deserve those evils” from which he saves us; and in earnest beseech him not to reward us after our iniquities?—Do we, “in spirit and in truth,” acknowledge and bewail “our manifold sins and wickednesses, which we from time to time have committed,” in thought, word, and in deed, against God? Are we, in truth, heartily sorry for “these

our misdoings." Is "the remembrance of them grievous unto us, and the burden of them intolerable?" I fear, my friends, that many among us have rather been taught by habit to use this form of confession without considering its import, than by grace to use it as the real expression of our feelings before God. Would not the pride of nature rise in some of your breasts in indignant self-defence, if you heard this language applied by another to your individual case? Have you not scorned the voice of conscience, or of friendship, when it would warn you of sin in terms far less severe than you here adopt? Yet, my dear friends, our church, in putting these confessions into the mouths of her children, says no more than Scripture declares of every man, and the saints of old acknowledged as their own experience. "My people," saith the Lord, "have gone astray like lost sheep;" they have forgotten their resting place:—they have "turned every one their own way," they have "sinned and come short of the glory of God;"—"from the sole of the foot even to the crown of the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores."

From Abel, whose sin-offering was

accepted of the Lord, down to the beloved disciple, who declares, that "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," *Confession* is the language of every saint in Scripture, and it is also the language of every heart which now beats with love to God and man. Why is it, then, that so many, even among those who make confession with the lip, are so totally ignorant of their own guilt in the sight of God? It is because they walk in darkness, and a deceived heart is still leading them aside.

The first office of the Holy Spirit of God is to "convince of sin." He enables the sinner to view himself in the pure light of truth. He shews him the holiness of God, and enables him by contrast to see his own impurity. He shews him the love of Christ, and thereby teaches him what that love is, and convinces him of his own ingratitude. He shews him the spiritual nature of the law, and convinces him that, had his life been blameless in the eye of man, yet God had discerned the roots and principles of evil in his heart. He teaches him to try himself by "the law and by the testimony;" and there he finds that many "things which are highly esteemed

among men, are abomination in the sight of God." Above all, he brings home to his heart what sin has cost his Saviour. We may "make a mock of sin," while we see it dancing along in its career of folly; but we dare not look on its effects on Calvary, and say it is "a trifle." We dare not say that *that* is light in the sight of God, which cost the blood of his Son to expiate its enormity. The law can instruct us in the holiness and justice of God as an abstract truth; but the cross exhibits both combined with that which could absorb all else—his *love!*

Convinced that such are the effects of sin, can the awakened soul sit down, and permit sin to reign in his members uncontrolled? Oh no! As the enemy of his Lord, he will search it out that it may be destroyed: as the poison of his soul he will seek out all its retreats. He ceases from the vain attempt to hide his guilt from the All-seeing; and brings it all before him, who at once can pardon and heal; and he fears not to look on the dread array which he must bring before his Judge, because he knows, that the one sacrifice offered for sin, can cover all.

How gladly would the poor leper, when

he came to Jesus for healing, cast away every disguise with which he had concealed his infirmity from his fellow-men, and display all his diseases to him, who himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses. Jesus is the physician of our souls, who has declared, that "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:" and if we would be healed of our spiritual malady, sin, we must cast away every refuge of lies, in which we have tried to veil it. The pompous trappings of righteousness, the deceitful drapery of a *soi-disant* innocence; the sober covering whereby we would distinguish heart sins from outward observances; the cloak of charity which we are so ready to transfer from our neighbours' offences to our own. Like blind Bartimeus of old we must, "casting away our garment, rise, and come to Jesus." We must lay bare the secret recesses of our heart to the God of truth, for the express purpose of their being cleansed; making it the prayer of our soul, "Search me, oh Lord! and try my heart: search me and try my ways, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

As in my text, so in almost every passage of Scripture which speaks on

the subject, confession of sin is linked with forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy," (Prov. xxviii. 13.) "God looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his soul from going down into the pit, and his life shall see light," (Job xxxiii. 27, 28.) "I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." David said unto Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord; and Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die," (2 Sam. xii. 13.)

But the confession which is thus spoken of arises from the ground of a broken and contrite heart; it is the outward and visible mark of that inward and spiritual grace; a true and deep repentance is a heart principle to which confession gives utterance, and which a life of active duty embodies; it is not that vain sorrow for past offences which evaporates in

tears ; it is not that despairing sense of guilt which led the traitor Judas to the crime of suicide : it is a change of mind and heart, exhibiting itself in a change of conduct ; it is a dislike of the sinful pleasures once loved, a disapprobation of the schemes once approved ; a renunciation of the sins once cherished. The tears of Peter *confessed* his sin, a life of devotion to the Master he had once denied, and a martyr's death, proved his repentance real. Fear of a maiden, and a menial, made him deny his Lord ; but his repentance was proved real, when at the tribunal of power he replied, " We ought to obey God rather than man." Fear led him to forsake his dying Lord, when all the other disciples also forsook him, and fled : his repentance was manifested at the stake when he cheered his wife with the words, " Remember the Lord ;" and chose for himself a death more ignominious than that his Master had endured, the being crucified with his head downwards.

Mere regret for our errors may arise from selfishness and pride ; we may regret them because they have injured our worldly interests, or lowered our character in the eye of man ; but this is " the sorrow of the world which worketh

death ;” that “ repentance unto salvation which needeth not to be repented of,” has God for its object ; it humbles the soul in his sight ; it cries, “ Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” It would not, if it could, lower the standard of his holy law ; but it longs, and strives, and prays, to be conformed to it ; and it can find no resting-place but the foot of the Saviour’s cross. There it fulfils the command, and enjoys the promise, “ Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee.” Its object is God, and its source is the love of God in Christ.

We may feel a selfish dread of the punishment of sin ; but we cannot abhor its nature and existence in ourselves, until we love God. The prodigal regretted his scanty fare, and wished for the comforts he had forsaken, while yet he remained afar off ; but he was led home by the hope of his father’s pardon, and it was when that father saw him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him, that he cried, “ Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son !” Thus, while we continue in our natural alienation from God, and are feeding on the husks of pleasures that

have fled, we may envy the solid happiness of his servants ; but it is only when brought nigh to God by the death of his Son, and made his children by faith in Christ Jesus, that we experience a heart-felt sorrow for sin as an offence against him. The law teaches us what our duty is ; but mercy makes that duty a delightful service, and pierces us to the heart when we forsake it. Thus it is written, “ I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God :” and again, “ I will save you from all your uncleannesses ; and I will call for the corn and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you ; and I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field : *then* shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and your abominations.” According to this principle our church declares that, “ Although we ought at all times humbly to acknowledge our sins before God, yet ought we most chiefly so

to do, when we assemble and meet together, to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, and to set forth his most worthy praise." And again, we commence our confession by addressing God as our "Almighty and *most merciful* Father," as that which at once gives its darkest hue to our guilt, and encourages us to acknowledge it and implore his mercy.

True repentance also is universal. It reaches from the action to the motive, from the motive to the principle; and, as it acts as in the sight of the Omniscient, it can leave no dark recess where sin is still permitted. At once the telescope of faith brings eternal, but unseen realities, into a sanctifying contact with the daily walk; and the microscope of conscience, discovers a thousand evils unseen by the eye of man, which keeps the Christian humble before his God, even when his life is most blameless in the sight of the world.

