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Meditations on Select Passages of Sacred Scripture, in a Series of Lectures Affectionately Addressed to Young Persons of the Society of Friends: With Introductory Observations on Subjects Connected with the Lectures

Priscilla H. Gurney

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MEDITATIONS

ON SELECT

PASSAGES OF SACRED SCRIPTURE,

IN A

SERIES OF LECTURES.

Affectionately Addressed to Young Persons of the

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS;

WITH

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

ON SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH THE LECTURES;

By PRISCILLA H. GURNEY.

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1832.

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It is proper to inform the reader, that if there should appear in the present Publication, any deviation in word or doctrine from the Truths of the Gospel as held by the Society of Friends, from its commencement to the present period, that this Society is not responsible for such deviation ; and that nothing of the kind should exist, has been the sincere intention of the writer.

She would also wish to state, that although she has often considered it a point of wisdom in the writings of Friends, to exercise great caution in bringing forward and subjecting to discussion, many of those important though mysterious Truths, which are best collected from the express testimony of Sacred Scripture, and can be apprehended only through the illuminating Influences of the Holy Spirit ; yet she also believes, that changes in times and outward circumstances, both in the Christian Church at large, and in any particular Denomination of it, may call for that express avowal and communication of sentiment, respecting such Truths, which at past seasons might have been superfluous.

That a time is arrived when such an avowal may seem called for, appears to be evinced by the tenour of much ministerial labour among us, both oral and epistolary. The very comprehensive and satisfactory illustration of doctrinal Truth, furnished in the work entitled "Essays on Christianity by J. J. Gurney," might indeed entirely supersede the occasion of the ensuing Lectures and Observations, did not the reason obtain in favour of them, which appears in the Preface—that of presenting the same Truths in a somewhat different mode, or of conveying them in a more limited and less learned form to the generality of readers; especially as the greater part of what is here offered, was written previously to the Author's acquaintance with that work.

In addition to the preceding remarks the Editor may observe, that though most of the Chapters or Lectures had been carefully revised by the Author, yet some of them were left at her decease, in a less finished state than her subsequent revision might have rendered them; and this circumstance has occasioned considerable delay in putting the work to the press. It is now presented to the Reader under an apprehension, that it will afford an agreeable, and in many respects a clear illustration of doctrines, which the Author estimated as the Principles of Truth, revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

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PRELIMINARY ADDRESS

TO

YOUNG PERSONS.

BELoved FRIENDS !

In turning my views towards a rising generation, in which description I include all who have not attained to middle age, and feeling a renewal of that cordial interest in their highest well-being, which has been often peculiarly awakened on behalf of a wide circle with whom I have been personally acquainted, I believe myself warranted to address the present salutation to a still wider range of the same class, and to solicit their attention to those sentiments and subjects which, from time to time, have been impressed on my mind ; not, I apprehend, for my own sake only, but for the especial purpose of extending

or confirming their important influence through the present medium.

I am duly aware of the great diversity as to states, stations, and circumstances, which are comprehended under this division of our Society, as also in reference to endowments natural and spiritual. Some among them, of whose progress from infancy to maturity I have been an interested witness, have themselves become heads of families; yet are they not less truly among the appropriate objects of that religious solicitude, which has been often revived in my heart for their growth "in grace, and in the saving knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

I have a consoling hope, that among this number, not a very few of both sexes may be ranked with those of whom the Apostle John observed, that he "wrote unto them *not because they knew not the truth, but because they knew it*; and that no lie is of the Truth." To such as these, by whom the word of exhortation is willingly received, I am induced to believe the present volume will not be unacceptable; either as containing caution, counsel, and encouragement

of a practical influence, or as embracing comprehensive views of Gospel Truths, more peculiarly of a doctrinal character. To such readers the Author would suggest how important and desirable may be their instrumentality, in promoting the objects of these labours of love, by introducing into their social circles, especially when enlarged by the company of other young people, the perusal of a Lecture or a Chapter designed to convey impressive information, to the inexperienced yet seriously disposed and enquiring mind; and that in a form which she hopes is alike calculated to preclude the labour of argumentative investigation, and the unsanctifying tendency of familiar discussion.

The writer believes that He who declared to his disciples: "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them;" will not be wanting to extend a portion of his blessing to any number, whether few or many, who are collectively engaged in promoting the knowledge of his Truth, though conveyed through channels inferior to those who denominated themselves "earthen vessels:" for

his power though secret in its operation, is as efficient as ever, in converting the water into wine, if the vessels prepared to contain it are filled according to his purpose and command. Without the communication of his living virtue, the purest elements of human instruction, comparable to elementary water, would remain like water still; capable of supplying natural, but not spiritual wants.

The writer would willingly draw the attention of that class of readers she is addressing, to the importance of their continually seeking a growth in the root of religious knowledge; for if this be not proportionable, and in some degree antecedent, to an expansion in the branches, the latter will infallibly wither and become fruitless; and will be susceptible of restoration to vitality only by some humiliating process, comparable to that of being cut down even with their parent stem, as to the very ground: whereas if the root is suffered and encouraged to shoot deeply downward, so as to derive its nourishment from the well-spring of Divine Life, the plant of the Lord's right hand planting will be preserved green and

fruitful in its season ; able also to sustain, without injury, times and dispensations similar to those of external drought and heat.

Corresponding with these distinct characters, will be the difference between *speculation* and *experience* ; even among those who may have been equally desirous of entertaining a right theory. The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, originally placed in Paradise, the former representing a fountain of soul sustaining blessedness to man in his primeval state—the latter furnishing a test of his obedience—are virtually accessible to the ransomed race during their present probationary condition. The first, which is described in the apocalyptic visions as the Tree bearing all manner of fruit, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, is the true emblem of Him who is the immediate Author of soul restoring virtue ; “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” The latter having its growth in the unregenerate nature, is characterized only by that knowledge which is held in a state of disobedience, and of alienation from “the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ

Jesus ;" and therefore is productive of corruption, sin, and death.

It is not assumed that the simple, literal knowledge of that Inspired Record which Divine Wisdom has committed to a portion of mankind, is to be considered as any part of this forbidden fruit, unless such literal knowledge is maintained to the exclusion of that which is spiritual ; or is so perverted by the inventions of men, as to exemplify something of that mixture of good and evil which is the distinguishing property of the Tree of Knowledge.

Hence the letter of Scripture, or the more literal meaning of its words and phrases, though not necessarily comprehending essential goodness, is good in its appointed office, as a medium to convey spiritual nurture and intelligence under the illuminating Influence of the Holy Spirit, by which it was dictated ; but if received independently of this holy Influence, the letter of Scripture will cease to present the words of Christ, as He hath declared them to be, even as "spirit and as life." It is in this sense that "the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life :"

Knowledge maintained without this life, may prove to be that food which nourishes the evil propensities of fallen nature, fitting the mind for nothing higher than a participation of those things which will perish with the using; and leaving it destitute of that which only can sustain and satisfy an immortal spirit.

What have been just described are not the only dangers which may be incident to every class of disciples. To a class of a more numerous and diversified character than has been already addressed, dangers and temptations are manifold and multiform; yet merciful preservation from them may be witnessed, by all who having tasted that the Lord is gracious, are engaged to come unto Him, as unto that "Living Stone, disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious;" to Him who has been revealed in their soul as the Way, the Truth, and the Life—the only sure Foundation of reconciliation and acceptance with the Father. Being not only instructed where to seek and wait for his appearance, but quickened by this good Word of Life, may such desire to be continually fed with the sincere milk of

that pure Word, both as immediately and instrumentally administered, that they may grow thereby; and may they be no further solicitous for stronger meat, than as it is afforded them according to the appointment of Him, who "feeds his flock like a shepherd; gathering the lambs with his arm and carrying them in his bosom, and gently leading" along those in whose hearts are raised living, though feeble desires after the knowledge of Him and his Truth.

To such a state as this, doctrinal information may not be thought food most convenient; yet seeing such is copiously mingled with practical precept, and with historical and miraculous fact by the sacred writers, it is presumed that it may be administered also through inferior instrumentality, in such selected portions as will be found, on attentive comparison, entirely harmonious with the undivided testimony of Sacred Scripture; and that these "Meditations" may, therefore, be found to promote in some degree, that health and strength of the spiritual understanding, which it is certainly designed we should acquire from the knowledge of revealed truths.

Those who have received these truths on the authority of inspired witnesses and commissioned teachers, in the simplicity of a rightly prepared heart, that good ground in which the Seed of the kingdom takes deep root and becomes fruitful, may be compared to the human frame in a state of perfect organization ; through which the vital principle may freely flow, and all the functions of the animal economy be properly performed ;—whilst an ignorance of such important truths and facts as it hath pleased Divine Wisdom to impart by instrumental means, or a partial, erroneous, and distorted apprehension of them, resembles the enfeebled and unhealthful state of a deformed body ; in which the operations of animal life must be much obstructed ; and which is incapable of maintaining the vigour that would be necessary to its full usefulness, though it is admitted, that a vital principle may subsist and circulate therein after a less perfect manner.

Thus a form of sound doctrine, as well as a form of sound words which is earnestly recommended by an apostle, becomes truly desirable. But though Gospel views of Gospel truths are

precious, a Gospel spirit is yet more so; and where these are combined in a proportionable degree, even in youthful disciples, they become fortified against invitations and examples of less consistent believers, tempting to "go away" from Him who, to their spiritual perception, both by external and internal manifestations, has been thus revealed as having the "words of Eternal Life;" and who, they therefore "believe and are sure," can be no other than "Christ, the Son of the Living God."

To be induced to turn from Him in this his spiritual appearance, has happened to many in a comparatively infantile, as well as in a more advanced stage, who are far from designing to renounce his authority, or to cease to be his true disciples; but they appear to prefer, and accordingly to obtain, a more distant station from their blessed Teacher, than that to which they have been primarily invited, by their birth-right in a Society which has been raised up in an especial manner, to manifest and testify the reality of his immediate presence, power, and government in the soul.

It is indeed a consolatory truth which was uttered by the Gracious Master, to those of his disciples who told Him they had forbidden one who followed not with them, when Jesus said : "Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us." Yet if on hearing this encouragement on behalf of these more remote followers, those disciples had chosen to decline the post to which they had themselves been peculiarly appointed, would they have been privileged to see and to hear, those things which many prophets and righteous persons had in vain desired to see and to hear ! Or had they ceased to be the intimate companions of his most tribulated path, would they have been likely to partake in an equal degree of that distinguished glory, which was promised to such as continued with Him in his temptations !

In like manner, however diversified may be the work assigned to us, an incalculable loss will be incurred by those, who, in their confidence of natural wisdom, reject their proper place amongst the numerous vessels that may be needed for different purposes. Not only may the gracious designs of the Divine Master be thus frustrated

toward others ; but their own sphere of usefulness may be thus abridged, and themselves accordingly degraded from " vessels unto honour," that is of especial service, for the Master's use, to " vessels unto dishonour ;" that is of contracted and inferior importance in his sight ; should He even condescend to retain them in any part of his spiritual family.

The diversity of religious professions now subsisting in the world, though not constituting even a presumptive proof of equality in the excellence of their respective principles, may be considered as a natural result of the state of the Christian Church, as being yet in a wilderness travel, and having been subjected to various interruptions, in its progress from the deepest darkness and captivity, towards the restoration to that light and liberty which distinguished its first establishment ; and which in the final re-union of all its living members, however at present separated and distinguished from each other, will again shine forth, and enlarge its borders in more than pristine splendour and extension.

But while that diversified state of the Church exhibits unquestionable evidences, that He who is the God and Father of all the families of the earth, continues to sanction his true children under every denomination, by enabling them to produce fruits unto holiness ; and, in many instances, to become instrumental in turning others from darkness to light ; so this diversity may be rendered, under His gracious superintendence, subservient to various purposes of his Wisdom and Goodness. It remains however to be a point of true wisdom for those who are seeking “Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write,” to weigh the motives which may influence their conduct, as in the balance of the sanctuary ; in order that, in changing from one profession to another, they may find good ground to believe they shall experience an *ascending*, instead of descending the ladder which, in a spiritual sense, still reaches from earth to heaven ; and which none can truly ascend, but as they are conducted by Him who came down from heaven.

There is another class among our youth whom the Author would willingly invite to become

readers of the following pages, particularly of the Lectures; though she is not ignorant of the difficulty of meeting the literary taste of such, on subjects not calculated to attract their inclination. Yet if of a studious disposition she persuades herself they might not deem it loss of time to survey these subjects, through the medium by which they are here presented. But what can be said effectually to extend their influence over those whose spiritual ears remain stopped to the voice of the true charmer, and whose spiritual eyes continue so blinded by the god of this world, as not to behold Him of whom it is said, "sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely?" Surely nothing is available unless He who miraculously opened the ears and eyes of the naturally blind and deaf, should be pleased to extend a measure of his efficacious power, in opening the eyes and ears of the spiritually blind and deaf, to behold and to receive the wonderful things of his law. Then will even such as these perceive, that their former apprehensions of Him, whom they are now favoured to know as "the chiefest of ten thousand," had

been no less erroneous than the apprehensions of the infatuated Jews, who, when they saw Him in his humiliating appearance on earth, did not desire Him ; considering "his visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men ;" a description which was indeed verified respecting Him by those who scourged and crucified the Lord of glory.

But as Christ rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, where He sitteth "on the right hand of the Majesty on high," and from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead ; and as "He ever liveth to make intercession for us ;" so will He also arise in the hearts of those who are willing to open the door unto Him ; and will cause them to know that He is indeed "the resurrection and the life ;" in whom those who believe, though they were even dead in trespasses and sins, should be made alive ; and those who live and believe in Him through this experience of the power of his resurrection, shall never die the second spiritual death.

It is therefore to such as are in any degree made sensible of their state of alienation from

this saving knowledge, that the writer would thankfully hold forth, if so enabled, a hand of help; if only by persuading them that there are treasures yet to be unfolded to their view—truths of the deepest interest and most consolatory influence, which, though hitherto unknown to them, will assuredly repay the most earnest pursuit and highest cost, which the possession of them may require: yea such are the boundless love and mercy which offer them to our acceptance, that their purchase, to which we are graciously invited, is declared to be—“without money and without price!”

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

It is fully admitted by the Writer of the following pages, that sources of information and channels of appropriate instruction, already open to the youth of our Society, are numerous and valuable—that opportunities and encouragements to avail themselves of such aids are abundantly afforded; especially that to which their religious profession peculiarly directs them—of embracing the high privilege of individual application to Him who is the Fountain of wisdom and strength, as the immediate Teacher of his people; together with the devout perusal of the Holy Scriptures, which so eminently testify of Him.

In the enumeration of these general advantages, may be especially included, that important means of religious instruction so earnestly enjoined on the members of this Society—the bringing up of children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, by pious example and precept—and their early introduction

to a constant attendance on the duty of public worship; when in conjunction with believing brethren, they may be exercised in waiting upon the Lord, and at seasons in hearing the testimonies of Truth, both doctrinal and practical, declared in a measure of its own Divine authority. Yet it is apprehended that a loss may have been sustained, by some classes among the youth, for want of the more frequent impression of doctrinal truth, as exhibited by concentrated views of Scripture testimony; whether as held in common by other Christian professors, or in some instances distinguished from them.

It has been observed by a late pious individual, that the religion of Friends is "a religion of feeling."—Surely it is not less truly a religion of faith; and that supported by sound principle, both doctrinal and practical. Is it not alone from the union of these essential characteristics, as equally the products of that grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, that religion can derive consistence and stability? Without this union our religious profession might resemble a tree, which if not destitute of its vital property, would be defective in its roots or deficient in its branches, not capable of bringing forth fruit to perfection. It may indeed be justly observed, that such sound principles, with all their specific results, both

doctrinal and practical, are contemplated in their best connexion, as stated in the Holy Scriptures; yet it must be also acknowledged, that from a partial combination of religious subjects, or an inadequate apprehension of the sense of Scripture testimony concerning them, many contradictory conclusions may be drawn. Hence arises the expediency of such comprehensive, as well as particular views on these subjects, as will stand the test of purely scriptural investigation.

Doctrinal truths as developed by some of our early writers, may be found to bear their full proportion of correctness and extent, with the present advanced state of religious knowledge in society at large.* The diffusion of such knowledge among the generality of Christian professors, and its conformity with Scripture testimony, is indeed much more apparent now than at many former periods. This has been effected principally by the writings of individuals, not of our profession, highly endowed, who, it may be reasonably presumed, are no strangers to those Influences of the

* These observations apply chiefly to subjects of a mysterious or deeply spiritual character. The sphere of biblical knowledge in many other instances, has been confessedly much more extended by writers of other religious denominations, than by those of the Society of Friends.

Holy Spirit, by which alone the heart can be purified, and the understanding illuminated, for the discernment and reception of the Truth as it is in Jesus.

These writings are read with avidity by many of those among our young members, who have time and taste, and perhaps talents also, for literary composition, joined with a preference for things excellent; especially when thus recommended to their notice. And when perused in conjunction with their more experienced Christian friends, or under that discriminating judgment which religious experience only can confer, such writings may be productive of much advantage; but as the generality of these writings contain some sentiments, and enforce some practices, which, however lawfully espoused by their respective advocates, are at variance with the purer doctrines which they exhibit, and with those which we consider ourselves called upon to maintain; so do such writings fail to hold up that consistent standard of spiritual attainment, which we believe to have been elevated in the view and in the experience of many in our Society, as that whereunto we are all invited to repair, and which we are required to support.

It must be acknowledged that true faith, which may be defined to be the efficacious reception of the

pure Truth, stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God ; and cannot therefore be certainly conveyed or brought into exercise, by the most correct representation of its legitimate subjects : not even that by which they are so eminently displayed in the Sacred Writings ; which are rendered effectual to their highest purposes, only by the enlightening and quickening Influences of that Holy Spirit from whence they proceeded.