This view of himself enabled St. Paul in the very height of his usefulness, and while walking as touching the law blameless, truly to think himself "the chief of sinners," and "less than the least of all saints." The heart once touched with the love of Christ delights in lying

low before him, and would not, if it could, cancel one portion of the debt of love. He knows that “whom much is given the same loveth much;” and he would elevate the Saviour’s grace on the ruins of his own righteousness, and increase his own love by the view of unmerited mercy, rather than by still seeking to “establish his own righteousness refuse to submit himself to the righteousness of God.” He loves his Benefactor too dearly to wish, by establishing his own merits, to diminish his gratitude; and therefore he allows himself to view his heart *as it is*, and does not “dissemble nor cloak his sins before God, our heavenly Father: but does confess them with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart, to the end, that he may obtain forgiveness of the same by God’s infinite goodness and mercy;” and our public services, however humbling their language, contain no confession of sin, to which a conscience awakened and enlightened by God’s Holy Spirit, does not plead guilty. In accordance with Scripture, where, as I have remarked, confession and pardon are inseparably connected, our church ordains that the confession of the people shall immediately be followed by a declaration of the

forgiveness promised to "all those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe the holy Gospel." In this absolution the minister fulfils his divine commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

But God forbid that any minister of our church should arrogate to himself the power of forgiving sin. "No man can forgive sins but God only:" nevertheless man, as the ambassador of God, is entrusted to pronounce God's offer of pardon to every returning sinner, and to declare the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ. Far from making himself a pardoning or a condemning judge, the minister joins his fellow-sinners to beseech God to *grant us* true repentance, which is indeed his gift, for Christ is "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to *give* repentance to his people for the remission of sin:" and he joins to implore the guidance of the Holy Spirit to render our present prayer sincere, and "to make the rest of our life hereafter pure and holy." For repentance is not a retrospective power only; it looks forward; and the sense of past sin at once

stimulates to future vigilance ; and shews us how vain our best attempts would be, unaided by the Holy Spirit, who alone can impart that “ holiness without which no man can see the Lord.”

Now my friends, who are these contrite sinners of whom I speak, “ Who earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for their misdoings ?” If I believe your own acknowledgments this day, I may say to every individual present, “ Thou art the man !” And will you continue in a state of allowed sin, acknowledged by your lips, but unrepented by your heart ? While you do so, the breath that is in your nostrils alone separates between you and perdition ; and, remember it is possible “ to heap up wrath unto the day of wrath.” Are any disposed to say, “ It is all very true ; I hope before I die that I also shall really reform, and set myself to the work of repentance ?” *Before you die*, my friend ! then why not now ? perhaps “ this very night thy soul may be required of thee.” You believe that except we repent, we shall all likewise perish. God is ready at this moment to receive you as a returning penitent ; then why delay ? I do not deny that death-bed conversions have been ; but they stand as monuments of

abounding grace, not as false lights to lure you from the paths of righteousness.

But are you desirous really to repent? then remember that repentance is a definite reality; not a vague sensation. In the third chapter of Luke, John the Baptist gives plain directions how you must evidence its beginnings to God and man; namely, by each one forsaking the error of his ways, whatever that way may be. Consider well what are the sins you confess; for many will lament *sin* in general, while they shrink with indignation from each separate charge; but true repentance is both general and particular; for *sin* as an indwelling principle, and for *sin* in every form it can assume.

Beware also of making a merit of your repentance; an error so absurd that experience alone makes us believe its existence in a rational mind; and recollect that repentance is efficacious so far only as it leads you to Christ, and no farther.

I fear the painful duty of warning the wicked of the error of his way, is not fulfilled without addressing another class of persons among the professing penitents before me. Is any one secretly saying, "I fulfil my duties; I attend my re-

ligious services ; I obey the calls of charity ; what then is my sin ? I may have little faults ; that which is faultless is inanimate ; but sin is too harsh a word to apply to my trifling failures." My deluded friend, " you deceive yourself, and the truth is not in you," your conscience is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. You disbelieve the declaration of God, that " all have sinned,"—that your " heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked,"—" that every imagination of the thoughts of your heart is only evil continually." You reject every promise of Scripture, for not one is addressed to that creature of your imagination, a sinless mortal ; while it abounds in offers of mercy to the returning penitent. You insult the Almighty ; to use the words of a living writer,* " The sinner who disobeys and trembles, renders at least the homage of his fears to the truth and power of the Eternal ; but the sinner who makes a righteousness of his infirmities, and puts a gloss upon his disobedience, and brings " the accursed thing" to the gate of the sanctuary, and bids the piercing eye of Omniscience look upon it and be satisfied—who can tell

* Dr. Chalmers.

us whether the fire which cometh forth will burn up the offering, that it may rise in sweetly-smelling savour to him that sitteth on the throne, or whether it will seize on the presumptuous offerer, who could thus dare the inspection, and thrust his unprepared footstep within the precincts of unspotted holiness ?”

But human words are weak and impotent on such a subject, while the word of inspiration thus puts your case in its true colours, “*You make God a liar!*” Let me repeat it; “If we say that we have not sinned, *we make him a liar.*” (1 John i. 10.) It were presumption to attempt to render more awful this declaration of him, who “is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent.”

And now the sweetest office of the ministry remains to me. We are not only sent to cry, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;” but also to “bind up the broken hearted, to comfort those that mourn in Zion, to say to them that are of a fearful heart, “Lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh.” Are there any here, then, whom the Holy Spirit has convinced of sin—who say, “Behold I am vile!” and are

now crying out, "Lord, save me, or I perish?" He *will* save you, my brother; the faintest sigh of *true* repentance has already ascended to the throne of grace, from whence it came. Thou hast, indeed, "destroyed thyself; but in God is thy help." Hear his invitation, "Return, ye backsliding children," and "I will heal your backslidings:" let your hearts then answer, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." In Christ, "Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." *Mercy* made the one perfect and sufficient offering for the sins of the whole world; *justice* and *faithfulness* are pledged to accept that offering, for all who make it theirs by faith. The covenant of grace is between the Father and the Son; we cannot alter it; and by that covenant eternal justice accepts the sacrifice made by eternal love. His faithfulness and his justice are also pledged to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This is the part of the covenant fulfilled by the third person in the blessed Trinity. Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, having made the sacrifice, God the Father is *faithful* and *just* to accept it, and forgive us our sins; and God the

Holy Spirit is faithful also, to cleanse all those who are Christ's "from all unrighteousness." Who then shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God, that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died; yea rather that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. viii. 33, 34.)

But remember that while you cannot be too confident in what Christ has done for you, you cannot be too distrustful of yourself. Christ is elevated in your soul precisely in proportion as self is abased. A distinguished Christian being asked, "How am I to lose *self*?" he replied, "Precisely in proportion as you receive Christ."

Beware, also, of putting repentance, humility, or any other grace, in place of Christ. They are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit, only so far as they tend to exalt the Creator and abase the creature; but *that* is an idol which we would put in the Saviour's place, whatever be its name.

While life remains, sin will still continue its warfare with holiness, and give the believer cause of humiliation before God. As lost sinners, we are first called to partake the offers of mercy: as peni-

tent sinners, we are granted the privileges of God's children : and as redeemed sinners, we shall hereafter join in giving glory to him who has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

SERMON X.

PREACHED NOVEMBER 16, 1828.

GALATIANS, V. 6.

Faith which worketh by love.

IN pursuing the consideration of our Liturgy, the object which now presents itself to your contemplation is, the Confession of faith, or Creed, by our belief in which we are entitled to hold a place in the congregation of Christ's church; and to which we all have testified our assent by our position, if not by our voices.

It is a valuable compendium of the doctrines of Christianity, which asserts, without attempting to explain them; and here let me, in the first place, observe, that, while in the utterance of confession, our belief in the depravity of human na-

ture renders our expressions general ; (“ WE have erred and strayed ;” *we* have done those things which we ought not to have done,” and so on) — in the declaration of our faith, each speaks only for himself. We cannot know or answer for the creed of another ; but each stands up to declare before God and man, “ *I* believe” the solemn truths which follow. Now, I have not a doubt that every individual here present, would unhesitatingly sign this short but comprehensive form, which martyrs of old have sealed with their blood ; but have we considered its import, or weighed its connection with our daily life ?

Most of the errors under which the moral world is groaning, and which have rent asunder the professors of our most holy faith, arise from a false distinction between the doctrinal and practical part of religion. — That “ which God has joined together,” presumptuous man “ would put asunder ;” and in so doing he severs the soul and body of vital godliness : the one party adhering to a lifeless form of works distinct from motive ; the other presenting to our admiration a visionary spirit, which may be good, and may be holy, but which glides as a sha-

dow from our grasp, when not embodied in our actions.

Now, this division has not its foundation in Scripture; there we find doctrine the life-spring of practice: they are not even severed as good things, each good in itself, but still better when combined: but a holy life is the fruitful tree which springs from a holy faith; and a holy faith is the germ which alone can bring forth fruit to the glory of God. Christianity is a religion of motives, revealed to man, who is the creature of motive. If you entertain false ideas of the character and dealings of God, you will, of course, mistake the nature of his service; but *you* have all just professed you believe in all the truths contained in Scripture concerning him; and now let us examine whether, while we profess to know God, we may not in works deny him; for “not every one that saith unto Jesus, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of his Father, which is in heaven.”

You say that you “believe in one God, the Father Almighty.”—A son honoureth his Father, and a servant his master; if then I be a Father where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts unto you

that despise his name." If we believe him to be our Almighty Father, do we *trust*, do we *love*, do we *serve* him as such? Are we willing to commit ourselves entirely to his direction, whom we believe to be "the Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible." Do we remember him in his works, or do they not often draw our attention away from their great Architect? Are we not often so absorbed in the pursuit and enjoyment of the creature, as to forget the Creator? Is not his name often "a jarring-note, which seems to interrupt our enjoyment even of his own bounties? Can we, then, say, with an honest heart, *We* believe in him as the Maker of all things?"

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God; begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried."—Awful mysterious, and sub-

lime declaration! how often, alas! uttered with a carelessness and levity which bespeak the heart a stranger to its import! “God manifest in the flesh;” God taking on him the nature of man, suffering by the hands of man.—Suffering? He who was without spot, the well-beloved of the Father? Yes, *suffering*; and suffering an agony of spirit, of which nature’s acutest pangs can give but a faint idea:—and all this voluntarily: leaving “the glory which he had with the Father before all worlds,” to become a sufferer and a victim. Surely here is a theme to draw out every emotion of admiring love, had the mighty work been wrought in our view in behalf of fallen angels; but how is it heightened? how is it pressed home on our hearts, how should it distil through every feeling of our souls, when we think that all this was “for *us* men, and for *our* salvation?” Where is the boasted virtue of man? where is his generous admiration of what is excellent? where is his gratitude? Surely, my friends, if such feelings exist in fallen nature, we shall find them at the foot of the cross. But while we profess to believe this glorious truth, do we never in works deny it? It was *sin*, yea, *our sin*, that brought

Immanuel from the throne of light, and nailed him to the accursed tree; and yet sin is cherished in our bosoms, and nourished in our houses, and walks abroad unpunished in our streets. Surely such mercy believed, must excite some gratitude, and the way to show it is made plain,—“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”—“Inasmuch as ye do kindness unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye do it unto me.” Do we, my friends, give this token of our belief in the work of Christ? If we believe that he who alone is good, once walked with man, and became actually a partaker of our nature, and an inhabitant of our world; surely we shall be found examining the records of his life, that we also may walk even as he walked. We shall be found endeavouring to conform our practice to his, whose simple record is, “He went about doing good.” But, alas! my friends, many find it an easy thing to stand up in the congregation, and declare their belief in what he did, who would shrink from the task of following his steps. You forget that it is written, “If we suffer we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us.”

You go on to assert your belief in him

as a risen and glorified Saviour, “The third day he rose again, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.”—You believe that he, who was once a sufferer for your sake, is now exalted, rules all your concerns, and sees all your heart:—and does this produce no sanctifying influence on your life? Do you live careless, and thoughtless, and without preparation for the judgment which you believe to be approaching? Is it possible that a person can, with truth, every seventh day, declare his belief in this solemn fact, of a judgment to come, and live the intervening six as though he said, “Who made thee a judge or a divider over us?”

Your declaration continues thus: “I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.”—We “believe in the Holy Ghost” as “the Lord and Giver of life;” we are promised, that our heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit

to them that ask it. Has then this part of our Creed led us to seek by prayer his sanctifying influence in our hearts? Has our belief in the sacred inspiration of the prophets, led to the diligent perusal of their writings as the Word of God? Above all, have we sought that *one only* baptism which we acknowledge for the remission of sins? "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance," said the faithful harbinger of our blessed Lord; "but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Have you even considered the nature of this baptism, without which you acknowledge you cannot be saved? As water cleanses the outward frame, so the Spirit of the Lord cleanses the heart, and as fire consumes the dross, so the same Spirit consumes all the vain imaginations which corrupt the soul, ere it be purified for the use of the sanctuary. Now believing and acknowledging the necessity of this spiritual cleansing, have we ever asked our souls this question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Alas! I fear, if truth were spoken, the answer would be, "We know not whether there be any Holy Ghost."

You also believe with "our Catholic (or

Universal) and Apostolic (or Scriptural) Church ;” namely, that God at all times preserves in the world a body of his pure worshippers : and do you acknowledge, as Christian brethren, all those who, “ in every place, call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours.” Have you then examined carefully your own title to be a member of that church, and do you love and esteem as brethren those whom you consider its true members ?

You say, that you look for “ the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” “ What manner of persons, then, ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness !” How lightly ought you to sit to the world, and all the chances and changes of this mortal life, if you live looking for a life to come, a resurrection of glory ? How do your habitual feelings and conduct evince your belief in this truth ? Are you walking “ as strangers and pilgrims upon earth ;” having your treasure, your hopes, and your hearts, centred in the everlasting life for which you are looking ? Are you comparatively indifferent to the accommodation, the ease, the pleasures of this life, counting all as nothing, if “ by any means you may attain unto the resurrec-

tion of the dead ; knowing that “ Blessed is he who hath part in the first resurrection, for over him the second death hath no power?” I leave these few simple questions with your own consciences ; and farther to aid you in the examination, let us briefly consider the influence of these very same truths on the mind which really receives them, “ not as the word of man, but, as they are indeed, the Word of God.”

He believes that there is but one “God.” He acknowledges but one Being whom he will worship or obey. He believes that this God is fully revealed in Scripture, and therefore from that source alone he draws his ideas of the divine character, and refuses to worship, under his name, the unholy deity of man’s imagination.—He believes that God is his “Almighty Father,”—the blessed title which unites omnipotence and love in his protection ; and therefore he receives every dispensation of his providence as from a father’s hand.

The joys of prosperity are heightened to him as tokens of a father’s favour, and the strokes of adversity are meekly accepted as parental chastening. For “ as a father chasteneth the son in whom he delighteth, so the Lord chasteneth his

own children." He regards him as "the Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible." He worships him as he beholds his glory in creation; the works of nature speak to him of their Creator.

"He lifts to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling says, my Father made them all."

He remembers that God is the Creator of all living things; and he says, "Have we not one Father, hath not one God created us? why then do we deal treacherously one with another?" This truth binds him in bonds of brotherhood with all mankind; and extends its influence to every creature that God has made susceptible of pain or pleasure. He believes that the same hand has also formed the things heavenly and invisible; and he knows that these things are bound together by inscrutable wisdom. Therefore, instead of murmuring at what he does not understand, he trusts where he cannot trace him, and believes that what "he knoweth not now, he shall know hereafter."

The incarnation, the life, the sufferings, the death, and the resurrection of our blessed Lord, are not to him as the

affecting history of a stranger in years gone by ; but as the history of one most dear ; most closely endeared to his affections, most highly exalted in his esteem ; connected with an ever lively recollection of this fact, that *he* was himself one cause of all that weight of woe which his Saviour suffered. Sin is thus abhorred as the murderer of his Lord ; the path of duty is beloved as that path in which Jesus trod ; suffering for his sake is welcomed more than the triumph of ungodliness. As Christ was crucified for him, so he desires to crucify every sinful feeling, every worldly passion ; to die to all those things in which the worldling finds his supreme delight ; and in spirit to follow his risen Master ; “ He seeks those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God ; he sets his affections on things above, not on things of the earth.” He believes in a “ judgment to come ;” but while the command, “ Prepare to meet thy God,” sounds continually in his ears, he anticipates the event without dismay, knowing that the Almighty Judge is his friend, and his Saviour ; and that the hand which shall wield the sceptre of justice, was wounded on Calvary for his sake.