In a subordinate degree every correct delineation of pure principles, deduced from a course of harmonious and progressive experience, supported by scriptural authority, and elucidated by right reason, has been known to prove the sanctified medium of spiritual intelligence and practical impression.

A familiar channel of appropriate instruction, adapted to the frequent, habitual course of youthful readers, has often appeared to the writer to be desirable ; and the subject having been connected, in her mind, with a lively interest in the spiritual advancement of such readers, she is induced to adopt a mode of communication, which she apprehends the most likely to facilitate this object, by encouraging the practice of serious social reading.

The different classes of subjects treated on in the following pages, are respectively included under the titles of "OBSERVATIONS" and "LECTURES." Those of the first class are considered to be such as may be comprehended by the natural understanding; those of the second as more peculiarly adapted to the reception of the spiritual faculties. The latter being wholly on scriptural passages, are especially designed to constitute distinct portions, for serious reading, calculated for each portion to be begun and finished at one sitting; and are therefore denominated "LECTURES." Aware however that the term Lecture may appear objectionable from its novelty, the writer wishes to explain the signification in which it is here applied; viz. a compendium of instruction on any specific subject, whether in natural or religious science, addressed to a collected auditory; which, in the present instance, is supposed to consist of a private or family circle.

Appropriate opportunities for reading, both solitary and social, may be found by most persons, at least on the first day of the week; and especially in places where the time of the second meeting leaves a long evening; or where the distance of members from each other admits not of more than one opportunity in the day for the exercise of public worship.

The writer having been one of those so situated, takes occasion to recommend a practice, not unusual indeed with many others, which she desires humbly to acknowledge has been graciously owned in her experience, by a sense of Divine favour;—that of reading to collected individuals, such portions of the writings of Friends, as have appeared to be calculated to open the spiritual understanding, particularly those of Isaac Penington, previously to the perusal of the Sacred Scriptures; and concluding the opportunity with a solemn pause. And having met with instructive passages, on particular subjects, in the writings of studious and pious authors, not of our Society, she has occasionally introduced certain parts of them with profitable effect; thus presenting the same truths under a somewhat different aspect.

It will be generally acknowledged by those who are conversant with literary productions of a serious description, that much useful information and pious impression may thus be derived from such sources, while an indiscriminate acquaintance with them, before some maturity of spiritual understanding is attained, has an evident tendency to produce a mixed influence, unfavourable to that radical separation between truth and error, which it has been so peculiarly the object of our religious profession to establish and enforce.

The practice of such indiscriminate reading, has become confessedly too prevalent among some classes of our young people ; but is not the cause to be partly sought in the want of more ample and unexceptionable materials, on which to employ the activity, and concentrate the attention of the youthful mind ; and which might be calculated to meet its legitimate desire after progressive knowledge, on subjects that come properly within its cognizance, by what may, in a subordinate sense, be termed, "food convenient for it." Such preparatory food is hereby intended as may be likely to excite and not to suppress or to supply that true hunger and thirst after spiritual sustenance, which can only be fully satisfied by the bread and the water of Life.

It is accordingly part of the plan of this Work, to point out authors who may be properly consulted for information on scriptural subjects, recourse to some of whom has been already recommended on valuable authority ; particularly on that of the venerated Lindley Murray. Many such helps, as well as those derived from a knowledge of the ancient languages, and from unprejudiced views of Ecclesiastical History, might be advantageously employed by the serious student. Yet if he be one, whose primary object is, to be made "wise unto salvation," let him consider

all these human aids as subordinate and secondary; not as sufficient conductors in the attainment of that knowledge, which is "Life Eternal."

Some of the writings extant in our own Society, may be justly regarded as instrumental to this higher end, inasmuch as they are the fruits of progressive experience in the Christian School. For want of a more frequent recurrence to the sound principles exhibited in these, it is not unusual to find some of our young persons, arranging themselves under those different distinctions of doctrinal profession, which are to be found in most other religious communities, not being sufficiently impressed with those specific views, to which our predecessors were conducted by humble dependence on the teachings of that Spirit, which alone can rightly open the understanding into the mysteries of godliness. A measure of this Spirit is promised, and still graciously imparted, to the children of the new covenant dispensation; not only to enable them to receive, but in some instances to qualify them to communicate to others, what they have known of the good "Word of Life."

It has been already observed, that the most rightly authorised declarations of the Truth, will not infallibly impart the saving knowledge of it; yet may they in

a very important degree conduce to that end, if only by guarding the avenues of the mind against the ready admittance of those erroneous suggestions, which are so industriously disseminated by some of the many teachers that are in the world.

It is also acknowledged that what relates to our distinguishing tenets, as well as to many of the principles and doctrines which we hold in common with other Christians, are instructively set forth by many of our early and later writers, in a manner which entitles them to the serious attention of our youth.

The present attempt to renew and encrease their interest in such subjects, is not therefore intended as a substitute for what has been already written; but to encourage an acquaintance with former writers, whilst the Author believes that many of those subjects, though not new, will be found presented in a somewhat different point of view, or treated on in a more detailed and comprehensive manner, than that in which they are frequently exhibited.

This work is designed for those who are arrived at some maturity of natural understanding, and who, it may be presumed, are not only susceptible of desires after the knowledge of the Truth, but are impressed

with the importance of being more perfectly "instructed in the way of the Lord."

The writer is sensible that she possesses no qualification to become an effectual instructor of *such*, except so far as her communications may be accompanied by a measure of that Influence, which proceeds from the Giver of "every good and perfect gift." But believing her sincere though humble endeavours toward the promotion of this object, to be a debt of love due from her to the younger part of the present generation, she desires reverently to commit the result of them to Him, whose blessing only can render them productive of salutary fruit.

It only remains to add that these "*Introductory Remarks*," were committed to paper before the publication of J. J. Gurney's "Essays on the Evidences and Doctrines of Christianity," or the work on the "Doctrines of Friends," by Elisha Bates; and that nearly all the Lectures, with the whole of the doctrines contained in them, had assumed their present form previously to the Author's acquaintance with either of those publications.

The similarity of views delineated in the following pages, with those so ably advocated by J. J. Gurney;

and so judiciously collected and maintained by E. Bates, might perhaps be alleged as superseding all occasion for the present essay. But as the effect of harmonious testimony in whatever proportion contributed, may be corroborative of right impression on the youthful mind, the writer of this volume does not feel excused from casting her mite into a treasury, which however variously supplied, is equally dedicated to the service of Truth.

OBSERVATIONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

Chapter I.

ON TRUTH

IN THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE SENSE OF THE TERM.

————— “But what is Truth?”

’Twas Pilate’s question put to TRUTH itself.”

The epithet of Truth as applied to subjects human and Divine, implies the absence of all error, delusion, or deception; and therefore cannot essentially appertain but to that Being of whom it is declared, that He is Light, and that in Him is no darkness at all.

As “there is none good * but one, that is God” —none else to whom belongs the character of Essential Goodness, so neither can the character of Essential Truth belong to any Being but to Him,

* If it be suggested that the blessed Jesus disclaimed the epithet of *good* when applied to Himself, by the young lawyer,

and to his perfect image * and manifestation ; who declared Himself to be “ the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

Whatsoever proceeds immediately from this Divine Source, unaccompanied as it must be by any mixture of error or imperfection, may be considered an emanation of the Holy Spirit ; called emphatically, the Spirit of Truth proceeding from the Father and the Son, and may therefore also be distinguished by the same essential characters, for “ These Three are One.” †

it may be justly observed, that by his question, “ Why callest thou Me good ? there is none good but One,” He thought fit to put the young man upon considering the ground on which he had used the appellation ; and which very probably was common in that day as it is in this, in order to endeavour by an acceptable title, to conciliate the good will of those of whom we ask a favour or kindness. At least it may be confidently admitted, that He who knows the hearts of all men, for “ He knew what was in man,” had a sufficient reason for thus interrogating that young man, without admitting so unfounded a supposition as that of Christ having no right to the distinction.

* “ The express image of His person.” The word person being substituted for substance in the common translation, is an acknowledged error by those who are conversant with the original Greek.

† “ These Three are One.” This text, which is considered by some as of dubious authority, is not here introduced as anticipating

When such emanations and revelations of the Holy Spirit, are given forth through chosen and sanctified instruments, whether concerning facts, duties, or doctrines, although the spiritual influence accompanying them may be rightly denominated an operation of essential Truth; yet the communication of such facts, duties, or doctrines, being limited by the finite nature of the channels through which they pass, they may more properly obtain the epithet of imparted truths than that of Essential Truth. And this Divine Truth, and those truths spiritually revealed, and spiritually discerned, whether in an immediate or instrumental manner, appear to be the only appropriate objects of true faith. The merely rational belief of even the most momentous truths, is very distinguishable from the saving reception of them; for as the nature of such rational belief, as well as the objects of it are cognizable by the rational faculties, and are received on the evidence of

any view that may be exhibited in this work respecting what is called the Trinity; but as fitly expressing an obvious truth in the present instance, viz. that whatsoever is affirmed in Scripture of the essential attributes of the Supreme Being, is also affirmed of the blessed Jesus and of the Holy Spirit. It is asserted "That in Him [Jesus] dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And He declared: "I and my Father are one."

outward testimony, so the nature of living faith and the objects of it proceed from an inward revelation, that is, a spiritual perception of their truth; being truly cognizable only by the spiritual senses, and received on that evidence, which whether immediately or mediately conveyed to the soul, is emphatically called in Scripture: "The evidence of things not seen." Thus these important subjects and momentous truths, may admit of the same rational credit, which is due to every well-authenticated record or unquestionable testimony; which latter may be called natural or historical faith: for those Divine emanations may also be received on the efficacious principle of living faith, which is scripturally denominated "The faith of the operation of God;" it being spiritually discerned through the medium of its own Divine Light.

Pure Truth then, as has been stated, is an emanation of the Deity, and must accordingly partake of the Divine nature and essence of its Author; as must also every production and offspring of it. Thus Truth can never be separated from Essential Goodness; nothing can be justly entitled to the character of the first, which does not also bear the impress of the second,

when contemplated through its own appropriate medium, divested of those extraneous appendages, and separated from that distorting mist, which is often interposed or cast over it by the veil of prejudice.

This criterion of Truth deserves to be considered by those who receive for doctrine, such partial conclusions concerning fundamental Gospel truths, as would rob the just and holy Deity of some of his essential attributes ; thus endeavouring to exalt his wisdom and power, to the exclusion of his justice and mercy. It is true that in our present state " we see through a glass darkly." On many important subjects our views must be circumscribed, and our conceptions inadequate ; yet we see and know enough on the testimony of Holy Scripture, and even by the testimony of that law which is written in the heart, although obscured from superficial observation by the various inscriptions of an enemy's hand, to warrant a belief that God is holy, just, and true ; righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works ;—that "justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne ;"—that mercy and peace go before his face : so that though there are expressions in Scripture denoting his severity, it is assuredly never

exerted but in strict conjunction and consistency with all his glorious attributes.

Truth is an authoritative teacher, that establishes itself in the soul, not by what may appear as a preponderance of argument, which is liable to deception if not weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, but by virtue of its own appropriate, efficacious impression on the mind that is prepared to receive it. Truth, as an essential attribute of the Deity, must ever partake of the Divine nature. A correspondent sense and perception of that nature, which includes the love of it, must ever constitute the real capacity for its efficacious reception; even as light can be perceived only by the organs of sight, and can be grateful to those organs only in proportion as they are free from disease, and gradually exercised to admit its penetrating yet delightful beams.

The blind or partially diseased may be pierced by its vital rays; in which also is healing virtue to those who refuse not to admit their salutary though searching operation. But the organ that is made truly willing to admit the rays of Divine Light, must, ere their efficacy can be experienced, be opened; and that by an humbling

process, in which the will and wisdom of man is laid low. The best thoughts of the heart, in the beginning of this process, may amount to nothing more than the conviction of our natural blindness, or of our long-continued infirmity of sight, under which we shall not be disposed to exercise ourselves in things too high for this our early spiritual condition. But if, unhappily, we think we are advanced beyond our real condition, and that we already clearly see that which, by the spiritual organ, is only just opening to our view, we may easily take light for darkness, or darkness for light—truth for error, and error for truth.

Thus it appears that argument, discussion, and controversy, are not the right way or the appropriate means for the certain discovery and attainment of spiritual truths. Yet these means rightly employed, that is under a due sense of our incapacity of ourselves to judge or know anything as of ourselves, may be useful auxiliaries of truth against error: they may be advantageously applied to the sifting, exposing, or confirming of the declarations which assume to be those of Truth through the medium of our fellow creatures; and if they do no more than tend to convince us of our liability to err, and thus, humbling human

pride, induce us to repose more implicitly on Divine guidance and instruction, they will not be without an important service.

Discussion also, carried on in a right, that is in a meek dependent spirit, may enable those to discriminate between the assumption of pure Truth and the semblance of it, who are not of themselves sufficiently experienced or exercised in divine things to be fully sensible of the distinction.

Chapter III.

ON THE NATURE OF MAN.

Section I.

THE COMPLEX NATURE OF MAN.

Man considered as fallen or unfallen, in his present state of existence, is a complex being, consisting of two natures, distinct as to their respective properties and future destination, yet intimately united, and reciprocally influencing each other during their temporary connection. To define or distinguish between all the properties or original propensities of each, might be not only difficult but impossible; so partial is our knowledge of the essence or elementary principles of all created substances. But of their comparative value, of their present and ultimate interests, and of their final destination, with the qualities appropriate to each, we are made capable of an adequate degree of knowledge.

These two distinct natures which enter into the composition of a human being, are denominated soul or spirit, and body; comprising a principle of mental intelligence both sensitive and rational, intimately united for a time with an organized corporeal machine; each of these natures being endowed with appropriate capacities or principles, which, however indefinable in their exact limitations and boundaries during their united existence, and in respect to some of their operations, evince the contrariety of their origin and their end: dissolution and corruption being the natural tendency and usual termination of the body; and immortality, or a future existence independent of its corporeal companion, being the destiny of the soul. Thus "the dust will return to its dust, and the spirit to God who gave it." He who is the Creator of the body and the soul; and of all things visible and invisible, is pleased to be emphatically denominated, the Father of Spirits; by which is clearly intimated, that the spirit of man in its original state of holiness and happiness, was the offspring of God; consequently of a nature and origin transcendently higher than the body.

That the spirit of man was formed in the image and likeness of the Divine nature, plainly implies not only a participation of like being in an inferior degree, but of like blessedness also: that it was an image, a creaturely transcript or resemblance, of the Divine perfections. This blessed resemblance was not however essential to man's being, though it was and is to his well-being: for we are informed by revelation, that he retained the former, when he had extinguished or forfeited the latter. But it not consisting with the infinite goodness and mercy of his gracious Creator, to leave him to the perpetuity of this miserable condition, an early intimation was afforded him of deliverance from it; and this deliverance in its further development, appears to be a gradual process of restoration from all the consequences of his fall, commencing with that effective word of promise, relative to the marvellous conjunction of the Divine and human natures, in our Lord Jesus Christ. In this conjunction was also ensured to man, his restoration to all the privileges conferred on him at his first creation, together with his exaltation to a still higher state of glory and blessedness, than had originally been enjoyed by him.

Of this ultimate design of the mediatorial process toward the whole human race, as they yield to the probationary terms on which it is suspended, the earnest was mercifully afforded to the first transgressors, and secured to all their posterity by the immediate communication of the Seed of a Divine nature.

With respect to man considered as a complex being, it may be observed, that the merely animal functions in man, as in brutes, are uniform; unless some extraordinary or incidental impediment arises to the exercise of them: whereas the principle of spiritual and moral intelligence is various in its degrees, in individuals of the same family and under the same circumstances, as well as in the times and occasions of its manifestation. The animal functions therefore may be considered as a natural endowment; the latter principle, in whatever degree it discovers itself, may be deemed a super-added gift of the Creator, and therefore purely Divine. Revelation indeed has established its character, proving its exclusion from the state of the *natural* man, till visited by the day-spring from on high—renewed in the spirit of his mind by the Light of Life, or principle of all spiritual life in man,

which is wholly referable to the process of redeeming love ; and which commenced its operation in that effective word of promise imparted to our first parents, continuing it, in some measure, under different dispensations of Divine wisdom, general or particular, and widely extending its sacred influences, as the purposes of these dispensations, were and are suffered to receive their due consummation. This principle therefore may be justly denominated Inspiration, in its most extensive sense, being an emanation of the Divine nature.

That testimonies are abundant of both ancient and modern date, from civilized and uncivilized individuals, to the existence of a principle of spiritual and moral intelligence in the human mind, cannot be denied by those who are conversant with historical notices or literary research. That this principle, though fairly presumed to be, in a greater or less degree, of universal operation, however obscured by its association with erroneous and corrupt prejudices, is to be accounted natural, or an endowment essential to the existence of man, appears to be altogether a mistaken assumption. It cannot therefore be identified with instinct, or be fitly compared

with that principle of apparent intelligence and wonderful effect on the animal creation, otherwise than as being ascribable to the immediate agency of the Creator.

Man is then a complex being, consisting of two distinct principles of different natures, origin, and end. This we learn as well by experience and observation as by the records of revelation. According to the first we are convinced that the two distinct principles which constitute his temporal being, and which we denominate body and soul, are separable in their tendencies, the one as we have seen, being subject to decay, the other exhibiting the strongest indications of propensities and powers, adapted to a future existence in happiness or misery.