He believes “ in the Holy Ghost as a

teacher and a sanctifier; he therefore seeks his guidance to lead him into all truth; he prays for the Spirit which dictated the Scriptures to make them plain to his mind; he ceases from his own wisdom, and is willing to be taught of God as a little child. He knows that his whole nature is unholy and depraved; and earnestly seeks the "renewing of the Holy Ghost," who can impart to him "righteousness and true holiness," and create him again in Christ Jesus unto good works. He seeks to have his *heart* baptized by the washing of regeneration, and gives up every attempt to extenuate the sins of his nature. He truly "*looks* for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come," as one who desires it. He knows that here he has "no continuing city; but he seeks one to come." As a stranger and pilgrim "he abstains from fleshly lusts that war against the soul." Seeing also that he looks for such things, he is "diligent that he may be found of God in peace, without spot, and blameless. He desires "a better country, that is an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called his God, for he hath prepared for him a city."

Now, my friends, what is the cause

of this difference? Why do the same truths influence the whole life and feelings of one man, and produce no effect on those of another? The reason is this; men in general regard these things rather as matters of speculation, than as truths which (if they exist at all) bear an all-important influence on the fate of every individual. They regard them rather as the stars which glitter at midnight in the canopy of heaven, than as their true emblem, the glorious orb of day. We perhaps admire their brilliancy, estimate their magnitude, perhaps contend among our fellow-men concerning their number, or their nature and importance: but we do not feel them the source of our life and our wealth; we do not feel them the warmth and light of our hearts; we do not feel that a cloud cast over their beauty would leave us cold and in darkness.

Alas! too often these most sacred truths are made but the badges of party, while even those who contend for them as such, will choose for their *private* motto, those well known lines—

“ For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.”

This common view of the subject (so common, alas! that in every congregation it is the sentiment of many) seems to me to resolve itself into one question: Are the things we profess to believe, true, or are they not? If they are, a belief in their fullest import and extent must be needful to salvation. We are apt to speak of these doctrines as a set of opinions, desirable to be received; but forget or disbelieve that they are *facts* which *must* be believed in order to be acted on, and must be acted on in order to our salvation.

To use a homely illustration; if our house be in flames, we must believe the danger before we seek to escape: if a means of escape be presented, we must consider it as at least a hopeful means of safety, ere we trust ourselves to it; if there be a guide offered to direct our path, we must confide in him ere we follow him. And thus, if the soul be immortal, and if there be a day of judgment; if for us men, and for our salvation, Christ came down from heaven; if there be a Holy Spirit to guide us in the way of safety; then must belief in these things be essential to salvation; since we cannot care for immortality, or dread the future judgment, or accept the for-

giving mercy, or be guided by the Holy Spirit, in whom we do not believe. And these are not the conjectures of man; they are realities, divine realities; and in disbelieving them the soul severs itself from God, throws itself on a chaos of uncertainty, and, unless there be an unknown God to meet it, there it must perish for ever; since that God in whom we believe has declared, "This is life eternal, to *know* the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent:" and "he that believeth not shall be damned."

Do you believe, my friends? Determine the awful question between God and your own souls; and in making the enquiry, remember, that the only true faith is that which "worketh by love."

SERMON XI.

PREACHED NOVEMBER 23, 1828.

PHIL. IV. 6.

Be careful for nothing ; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

IN considering the subject of prayer, we are very apt to separate between the privilege and the duty ; whereas, we should consider both as combined in their fullest extent ; for “ that which God hath joined together let not man put asunder.” The Christian who enjoys this privilege as his highest blessing, needs not to be reminded that it is his duty. He delights to dwell within the circle of the divine presence, and blesses God for permission to do so ; but should he wander from this happy station, and cease to regard it as a privilege, then Duty checks his way : the outer court of the sanctuary stops his

course, and restrains him within its limits, until he is again enabled to count it his highest privilege to dwell there, "to behold, the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." But we are equally in error if we think that because it is a commanded service of the creature to the Creator, it is the less a gracious and blessed privilege; or if we imagine that because it is a privilege, we are at liberty to accept or reject it as we please.

The command is positive, "In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." And the privilege is sweetly implied in the promise which immediately follows, "And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." If to pour our sorrows into the bosom of friendship is consolation; if to lay our difficulties before a wisdom that can guide us is support; if to make known our weakness where help can be obtained is strength; if to open our wants at the fountain of supply is riches; if to fly in the hour of danger to a sure refuge is safety: then surely the permission to "make our requests known unto God," is all these in one: for he is

the friend of his people, who heareth their cry, and whose soul is grieved for their misery. He has promised, "I will lead thee and guide thee in the way thou shouldst go." He declares, "My grace is sufficient for thee; as thy days so shall thy strength be." He is "the Fountain whence every stream of mercy flows;" and "the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." But it is not, therefore, the less a simple duty; for it would be a duty were no promise attached to it, because it is a command; and its omission had been sin, for "sin is the transgression of the law."

Had revelation been silent, the spirit of dutiful dependance had still made its wants known unto God, and waited, in humble hope, the possibility of an answer; but when faith hears the assurance, "Ask, and it shall be given you; —Whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive:" then the duty becomes a beloved privilege, and the permission to approach a throne of grace, is one of the blessings for which gratitude pours her sweetest song before the mercy-seat.

It has not pleased God to reveal to us *how* it is, that his purposes are influenced

by our prayers; this is one of the "secret things" which "belong unto God;" but that which is revealed "to us and to our children," is this, that God is the hearer and answerer of prayer. His language is, "Nevertheless, for these things will I be enquired of;"—"Ye have not, because ye ask not:" and the response of our hearts should be, "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto thee all flesh shall come."—"Because the Lord has heard the voice of my supplication, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live:" and the exhortation of the minister should be, "Ye people, pour out your hearts before him;"—"God is a refuge for us."

If in the black catalogue of man's offences I were to seek out that which most plainly stamps the natural heart with "enmity against God," I should say, it is the want of the spirit of prayer. Passion, temptation, weakness, human infirmity may plead an excuse, insufficient indeed and false, for other crimes; but here, the very force of passion, the very dangers of temptation, the very frailty of our nature, are just the things which ought to send us to God for defence, and health, and strength. Nothing is required of us; no preparation,

no wisdom, no learning: it is simply, "Ask,"—"Pray without ceasing,"—"Make your requests known unto God:" But it is this very absence of any thing in self to render the prayer acceptable, from which proud human nature revolts.

The unconverted man mistakes the outward form for the inward spirit. He forgets that there is a real *present* communion between the soul and God. He thinks of God as at a distance, and believes not what God has said: "It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and whiles they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isa. lxxv. 24.) Again, (Jer. xxix. 12, 13.) "Ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you; and ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." But let us, for the short time we are together, remove the veil which unbelief has placed between us and our God; and realise the truth that HE sees our hearts as plainly as man can see our persons. Let us consider our petitions, not only as they come from the lips of the minister, but as they are now ascending before God, through the intercession of his Son. Let us consider what it cost our blessed Intercessor to open the way

of access to the Father, which *sin* had closed. We read (in Hebrews x. 19—25.) “Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the *blood* of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, *through* the veil, that is to say, *his flesh*; and having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith;—Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is.”—“We are brought nigh to God by the death of his Son.” “There is but one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus:”—the only medium of communion between the sinner and his God; the only link between heaven and earth; the way, the truth, and the life. As in that beautiful phenomenon, where the rays of the sun meeting the vapours of the earth, become embodied to our eyes, and form one bright cloud, reaching from heaven to earth; so his divine nature was joined to the human, “not by conversion of the Godhead into man,” but by taking of the manhood into union with God, that so he might reconcile the creature to the Creator.” As in the vision of Jacob’s ladder, our prayers and praises ascend to God, and through him the mercies of

God descend on us. And thus we behold "the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers," and "the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Perhaps to some now present, he might say, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing *in my name.*" Oh! my friend, believe his own word, "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full; for "whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you."