According to the history of the creation, afforded us by revelation, we are informed that the organized body of man was formed of the *dust* of the ground ;—and that into this animal machine was breathed the *breath of life*, by which he became a living soul. As it is also declared that he was made in the image of his blessed Creator, there is reason to believe that the breath of life thus breathed into him, is not expressive

of that mere natural life which he enjoys in common with other animals of this world, by breathing the vital air; and which those inferior animals appear to have been capable of doing without any such specific act of Divine power; but that the breath of life denotes the spiritual breath or wind, that by which man received a measure of the Divine nature, even an image or created resemblance of his eternity—his dominion—his moral and spiritual attributes. For there is full ground to conclude, that this breath of life immediately communicated by the Almighty, included not only all that was essential to the existence of a spiritual being, but all that was conducive to the perfection and blessedness of that being; and which evidently consisted in the enjoyment of intimate communion with his Maker, and a capacity of deriving from Him an increase of this blessedness, according to the degree in which he was constituted susceptible of it.

That this condition of progressive perfection was made liable to forfeiture and frustration, we are fully informed. And that the penalty both natural and spiritual, was incurred by Adam's violation of the probationary terms to which

he was subjected, may be confidently inferred by an attentive consideration of Scripture testimony; for though, in the prohibitory condition imposed by the Almighty on his creature man as the test of his fidelity and obedience, the terms appear to be more immediately expressive of spiritual, than of natural death, viz: "In the day that thou eatest thereof [of the fruit of the forbidden tree] thou shalt surely die;" yet that natural death was implied in this sentence, or at least inflicted as a more remote consequence of the great transgression may be safely concluded; for it is observable that the declaration of: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," was not pronounced to Adam till after his transgression; and may therefore be numbered among the penalties denounced against him, of which the change in the whole constitution of temporal nature, as well as in the physical state of man, formed so prominent a part.

Section II.

THE DIVERSITY OF CONDITION, TO WHICH MAN BY CREATION IS SUBJECT.

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ; and man became a living soul. GEN. ii. 7.

The generality of learned writers on this comprehensive subject, even of those who acknowledge the truths of Divine revelation, have been apt to consider it with too little reference to that important guidance ; and rather as susceptible of philosophical disquisition than of certain information. Some however, aware of this inconsistency in the conduct of a believer, and determining to take their stand on surer and safer ground, appear to be in danger of passing it over too superficially, by treating the Scriptural account as so very brief and inconclusive, that it is designed rather to check than to encourage the most modest enquiry after Truth.

But to those who desire to be preserved within the limits of sincere dependence on the revelations Divinely afforded, appealing to experience

and observation only as collateral or subordinate evidences of the same truth, it may be safely asserted, that the Scriptures are their own best interpreter in those cases wherein the obligations of duty, are not enforced by a still superior Instructor; who alone can open them to us, as He did to the two disciples formerly, so that we may understand their utmost import or most important design; and to such individuals as these, reason rectified by Divine illumination, or in other words, brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, may become 'a sanctified auxiliary, in such a comparison of Scripture passages, as tends to the elucidation of their subjects.

According to the united testimony of these witnesses, it is evident that man, whether considered as unfallen or fallen, appears to be a being of a complex nature at the commencement, and during the progress of his temporal existence: a nature consisting of two principles, so far as we are able to trace them, distinct in their origin, properties, and final results. These we denominate body and spirit, without attempting to search for the primeval source of the former, beyond that act of creative power

by which man was "formed of the dust of the ground."

When it is added that the Creator breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, or as the original is said to import, the breath of *lives*, we are warranted in concluding, whether the life which man has in common with the animals of this world, or even that higher degree of intelligence which he possesses above them, was thus imparted, or not; that the communication of a spiritual life, the life of the Divine nature and image of his Creator, was eminently included in that expression: for thence "man became a *living soul*," a soul possessing the blessing of Eternal Life.

Though the natural life of animals is frequently in Scripture stiled the soul, yet this life we find to have been imparted to them without any specific act of creative power. Thus also it is with the human infant; and thus also may be, and apparently is the gradual development of his intellectual faculties, without any renewed creation: yet the communication of a spiritual principle, however imperceptible in its first introduction, must be justly

considered as wholly separable from the constitution of man, because it is painfully obvious, that it is capable of such separation or expulsion. Thus saith the apostle: "We know that no murderer hath Eternal Life abiding in him."

Eternal Life we may observe, in various parts of Scripture, signifies eternal blessedness; for that future existence which is predicated of the wicked is never denominated life, or Life Eternal; so that the principle of Divine Life which was evidently conferred on Adam in his first creation, was that image or transcript of the Divine nature which comprehends eternity, moral perfection, and holy dominion. But though thus bountifully bestowed on Adam, it appears to have been a probationary trust, not unconditionally secured to man; and was accordingly forfeited by his breach of the conditional terms, on which only it could have been maintained, the fidelity of love and obedience to his bountiful Creator. But this principle of Divine Life and spiritual nature, bestowed in such a degree of ascendancy on our first parents, is communicated to their posterity in the form of a seed; and such a one as may be termed the smallest in the still variously adorned garden of the human mind;—

too often inconspicuous among those which are generally more sedulously cultivated—and in its growth and productions, being dependent on the visitations of Divine successive influences received and not rejected; whether first bestowed in the way of holy discipline or attractive love. Neither is it enough that such celestial favours should be only passively received, when such measures of power from on high are vouchsafed to the creature, as may be sufficient to enable it both to will and to do according to the Lord's good pleasure.

However small may be the importance attached to the plurality of the noun "*lives*," toward the establishment of any point of doctrine, the term "*breath of lives*," may not unfitly serve to convey an idea of that plurality of lives or natures, which evidently appears to have been conferred on man at his first creation; and which may be distinguished by the epithets of his animal, his intellectual, and his spiritual life in close connexion with each other; in the united participation of each of which he was originally formed or endowed.

However difficult it may be to assign to each of these principles or natures its precise boundary,

with the due distribution of respective properties and faculties, we may define the first to be that life of the body, which, in many obvious respects, man receives in common with the inferior animals of this world, he being derived from the same origin, the earth he was to inhabit; and, as to his animal frame, tending to the same end, that of destruction or dissolution; unless by a further extension of Divine power, as we may suppose in the cases of Enoch and Elijah, it should be transformed and fitted for a higher state without being previously subjected to death.

The second may be denominated man's intellectual life, comprehending all those faculties both rational and sensitive which are of a mental description, and which he enjoys in a degree much surpassing that of the faculties bestowed on the lower order of creatures, or clearly distinguished from theirs, and forming a principal characteristic of the human species; being essential to manhood, whether in a state of exaltation from the influence of a still higher principle, or of degradation from the effects of one that is debasing.

The third life in which man was created, and of which he is still susceptible, is his spiritual

life communicated to him at his first creation, in a state of progressive perfection; but to Adam's posterity only in a seminal or embriotic state: capable nevertheless of progressive restoration to its original excellence and perfection, and even of attaining a standard in the Divine appointment, from which there will be no falling any more. *

Hence it is evident that man, as he is considered in an unfallen, or is viewed in a fallen state, is a being of qualifications and endowments, that are very different, and still more widely so, if his state of highest perfection either original or attainable, is contrasted with the lowest state in which he may retain his character as man, while in the body, or with that condition for which he may miserably exchange it after death, if he turn his "glory into shame," by voluntarily persisting in a violation of the terms, according to which the gift of spiritual life and blessedness may be consummated in him.

* "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out."

The formation even of man's body displays, indeed, a superiority of construction to that observable in the highest order of the brute creation ; it being designed during his residence in this world, for nobler purposes and offices than any of those assigned to them : and hence a style is adopted in the sacred history, in the creation of man, different from that employed in calling other animals into being. Yet some of the properties of this admirable machine, similar to those of inferior animals, particularly the sensual, in man, appear to be possessed in an inferior degree of acuteness to that enjoyed by other animals, which indicates that this is not the seat or scene of his most dignified existence.

If something of a correspondent affinity should be observable between the sensitive properties in man, and those discovered by the inferior animals, it does not fully demonstrate them to be derived from his merely animal or perishing nature : such as love, fear, gratitude, desire, aversion, &c. all which, though they may be exercised toward created beings and mundane objects, are capable also of the strongest excitement and attraction, toward such objects as appear beyond the capacities of inferior creatures to apprehend. For

even if the breath of life, or living feeling and partially intelligent principle imparted to them, may be as little resolvable into any combination of matter or motion, as many writers have endeavoured to prove are the like qualities implanted in man, it determines nothing respecting a future condition in the life of those animals, in whom they appear to be excitable only by objects that have a relation to the present state of being.

The principle indeed which chiefly characterizes the superiority of man, above all other animals of the creation, is the direction of his highest powers to subjects transcending those which are cognizable by the senses, and which principle appears to be accompanied by some mental sense or apprehension, of his being accountable to some unknown power whom it is his interest to propitiate. Of such a principle and its accompaniment, it is certain no vestige is discoverable among the inferior animals, although a process very similar to reason, and strongly indicative of a perfect understanding in things which essentially concern their own temporal existence and even that of others, is observable in many of the most sagacious of them; while the principle of devotion, prompted either by fear or love, is found to subsist among

the most savage of the human race. This principle of human intellect can however make no excursion beyond the bounds of that prison-house, within which it is originally confined in its most intelligent recipients; until, divested of some of its fetters, and made both to feel the positive pain of its thralldom, and to taste and see so much of the benefit of deliverance, and of the sweetness of liberty, as to yield itself to the Influence of that grace which would effectually, though gradually, draw and introduce the obedient mind, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

The utmost efforts of human intellect, before such visitations of Grace have nourished and directed it, could only be exerted in a choice between the furniture, the occupations, and the companions of its prison; none of which could present any good thing if unaccompanied by the interposition of Divine power. But when touched, drawn, animated thereby, the will of the creature is capable of making its election, not merely between objects of equal indifference or equal depravity, but between those which are characterized as being good.

Thus however blind in its own unenlightened condition, until made to know the difference between good and evil, and however powerless to choose the one and refuse the other, until strongly excited to maintain that difference by being inclined and assisted to choose life and live; it is nevertheless capable of yielding itself to the Influence of that Divine principle which only can effect its deliverance; and it even possesses ability to exercise the utmost degree of its boasted liberty, in rebelling against, and in altogether refusing and rejecting the Divine principle: "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" "If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured." "Oh! Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help" saith the Lord.

Chapter III.

ON REASON AND CONSCIENCE.

Having in the preceeding chapter given a summary view of the complex nature or being of man, it may be useful to advert more particularly to the faculties and endowments with which he is furnished, as respectively appropriate to the different principles of this complex being, in reference to his animal, mental, and spiritual nature.

Of each of these it may be observed, agreeably to the conclusions of a late judicious writer, that they possess original tendencies or primary elements, as the seeds of all those qualities which gradually develope themselves, or are brought to maturity by favourable circumstances or appropriate culture ; and which, in their seminal state, may be denominated instincts. Such at least

may very properly be accounted, all those propensities in the animal nature of man, which arrive at completion without the intervention of any human tuition : as desires, affections, &c.

Those also which constitute all the superior faculties of man, being comprehensive of his whole intelligent nature, as his sensitive and rational mind, are also originally of this seminal description, though susceptible of accession, and of being brought into action by extraneous circumstances and human cultivation.

In like manner that which is emphatically termed in Scripture : " The Incorruptible Seed"—"the Seed of the Kingdom," has its original tendencies and intuitive perceptions, though susceptible also of growth and expansion, from the nourishment congenial to its own pure nature ; that is from the spring of its life, the Eternal Word received in the soul of man.

To assign to each principle of man's present threefold mode of existence, their exact boundaries, might be difficult as well as useless. That the lowest principle, the animal life, not only takes the lead of its more noble

associate the mind, but operates powerfully on it, is clearly evident to experience and observation. That the second principle, the intellectual part in man, in some degree anticipates the operation of any spiritual faculty, and is indeed prone to invade the province of the superior, is too well known to most religiously exercised individuals. Yet that this highest principle, when introduced to its rightful dominion, is capable of subjecting and regulating both of its inferior companions, through the continued communication of power from on high, is also happily ascertainable ; and as its dominion is thus supreme, so it operates frequently through the medium of its two associates, the mental and corporeal natures of man, as well as, in some instances, wholly independently of them. But though it may be difficult or impossible always to ascertain the precise limits of the operation respectively, of these united principles, they each have some distinguishing characteristics which it seems important to observe ; and which are designed to be the subjects of the present section.

In taking a distinct view of the natural and spiritual faculties of man, little requires to be said of the first observable and lowest principle of his

nature, his corporeal frame, with all its instincts, properties, and functions. Yet in the most cursory survey of this complicated machine, and still more on a minute examination of its various powers, we are constrained to adopt the admiring acknowledgement of the Psalmist on a general view of the Creator's power : " Lord, how manifold are thy works ! In wisdom hast Thou made them all ! " And if the features of the Divine character are thus clearly impressed on that which is doomed to decay, whether or not to be ultimately transformed into a mode of being, far above our present conception, how much higher may our admiration rise, in contemplating the more glorious instances of the power and wisdom, the mercy and goodness of God, which are displayed in the constitution of man's nobler part ! For this part, being originally designed for the participation of glory and blessedness, is also made capable of the ultimate experience of this gracious design, even after having violated its original conditions, if man fulfil such renewed terms as are placed within his reach, and which are completely adapted to the gracious purpose of restoration from his present degenerated state.

Among the mental faculties of man, as such, must be principally noticed, those principles of

rational and sensitive intelligence, which may be denominated "Reason and Conscience;" the first comprehending the operations of simple intellect; the second being the proper seat or throne of a Divine vicegerent, though liable to be occupied by a usurper.

We come then to enquire—What is to be understood by "Reason?" since the term is often applied in a vague and indeterminate sense. Thus it is sometimes used to imply the whole of man's mental susceptibilities and endowments, including every possible operation of them, whether employed on subjects physical, intellectual, or purely spiritual. Under this view is comprehended not only those natural powers which—in a greater or less degree, belong to him as man, but also every degree of spiritual intelligence and influence, of which his mind is susceptible, though proceeding from a source which is distinct from his nature, and making no part of his essential existence; and yet as a rational creature, constituting the highest privileges and greatest blessedness of his being.

Thus the moralist extols, as well he may under this comprehensive view, what the religionist

depreciates and rejects ; because in the mind of the latter, a distinction is maintained between the natural faculties of man as such, and the super-natural endowments and communications of which he is made capable. Such a distinction ought at least to be kept in view, or the respective intention of writers should be clearly ascertained, in order to reconcile their apparent contradictions.

We will suppose the term “Reason” to comprehend in its largest, legitimate extent, the varied powers of the human mind as taken collectively. In a more restricted sense, it is considered as the origin of only some of those mental powers which we possess, either capable of being distinguished from those of the animal creation, or of rising into much higher perfection than theirs ; as the capacity of comparing and combining simple ideas, and thus drawing inferences from certain acknowledged premises.

But let us examine more particularly what is the extent and true amount of these powers. We may discover at least six distinct acts or operations which may be considered as constituting the full exercise of the reasoning or rational faculty, viz. *first*, to perceive ; *second*,

to apprehend; *third*, to combine; *fourth*, to compare; *fifth*, to reflect; *sixth*, to conclude.

Now these are operations or acts, of which every rational being is capable, whose organs and mental powers are not defective. But experience has fully established the fact, that with the possession of these in their utmost vigour, mankind may perceive partially, apprehend imperfectly, combine erroneously, compare inadequately, reflect defectively, and thus consequently conclude mistakenly. How then is "Reason" an infallible guide to Truth? This Reason which is a natural endowment, or common in a greater or less proportion, to every man in his natural capacity, is a sufficient guide and rule of conduct in the investigation and pursuit of natural truths, or with relation to those objects with which it is properly conversant, embracing all that are natural and correspondent with the temporal nature of man. For though it may be incompetent to the discovery of all possible truth of a natural kind; yet when corrected by experience and observation, that of others as well as our own, it will not be found inadequate to the establishment of natural facts, and rational deductions, so far as the knowledge of them is important to our well-being; and

provided we use it only within the sphere assigned to it in the order of Providence.

But Reason may be more strictly defined to be, that act of the mind by which it discriminates between subjects cognizable through the medium of the senses—discovers their properties and relations—separates, combines and compares them according to its powers—and deduces conclusions which are the certain result of the premises assumed. Its primary characteristic may be said to be, that it is the operation of a purely natural faculty, not of an especial gift, super-added to that nature which is common and even essential to man. That “Reason” is not however, in every degree, exclusively the property of human nature, has been admirably shown by the writer before alluded to ;* and it may be often observed, by persons attentive to the fact, in inferior animals. Its sphere of action must be bounded by the sphere of knowledge in every rational agent. But since a fountain, as has been often asserted, can rise no higher than its spring, so the faculties in their utmost elevation and exercise, can attain to no higher degree of knowledge, than that

* Hancock on Instinct.

which is derived from premises with which they are furnished ; whether from the objects of this visible creation, or from impressions made on the intellectual faculties and feelings of man, by the various contingencies to which he is subject ; exciting pleasurable or painful sensations.

But there is another class of objects which may be communicated to man's perception, both in a mediate and immediate manner, which are not of a natural kind ; such as could never be discovered by any combination of matter and motion, nor even by all the combined powers of the human mind ; neither can they be any further justly apprehended by the latter, than according to the proportion in which their nature and their relations are Divinely unfolded to its capacities. These are the subjects of Revelation,* and are such as it is evident have never entered into the heart of man, except by Divine communication, whether primarily or secondarily afforded.

The natural faculties of the mind of man, as distinguished from all super-natural endowments, may be compared to implements in the

* See the Chapter on that subject, which immediately follows this.

hand of an artificer suited to his various tasks. They are of two different classes. Some of them of a passive, and some of an active character. Perception, sensation pleasurable or painful, memory, and conscience, appear to be of the first class. Recollection, reflection, combination, comparison, deduction are of the second. And these active operations appear to constitute the whole province of "Reason," or to comprehend what is properly speaking the reasoning faculty; while the former embrace not only images or impressions of objects, indifferent or interesting, but all the affections and desires, and also the moral sense. But these implements or faculties must be furnished with their proper materials to work upon; and these are abundantly presented in the phænomena of visible, tangible, audible, sensible, and odorous objects in nature and art; and in those various combinations of mental stores, which are supplied by the experience and observation of other ages and generations, as well as of individuals more advanced in the like experience and observation.