In our admirable liturgy, provision is made for every situation in which the worshippers can be placed. If she that is "a widow indeed," and desolate, bends her steps to this house of prayer, she finds she is not alone, for she hears the voice of a congregation rising in behalf of "the fatherless children and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed." If the anxious friend steals from his watch beside the bed of sickness; to worship here, he finds kindred hearts joining in prayer, "for all sick persons, and all who are in any wise afflicted or distressed." Here the parent, the delight of whose eyes is now wandering "the wide blue waste of waters o'er," finds his desires expressed for "all who travel by land or by water." Here the husbandman, who has been all the week

tilling the ground, implores that blessing which alone can give the increase; beseeching God to "give, and preserve to our use, the kindly fruits of the earth, so as in due time we may enjoy them." And here the spiritual husbandman, who has laboured during the week, perhaps in fallow, or in stony ground, implores a blessing on his labours in this prayer, "May it please thee to give to all thy people increase of grace, to hear meekly thy word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit." Here the soul convinced of sin pours forth the prayer, "Remember not, Lord, our offences." Here, he who feels that in prosperity he stands on a pinnacle, whence Satan invites him to "cast himself down," joins with his brother in the Lord, who equally dreads the furnace of affliction, to pray, "In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord, deliver us." Here the command "pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you," is fulfilled in this petition, "Forgive our enemies, persecutors and slanderers, and turn their hearts." But while these prayers are framed to enter into every separate case, they also embrace the

whole family of mankind. Ours is a Catholic and Missionary church, breathing in all its petitions, "Thy kingdom come!" and desiring the salvation, not only of those within its own pale, but "seeking out that which was lost, and bringing again that which was driven away."

Now, my friends, in prayer we pledge ourselves, as far as in us lies, to promote the object for which we pray; it were presumptuous, indeed, to suppose our assistance necessary to carry into effect the purposes of God; but it is a mockery to offer up prayers for what we make no effort to obtain. In extraordinary cases God has been pleased to give a miraculous supply, but, in general, he works by means; and his answer to prayer is usually given by opening an opportunity, and blessing the exertions made. Let us, then, examine the various petitions we are in the habit of presenting before God, and ask ourselves, Do we really desire, and humbly seek their fulfilment?

Is the prayer, "Give us an heart to love and fear thee, and diligently to walk after thy commandments," followed by a diligent study of God's commands in order to obey them? Are our supplica-

tions on behalf of the widow and orphan, the afflicted and distressed, followed by efforts for their relief? Are our prayers for our enemies succeeded by an attempt at reconciliation? Have our prayers that God would "bring into the way of truth all such as have erred and are deceived," produced an exertion in aid of the means by which he is now effecting the conversion of the heathen? Oh! what a life of zealous usefulness, of active charity, of Christian love, would that be, which, during the week embodied in action the petitions of the Sabbath! My friends, is it so with us? Let us, when we return home, take that infallible model and compendium of prayer, which our Lord himself has given us, and by it try our ways, that we may see whether we are fulfilling the objects which he taught his disciples most earnestly to seek. While we say, "Hallowed be thy name," do we endeavour to make the name of God known and honoured in the circle wherein we move?—While we pray, "Thy kingdom come," are we earnestly seeking Christ to reign in our hearts? Are we each desiring that our own souls may become a part of the kingdom of our God and of his Christ—that his spiritual reign may be established on earth, to the

overthrow of the schemes of pleasure and ambition in which men delight ?

While our lips offer the solemn petition "Thy will be done," do we remember that *his* will may be very contrary to ours? We may easily utter the words while seated quietly in the house of God; but do we feel the sentiment, when that holy will is depriving us of what we value? In the hour of trial, when the desire of our eyes is removed with a stroke, *then* can we say, "Thy will be done?" and with Eli, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good?" And his will calls for active as well as passive obedience; while we pray, therefore, "thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," are we using our endeavours to make that will known to those who are in darkness? Are we using our influence that it may be done in our town? Are we exerting our authority to have it done in our own houses? Are we teaching our children and servants to know and to fulfil it? Are we endeavouring honestly and actively to do it ourselves? Is it the language of our hearts and actions, "Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

I will not detain you by continuing this examination, which I earnestly hope

and beg may be continued in your own closets : but remember that this practical view of the subject applies strongly to family and private, as well as to public worship. To these most important points, in connection with the present topic, I hope to draw your attention on next Sunday morning ; for Prayer is a subject so replete with interest and instruction, that it is difficult to bring it within the limits of one discourse.

SERMON XII.

PREACHED NOVEMBER 30, 1828.

PHIL. IV. 6.

— *In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*

IN public worship we kneel as members of the great family of mankind, and citizens of the world; in private prayer we present ourselves as individuals; but the chain seems incomplete if we do not pray as a family, each household joining together to ask a blessing on our domestic life, and our various relations one to another. Job offered daily sacrifice in the name of his sons. The Israelites were not only to offer public sacrifice, but to mark each separate house with the token of the cross, that so the destroying angel might pass over it. And thus I think

each Christian household ought to mark themselves of the number who worship God, and say, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

None can pass through the glens of Scotland, and hear the evening service of prayer and praise ascending from the scattered cottages, without feeling that it is a land where God is honoured. Why are its rugged hills, its scanty pastures, blessed with plenty and content, while the fertile vallies of our Emerald Isle resound with the voice of complaining?—Is it enthusiasm to say, it is because it is a praying country? But it is written, "Let the people praise thee, O Lord! yea, let all the people praise thee; then shall the earth bring forth her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us." And it is also written, "Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." Remember, my friends, the promise is as applicable to our domestic circle, as to the great congregation, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) But the congregation and the family are alike composed of individuals, every one of whom is more precious in

the sight of God than the whole material universe; and every one of whom he invites separately to "make their requests known unto him." "But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." (Matt. vi. 6.) Here all human eloquence is hushed; the whole world is shut out, and the soul approaches its Maker as though there were no being in existence but God and itself. It goes into his holy presence to reveal its inmost feelings, to make known the wants which its heavenly Father alone can relieve, to open the secret recesses which the eye of closest friendship cannot pierce, and to "ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." And here let the heart of the Christian testify the privilege of prayer. It was beautifully observed by a prelate of our church, "Prayer is the ambassador which faith sends to God:"—but it is not an ambassador sent to a far country, unseen until he returns with the desired boon. No; it is the friend who conducts the child to the presence of his Father: and the privilege of being there, is dearer than any gift the opportunity

can crave, or can obtain. It opens wide the flood-gates of mercy, and pierces the stony heart to admit the healing stream.

“ ’Tis heaven, all heaven, descending on the wings
Of the glad legions of the King of kings :
’Tis more—’tis God transfus’d into the whole ;
’Tis God himself triumphant in the soul.”

But I fear such seasons of full and blessed communion are rare, even to the real child of God; he oftener finds a dullness of feeling which humbles him before his heavenly Father. Religious joy is a delicate and tender exotic in a world of sin, and every blast of worldly passion blights its leaves, though the root survives.

The excellent Dr. *Doddridge* observes, “ As prayer is the food and breath of all spiritual religion ; so secret prayer in particular, is of vast importance ; inso-much, that I verily believe, that if a man were to keep an accurate journal of his own heart but for one month, he would find as real and exact a correspondence between the temper of his soul at the seasons of secret devotion and in active life, as we do between the weather and the barometer.”

Perhaps more particularly to private

than even to public or family prayer, is the expression applicable.

“ *In every thing* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” No second person can know the “ every thing” which constitutes the history of each individual heart, and which we are invited to bring before God in prayer. Now this, though a most sublime, is a plain and simple truth : we should readily understand the meaning of a powerful friend, who said, “ Make all your wants known to me, that I may relieve them :” and the same invitation becomes not less simple when that friend is our God. Men are apt to think that only great things are to be prayed for ; but, believe me, whatever is worth wishing for is worth praying for : whatever is sufficient to fill your breast with anxiety is sufficient to send you to pour forth that anxiety before God ; and by this means we may judge, in some degree, what things may lawfully fill a place in our wishes or anxieties. *That* which we are ashamed to lay before God must be wrong. Every individual here, I will venture to say, has some want, some anxiety, which he would gladly reveal to a fellow-creature, of whose power and will to assist him,

he was convinced ; here, my friend you are invited to “ Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee.”