It is not however denied that the reasoning faculty, that of deducing conclusions from admitted premises, may exert itself even profitably

as well as unprofitably, on subjects which are altogether above its native sphere, and in which it often betrays its insufficiency, through the want of that more perfect and extensive knowledge of primary principles, which is not afforded to man in his present state. But the higher office of the reasoning faculty in relation to these subjects, is to act in strict subordination to the superior light of Revelation; and the extent of its province in this respect, will be further considered in the sections on that subject.

“Conscience” in its strictly proper signification, appears to be also a natural faculty; and, as such, resembles the nature or property of a mirror, presenting the reflection of objects or images which have been, through whatever medium, and on whatever authority, previously admitted to contemplation as being good or evil.

But when we consider in how unsought for and undesirable a manner, objects or images are thus brought to our remembrance, not by a simple operation of passive memory or voluntary recollection; but accompanied by an authoritative sentence of condemnation or justification of our thoughts, words, and actions, as thus brought

into review, we are constrained to admit, that the general and practically influential idea of Conscience, properly includes that super-natural light and power of discerning between essential good and evil, which is to be justly ascribed only to a spiritual principle, a gift bestowed on man, which is capable of enlargement, or liable to extinction, according as it is faithfully occupied, or wilfully neglected. Thus "Conscience," and the Divine Light shining in the Conscience, and presiding there as its proper seat or throne, are two distinct faculties; the one natural—the other super-natural; but both susceptible of progression and enlargement, and of acting in complete concert; the former being in all points subordinate to the latter.

"Conscience" then may be defined to be the seat or receptacle of that moral sense—that intuitive perception of right and wrong, which, in a seminal or radical degree, may be fitly called "the law written in the heart"—a law capable of expansion, and of making upon the mind pre-eminent impression above all laws, through the successive communication of Divine Light and Influence, whether immediately or mediately conveyed. It is to this Light shining in the

Conscience, that is to be attributed that authoritative power of correction, which intrudes itself unbidden to the guilty and rebellious; and is also heard both as a dictator and a monitor, like a word behind us saying: "This is the way, walk ye in it," when we would "turn to the right hand, or turn to the left."

Conscience is accordingly, in a popular sense, represented as the vicegerent of heaven.

Chapter IV.

ON REVELATION AND INSPIRATION.

Section I.

REVELATION IMMEDIATE AND INSTRUMENTAL.

Revelation is the communication of truths Divine, spiritual, or natural, which are not discoverable by the unassisted rational faculties of the human mind.

REVELATION is of two kinds:

First, Immediate—being a communication of the Divine Spirit to the spirit of man, whether accompanied or not by an external voice, appearance, or vision, manifested to the external as well as to the internal senses. Such were the Revelations of the Most High to the patriarchs and prophets, to the evangelists and apostles.

Second, Instrumental—being a like Divine communication conveyed through the medium of the servants and prophets of the Most High, speaking as they were moved, and immediately commissioned by the Holy Ghost, and ever accompanied by its Divine Influences; and which primarily includes traditional and scriptural revelation.

Though TRADITIONAL REVELATION may be justly considered, in these later ages of the world, to be the least important and the most uncertain, being indeed superseded by that which is written; yet must it have had a very prominent place in ancient times, among the various manners in which the Divine Being saw meet to communicate the knowledge of his works, his ways, and his will, to the bulk of mankind in the early ages of the world; during which it was transmitted by faithful witnesses of his power and his glory, from generation to generation, probably for many hundred years, before the art of writing was known. And though this mode of the communication of facts and truths, would become liable to much perversion, as it diverged into impure channels; yet it is worthy of observation, that however defaced and deformed

by the perversion of unholy men, many of the facts and truths recorded in the Holy Scriptures, may be traced to their pure origin, through all the mazes of error and distortion by which they have acquired those corruptions.

SCRIPTURAL REVELATION is the communication of such facts and truths, as God has been pleased immediately to reveal to chosen instruments, who were Divinely authorised to commit them to writing; and which, though no less truly the effusions of the same Divine Spirit, might or might not be accompanied by its Influences on those who afterwards received those written Revelations; as they may or may not in the present time, according to the state and disposition of the respective readers.

The subjects of these "Scriptural Revelations" or intelligences to mankind, are of three classes.

First, REVEALED TRUTHS which could not have been discovered by the utmost extent of human reason.

Secondly, MIRACULOUS FACTS, as visions, interpositions of Divine power; such as could not happen according to the regular course and establishment of nature.

Thirdly, INTERNAL IMPRESSIONS AND INFLUENCES.

The manner in which these Revelations, especially the two former, have been communicated, is twofold: that is primarily and secondarily, or immediately and mediately. Primarily and immediately to certain chosen witnesses or instruments, whose appointed office it was to rehearse and to record them for the benefit of mankind; inasmuch as no repeated primary and immediate revelation of them, appears to have been afforded to any other individual or individuals, than those to whom they were originally intrusted; unless this may be supposed to have been vouchsafed in the instance of Moses, or in similar cases, in which the original revelation committed to Adam, as well as those to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had become obscure or lost during the enslaved or degenerated condition of their posterity. In such cases there is no inconsistency in supposing a renewed revelation would be granted; though it is evident, that all which is related by Moses of those received truths and facts which had been known antecedent to his own times, might have been procured by traditional revelation in an unbroken chain.

There is a distinction between the revealed *truths* and the miraculous *facts* thus committed to mankind; the first being the subjects of pure revelation to the primary receivers of them, of whom there rarely appears to have been more than one appointed individual; and of which there could be no human witness. These *truths* are such as the history of the creation—the purposes and promises of the Most High in different ages—and the predictions of future events before they occurred.

The miraculous *facts*, include the fulfilment of these predictions, and various miraculous interpositions, of which there were many human witnesses; and which rested on evidence that could not be overthrown in the times of their occurrence; while to us they are attested on the authority of a Divinely Inspired Record.

Thirdly, There must be admitted a kind of MIXED REVELATION, if the expression is allowable, which the Divine Being has seen meet to employ, in various instances recorded in the Old Testament; that partook both of the immediate

and instrumental, and in which both the external and internal senses are addressed; as in the case of the burning bush displayed to Moses—the ladder to Jacob—and all other supernatural appearances accompanied with their appropriate internal impressions.

In the discussion of this “*mixed revelation*,” especially as it obtains under the Gospel Dispensation, most important considerations are involved.

First—This “*mixed revelation*” appears to be the standing ordinance of the Lord toward his true Church, while in a progressive state toward that final condition, described by John under the similitude of the New Jerusalem; which “had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

Secondly, That this “*mixed revelation*” is a standing ordinance, appears to be a clear inference; because no instance has ever yet occurred in the annals of mankind, of a church or collective body of believers in Divine, unadulterated

truth, to whom the double privilege of the outward and inward communication of Revelation has not been imparted. This is verified in the Patriarchal Church, as well as in the Mosaic and Christian ; the first having had the benefit of the most unbroken chain of tradition, in conjunction with the successive and particular manifestations of the Divine Will. The second had that benefit, together with a distinguished train of outward miraculous interposition, or immediate Divine instruction. And the third is not only favoured with a clearly authorised record of the truths professed by the two former, but with all additional gifts and graces of a spiritual nature, of which its state could stand in need.

Though these two distinguishing modes of religious instruction, have been thus united in the Divine economy towards every true Church, it must be confessed they have been most unhappily separated in the experience of all professed churches, who, though originally rightly gathered, have apostatized from their primitive condition : witness the general state of the Jewish Church at the coming of the Saviour, and during

many intermediate periods between that and its first rise ; although individuals of its communion, from time to time were preserved, keeping their integrity, who could bear a testimony of living faith in the Divine promises ; being conducted, by the right understanding of all the external types and rites, to their great antitype : and hence to wait for the consolation of Israel.

In general all the truths or facts that have been imparted to man, which could not be, or which never have been clearly discovered by the efforts of human reason, may be considered as entitled to the character of Revelation. Yet many of these are of an outward kind, and so far cognizable by the natural senses and faculties of man ; as to be susceptible of proof from outward observation, though not originally discoverable by natural or external powers.

In this description may be included the history of the creation—the fall of man—the promise of a Redeemer—the subsequent predictions of inspired prophets—and the fulfilment of these predictions in various minor cases, as well as in that most memorable instance connected with

the recital of the life, death, and sufferings of Christ.

It may indeed be questioned to which of these modes or kinds of Revelation is to be assigned, that pre-eminent manifestation of the Divine nature or will, which has been vouchsafed to man in the person of the blessed Jesus. For "God who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son." It was indeed by his Eternal Word, even the Spirit of his Son, that God thus spake in times past through his servants the prophets; as He has spoken in times subsequent to his appearance in the flesh, by the evangelists and apostles. But his speaking by his Son, in that personal appearance upon earth, in whom "dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," was indeed distinguishable from all other ways; seeing, in this union of the Divinity with the humanity, He spake to our whole nature, as consisting of body soul, and spirit; to our outward and inward faculties: so that the refusing to hear Him who spake both from heaven and on earth, must involve the most complicated guilt: "If" said

He "I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both Me and my Father." "Though ye believe not Me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

Section II.

REVELATION IN ITS MOST EXTENSIVE IMPORT.

What is the primary import of the term Revelation ?

In its most general and extensive sense, "Revelation" appears to be synonymous with the terms manifestation, unfolding, unveiling, either partially or perfectly, of things that had been previously hidden ; and always implies the idea of an agent or a revealer to others, and not of a self-discoverer. As He who is the Source and Author of Essential Truth, is the alone Revealer of every emanation of it which can be imparted to mankind, whether immediately or instrumentally ; so the term "Revelation," when applied to the subjects of religious truth, to which it is most appropriate, may be justly defined to be the supernatural communication of Divine and spiritual truths, and of such important facts connected therewith, as could not have been discovered by the natural, unassisted faculties of man.

Revelation may be considered under the following divisions or distinctions, *primary* and *secondary*, *internal* and *external*, *original* and *instrumental*.

PRIMARY REVELATION is that which may be so termed, because communicated by its Divine Author, to one or more individuals, without the intervention of any human agent; and is therefore usually identified with Immediate Revelation. But it does not appear that this primary and original Revelation, is always conveyed in an immediate manner only; that is, without some correspondent medium, or accompanying outward symbol, which might render it cognizable by the outward as well as by the inward senses. Witness the Divine appearances to the patriarchs and prophets under former dispensations; and, even under the Christian and more purely spiritual one, the Descent of the Holy Ghost—the Transfiguration on the mount—the sight of the Redeemer by Stephen, by Paul, and by the Apostle John as recorded by him in the Revelations.

Thus angels in the form of men, and even appearances in the character of Jehovah, as well as various others of visible glory, and also by voices

and miraculous visions, have often been the appointed vehicles and corroborating evidences of *primary, original* Revelation.

Let none however mistakenly conclude, either that it never has been, or may not ever again be afforded in a wholly immediate manner ; or that these external Revelations of the Divine presence and power, were not accompanied with an *internal*, spiritual impression proportionally unequivocal, and producing an awful sense of their Divine reality. For not only are the instances numerous, of this primary, immediate, and internal communication of the Father of spirits to the spirit of man, in the testimony of Sacred Scripture, most especially indeed under the Christian dispensation ; but this inward and immediate “ communion of the Holy Ghost,” is that abiding promised privilege, which is the perfection of that glorious dispensation ; through which the subjects of it should not need to “ teach any more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying : Know the Lord ;” for all should know Him “ from the least to the greatest of them ;” which can only be by the immediate manifestation and communication of His own nature, to their spiritual perception and participation.

This is that immediate and internal revelation which belongs not exclusively to *primary* Revelation, but no less inseparably to that which is *secondary* and *instrumental*; and which, as such, must therefore be both mediate and immediate, both external and internal, to entitle it to the character of true Revelation in the highest sense of the term. The distinguishing character indeed of this secondary revelation is that of its being mediate or instrumental. Such a medium are the Holy Scriptures. Such instrumentality is all true Gospel Ministry. But what shall we conclude of either, or how shall we ascribe to them the essential character of Revelation, if wholly unaccompanied *to us*, with any measure of that inward, illuminating, or soul-quickeniug Influence which proceeds only from the Father of lights and of spirits? and from which is derived the highest efficacy of making us “wise unto salvation.”

There is however a subordinate sense in which the outward testimonies, the sacred records of Divine Truth, may be denominated Revelation, if considered with regard to the twofold view just taken of the subject. The subordinate sense in which Revelation applies to the Holy Scriptures, respects the subject matter of all *pure*

Revelation, whether primary or only secondary. This subject matter, as was observed in a former Section, consists of truths and facts, the knowledge of which could never have been attained, but as originally communicated to mankind by their Divine Author. In strict propriety of speech, these testimonies of Sacred Scripture, might be termed the Divinely authorised declarations and records of Revealed Truth ; which, as it comprehends many other important considerations, will furnish the peculiar subject of another Chapter.

Primary Revelation, as describing revelation in its highest point of view, may embrace, though not necessarily so, both mediate and immediate, internal and external manifestation. Secondary Revelation, though exhibiting the like highest point of view, *must* embrace each of these descriptions ; for in this secondary character, the vehicles of revelation are ever those of hearing or seeing ; by which it is received through the medium of the outward senses. There is however a *third* sense in which Revelation may be distinguished from either *primary* or *secondary*. This third sense of the term Revelation, is that which

is primary and original with respect to its subjects only, as are the Sacred Scriptures ; but which in the manner of communicating them, may not partake of this primary virtue ; for the hearing or reading of the Holy Scriptures may be unaccompanied by any measure of that illuminating Influence, which is needful to a right understanding and efficacious reception of them : yet even in this lowest point of view, they are an attested revelation of truths which could never have been attained, but as primarily and originally communicated to prepared and chosen instruments, in order to their propagation among mankind at large ; and as such, they deserve a reverent attention, even from those who judge of their authority only by the force of external evidence. They may however become, through the irradiating Influence of the Holy Spirit, even to such as these, as they have often been made, and are continually found to become unto thousands, the consecrated channel of pure internal communication, that is of spiritual influence and evidence ; and they also furnish to all conditions a standard of doctrine, of truth, and of practical morality, the like perfection of which was never exhibited by mortal man, only as this sacred standard has been attained by him, through the supernatural means therein

exemplified. Hence the value of the Scriptures, even in this lowest description of their excellence, immeasurably transcends that of all other writings.

But what is to be understood by Revelation in its utmost extent ?

It is the spiritual manifestation of Divine truth or truths, which is addressed to the perception of those spiritual faculties that are awakened, or which is conferred on the soul by an operation of Divine power. Such manifestations, whether received immediately from the Fountain Himself, or conveyed from the Fountain through the medium of appointed channels, as those of consecrated human instrumentality, constitute the true character of Revelation ; which is the unveiling of hidden mysteries : but this unveiling of them is only in such measure and extent, as Infinite Wisdom sees meet to entrust to his dependant creatures ; the proportions of it being very different, according to his purposes, whether universal or particular, and whether ordinary or especial. Hence the lesser degrees of Revelation, or those which may be termed secondary, being the Divinely enlightened impressions of facts or truths which have been primarily communicated to others, may

perhaps, with more strict propriety be termed, "Divine Illuminations."

The revelations and communications of the Lord to the patriarchs, prophets, evangelists, and apostles, were mostly immediate in every sense of the word; not only as being accompanied with an appropriate evidence of their Divine origin, but also as being communicated without the intervention of creaturely instrumentality. To those chosen witnesses were committed, not only what importantly concerned themselves as individuals, but also what concerned successive ages and generations; always indeed attended in its efficacious communication to others, with a measure of the same Divinely, enlightening Influence, or spiritual evidence of its Divine authority, which was needful to establish it in the minds of the first receivers as the object of their faith; and which influence or evidence will never be wanting, in a sufficient degree, in a secondary sense, to impress and enforce those primary revelations on the minds of those who are prepared to receive the Truth in the love of it.

Hence though no new Primary Revelation is to be expected, of things which have been already

clearly revealed, powerfully attested, and faithfully transmitted from generation to generation ; yet a renewed secondary revelation or spiritual evidence of their truth and importance, is to be relied on, by those who are willing to be taught by it, as an indispensable qualification, for the beneficial or effectual reception of such primary manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

Revelation then must be considered, not only as immediate and instrumental, but as immediate both in a primary and secondary point of view. Primarily to those to whom it is originally communicated, secondarily to those who receive it through their testimony, attended with a measure of the same Divinely illuminating Influence which accompanied its primary communication ; by virtue of which, the veil being taken from the hearts of these secondary recipients, they are enabled to discern spiritual objects, through the medium of their own spiritual sight. This veil, which is significant of the influences of flesh and sense, or the reasonings of the " carnal mind which is enmity against God ;" can only be removed from the heart, agreeably to the condition prescribed in Scripture : " When it shall turn to the Lord : " —when that disposition is effected in the heart

which is not readily produced in mortal man, without much previous discipline of Divine judgment, mixed, as it ever is, with Divine mercy.

The qualification is too rarely found or too slowly obtained, which was insisted on by the blessed Jesus as necessary to the right understanding of his doctrine, viz: "If any man WILL DO THE WILL of my Father, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," i. e. in his human capacity. Of the real existence of such qualification, the Searcher of Hearts is the alone sufficient Judge; although some proof of it may be ascertainable to the creature, according to the degree in which a willingness is wrought in him, to yield practical obedience to those manifestations or declarations of the Divine will, which he is fully persuaded to be such. Thus—"whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." For obedience must keep pace with a real progress in knowledge, as is excellently observed by Cudworth, prop. VI. of his sermon. "There is a Spirit in man; and the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding: but we shall not meet with this Inspiration any where, but in the way of obedience."