My friends, make your petitions before God *definite* and *particular* : be not content with asking his blessing *generally*, but ask it on every concern in which you are engaged ; and thus doing you will fulfil the precept, “ Pray without ceasing.” The time is comparatively short which you can withdraw from the world for the exercise of prayer ; but if you make it your custom to lift up your heart to God for a blessing on whatever you do, you will not only find the work of your hands prospering, but your soul will enjoy that real communion with him, which is the pledge and foretaste of eternal bliss,

Plead before God his *own promises*. We have no right to expect any thing of him, but as his own free mercy has promised it in Christ Jesus : for “ all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen.” Search your Bibles for those “ exceeding great and precious promises,” which are formed to meet every case of real distress, either temporal or spiritual, in which you can be placed ; and plead them with him : if I may so speak, *remind* him of them, as David did,

when he said, "My soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken thou me *according to thy word.*" My soul melteth for heaviness; strengthen thou me according to thy word. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, *according to thy word*: unto thy servant"—"Give me understanding *according to thy word.*" "Remember *thy word* unto thy servant on which thou hast caused me to hope."—Plead his promises thus before him, and soon you will join the sweet Psalmist of Israel to say, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord! *according to thy word.*" This privilege must be peculiarly dear to those who wish to live according to God's commandments, since every precept in Scripture has a corresponding promise of grace to perform it. This is one of the blessings we shall discover by "searching the Scriptures," as one that "seeketh after hidden treasure."

Pray for your *friends*; how many hours are wasted in unprofitable intercourse with those we love; and how few moments are devoted to calling down on them the blessing "which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it!" As far as your knowledge of each admits, bring the cases of those you love before the mercy-seat as they did, who, in the days of his flesh, brought their children and

their friends to Jesus, that he might heal them. He is still ready to "heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people."

Pray for your *enemies*; or those whom you consider such: if you think they have sinned against you, they have also sinned against God; then ask *him* to "forgive your enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and turn their hearts." Establish it into a habit to pray for whoever has offended you, and it is wonderful how quickly you will find their offences evaporating from your mind.

Pray for your *ministers*; they have a difficult and important task:—a solemn charge—an awful account to render for your sakes. Oh, let your prayers support and strengthen their hands, as Aaron and Hur upheld the hands of Moses, so that their enemies could not prevail against them.

Prayer is indeed the breath of the believer's soul; and the new-born spirit of true religion can no more exist within the soul without prayer, than the infant can live without respiration. The *man* indeed may live in the neglect of prayer, but oh! how soon the *Christian* dies! The less you feel inclined to pray, the greater is your need of prayer, that God would pour upon you "the Spirit of

grace and of supplications :”—and be assured of this, the longer you neglect the mercy-seat, or approach it in a formal, dull, and unfeeling manner, the more difficult you will find it to return. Your souls will become dry and barren; and it will require, perhaps, some heavy stroke of judgment to remind you from whence you are fallen, and to revive your first love. Walk closely with God by prayer, so shall your path be “as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

But to many these feelings are unknown and incomprehensible. That language which is plain to the simplest Christian, because it finds an answer in his heart, seems mystical and indefinite to the wisest of those who are still “of the earth, earthly.”

Example, however, speaks a language which all can understand. To display the efficacy of united prayer, and the truth of the promise, “If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven;” I would lead you to the house of Mary, the mother of John, where many were assembled together praying in behalf of Peter, for whom, we are told, (in Acts xii.)

“Prayer was made, without ceasing, unto God by the church.” They had no power to assist a prisoner under the vengeance of the great Roman Governor; but they laid his case before “the King of kings and Lord of lords;” and while they were yet speaking, the answer to their prayer was sent. Peter himself came to declare how the Lord had miraculously brought him out of prison. To behold the value a child of God sets on the privilege of prayer, let us consider the case of Daniel, when he heard the irreversible decree that “Whosoever should ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of the king, should be cast into the den of lions.” He might have argued, “the time is short. God knows my heart: he will pardon an omission under such trying circumstances.” Or he might have hurried over a form of prayer in secret; but no—we find that “he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforetime.*” (Dan. vi. 10.) Mark these words, my friends, “*as he did aforetime;*” for here methinks we discover the secret of the strength of the champion in the cause

of God. We all know the conclusion, "His God whom he served *continually* was able to deliver him from the lions."

Are any in perplexity as to their temporal concerns? let them remember the example of Abraham's servant, when he met Rebekah at the well of water, (Gen. xxiv. 48.) and of Hezekiah, "who spread Rabshekah's letter before the Lord." (Isa. xxxvii. 14.)—Are any enduring persecution for righteousness sake—even that minor, but most painful persecution, of "cruel mockings," ridicule, contempt, for their Christian conduct? they will find a glorious stimulus in the conduct of the Apostles in Acts iv.; who, when dismissed from the bar of judgment, "Lift up their voice with one accord to God" (Ver. 29.)—not to ask the removal of the trial, but grace not to be cast down by it.

But we have an example higher than prophet, priest, or king: even our God himself when veiled in our nature; "Who, in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death." (Hebrews v. 7.) Surely, if prayer could be dispensed with in any case, it could be in his. If prayer were only the cry of want; if it were

only the abject homage of inferiority; never would its accents have passed *his* lips, to whom all power is committed in heaven and in earth: but it is the actual communion of the soul with God; it is the appointed medium of converse with him; and we find our blessed Lord, as an individual, the highest example of constancy, perseverance, earnestness in prayer, while his divinity stamps with infallibility the example that his manhood displays.

In Matthew xiv. we find him who *could* be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, informed of the murder of his harbinger and kinsman according to the flesh, seeking a solitude from whence he was drawn by the wants of the multitude; we find him attending to their various complaints, and then, instead of seeking rest, "when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray." Again, (in Mark i.) after spending the last hours of evening in healing the sick, "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." What an example for those who plead want of time, or want of place, for the exercise of private prayer! His intercession for his disciples, his prayer

for his enemies, above all, the spirit of prayer and supplication breathed in the hour of nature's agony—these shew us how it is we should “make our requests known unto God.”

But we *cannot*—we know not *what* to pray for, and we know not *how* to pray “in spirit and in truth.” Therefore is the promise made, “I, saith the Lord, will pour upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication:” “they shall come with weeping, and with supplication will I lead them.” Likewise, “the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.” And “He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” Romans viii. 26. *

I beseech you, my friends, make it the desire of your hearts—“Lord, teach us to pray!” Prayer is not the natural language of sinful man; and this plea, “Lord teach us to pray,” will be heard when offered; for “we know that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:” and we know that the answer to this simple request produced

that form of prayer which is the epitome of all the Christian church can desire.—But, blessed be God, we have an intercession higher than our own. “We have a great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, who has passed into the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for us.”—Our Mediator is also our “Advocate with the Father:” “and he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” “We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, my brethren, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” And here, lest any may be present who forget, or did not hear, what I said on the same subject last Sabbath, let me solemnly remind you, that it is through Christ alone our prayers can reach the Father.—He is our only Mediator; and if we presume to set aside his work, and approach the throne in our name, or our own righteousness, we perish, as surely as did Nadab and Abihu, who thus offered strange fire on the altar; “and there went out a fire from

the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.”

“ Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think, to him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, world without end, Amen.”

SERMON XIII.

PREACHED JANUARY 1, 1830.

1 KINGS, XVIII. 21.

How long halt ye between two opinions?

WE are all hurrying on to eternity, my friends. This day commences a new period of our existence. How often have we contemplated the year 1830 as a distant period, to which we might never attain? How distant the NEW YEAR would have appeared had the fulfilment of some favourite scheme hinged on its arrival! And now it is come, what do we intend to do with it? It is set before us this day as a blank tablet; if its pages are written, it is with invisible ink: what will you write on them? Shall they be inscribed with "Vanity," or shall they

be inscribed with "Holiness to the Lord?" If the pen of fate were placed in your hand, which would you write? Would you fill the blank with schemes of pleasure, of profit, of advancement in the world? or would you write there, "The Lord is my portion, and the lot of my inheritance?"

Of each of you, it now appears, it was said, at the commencement of the now departed year, "Let it alone this year also." Well might divine justice long since have said of every one of us, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" No fruits of righteousness were found in us to avert the sentence; but, up to the present hour, the Lord Jesus has interceded for us, and pleaded for the fruitless tree, "Let it alone this year also, till I dig about it, and dung it:" and he has fulfilled the promise; he has stirred up the earth around us by judgments, and by mercies he has appealed to our hearts; his Gospel has been freely offered to us, and where are the fruits? May he not say of this part of his vineyard, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

The decree which has been unfolded in our last year's history, we now read, "Let it alone this year also." But, oh! my friends, who can raise the curtain which veils futurity? What if the sentence be fulfilled against any of us this year:—"If it bear fruit, well; and if not, then cut it down?" And if we be cut down as cumberers of the earth, "as the tree falleth so shall it lie:" the worthless trunk will be cast into the fire of hell.