The knowledge of Christ, and the keeping of his commandments, must always go together, and be natural causes one of another. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God" saith the Apostle "they are the sons of God." And none can be so led but those who receive the teachings of that Spirit, and are subject to it, as the primitive Christians were. "Now we have received" saith the Apostle, "not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God." This is that Spirit which was promised by the Saviour of the world, and which was and is given, though in various proportions, to lead and guide into all Truth. It is by this Spirit alone that any can truly adopt the language of "Abba, Father;" as it is declared that none can even truly "say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Every one therefore who is a child of God, not only by creation but adoption, this spirit of adoption being sent into his heart and enabling him to call God, "Father"—every one who is thus qualified, or is sincerely desirous of becoming so, assuredly has received, or is entitled to expect, some portion of Immediate Revelation or Divine illumination, if it were only to render intelligible and effective, what may have been

communicated through the instrumentality of others.

Where this mediate communication is not afforded, which is the case with millions of our fellow-creatures, there is yet no reason to conclude, that such a portion of Divine Revelation is not immediately vouchsafed, as is essential to the salvation of such souls, by discovering their native darkness, and exercising their faith and obedience, according to the measure of light and grace received, however small it may be; for if duly improved by faithful occupation, the lowest measure, equally with the highest, will obtain, agreeably to the Divine promise, a proportionable increase; but if rejected or neglected, even the lowest measure will become, like the talent buried in the napkin, the cause of condemnation to the unworthy receiver. For as saith the Scripture: "God is no respecter of persons."—"As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law."

Here the apostle evidently refers to the law *outward*, implying also that these sinners are not without a law inward, otherwise they could not be sinners; because "where no law is, there

is no transgression." He adds: "As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law; for not the hearers of the law are just before God; but the doers of the law shall be justified: for when the gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, [outward,] are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts," &c. This observation applies not only to the law given by Moses, but also to the law of the new covenant dispensation; an eminent characteristic of which was, according to Divine prediction, that it should be so written on the heart, as to preclude the necessity of "every man teaching his neighbour or his brother, saying, Know the Lord," because all shall know Him from the "least to the greatest."

The law thus impressively written within, is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that makes free from the law of sin and death;" both to those who are, and those who are not acquainted with the precious and extensive transcript of it, contained in the Scriptures of Truth; by which the "man of God may be perfected, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." But what must be the condemnation of those,

who in addition to this effectual law, engraven as by the finger of the Living God, on the fleshly tables of the heart, have also the most impressive and extensive testimonies of its origin, its efficacy, and its end, as exemplified in the Holy Scriptures in generations past, and predicted of generations to come; if, notwithstanding they are recipients of these high favours, they should yet reject or neglect so great salvation?

Section III.

ON INSPIRATION.

Inspiration is the communication of a supernatural influence, by which spiritual truths are rightly discerned, or efficaciously received and directed; according to their Divinely appointed purpose. And it admits of various degrees and even kinds: "There are diversities of gifts, but all by the same Spirit:"—but nothing that is altogether of human attainment by the natural powers of man, unassisted by a measure of Divine illumination, comes within the character of Inspiration or Revelation; although human powers so illuminated, may receive sanction and enlargement from Inspiration.

That a spiritual operation is essential to the opening of the spiritual eye and heart, to receive the things which belong to peace and salvation—and that this influence accompanying declared truth, is that which constitutes an inspired Revelation, may be farther inferred from

that observation of the apostle concerning the Jews: "When Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart; nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away."

Revelation and Inspiration are often confounded, as though in every sense of the expressions they signified the same thing. It is true no degree of Immediate Revelation conveyed to the mind of man, can be separated from some degree of Inspiration; that is from some portion of Divine Influence awakening or imparting spiritual faculties, capable of discerning such Revelation. That may also be justly accounted mediate Revelation, which is conveyed through human instrumentality, by words written or spoken being accompanied with such a degree of Divine Influence as irradiates the understanding, and disposes the heart to receive and embrace the subject revealed. As this supposes a measure of Inspiration, so also doth such an operation on the mind and affections, when not accompanied by any subject either mediately or immediately revealed; although not unconnected with the knowledge of previously revealed and attested Revelation, however that knowledge may have been obtained. Conformably with this idea is the beautiful language of a collect of

the Church of England: "*Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the Inspiration of thy Holy Spirit. &c.*"

The indefinite term "Revelation," is very generally assigned both to that which is primary and immediate, and that which is secondary and mediate; as well as to that which is of the mixed kind just described, arising from the record of truths, formerly revealed in one or other of the fore-mentioned modes; and which, to the present recipient is only attested revelation. This is indeed of a very different character; being common to all who possess the Holy Scriptures, or any correct outward knowledge of the truths they contain. But seeing those truths are of signal importance to the human race, and of universal application, so far as there is a capacity for the reception of them, we may be assured that no new revelation, supposing such to be granted, nor any revelation already *received* concerning those truths, that may from time to time have been afforded to the true disciple, can supersede or render null and void, the design of those Sacred Records; which will become increasingly momentous in our view, in proportion as they are contemplated under any true measure of

that inspiration or illumination which dictated them, or pervaded the various subjects of their contents.

That such inspiration was afforded to the writers and original collectors of them, is evident from the circumstance, that these writers and original collectors, appear to have been immediately endowed with supernatural gifts and graces, as was exemplified in the whole course of their administration ; such as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Ezra, and Nehemiah, with all the prophets in the Old Testament ; and the four evangelists, with the apostles Paul, Peter, and John in the New. And the same may be reasonably inferred, of the writers of those few books of which the names of their authors are not certainly known ; yet it is evident that the supernatural qualification which we justly denominate Inspiration, was imparted in very different measures to the same person at different times, and according to the different occasions on which it was employed.

The history of the Divine economy in the creation of the world and of man—of the dealings of Providence in the government of his intelligent

creatures—His purposes and promises towards them—and especially the communication of His all-perfect will—with the prediction of events from the commencement to the consummation of time, must be considered subjects of much higher degrees of Inspiration, than the presenting of a correct and instructive narration of facts which might be altogether cognizable by human observation. Yet even these, connected, as they were for a series of ages, with interests the most important, required an integrity and accordancé, as well as a preservation from the influence of prejudice or misapprehension, which can scarcely be relied on as the product of any merely natural principle; but must be ascribed to a secret, if not a sensible interposition of Divine Influence.

The degree of this sacred Influence would, we may conclude, be varied in proportion to the occasions for which it was extended. And thus it appears to be in the present day, in the experience and observation of those who are sensible, that the gracious promises and predictions which are left on Holy Writ, are still fulfilled and fulfilling toward the Church militant; and will yet be far more generally displayed in their further accomplishment, in and through them who believe

“according to the working of His mighty power.” Such individuals indeed are far from assuming, that any measure of this sacred Influence with which they are acquainted, in the distribution of the gifts which God is pleased to continue in his Church, has been equivalent to that degree of Inspiration which must have been imparted, for the working of visible miracles, or for being intrusted with an immediate and repeated Revelation of those truths and facts which had been committed to certain chosen witnesses, from the beginning of the world to the complete establishment of the Christian Church. Yet since many of the signal predictions of those highly endowed instruments, remain to be yet fulfilled, the humble believer in the manifestation or inspiration of Divine power and goodness with which he is himself intrusted, will consequently be induced to look for the progressive approach of that state, when “the glory of the moon” or lesser light “shall be as the light of the sun ; and the light of the sun as the light of seven days.”

Chapter V.



ON REVEALED TRUTH.



THE NATURE AND DIFFERENT KINDS OF EVIDENCE, APPLICABLE
TO THE TESTIMONIES CONCERNING IT.



There are two principal kinds of evidence, on which the Divinely authorised testimonies of revealed Truth, whether written or spoken, may be received—the natural and spiritual. The first is an effect of the application of the natural powers of the human intellect to the subjects of such evidence; and the latter is that Divine Influence, operating either through the medium of those natural powers, or independently of them. Our belief of such truths, may therefore be termed respectively a result of the exercise of reason, or of the influence and persuasion of faith.

Reason is that faculty of the human mind, or rather that combination of faculties, by which

it can apprehend natural subjects ; compare them with each other ; investigate their properties ; discern their natural relations, and form conclusions concerning them.

Faith is that spiritual endowment wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind, by which it is enabled to discern the nature of spiritual subjects ; to distinguish their important character ; to perceive their indissoluble relation to each other, by comparing spiritual things with spiritual ; or to embrace them, from a persuasion of their congruity with that secret testimony for Truth and of its Divine authority, which is afforded to the mind of man, as a light in a dark place. Therefore he that thus spiritually "believeth hath the witness in himself."

To believe, according to the common acceptance of the term, is to admit or assent to, the truth of any proposition that can be established on rational grounds. But to believe, according to the general scriptural acceptance of the term, is to believe efficaciously, even to the saving of the soul, by receiving the pure impressions of Divine Truth in the sincere love of it, and by yielding to such impressions "the obedience of faith."

The two grand departments of natural and spiritual evidence, may be further subdivided; the first into external and internal. Thus external evidence is that which may be derived from sense—from human testimony—from analogical deductions. Internal evidence is that which requires no extraneous help, but which arises from a just comparison of the constituent parts of any whole, by which the validity of that whole, may be ascertained.

This internal evidence, as applied to the Sacred Volume, affords the most irrefragable proofs, of the authenticity, the genuineness, the veracity of its collective contents; by exhibiting their essential connexion with each other; a connexion which is the result, not of any possible human foresight or contrivance, but of a Divine purpose, progressively developed. This may be deemed the most cogent and conclusive of all natural, or merely rational evidence, that can be applied to establish the truth of the Holy Scriptures; but this may receive additional light and corroboration from that spiritual evidence which is obtained through the exercise of a spiritual faculty, even that of discerning, comparing, and appreciating the nature and the connexion of spiritual subjects.

Thus natural and spiritual evidence may be united ; and hence the latter, as well as the former, may admit of the distinction of external and internal, according to its subject matter, and the field of its operation.

That may be termed the external division of spiritual evidence, which is employed on subjects of universal import, such as the connected truths of Sacred Scripture ; and that may be distinguished as internal, which affords the evidence of Truth and impressive obligation, on subjects involving either doctrine or duty—general or individual. Faith and right reason are therefore not at variance with each other ; because right reason, is reason rectified by the knowledge and the love of Truth :—a knowledge which nothing less than Revelation can bestow. But reason, in the merely natural man, which must be limited in its operations by his contracted sphere of knowledge, is often the agent and instrument of his corrupt propensities ; and while enslaved by their influence, Reason can as readily yield its powers to the service and defence of error as of truth.

Reason must prove an insufficient and delusive guide even in the most diligent researches into

subjects spiritual and Divine, except so far as its sphere of operation becomes enlightened and enlarged, by the knowledge of Revealed Truth, and its conclusions formed in due subordination to that knowledge. For spiritual Truth, or the true knowledge of Divine things, is the product of Revelation only, either immediately or mediately communicated.

To the recipient of such truths, that Revelation is pure, only when the veil of wilful ignorance or prejudice is taken from the heart ; and this is the promised effect of its being turned to the Lord : "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness ; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Hence the belief of any truth, received merely by the natural understanding, or on the ground of rational evidence, without a correspondent impression on the heart, is not that faith which accompanies the things which belong to salvation ; nor is it therefore that ground on which the Most High requires our reception of his revealed or declared Truth.

It is nevertheless acknowledged that sufficient evidence may be obtained by the sincere, patient, and humble enquirer, even on this rational

ground, to remove every substantial objection to the validity of scriptural declarations; and therefore the controversy of the consistent believer with gainsayers, has not so much reference to the insufficiency of their argumentative objections, as to the want of spiritual perception, and sincere love of the excellent nature of those things which they unhappily reject; because they cannot reduce them to the level of their own imperfect and unassisted conceptions. May all such be persuaded to learn, duly to appreciate the importance of this scriptural exhortation: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thy own understanding."

Chapter VI.

ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

"All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

"The Holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life, and they are they which testify of Me."

"The testimony of Jesus, is the Spirit of prophecy."

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The foregoing texts are selected and presented to the reader as being the collective testimony of Sacred Scripture to its own appropriate character and purposes; and as fitly introducing all that can be said in order to the establishing of a right estimate of their true value and important benefit.

The portion of Scripture last quoted is positive and conclusive as to their high origin: "Holy men of God spake"—they gave forth words whether orally or by writing, "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." To understand the full extent of these expressions it should be remembered, that the term prophecy in scriptural signification, is by no means confined to *prediction*. It is indeed defined to be—"speaking unto men to edification;" and of course includes preaching when this is exercised "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." It is therefore synonymous with—The word of prophecy—even of inspiration. And accordingly we are unequivocally informed, by learned and pious writers who have sought diligently into this part of theological history, that the whole of what we have of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, were ever considered by the Jews, as entitled to these epithets; as well those portions which we call the historical, as those which are the more specifically prophetic books.

To have just and adequate apprehensions of the character of that collection of writings, which are stiled by way of eminence: "The Scriptures," is an object no less worthy of the attention of Christian professors, than is a right understanding

of their contents. Indeed the latter is scarcely attainable without a due regard to the former ; by which may be ascertained the extent of their authority, and of the duty of subjection to it. From the want of those just and adequate apprehensions of the Scriptures, have arisen two very different classes of professed believers, between whom the pure Truth appears to have suffered, as between two thieves ; though not from both in equal measure. While one of these classes would attempt to exalt the Scriptures above that place and character to which they exhibit a most unequivocal claim, the other would depreciate them to a level with those human compositions, which may be properly subjected to the discussion and decision of the human intellect.

As even human productions, when they are the result of long continued observation and experience, or of deep scientific research, would demand a patient and progressive investigation of their contents, from every candid enquirer after natural and philosophical truth ; so the volume containing Truths far above the sphere of nature, with a transcript of duties both doctrinal and practical, of the most important influence on the happiness of mankind, must pre-eminently demand to be

received and searched with that reverent attention to the dignity of its subjects, which would lead to humble application of heart to the Giver of "every good and perfect gift," for a right understanding of them.

The two classes alluded to, who fail, in very different measures indeed, to ascribe to the Scriptures their legitimate place and character, are first, those who consider them the primary and ultimate source of Divine knowledge; attributing to them that honour and that efficacy which belong to Him who is their Author, and who has been pleased to appoint them, not as a source, but as a consecrated channel, of His Divine communications to mankind in different ages of his Church. This *channel* has been preserved with a wonderful display of providential care, from contracting the defilement of falsification, or fiction, or any important error; and is distinguished by the irrefragable evidences, both external and internal of the high purpose of those sacred writings. The Holy Scriptures are therefore most properly designated, A Divinely authorised record of Revealed Truths, and of important facts connected with them, which relate specifically both to the age and generation in which such Revelations were given

forth ; and also, in many instances, still more especially to succeeding ages and generations ; even to those yet unborn.

The strong corroboration of evidence both to their full authenticity, and to their Divine authority, derived from the contemplation of their progressive fulfilment, while it precludes the reasonableness of doubt in receiving their whole testimony, should make us very cautious in supposing ourselves fully acquainted with their utmost object ; rather considering our present knowledge as a preparation for perceiving their further accomplishment. Let us then read and meditate upon them as true disciples, sitting at the feet of Jesus, of whom they most eminently testify ; that we may receive from Him those immediate communications which are spirit and life to the soul.

The Holy Scriptures are a treasury of Divine knowledge, abounding with information and instruction in righteousness, suited both generally and particularly to every state and condition. It may be truly said there may be found in them, milk for babes, and meat for those of riper years ; food adapted to the most infantine, as well as to the most advanced, in the growth of spiritual

experience. But as even natural food fails to afford true nourishment in a diseased body, or in a vitiated state of the animal functions; and even in a healthful one when taken in undue proportions, or when the process of digestion becomes interrupted; so the food which is intended to sustain the soul, and nourish it up unto eternal life, though eminently adapted to this purpose, would fail of its designed efficacy, if not accompanied with the blessing of Him who "giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater," both natural and spiritual.

In the spiritual sense this blessing consists in the secret or sensible Influences of the Holy Spirit, enlightening the understanding to receive, and disposing the heart to embrace, the things which belong to peace and salvation. How then must this bountiful supply be abridged, this rich treasury of important truths diminished, or robbed of its highest efficacy, by those who boldly reject, as no part of Divinely authorised Scripture, whatever is not clearly comprehensible by their natural understanding, or by that degree of spiritual capacity to which they have attained. The more indeed the powers of the mind may be enlarged, and suffered to take the lead in the exposition

of Sacred Scripture, and in the elucidation of Truth, independently of a Divine guidance, the further will such a mind be found from that state of childlike simplicity and humility, to which the mysteries of the kingdom are revealed.

But it is not only subjects of a highly mysterious or most sublime description, such as angels desire to look into, but many of a subordinate character, that some intelligent seekers after Truth have stumbled at, because their natural capacity has been exercised more than in a due proportion to their spiritual. Presuming on the knowledge they have gained, of the high standard of moral excellence which is exhibited under the Gospel Dispensation, and to which it becomes every Christian professor to be conformed, they exclude from their creed of Scriptural Truth, whatever has fallen below that standard in a former and less perfect dispensation ; without regard to the condescending wisdom of Him who knoweth our frame, in adapting his successive requirements to the slowly progressive capacities of our fallen state ; in order to lead mankind by a gradual process, to a condition in which they become capable of receiving His perfect law—even that which is a transcript of his own Divine perfection.

When we duly consider how very few among the numerous professors of Christianity, appear as yet prepared to own, and as it were capable of receiving, this perfect law in its utmost purity and extent—when we consider how many practices are even conscientiously pursued by many, as being at least necessary evils, the way to avoid which may not have been opened to their understandings, we may find a clue by which to unravel the seeming difficulty of admitting, that practices forbidden under the Gospel Dispensation, should have been tolerated and even sanctioned under that preparatory system, which, in many impressive instances, was designed to be as “a school-master to bring unto Christ.” In numerous other instances, if not in its whole scope, this preparatory system, appears to have been especially designed to exhibit, what was and is the condition of human nature under the fall, devoid of those enlarged supplies of Divine grace, which alone can qualify for such entire subjection to “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” as to exhibit its efficacy in wholly setting “free from the law of sin and death.”

The impressive transcript of this law, with the communicated power of obedience to all its requisitions, was to be a characteristic privilege

of the Gospel Dispensation. And those who conceive themselves capable of exemplifying in their true extent, the dictates of this most perfect law, without the super-added qualification of power from on high, will be found deficient in the fulfilment of those duties which spring from a renewed heart; however unexceptionable they may appear in that conduct which is cognizable by their fellow-creatures.

“The spiritual meaning of any passage of Scripture,” says a pious author, “is the meaning of the Spirit.” The meaning of the Spirit may with stricter propriety be affirmed to be, the true or right meaning of a passage, whether that passage is capable of a purely spiritual, that is a mystical sense, or of a literal one only; or, whether, as is the case in many instances, it is designed to comprehend both. The spiritual meaning of any passage, whether literal, figurative, or properly mystical, is not to be confined to the object to which such passage was originally applied by the Spirit itself, if the same Divine Interpreter is pleased to apply the passage to a further and more extensive purpose; as is evidently the case in various quotations of the New Testament from the Old. Nor does it follow that the same

passage may not, under a degree of the like authority, be rightly applied to occasions and purposes of which no parallel may be found in those quotations ; because a renewed Dispensation of the Gospel, or a state of the Church differing in some of its circumstances from that which subsisted in the apostles' days, was clearly foretold by some of them ; and because, in the nature of things, such a state may with no less propriety admit of the language of inspired individuals, uttered at an early period of the Christian Dispensation, to be applied to a further advanced state of the Christian Church, than its situation at that early period admitted of the application of inspired language, which had originated under the former dispensation, and in a still earlier period of the true Church.

Thus the Holy Spirit remains to be the true Interpreter of his own language from age to age ; and He only can rightly apply it from dispensation to dispensation : and the more experimentally this is understood, the more apparent will it become to the deeply attentive and humble disciple, that there is an uninterrupted harmony observable in the various applications of the same language ; at least so far as that

no one spiritually authorised interpretation or application, will be found to contradict or to be subversive of another.

Such an assumption can by no means be adopted, respecting that interpretation or application which is private or merely human, and which can either sacrifice one exclusive meaning to another ; or, if aiming at congruity, will adopt a partial one. To distinguish certainly between the dictates of the Spirit of Truth, and the suggestions of the human imagination, in instances wherein the letter of Scripture does not afford certain information of the former, requires a qualification which is not to be derived from the disputing wisdom of this world. It is the result of a continued course of true spiritual experience.

The language of the Spirit, especially on a subject of a purely spiritual nature, and not cognizable by the unenlightened human intellect, is only to be understood by its entire correspondence with the testimony of the same Spirit, as evidenced by its own work in the soul ; producing the experimental knowledge of that which it so fitly describes. A striking proof of this fact

appears from the different interpretations which are put on the words of the blessed Jesus, used on two very different occasions : when speaking to the multitude who followed Him for the loaves and fishes ; and when administering to his disciples the bread and wine at the last paschal supper.

On the first they were as follows : “ I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven ; if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever ; and the Bread that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” And again “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath Eternal Life ; and I will raise him up at the last day ; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.” &c. &c.

On the second occasion alluded to, Jesus “ took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying : ‘ This is my body which is given for you.’ ” &c. &c. He “ took likewise the cup after supper, saying : ‘ This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.’ ”

That the subjects thus impressively introduced on these several occasions exhibit a striking affinity, and are readily apprehended to have a close connexion with each other, must be obvious to every attentive reader; yet a diversity of aspect is no less observable between them.

In the first instance they allude, according to the experience of the truly spiritually minded, not only to the breaking of the human body, and the shedding of the human blood of Christ without the gates of Jerusalem; but also, and more especially, to the partaking of the spiritual nature and living virtue of Christ, which may be justly called his spiritual body and blood, poured forth as it was and as it still is, to the reception of all true believers. In the second instance, as an institute of the former dispensation, the outward bread and wine were employed as figures of the true.

The Scriptures without the enlightening Influence of the *Spirit* operating on the mind of the reader, are not sufficient to "make wise unto salvation;" because they cannot impart that living faith, though they testify of the objects and the subjects of it, through which alone salvation is to be obtained, or any qualification received for

pleasing the Lord, whose gift it is through the operation of that Holy Spirit ; of which this gift is also described as a *fruit*. The Spirit without the Scriptures, though the source from whence all Scripture has proceeded, and sufficient, if the great Giver so please, to supply every need ; is not however dispensed in any measure sufficient to supersede the necessity of Scripture testimony, so far as to make the man of God perfect, in knowledge, “thoroughly furnished unto all good works ;” except in those instances in which the Divinely inspired records, were first dictated to mankind : and this probably in no instance so extensively as in that of *Moses*. Nevertheless it is fairly deducible from Scripture testimony, and most consistent with a due consideration of the attributes of the Divine and transcendently perfect Creator, that such a measure of his saving grace—his sanctifying Spirit—his redeeming virtue, is communicated to every accountable creature, as may be sufficient to constitute this life, that probationary condition by which the future distinction of all will be determined, as lovers of darkness or of light.

Allow me then, dear friends, to exhort you in the language of the apostle : “So run that ye

may obtain." Sedulously endeavour to cultivate those dispositions which are favourable to the reception of the truths of the Gospel—humility, meekness, docility ; and thus, through the Divine blessing, you will happily experience the fulfilment of the promise made to Nathaniel by the blessed Jesus : " Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou ? thou shalt see greater things than these." So may we go on from strength to strength, " till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

MEDITATIONS, &c.

Lecture F.

THE RIGHT ESTIMATE OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE, AND TEMPORAL ACQUISITIONS.

“Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness to the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

Not only the concluding clause of this passage, but the whole of the chapter, and indeed much of the book of Ecclesiastes, as well as that of Proverbs, is replete with appropriate instruction for the youthful mind; being the deliberately approved result of a long course of extensive and diversified experience, both of the most highly estimated good that this transitory world can afford—and of its vanity and insignificance, when brought into competition with the immeasurable and immutable interests of Eternity. For though

such competition or comparison might form no express part of the writer's design, it is certainly included in that just and comprehensive view of "*the fear of the Lord,*" which embraces "*the whole duty of man,*" as developed in a Christian sense of the term.

The energetic language of Scripture in many instances, as in the text here quoted, is evidently designed to exhibit, not the positive, but the comparative excellence of subjects thus contrasted; and therefore does not constitute a just appreciation of their distinct characters when separately considered. Of this manner of expression, we have a remarkable example in the declaration of the blessed Jesus, on a very different occasion: "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, &c, he cannot be my disciple." Now we may be well assured that the term "hate" is here used only in a comparative, not in a positive sense; and that its meaning is equivalent to that of another passage on the same subject: "*He that loveth father or mother, &c. more than Me, he is not worthy of Me.*"

Again: "He that loveth his life," that is more than Christ and his Gospel, "shall lose it; and

he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal."

Those who indeed have tasted of the goodness of the Lord, and are in any degree made sensible of the riches of his love and mercy in Christ Jesus, cannot hesitate to acknowledge the justness of this widely contrasted estimate, according to which all consideration of the lesser is absorbed in the greater; the favour and approbation of an earthly parent, being annihilated when opposed to that of the Heavenly Parent: and all the dearest interests of time, being swallowed up in those of Eternity. But when viewed, not in competition with heavenly, these secondary subjects may not only be allowed, but demand a high place in the scale both of duty and usefulness.

The claims of parental authority—the influences of well regulated affection towards every relation—the due care and preservation of our natural lives, are all recognized and impressively enforced by the same Divine authority, which forbids their being pre-eminent to the requisitions of Him, "who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift;" and to whom we owe life, breath, and all things given us richly to enjoy.

In like manner the acquisition and the diffusion of knowledge, of which the making and the reading of books, and the study of their subjects are assuredly principle means, though represented in the text only by their discouraging concomitants, are worthy to obtain that appropriate share of our regard, which may be justly measured by the adaptation of such knowledge to beneficial purposes, whether they respect ourselves or others.

With this object in view, knowledge may be said to excel ignorance, as "wisdom excelleth folly;" but with this difference, that while ignorance may be in a certain degree an involuntary deficiency, wisdom and knowledge imply the co-operation of creaturely agency in the due improvement of the talents committed to our trust, whether natural or spiritual, by the right application of them to their most worthy and legitimate purposes.

The labour and pains which are requisite in the attainment of all natural science, as well as in the production of every work of art, is a consideration, well calculated to impress upon us a salutary truth, viz: the imperfection of that

state of being to which, as probationers, we are subjected in this perishable world.

That the highest of our merely human efforts should partake of this imperfection, is a fact that may well tend to humble pride, and rectify the aspiring aims of the human heart, when indulged beyond their proper sphere of exercise; for it is consistent with the conviction which experience confirms, that the more we embrace of real knowledge concerning subjects both human and Divine, the more we perceive of the great disparity which subsists between all that can be attained in our present state, and that which remains unknown, unexplored, unrevealed, on this side of eternity.

Is then the pursuit of knowledge on subjects of a sublunary nature, absolutely vain and unprofitable? Is it altogether unworthy of the application of our rational faculties? Surely not! Though we must allow it involves a degree of weariness, a kind of perpetuity of pursuit, the utmost object of which, is perhaps never attained; yet under due regulation, it is often a safe and salutary employment for the activity of the youthful mind, and may not only be conducive to the

comfort and improvement of our condition here, but may be subservient even to the promotion of still higher objects—the increase of knowledge, and the diffusion of light both natural and spiritual, more extensively among our fellow-creatures.

Although our future allotments in life, in the ordering of Providence, may be much unknown, let not any one unwisely despise or neglect opportunities of acquiring such knowledge as may become productive of substantial fruits. Indeed the disposition thus to do, bears a strong affinity to that which would despise and neglect still higher gifts; and the consequences would be similar, though much more deplorable in the latter instance. But while it is one purpose of these observations to incite young persons to employ the increasing vigour of their natural powers, in the acquisition of useful knowledge, both civil and scientific, as opportunity and ability may be *rightly* obtained, it is the *primary* object of the writer, to invite them to the cultivation of spiritual endowments and attainments, in a degree proportioned to their superior importance. May all “covet earnestly the best gifts;” not only those special ones enumerated by the apostle, of which some were of more general

utility than others; but the gifts and graces which are designed for universal participation, the fruits of the spirit—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." These are all to be brought forth in their season; and as pre-eminent among these, to be preferred above the highest miraculous gifts, and which the apostle also denominates a more excellent way, is charity or the love of God and man.

The perfection of this grace, must have its commencement, its progress, and its consummation, in "the fear of the Lord," which David calls "the beginning of wisdom;" and which Solomon terms, "the conclusion of the whole matter."—And since this is a qualification more frequently and strenuously insisted on in Scripture, than almost any other, we will terminate the present discourse with a deep and serious consideration of all that is included in this duty.

It is primarily to be considered as a state of mind, the most favourable, indeed the most essential to our deliverance and preservation from evil; for it is equivalent to "setting the Lord always before us;" to walking as in his presence,

by maintaining a constant remembrance of his omniscience ; even that "the Lord knoweth the thoughts of man," and that there is not "a word in our tongue, but the Lord knoweth it altogether," "and will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing." But this cleansing, this soul preserving "fear of the Lord," cannot be effectually taught by the precepts of men ; nor become duly implanted in the heart by any thing short of an immediate impression of the Divine majesty, purity, and perfection, stamped by some degree of actual perception, vouchsafed to the creature, of these his adorable attributes.

And surely He hath not left mankind without a witness of Himself, both externally exhibited and internally revealed ; therefore will all be without excuse, who, disregarding such sufficient indications of his power and goodness, prove that they do "not like to retain God in their knowledge." It is indeed His work to afford these effectual impressions of Himself ; and this He is often pleased to do in an awful manner, especially when gentle intimations of his attributes are suffered to pass unheeded. Of this we have numerous instances on Sacred Record, as well as in the obvious course of Divine Providence.

But the part which rightly belongs to us, is to maintain and cherish those impressions—to dwell under them—to seek and promote their renewal and increase by every means of Divine appointment; as by waiting upon the Lord in silent retirement in the assemblies of his people—by the solemn perusal of the Holy Scriptures,—and by avoiding those circumstances and situations which have a natural tendency to dispossess the mind of this pure fear of offending: “Stand in awe, and sin not. Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still.” These are the exercises which prepare the soul for the reception of such a sense of the Divine nature, as renders it quick of understanding in this holy fear. It is indeed the effect of the operation of that Spirit which rested without measure on the great Head of his own Church; and which He still gives in various measures to believers: “the spirit of wisdom and understanding;—the spirit of counsel and of might;—the spirit of knowledge and of the *fear of the Lord*.”

But it is however to be observed that this “fear of the Lord,” in scriptural signification, refers not only to inward impressions, but to outward conduct, comprehending the whole tenour of

a Christian's life, as is well expressed by that pious author, Thomas Scott: "The fear of God is frequently put for the whole of true religion, being an essential part of it, and necessarily connected with all the rest. It seems to comprise a reverential regard to the majesty, authority, presence, and purity of God; an influential dread of his displeasure, accompanied with a desire and hope of his favour; (otherwise it would drive us from Him, inspire hard thoughts, excite enmity, and discourage all endeavours to please Him;) a submissive acquiescence in his appointments; a conscientious obedience to his commandments, and a serious, devoted attendance on his worship; nor can it be ever separated from a real belief of his Truth, and a cordial acceptance of his salvation, as far as we are acquainted with them; or from love, gratitude, and other holy affections. In proportion as faith and hope deliver the soul from terror, humble, admiring reverence of God will be increased; and when perfect love shall have cast out entirely and finally that fear which hath torment, the filial, reverential regard of God, as our adorable Friend and Father, will be enlarged and perfected for ever; even as it is in the holy angels."

To this may be added the encouraging expressions of the Psalmist: "O! Fear the Lord ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear Him."—"O! how great is thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!" This trust comprehends the faithful confession of Him, not only in word and tongue, but in the expressive language of conduct.

Such a state, it may be objected, cannot be proposed to sinners, who must have many stages to pass through, ere they are capable of a full compliance with these pure precepts. The path from spiritual death to spiritual life and peace—the work of the soul's redemption from the dominion of sin and satan, may be gradual, and variously exercising. It is so even to those who are in some degree "turned from darkness to light;" from the darkness, which is by nature in us all, to the Light which visits all, even to the day-spring from on high, that discovers to us our original darkness; which is greatly deepened in those who rebel against the Light, by resisting its primary visitations. But in every case, "the fear of the Lord," which in the rebellious is first

received by the sense of his righteous judgments, "is the beginning of true wisdom ;" the beginning of that perfect love, which ultimately casteth out all "fear that hath torment," and retains that only which is "clean enduring for ever ;" producing some of the most sublime sensations, of which the human heart is susceptible. For the pure fear, and the pure love of God, do not originate in a different, but in one and the same essential root and ground ; which is the principle of the Divine Life in man, in its different degrees of expansion. Thus, according to an observation of the pious Isaac Pennington : "Fear is love descended ; and love is fear ascended."

May you, my dear young friends, experience the effectual operation of this blessed principle, and all its salutary fruits ; among which will ever be pre-eminently found "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus will "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and in the love of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Lecture III.

THE RIGHT ESTIMATE OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE & ATTAINMENTS.

“If any man think he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.”

This language of the apostle, seems equally to involve an instructive truth, whether we consider it as applying exclusively to that kind of knowledge concerning spiritual subjects, which is attainable by man in his natural capacity, or whether as embracing every kind and every degree of spiritual knowledge, the attainment of which, however extensive in this our initial state of being, can be only partial and imperfect in comparison with that fulness of vision in a future state, of which it is declared: “We shall know even as also we are known.”

In the first and most limited sense, the doctrine can scarcely be too often or too deeply impressed on our minds, as it is admirably set

forth by the same apostle, in the first, second, and third chapters of his first epistle to the Corinthians. He therein exemplifies the distinction which invariably subsists between the wisdom of this world, and the wisdom of God, asserting that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Hence it is evident that a measure of the illuminating, quickening, and sanctifying Influences of the Holy Spirit, is essential to the right understanding and efficacious reception of spiritual truths. This was accordingly given to the primitive believers; and continues to be afforded to true believers of the present day, that they also "might know the things that are freely given to them of God." Without such a degree of this Divine qualification as the individual state may admit or require, it is in vain to presume on the possession of the true and saving knowledge of Divine things; and therefore they remain still "hidden from the wise and prudent, but are revealed unto babes." Therefore "if any man think he knoweth any of these things" by the strength of his own natural, unassisted powers, he assuredly "knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

But there is a more extensive sense in which this language of the apostle is equally verified ; and that is in the two following cases.

First, When a small initiatory degree of true knowledge, is mistaken for the whole of what might be progressively attained in the School of Christian experience ; and when this knowledge is held in the earthly vessel of the human heart, from under the sense of due dependance on the spring whence it proceeded, and becomes corrupt by the admission of earthly or creaturely properties, as pride, self-confidence, &c.—Thus it is justly said that “knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth :”—charity which is the love of God and of our fellow creatures, is like the salt of the kingdom, that grace which if faithfully maintained and exercised, will preserve in purity every other spiritual acquisition, whether small or great.