If you were sure of life this added year, then you might say, (though most foolish in you would it be thus to defer your own happiness,) "To-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and buy and sell and get gain, and enjoy ourselves after the devices and desires of our own hearts." But, "What is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Perhaps the web is wove which shall enshroud your limbs; perhaps the wood is sawn which shall make your coffin; perhaps this burial ground, through which you have walked so carelessly and thoughtlessly to-day, will next open its mouth to receive your body; and where, oh! where, shall be the soul?

While I address you all as trembling on the very brink of destruction, I do

not accuse you of any particular vice : *I* do not charge you, though conscience may, with the flagrant crimes of Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, covetousness, or such like : but I stand on broader ground ; we are, every one, children of Adam, and under the curse pronounced on his posterity. We are born the “ children of disobedience,” and “ of wrath ;” (these are Scripture expressions ;) “ the wages of sin is death,” eternal death ; and we are *all* hastening to everlasting destruction as fast as the torrent of life can carry us ; except only those who have been stopped short in their career, and have been separated from the multitude, to be a peculiar people, shewing forth the praises of the Lord. Now, the question on which my fate for eternity hangs, does not depend on my comparative merit in the eyes of man. It is this—“ Am I, or am I not, one of the people of God ? Have I ever been turned from the power of Satan unto God ? Have I left the world to follow its own way, and “ fled to Jesus for refuge from the wrath to come ?” Have I made God my shield, and my exceeding great reward ? Have I risen up and left all I formerly valued, to “ follow the Lamb of God whithersoever he goeth ?”

If not—if I am still following the multitude, and walking according to the course of this world—the wrath of God abideth on me. As a sinner, it was my birthright, and there has been nothing to avert it. I have never applied to that blood of atonement, which alone could blot out the hand-writing that was against me, and which, therefore, stands unrepealed in the court of heaven.

It is a true, though homely proverb, “The way to hell is paved with good resolutions;” and I believe I address every individual present, when I address myself to those who are intending at some future indefinite period, to think more seriously of religion, to prepare their souls for eternity. Who told you, my friends, that you shall live to see the light of to-morrow’s sun? who told you that reason should be spared to you? who told you that vice should not drown even the wretched resolution you have formed of giving to God the vile dregs of an ill-spent life? Above all, what promise have you that God will accept such an offering at your hands?—You say, “I will seek the Lord at a more convenient season;” but God says, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near; *now* is the ac-

cepted time; *this* is the day of salvation; “*to-day* if ye will hear my voice harden not your hearts.” You say, “Heaven forbid that I should fail in my duty to my Maker, and the care of my soul! but, surely, religion need not occupy all my time and thoughts. I can serve God sincerely without separating myself from the world, or making myself singular.” But God says, “Whosoever is not for me is against me; ye cannot serve God and mammon; he that will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God.” You say, “The enemy of God! far be such a character from me! but I can love and honour the Almighty without being an enthusiast, or carrying things *too far*.”—But this is the answer of God to you, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot; so then because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” (Rev. iii. 15, 16.)

This compromising system will avail you nothing, my friends; it is abhorred and disowned of God, and in endeavouring to serve two masters you will displease both. “How long halt ye between two opinions? choose ye this day whom ye will serve: if the Lord be God follow him;” or if the world be your god

follow it; sow to the flesh, and of the flesh reap corruption.

It is awful to hear such language as this; "It is true, I am not so good as I ought to be, but, God help us! who is?" Will it avail you that you have many fellow sufferers, when you fall short of the standard of the sanctuary, fail of the mark, and sink into perdition? Equally awful is the spiritual sloth often clothed in the garb of humility; "I know I am not a Christian—I feel that religion is not yet an inmate of my heart; I feel that I am not a converted character." And this is often uttered with a composure, that discovers no intention to "awake, and arise from the dead, that Christ may give you light." Do you weigh the alternative? If you are not a Christian, you are an unpardoned sinner; if religion is not in your heart, you are without God in the world; if you are not converted, you can never enter into the kingdom of heaven; and this awful confession you make with no discomposure of spirit; you are able to go about your daily concerns as if there were no eternity. My infatuated friend, do you believe your own words? Can you sit down contented, while the flames of hell are kindling around you? "Awake, thou

that sleepest" in this delusive dream ; " arise and call upon thy God ;" he can make you a Christian ; he can come and dwell in your heart by faith ; he can convert your soul.

Halt no longer, then, my friends, between two opinions ; make your decision. Christ is all, or nothing to you. He will not accept a divided heart ; he will not share the throne of your affections with any other ruler. Two roads are open before you ; this day, as the commencement of a new era, you seem standing at the point which separates them ; now make your choice. One is a broad way ; it lies straight before you ; the multitude of the gay, the fashionable, the prosperous are walking there. Follow them ; and you will, perhaps, share their enjoyments ; perhaps, be cast off by them : but go on ; many profits and pleasures will be found there ; many gay and gawdy flowers. It is the " way which seemeth good unto a man, but the end thereof is death." It ends in a precipice, unseen by those who are on the path, but it overhangs the bottomless pit ; hell opens its mouth, and " their glory and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it."

The other road is narrow, nor can you

enter it so readily ; “ Strait is the gate ” which secures its entrance ; a gate which will not permit one particle of your self-esteem, or your worldly-mindedness, or your carnal desires, to pass through it. Your soul must pass this door stripped of all its self-opinions, as ready to receive new impressions as when it first entered the world ; as a little child it “ must be born again.”

Christ is the door by which you must enter the path of holiness, the narrow way ; and few there be who walk therein. You will have few companions, but they will be all friends ; there will be no disputing by the way. They are those whom the world despises as the dull, the gloomy, the unsocial ; but from them you will meet no wounds, no disappointments. Its close is not hidden from the eye of faith ; the moment you enter, you will see before you the fields of light, the crown of glory, the river of life, ” the pleasures which are at God’s right hand for evermore : ” and “ Your ears shall hear a voice behind you, saying, This is the way, walk ye therein, if ye turn to the right hand, or if you turn to the left.”

Behold, then, my friends, the path of life, and the path of death ; which will you choose ? I put it to you now, par-

ticularly, because this is a day when the mind is occupied in forming its plans and determinations. Halt not on the turning point between two opinions, lest, ere you are resolved, you stumble on the precipice, and are lost for ever. The door of mercy is before you; "Knock, and it shall be opened: seek the Lord, and he will be found of you;" ask the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and it shall be given. Stop, now, in your worldly career. As an ambassador for Christ, I *beseech* you; stop at once, and give yourself wholly, soul, body, and spirit, to be the Lord's.

If you will hear the voice of your pastor, and your friend, take this as the motto of this year—"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ: and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." (Rom. xiii. 14.)

SERMON XIV.

PREACHED JANUARY 2, 1831.

LUKE, xvii. 17.

*And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed?
but where are the nine?*

IT is with sincere joy and thankfulness, my dear friends, that I observe, that not one has been removed by death from the congregation I addressed this day twelve-month, save those whom great age and infirmity rendered the king of terrors, so far as this world is concerned, a welcome deliverer. Great have been our mercies, both public and private, both as a congregation and as individuals, during the year that is gone. While anarchy and disturbance have raged around us, our little town has been the abode of tranquillity ; while the torch of the incen-

diary has sent fear and devastation through the smiling villages of England, we have laid us down in peace, and have taken rest, because "the Lord caused us to dwell in safety." While unwonted poverty has, in that envied country, raised brother against brother, and armed the heart with enmity, and the hand with steel, blessed be God, the same distress here but opened the heart of benevolence, and stretched forth the liberal hand of relief. My friends, particularly my female friends, look back on your terror, your anxiety, when party spirit for a few days disturbed our streets, and by your past alarm measure your present cause of gratitude. And if the demon of family discord has been far from our domestic circles; if brethren have dwelt together in unity, and the revolving year has bound more closely the ties of friendship and natural affection, let us remember that it is the Lord "who causeth men to be of one mind in a house." If family dissention has been removed; if any of those whom I address, have been reconciled, and have held out the right hand of fellowship to those who once were enemies, shall they not bless the God of peace, who alone teaches man to forgive as he would be forgiven? As a congre-

gation let us not disregard our privileges, because they are common to our brethren. Let us compare our situation with that of the early Christians, assembling at midnight among the tombs, and death the penalty of their detection ;—with the Waldenses of later periods, trembling while they raised the hymn of praise, beneath the threat of fire and sword ; and then may we appreciate the blessing of our Sabbath meetings under this roof, when God and man seemed joined for our protection.