Secondly, When the utmost degree of spiritual knowledge which can be derived from faithful disciples either of the past or present time, is supposed to be the summit of Divine Truth ; for to man Divine Truth has been but partially revealed, according to this apostolic declaration : “ We

know in part and prophesy in part ; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." If therefore "any man thinketh he knoweth any thing," of Divine things, or so knoweth them as that nothing can or need be added to that knowledge, in order to a full comprehension of all that belongs to the subject, "he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

Even in the acquisition of human science, there is nothing more inimical to its progress, than the conceit that the summit of it is already attained ; so likewise in acquisitions of a Divine nature, the like conceit becomes an effectual barrier, to that revelation of the mysteries of the kingdom which is granted to a state of humble, child-like simplicity.

And what, it may be asked, is to be understood by these mysteries of the kingdom ? Are they not importantly interesting truths, which may be progressively unfolded, as the state of mankind or of individuals, is found to require them or is able to bear them ? Though the revelation of these, as to a full and perfect knowledge, is reserved for a future state of existence,

they may, in an extensive degree, be anticipated in the mind that is rightly prepared to receive them. Partly to the unfounded assumption that the whole of Sacred Truths designed to be rendered cognizable to the human mind, can be conveyed by the mere words of Scripture, even the most fitly chosen that language could afford; and partly to the vain attempt of reducing such words to one exclusively determinate meaning, may be ascribed many of the erroneous systems of doctrine that are in the world.

Indeed the very endeavour to confine the knowledge of Divine subjects either to verbal limitation, or within a system that shall be comprehensible in all its parts by the natural understanding of man, indicates a low measure of Divine illumination: "God is a Spirit," and as He is only to be rightly "worshiped in spirit and in truth," so his immediate communications to the soul, are more intimate and uniting than can be received by words; except so far as words are accompanied by that "unction from the Holy One," that "anointing which is truth and is no lie."

If this statement should seem to involve the censure of being wise above that which is written,

let it be remembered that, according to the express testimony of the same written word, it is declared: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him: But" adds the apostle: "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." And still they will be no otherwise truly revealed, however copiously and authoritatively declared by others, than through the renewing of the same Spirit, and according to our respective capacities for receiving them. In proof of this position, we may remember the description which the same apostle gives of the varying capacities of the believers in his day; as set forth in *Rom. xiv. 1-5*: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." &c.

The apostle John also speaks of children, young men, and fathers, though all had the same opportunities for knowledge. Hence though it is freely confessed that the fundamentals—the ground and root, as it were, of every doctrine and duty as well as of prophecy, appear to be expressly contained in the collective testimony of Sacred Scripture, and, in many instances, the minutest branches are also unfolded to our view; yet there exists

likewise what may be compared to a germinating principle in many of these, and especially in those of a mystical description, which is progressively expanded, as the soil of the human heart becomes prepared to promote the growth of the successive productions, caused by the renewed and united Influences of the day-spring from on high, and of the celestial showers of that refreshment which comes from the presence of the Lord. How needful then is the apostolic injunction! "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

To become a fool in the signification here intended, is to become rightly and truly humbled under a sense of our own insufficiency, and our consequent need of entire dependence on the Fountain of wisdom and strength; not only for the qualifications necessary for every good word and work, but even in order to attain such a right understanding of the doctrines of Christ, as may fit and prepare us to become his disciples indeed. It is the disposition of the heart rather than the capacity of the head, that renders us apt learners in the Christian School.

Of this we have proof when the Jews were desirous of ascertaining the authority by which the blessed Jesus delivered his doctrine ; for He replied to their inquiries : " If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." He who knew what was in man, well knew that these inquiries were not made in a disposition to do the Father's will ; and therefore not under the influence of right capacity for understanding that authority to which they would have refused subjection ; or for becoming instructed in the depths of that doctrine, the most simple elements of which they rejected and despised ; wherefore, as it was said on another occasion : " He did not commit Himself unto them."

Many in the present day, like the Jews, are more zealously concerned to ascertain by external evidence, the authority by which Christ spake, whether to prove or to disprove its validity, than they are to give proof themselves of a right disposition to obtain that evidence which is ever afforded to the doers of the Divine Will.

But it may be objected, that " He hath, committed Himself unto us" in these latter days, as

He did to his disciples formerly, by the full declaration of that authority by which He spake, in the Divinely authorised record of what He did, taught, and suffered. It is indeed thankfully to be acknowledged, by those who are seeking the full benefit which is graciously intended thereby, that all which can be conveyed by words declarative of that authority, even the whole "counsel of God," as delivered to chosen witnesses and appointed instruments for the communication of it, is intelligibly intimated to us in the Holy Scriptures. This knowledge, however, is as insufficient of itself now, as it was in the days of the apostles; one of whom thus addressed the church of Galatia: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the Truth, before whose eyes JESUS CHRIST hath been EVIDENTLY SET FORTH, crucified among you." &c. The succeeding expostulation exhibits further proof, that the disposition and qualification for the right understanding and application of Divine Truths were the same as insisted on by the Great Master; and such they must remain to be: "If any man will do His will." &c.

We may rest assured both on the testimony of Sacred Scripture, and on the results of extensive

observation and information, that no human mind whose natural faculties are arrived at sufficient maturity, has been left, or will continue to be left without the rudiments of Divine knowledge, or some fundamental indications of its individual duty. "He hath showed thee, O man!" universally, though it may be in ever so limited a measure, "what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God!" So much as this has been discoverable in some degree among the most savage, who can recognize the principle of doing justly and loving mercy, especially in the conduct of their fellow creatures towards themselves; and even in the instance of walking humbly before God, they evince some sense of its obligation, though deeply perverted, and grossly mingled with idolatrous superstitions.

However combined with error and corruption, whether in savage or civilized life, such a portion of light and knowledge will be afforded to every rational creature, as will be sufficient to constitute the necessary probation, and prove its predominant love; whether tending to darkness or to light. If darkness be the character of any state, that state is not in a capacity to receive more light;

if a tendency to light predominate, a fitness is attained for the reception of those further manifestations of light and knowledge, which the great Giver of "every good and perfect gift," may see meet to impart; and which, however various in their proportions, according to the purposes of His wisdom and goodness towards different classes, as well as different individuals of mankind, are all of saving influence. And it is further to be gratefully observed, that the progress of all Divine dispensations, viewed in connexion one with the other, is ever towards ultimate and universal perfection.*

To become a lover of Light and of Truth is indeed very often a progressive attainment, which continues to be long opposed and interrupted by the corruptions of our fallen nature. But as "He who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust," doth not require of us more than we have ability to do or to bear; and is pleased ever to give proportionably, "grace to help in time of need," the victory becomes progressive over our souls enemies, by every act of

* See this subject more fully illustrated in Lecture III,—
"The Knowledge of the Supreme Being." page 157, &c.

the obedience of faith, through Him "who hath loved us," and "given Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity." &c.

And let it be remembered, that as obedience is the test of our love, we must be accordingly exercised rather in doing than knowing, rather by acts of faith and love, than in clear conceptions of doctrinal truths, till we evince our fitness to be intrusted with the successive manifestations of them—that is with the revelation of their spiritual and Divine nature. A literal, external, and speculative knowledge of these truths, with which too many content themselves, is indeed within the reach of all who have access to the Inspired Writings; to which knowledge the expositions of truly learned and wise men, may be highly conducive. Even the external knowledge acquired by the Holy Scriptures, is an important talent, for the right use of which we are strictly accountable; but their highest character is that of being an especially appointed channel of spiritual intelligence; "able to make wise unto salvation, THROUGH FAITH which is IN CHRIST JESUS." Yet it is confessed that what principally relates to the external and obvious duties of human life, and even to the first principles of religion, its

precepts, sanctions, prohibitions, and results, as set forth in the Scriptures, is too plain to be misunderstood by the unsophisticated mind. But there is a height in scriptural subjects that cannot be reached, a depth which cannot be fathomed by the natural understanding, or received by the depraved will of the unregenerate man ; neither is this height or this depth attainable, but through the successive revelations of the Spirit of Truth, that "searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." Therefore those only who become willing to be governed and guided by it, are made able to apprehend "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of God, which passeth knowledge ;" any knowledge, but that derived from the participation and experience of this love shed abroad in the heart.


May you, dear young friends, who have been instructed by precept and example, where and how to attain this saving knowledge, be happily prevailed upon to account all things as loss and dross in comparison with this, even with the "knowledge of Christ, and the being found in Him ;" not having that righteousness which may

be acquired by man in his own will and strength ; but the "righteousness which is of God by faith," of which Christ is the author, the operator, and the finisher, in those hearts which are subject to Him. So shall you be of the number of his children, to whom the mysteries of the kingdom are revealed ; who shall go on from faith to faith, from strength to strength, and finally from grace to glory. Amen.

Lecture III.



THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUPREME BEING.



“This is Life Eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

The highest felicity of which even the highest order of intelligent creatures can be susceptible, is a true knowledge of the Eternal Source of perfection and blessedness, from whence they derive their being; and this knowledge consists in an intimate participation of such measures of that perfection and blessedness, as may fit them for everlasting union and communion with their adorable Creator; according to the several degrees of exaltation in glory, for which He may see meet thus to prepare them. Such unquestionably appears to be the state of angels, and of ministering spirits who stand before the throne and execute the will of God.

Such a state of positive enjoyment, and of progressively increasing capacity for its enlargement and duration, was undoubtedly the state assigned to man, when "he was made a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour," in being set over the works of this visible creation, and permitted to eat of that Tree of Life, which would have secured to him, not only a perpetuity, but an increase of blessedness. And such no less clearly appears to be the state to which, from a present condition of inferior and degraded nature, mankind will be finally restored through the efficacy of redeeming grace; according to the terms of probation to which they are now subjected. But the blessedness and perfection for which man is thus mercifully prepared, is to be only progressively attained; and that transcendent knowledge, the "knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent," in which it essentially consists, is therefore progressively and very gradually unfolded to him, whether in a universal, a general, or in an individual manner.

That such a state was communicated to man before his fall, through the medium of his external senses, as well as in a manner the most purely

spiritual, we are warranted to believe, from the testimony of Scripture in the former instance, and from the certainty that He who "is a Spirit," and can be acceptably "worshiped only in Spirit and in Truth," would prepare and qualify His highly favoured creature man, for that communion with Himself which alone can constitute the highest blessedness. But as this favoured creature was a being of a complex nature, consisting of an earthly body and a spiritual soul or life; so a two-fold mode of communication with him, appears to be adapted to his two-fold nature; and that in perfect harmony and correspondence: the external and internal revelation of the Divine Will, being ever in strict unison with each other.

Of this two-fold mode of Divine communication to mankind, we are more explicitly informed, as it has been afforded in his fallen state: for, *externally*, the voice of the Almighty walking in the garden—the sentence pronounced to Adam, Eve, and the serpent—and the institution of the rite of sacrifice, are sufficiently evident in the summary history given by Moses; though the last mentioned is not introduced by him, except as connected with the history of Cain and Abel; but there it may surely be recognised as of Divine institution,

from the approbation and acceptance it obtained, when performed in faith ; and the *internal* or spiritual communion of faith, appears to have been completed in obedience to the Divine requiring. In the instance of Cain, the outward ordinance was separated from its right qualification, and probably exhibited the will of the creature instead of submission to his blessed Creator, as well in the matter as the manner of his sacrifice ; which certainly was void of the distinguishing character of the Divinely appointed sacrifice for sin, concerning which it is declared, “without the shedding of blood there is no remission.”

Let us then further consider the ways and means appointed by Divine wisdom for the attainment of that knowledge, with which is identified the highest blessedness of our being. As before stated, He who knoweth our frame has been pleased to ordain two distinct ways or channels for the communication of it, which are respectively adapted to the capacities of our nature. The one is external, preparatory, and instrumental ; consonant with those natural faculties, by which we perceive and apprehend the nature of all sensible objects. The other is internal, essential, and immediate, adapted only to those spiritual senses

and faculties, with which God is pleased to endow us ; not as an essential part of the natural man, but as His free gift—the communication of a measure of that Spirit, by which only can be known the things of God, or truly understood the things which belong to our eternal state.

It is worthy of remark that both the external and the internal ways, have been employed by the Most High, wherever his purpose has been exemplified by establishing a church and people to his praise. Such it appeared to be in the family of mankind at large ; at least in the commencement of it, till the infidelity and disobedience of our race, so overspread the world as to cause a separation from the outward church, and indeed so infected many among all the descendants of Adam, that far from being generally preserved in a state of either internal or external religious communion, the knowledge of the true God appears to have been chiefly found in illustrious individuals, who were instruments in His hands to warn and instruct the multitude.

Knowledge indeed, in Scripture dialect, is mostly identified with experience, at least that knowledge which is saving and essential. Thus,

intimately connected with the knowledge of Christ, is the experience of its effects: "That we may know Him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings; being made conformable unto his death." "No man knoweth who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." This revealed knowledge of Increate Perfection, can be the result only of a spiritual manifestation and communication of the Divine nature, through the enlightening and baptizing Influence of the Son, and sent of the Father. He is that "true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" and if received in his least and lowest appearances in the soul, will introduce and prepare it for the reception of further degrees of that knowledge which is Life Eternal: even "to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent," by a capacity of blessed communion with the Father and the Son.

But in relation to this august subject, there are many kinds and degrees of knowledge vouchsafed to man, which may be called instrumental and preparatory. These are eminently conducive to the attainment of that knowledge which is Life Eternal. Indeed such is the state of ignorance

and degradation, into which a large proportion of the human race is sunk, especially where they partake not of these instrumental privileges, that it must be presumed, where these are withheld, a very small number only, if any, would be found in a fit state for receiving such measures of that transcendent knowledge as are designed, in process of time, to be universally extended. And this opinion is supported by the fact that this transcendent knowledge has hitherto been extended in a gradual manner, corresponding with the extension of these instrumental means.

This preparatory knowledge is of an external kind, a knowledge of important truths conveyed through external mediums of Divine ordination, adapted to the complex nature of man; and these truths are addressed to him, not merely as he is a spiritual being designed for immortality, but as he is, during his abode on earth, an *embodied spirit*. Hence his natural senses became avenues for the introduction or reception of revealed truths, designed to be conveyed to his spiritual senses. If they reached not these senses, so as to be apprehended by them, they would be void of any vital influence, and so would not be accessory to that knowledge which is Life Eternal.

Without this vital influence, the works of the Creator, and the words of his inspired servants, would equally remain as a sealed book, as a dead letter; whereas each are eminently calculated to proclaim his power and his Godhead, his glory, his mercy, and his truth, to the souls that are subject to the secret visitations of his life-giving Spirit.

That such visitations are and have ever been universally afforded in a measure which, if duly regarded, would be all-sufficient to open the blind eyes, to unstop the deaf ear, and to regenerate the heart of the natural man, may be concluded from this scriptural declaration: that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" even before, as well as since He was pleased to commit to chosen witnesses, this word or distinct message of reconciliation—the glad tidings of life and salvation, through that blessed Redeemer, who might be accordingly, in some measure, virtually known as their Mediator before his outward manifestation in the flesh. Man even in his fallen state, was favoured with such indications of his power and Godhead, of his goodness and truth, as would have led to a more spiritual and blessed acquaintance with the Divine Being,

had he “liked to retain God in his knowledge.” Because a large portion of the human race did not so incline, we read that they were without excuse ; which plainly implies that all did know or might have known, so much of Him and of his just and holy law, through the measure of light wherewith they had been visited by the day-spring from on high, as to be accepted with Him according to the terms He was pleased to hold forth to them as the test of their love and obedience : not that the creature is capable, under any circumstance or any qualification, of *meriting* Divine favour and acceptance, or of performing what shall entitle it to salvation on any other ground than that which originates in the infinite goodness of God.

It is a truth applicable to all, whether they understand or not the language in which it is conveyed ; a language which is clearly intelligible only to the Christian believer, that : “ By grace are ye saved.” Divine grace, unmerited mercy, is the only procuring cause of man’s salvation and acceptance with his Maker, manifested through “a Mediator—the man Christ Jesus ;” who having tasted death for every man, even that two-fold death of body and spirit to which mankind

became subject in consequence of the fallen nature derived to them, from their common earthly parent Adam, is "set down for ever on the right hand of the Majesty on high." It is assuredly by virtue of this one propitiatory sacrifice, which is expressly declared to be made for the whole world, that "the free gift is come upon all men to justification of life;" restoring them to a capacity of pleasing God according to the manifestation of his will vouchsafed to them.

Various have been the dispensations of Infinite Wisdom toward mankind, at different periods and under different circumstances; all or any of which He is able to render effectual as the means, though they are not the source of man's salvation. The lowest of these dispensations may be said to be adapted to man in his lowest condition; which appears to be or to have been the most extensive, and almost universally prevalent; though not designed so to continue: and this is the gentile state. Yet according to the apostle those who are and have been in this state, have not been without a law towards God, by which their consciences accused or else excused them.

It was not therefore in a totally darkened condition that the Creator designed to leave his fallen creature, even in the denunciation of the sentence of suffering and death pronounced upon him ; for this was accompanied by intimations of his merciful purpose, in man's redemption from the dominion of sin and misery—from the power of death, hell, and the grave. And consistently with these gracious purposes, which were designed to be progressively developed and fulfilled, as the state of mankind should become duly prepared to receive their full accomplishment, man was directly admitted into a covenant of grace, a new probationary state, consisting of terms on the creature's part, which he received a capacity to fulfil from that renewedly inspoken and effective Word—the Word of promise ; and these terms we may venture to call evangelical, even the obedience of faith ; having reference to that Gospel which should hereafter be fully revealed.