Let us compare our churches with the Heathen temples, at this very hour, perhaps, red with the blood of human victims, resounding with the cry of self-inflicted torture, while the deluded worshippers offer their “ first-born for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul :” and then may we appreciate the privilege of hearing, from Sabbath to Sabbath, of him “ who bare our sins in his own body on the tree—who suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God ;” whose blood dyes no earthly temple with its hue, but “ blot-teth out, as a thick cloud, our transgressions,” and cleanseth us from all sin.

And as individuals, my friends, can we look back on the year we have spent,

and refuse to say; "His mercies were new every morning? surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life." He has preserved you in health, or has raised you from the bed of suffering. He has preserved you from trouble, and turned aside many a threatened evil. How many fears and anxieties with which the year begun, dispersed almost unobserved? how often, even in your temporal concerns, have you found that—

"The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings round your head?"

Just contemplate, as from a distance, the blessings of your own lot; regard it as angels do, who view it unobscured; without envy, passion, impatience, pride.

You are a sinner; and yet on you, for twelve months longer, has the Lord caused his rain to descend, and his sun to shine. Though you have often disregarded the cry of distress, yet the Lord has rejoiced your ear with the voice of friendship. Though you have neglected to behold the Majesty of the Lord, yet he has delighted your eye with the beauties of creation.—You are a sinner, and

in your ear has been sounded the invitation of the Gospel ; before your eyes has been spread the glorious work of redemption. Twelve months have been added to your time of probation, in which the Lord has stood, as it were, " waiting to be gracious," every offer of mercy lies open to your acceptance. The gates of Heaven are open ; and Jesus stands within, saying, " Come unto me and I will give thee rest." Oh, could one of those lost spirits who never heard the voice of mercy ; for whom no Saviour died, but who are " reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day ;" could they behold you, with what energy might they exclaim, " Blessed are the ears that hear the things that ye hear : and blessed are the eyes that see the things that ye see !" Though your sojourn here on earth were but one path of woe, the offers of eternal happiness *alone* would render you an object of envy to devils, and of congratulation to the hosts of heaven. And besides these blessings common to all, and which all share alike, have we not each some peculiar mercy to record this year ? In the wide field of our earthly possessions, has there been no favoured spot on which divine grace has shone peculiarly ? Have there been

no peculiar mercies in the last year's record of each individual, known only to himself; but at which grateful memory should raise an Ebenezer, and say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me?"—Was there, during the past year, no season of trial, when "we cried unto the Lord, and he helped us, and delivered us from all our fears?" Was there no moment of distress when, even while standing afar off, ye have cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us?" and he has had mercy, and ye are all here this day to testify, if you will testify truly, that "not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord has promised for which you have asked." The "ten" indeed have been bountifully dealt with, "but where are the nine?" Where are the hearts of the majority of this favoured multitude—are they returning to glorify God? Alas, no!—they may join with their lips in the general thanksgiving, but are they shewing forth his praise, not only with their lips, but in their lives?—Alas, no!—Are those who have been raised from the bed of sickness, now returning to pay the vows which they made in trouble? Are they found returning to thank God for his providential mercies? Are they found devoting a portion of

their wealth to his service, according as the Lord hath prospered them?—Are they returning from Sabbath to Sabbath, to praise him for Christian privileges and Gospel ordinances? Alas! dear friends, do not your vacant seats too often proclaim that the language of your hearts is “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn; and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?” Do they not proclaim at our weekly meeting, “Is not the Sabbath enough? Do we not hear enough of Christ? Must he intrude even into our six days’ labour and amusement?” Yes! my friends—if “the stone can cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber can answer it,” this is the avowal that echoes through your empty pews—“Once in the seven days is enough to hear of Christ.” You reverse the saying of David, and instead of the vow, “Seven times a day will I praise thee,” you say, “Once in seven days will I acknowledge thy mercy!”—Are “the nine” among us returning to glorify God for the blessings of redemption? Is the redemption of our souls precious in our eyes? Do we feel that all the world can give or take away, is as dust in the balance, compared with the loss or safety of our souls? Alas! the

“unspeakable gift” appears to the multitude of little value. The “pearl of great price is trodden under foot;” and they turn again, not to give thanks unto God, but to insult by their blasphemy, their unholy walk, and their contempt for him who offers it. Do they return to give glory to God for the mercies peculiarly addressed to their own souls? for warnings, and invitations, and opportunities of spiritual instruction? Alas! warnings are derided, invitations disregarded, opportunities shunned. Far from desiring the cleansing of their souls, they shrink from the hand that would probe their wounds; they close their ear against the warning of danger; they count him their enemy who tells them the truth.

And those who are thus ungrateful to their God, where are they to be found? Many will be ready to say, “If there be such, let them be sought in the lowest haunts of vice;” but this is not the testimony of Scripture, it speaks of “the *world* lying in wickedness,” and a few only escaping its temptations. It speaks of the world as “enmity against God,” and the “little flock,” as his chosen few. It speaks of the “remnant,” who shall

be saved from the *wrath* to come, that they be not condemned with the world. It is the *world*, then, that you love so much, whose opinion, whose maxims, whose fashions you value so highly, which is represented by "the nine." They may pause a moment in the career of gaiety, to ask of him some temporal good, but they return not to give him glory. They may walk in various paths of pleasure or gain; the love of ease, or the love of profit, may lead them into flowery or into thorny ways; but they are agreed in this, they turn away from Jesus. To *whom* then can they go? for he alone has the words of eternal life. If they abandon him, there is no other Saviour, no other hope, "no other name given under heaven whereby they can be saved." He is the only way, and no man cometh to the Father but by him; therefore every creature who returns not from his evil way to give glory to God, is in "the broad way that leadeth to destruction and *many* there be which walk therein."

There "are the nine," my friends; we see them walking carelessly away; but where, oh where is the *one*? "One of them, when he saw that he was healed,

turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks." We all shrink from the character of the *nine*, but which of us can appropriate the character of the *one*? He was originally the same as his companions, travelling the same road, and like them a stranger to Christ. Thus we are all by nature the children of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins, even as others; but have we turned back from the paths of vanity and sin? Have we experienced the love of God in Christ Jesus healing our polluted souls? Have *you*, (I would address myself to every individual, and may the Lord open some one to hear and to obey,) have *you* known and believed the love that God hath to you? Have *you* received the "record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son?" And are you, *therefore*, constrained by the love of Christ, drawn by "the cords of a man, the bands of love?" Have you, therefore, "turned back," from your own way? have you said in your heart, "the time past of my life may suffice to have wrought the will of the world?" Have you glorified God by giving up yourself to his service?

Have you fallen at the feet of Jesus, deeply humbled under a sense of guilt, and "giving him thanks," that "while you were yet a sinner Christ died for you?"

But why should I speak of it as a thing past? will you *now* be that one? will you *now* come out from the world and be separate? will you *now* choose Jesus as your master? will you *now* "come and join yourself to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten?" will you *now* say, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." Will *you now* give up to him whatever you have hitherto withheld? will you give yourself to the Lord, and make with your heart that surrender which your lips have often made, "Here I offer and present unto thee, O Lord, myself, my soul, and body, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee."

This is the first Sabbath of a new year. Ere the next year come, another preacher may fill this pulpit, and other hearers may fill your seats, and "the place that has seen us may see us no more for ever." Then let us not delay; *now* is the accepted time; *to-day* is the

day of salvation. Who is among you that inclineth his heart to seek the Lord? Who will be the happy *one*? Then let him begin the year with God, and from this very day “live unto him who died for us.”

THE END.

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