It is “through this Gospel that life and immortality are brought to light ;” and its operation is by communicating the knowledge of the true God : “This is Life Eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” The words of the text just

quoted, must be acknowledged to contain a most impressive, interesting declaration, given forth on the highest authority, in the address of the blessed Jesus to his Father and our Father. Let it then be further considered, what is the nature of that knowledge which is entitled to this distinguished character; and what have been and remain to be the appointed channels by which it has pleased Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, to communicate it to mankind.

The kind and degree of that knowledge which is thus identified with the highest blessedness of time and of eternity, is nothing less than a spiritual perception and real participation of the Divine nature and perfections; by which we may become the sons and daughters of God, in a much more perfect and precious relationship than that which we obtain by creation. Indeed to have just apprehensions of all that is affirmed in Scripture of the Supreme Being—of the nature, the character, the appearances of Him who is emphatically styled, “The image of the invisible God,” is a highly desirable attainment; especially as precluding those defective and erroneous ideas which, so far as they are at variance with the testimony of pure Truth, are inimical to the

experience of its ever salutary influences. But there is a knowledge of the Father and the Son, which far transcends all that can be expressed by words, though the most fitly adapted to convey right impressions on this awfully exalted subject ; and that is the knowledge which is communicated, whether through the medium of words or without them, only by the manifestations and operations of the Holy Spirit—the revelation of the Divine nature in the secret of the heart, transforming the soul into the likeness of itself, and filling the capacities of the immortal spirit of the creature, with the sense of that Divine Presence in which there is life, and in which alone there is fulness of joy in its utmost fruition — “even joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

If we have in any measure tasted that the Lord is gracious, and have been enabled thus to come unto Him as unto that “Living Stone, disallowed” indeed of men, but chosen of God and “precious,” even to know “Christ IN US to be the hope of glory;” let us not rest satisfied without the renewed experience of this high and holy privilege; neither let us become weary of waiting or hoping for it, desiring the returns of this blessedness, and such an increase of faith and strength, as shall enable us

causeth me to lie down in green pastures ; He leadeth me beside the still waters ; He restoreth my soul ; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake." Happy are they who know the Lord to be their Shepherd, by a grateful impression on their minds of the benefits and blessings He daily bestows upon them ; and who are thus encouraged to trust that they shall not want whatsoever He sees to be needful and convenient for them, while they continue of the number of His sheep, His true disciples : such as are willing to be led about, taught, and instructed by Him in the ways of his choosing. To these will He show the path of life—make them to "lie down in green pastures, beside the still waters" of comfort and peace. They will be led into the paths of righteousness for the Name's sake of Him who laid down his life for His sheep. And when, through the frailty of their fallen nature, they may have been made painfully sensible of its propensity to sin, their souls will be restored to the joys of His salvation who alone giveth repentance unto life.

Lecture IV.

ON TRUTH DIVINE, SPIRITUAL, AND MORAL.

“If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.” “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

In this language of the blessed Jesus, we may observe Truth is not only personified, but even identified with Himself. Thus it also is in another declaration, by which He styles Himself, “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” Many persons are accustomed to consider Truth only as an abstract idea or intellectual acquisition, having relation to such subjects only as are apprehended by the understanding, and are of a speculative, theoretical, or doctrinal description; and they do not view it as having an equally intimate relation to the practical, moral, and spiritual character of man. But the Light of Truth is not merely the light of knowledge; it is the Light of Life. It is evidently a scriptural position that the heart is

as much its seat as the head—the affections as the intellect ; and that its sphere of operation in each of these, is in proportion only to the degree in which they become rectified and purified by the admission of that Divine Light, which at once irradiates and sanctifies ; being an immediate emanation from Him, who is justly styled the “Sun of Righteousness.”

Truth is to be considered not only in its original and eternal nature, but also in its communicable and derivative characters, as having relation both to intelligent and unintelligent subjects, to persons and to things. To intelligent subjects or persons, Divine Truth is communicable in an immediate manner, in a degree and extent to which we can assign no boundary, and also through its appropriate channels and modifications, according to the Divine good pleasure.

A measure of this Divine Truth being communicated to man, whether immediately or through its Divinely prepared mediums, if received and embraced in the love of its own pure nature, and thus transforming the soul into its own likeness, may be said to be imparted and derived so as to become a quality or property of the human

subject ; and thus it stands opposed to falsehood, fraud, and duplicity, being exemplified by simplicity and sincerity in disposition and intention, veracity and purity in words ; integrity and fidelity in conduct. Divine Truth may however possibly be entrusted or committed, rather than so imparted or derived as to become a constituent part of the character of the recipient ; and that such a possibility has been realized, we have some remarkable and awful instances on Scripture record, particularly that of Balaam, who without retaining the love of Truth, was made or continued an instrument of conveying it to others. As its Divinely appointed vehicles, are not only of an animate description, but inanimate also as in the words of Sacred Scripture, so these records derive a character or quality from the nature of the subjects of which they testify, and the authority in which they have originated ; and being a Divinely appointed repository of Sacred Truth, they may be properly denominated the Scriptures of Truth. Such is the character of the fully attested and recorded revelation which they contain.

Reality, authenticity, and certainty, may indeed also appertain to merely natural subjects, as the

narration and description of facts and events, past or present, established on sufficient human evidence and observation. This may entitle such facts and events, to the character of truth, that is of reality as opposed to fallacious appearance, independently of any Divine or moral quality.

There is however no being to whom belongs the attribute of Essential Truth, but Him to whom also belongs that of Essential Goodness, who is affirmed to be "Love" as well as "Light;" in whom is no darkness at all, neither "variableness nor shadow of turning:" and consequently to Him also do these characters appertain, who is the living image and manifestation of the invisible Deity—the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of His substance or essence. In like manner must be ascribed the same Divine attribute to that emanation of Essential Deity, which is emphatically denominated the "Spirit of Truth." Thus Truth in its Divine nature, stands opposed to every degree of fallibility and imperfection, equally comprehending the attributes of Infinite Wisdom, Justice, Mercy, and Goodness.

When Truth is considered in reference to unintelligent subjects of a natural kind, though it

may cease to retain either a Divine or moral character as inherent in the subjects, it exhibits an important quality or adjunct, which we denominate fact and reality, in opposition not only to fallacious appearances, deception, delusion, and error, but also to fiction and fable, and even to types and symbols, except so far as the latter illustrate their Divinely intended purpose, bearing a correct analogy to the object designed to be represented by them.

Truth, even in a natural sense, or in reference only to unintelligent subjects, is ever valuable and important: in a moral and spiritual sense it is indispensable to the approbation both of God and man, as said David to the Searcher of Hearts: "Thou desirest Truth in the inward parts." And this Divine Truth imparted to man and engrafted into his nature, alone can make free—free from what? from all the bondage of sin and satan, to which his nature is become subjected, and can render him capable of partaking of the "glorious liberty of the children of God."

Such a transition must originate in the deepest recesses of the soul; being a progressive effect of the shining of that Light, which alone can

expel darkness, and rectify the depraved will and affections of the natural man. Thus the blessed Jesus prayed to his Heavenly Father on behalf of his disciples; "Sanctify them through thy Truth; thy Word is Truth." Whatever proceeds from a Divine nature, must be of a nature correspondent therewith. Every word, that is, not only every express declaration and command, but every communication of a sanctifying influence, must be derived from the same Divine Source, and is effectual in its operations if not wilfully resisted: "Now ye are clean" said the Divine Teacher "through the word which I have spoken unto you;" exhorting them to abide therein consistently with the doctrine of the text: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free." &c.

To continue in the word of the blessed Master, is to continue subject to his successive instructions and requisitions. For though the entrance of the Divine Word, giveth life; and every communication, every dispensation of the Divine Will to man, quickens his soul into a sensibility of what is good and acceptable in the Divine sight; yet if we reject it in any of its

least and lowest manifestations, we shall be in danger of not apprehending or of not discerning it in things of greater magnitude. Thus should we fail of being his disciples indeed, and of knowing "the Truth as it is in Jesus;" even as it is in its own pure nature and essence: in which alone it can convert the soul. This only is that "law of the Lord which is perfect;" experimentally known to David, as a transcript intended to be more and more fully unfolded, of "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," which alone can "make free from the law of sin and death."

Such is the essentially pure and perfect nature of Spiritual Truth, or the principle of Divine Truth, when engrafted into the nature of man. As brought forth into obvious action in human conduct, it may be denominated Moral Truth; and it confers upon man substantial value in the view of his enlightened fellow creatures. It is the indispensable basis and accompaniment of all other Christian virtues.

May the reader of these characters of Spiritual Truth, be found among its strict adherents and faithful votaries. And seeing we are exhorted by the lips of Him who is Truth itself, to be "perfect

as our Father who is in heaven is perfect ;” that is to be lacking in nothing which his goodness is willing to impart, or to qualify us to attain, let us be earnestly concerned that the transcript of his Divine perfections may be brought forth in our hearts and lives ; we “ being not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove,” from time to time, “ what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God concerning us ;” which “ is our sanctification” and salvation.

Lecture V.

ON GRACE AND DUTY.

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Every Christian virtue consists of two essential parts—Grace and Duty. Grace in whatever proportion communicated, is a Divine gift; duty is that reception and occupation of the gift which are required of the creature, being that obedience which is placed equally within his power to yield or to withhold. This power may at first be very limited, extending only to the resistance or non-resistance of the grace bestowed; but it is enlarged by every visitation of the grace *duly received*. Thus its sphere of operation, though in the beginning it was that only of passivity and non-resistance, becomes that of activity, and co-operation with the measure of grace, to the effecting of the Divine purposes thereof. This activity or co-operation

may be either purely mental, or both mental and coporeal, according to the nature of the Divine requiring.

Man is a complex being, consisting of a two-fold nature, distinguished in Scripture by the inward and the outward man. His bountiful Creator and merciful Redeemer, demands the dedication of both to his service ; and accordingly has endowed him with a progressive capacity for the fulfilment of his active duty, as well as with power resulting from this grace, to resist and gradually overcome, all those corruptions of his nature and temptations of the enemy, which would oppose the work of salvation : and when this " enemy shall come in like a flood," there is a promise of a super-added measure of grace, even that " the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

Some of the operations of the grace and good Spirit of the Lord in the soul of man, are or may be antecedent to any, the most passive acquiescence of the will of the creature ; such as the drawings of the Heavenly Father's love—the sense of his goodness, mercy, and truth, to attract to the knowledge of Himself—also convictions

for sin, calls to repentance, and condemnation for disobedience. There are likewise other operations of the Grace and good Spirit of the Lord which appear to be equally gratuitous, and independent of any concurrence of the will of man.

The fruits of the Spirit, as enumerated by the apostle, appear to embrace both descriptions of operation, and might be distinguished by the respective similes of spontaneous and of cultivated fruits; or by the more appropriate denominations of Christian graces, and Christian virtues. The first three enumerated by the apostle are confessedly of the former class—love, joy, peace; and the six following are evidently of the second class—long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; to which might be added—patience and charity. All these of the second class are acts consisting both of grace and duty. That such is their true character is obvious by their being enjoined and enforced by many spiritual precepts; and the deficiency of them condemned, because the concurrence of the will is necessary to their production, and the withholding of that concurrence is reprehensible. Thus Thomas said: “Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand

into His side, I *will* not believe ;” which exhibits faith as an act of the will, as well as an effect of grace. But who was ever reprehended for his inexperience of love, joy, peace? unless this inexperience, this want of a sense of the love of God shed abroad in the heart, were attributable to his having violated the manifested will of his Creator, or so persisted in the violations as to become a stranger to His love and peace; and unsusceptible of the joys of His salvation.

The Christian duties just enumerated may indeed be considered, some of them especially, as deeds of the mind, or as mental rather than as bodily exercises, and especially that of faith. But let it be remembered, how imperfect in its operation, how inefficacious in its result, would be the gift of faith without its appropriate works!—the works resulting from the obedience of faith, as exemplified in numerous instances in sacred record, by confession, contrition, and repentance with correspondent action; and also patient submission to all the trials by which true faith becomes proved and purified. See the instances of each kind as rehearsed in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews; also those exhibited in the conduct of Stephen, and of all the faithful disciples of our

Lord ; and as referred to by the apostle Peter : “The trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth.” &c. Indeed faith may justly be acknowledged to be the most productive of all the Christian virtues ; and is therefore sometimes not unaptly considered as the root or parent of them all ; and, in an eminent sense, must be acknowledged to precede them : “For He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”

The principle or spiritual endowment which is most fitly denominated Divine Grace, because it is a free gift wholly unmerited by the creature, cannot be too highly exalted in point of efficiency and sufficiency, for every purpose for which it is communicated. It is indeed the originating cause, the author, and the principle agent in the production of every right disposition, holy desire, good thought, word, or work ; and in all these its primary operations, as well as in some others, which are not only more secret, but more especially preparatory, it is not too much to assign to Grace even an irresistible influence, so far as it may please Divine Wisdom to direct its course ; as is apparent in rebukes and secret

chastisements for sin. Yet that these may prove finally ineffectual, in bringing the soul to repentance and amendment, by the subsequent resistance of the creature, must be acknowledged, according to Scripture testimony. "Like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," some, in every age, have refused chastisement; turned not at Divine reproof though sensible of it; and though convicted and brought to acknowledge their sin, yet have not forsaken it: yea though warned of its danger, and led to deprecate it, (but too superficially indeed,) they have become its unhappy victims; as Saul, Hazeel, Balaam, &c. which sufficiently proves that such visitations of Grace though irresistible in conviction, are not irresistible in their results.

To represent Divine Grace as irresistibly effective, in the whole process of the work of the soul's sanctification and salvation, independently of the co-operation of the human subject, would properly describe the gift as *coercive* grace, and not as free Grace. The gifts and powers of the natural man, in his fallen state, though utterly incapable of themselves of producing any good word or work, are the appointed instruments of his salvation, when they become subordinate to

the operations of Divine Grace. And such instrumentality, whether passive or active, being at the option of the human agent to yield or to withhold, constitutes him a responsible, an accountable being, susceptible of the obligations of duty, and obnoxious to the consequences of its violation.

The natural man therefore is not merely mechanical, having no power to resist or to yield submission ; but is intelligent, having volition, and can yield itself to the direction and control of that powerful principle ; or can refuse and rebel against all the sensible attractions of Grace, and thus remain the willing slave of sin and depravity : “ To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey,” said the apostle, “ his servants ye are to whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.” Yet such is the infinite superiority of Divine power, to the power of the grand adversary or any of his agents, that if the soul do but as it were *stand* still in the faith of the former, it shall be delivered from the power of the latter ; and in fulfilling the term of probation appointed it, the beginning or duration of which is known only to Him who appoints it, the principle of Divine Grace will so

effectually impart continued increase of strength, that the soul will become a willing and even an active instrument, in "working out its own salvation with fear and trembling;" knowing who it is who has alone worked, or can work in it, "to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Lecture VI.

CONTINUATION ON GRACE AND DUTY.

The injunction to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in us, to will and to do of his good pleasure," like many other passages of similar import, appears to be imperfectly understood by those who would deduce from it, the doctrine of the irresistible operation of free Grace; considering it not only as the origin and primary cause, as indeed it is, but also as the sole agent, in the work of man's salvation; and this to the entire exclusion of his own instrumentality.

This is to degrade the capacities of man's intelligent nature, by placing them on a level with the powers of an inanimate or irrational machine; thus excluding not only the distinguished faculties with which the great Creator

has been pleased to endow him, as a conscious and accountable being ; but those also of a purely spiritual and still more exalted character ; which in the riches of God's mercy and goodness, He is pleased further to bestow upon man, both gratuitously and conditionally ; according to his Divine Will and wisdom. If the sum of these super-added gifts and graces were wholly gratuitous, and not in any degree dependent on that subordinate instrumentality, of the intelligent creature to whom the necessary qualifications are imparted, wherefore should the due co-operation with these gifts be made the condition of their increase or continued communication, or we be exhorted to "work out our salvation," and to be exercised in so doing, "with fear and trembling?" Is it not because the Lord worketh in us for this purpose, and we are entrusted with this high capacity of willing and doing according to his good pleasure and purpose ? and which, of ourselves, or by any works exclusively our own, it would be impossible for us to do.

Hence though it is most fully to be acknowledged, that of ourselves we "can do nothing," yet we may say with the apostle, "we can do all things," required of us, "through Christ who

strengtheneth us." In what manner then, we may humbly inquire, is it to be understood, that God "worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure?"

It is not to be admitted that He works his Holy Will in us to the annihilation of our own, or that He performs, within us or without us, those deeds on our behalf, which He is pleased to require from our hearts or our hands; and which are ever only according to the capacity He has given us, for the performance of them. No! He works in us by the gentle, yet powerful Influences of His Spirit, *so far* as is needful to *enable* us to "will and to do"—so far as shall tend to set free, and if not resisted shall effectually set free, the captive will in fallen man, by enlarging the sphere of its intelligence and its agency;—by communicating a true sight, taste, or sense of its own bondage, and of the liberty of the Lord's children.

The degree in which the Divine power may be pleased to work in these its primary operations, may have a relation not precisely discerned by us, to the depth and strength of the captivity to which the will of the creature has been subjected.

This captivity though of universal extent, is the effect of inheriting a fallen state, in which all the powers of the original nature of the creature are obscured or obliterated, and the Light of Life, spiritual life is extinguished; yet may this captivity be increased by many additional bonds and fetters, through individual rebellion; from which the power of the Lord alone can set free, and give a bias, a disposition, not irresistibly indeed, to all the goodness of which it may become susceptible.

To what extent and for how long continuance, the Influence of Divine Grace may be thus extended towards the variously circumstanced subjects of it, is known only to Him who seeth the secrets of all hearts—"the end from the beginning;" and who reserves to Himself the prerogative of that final election and that final reprobation, which He has been pleased should depend on certain conditions; while He executes his decrees of absolute election and reprobation to a temporary, though highly important purpose, either personally or collectively, in a manner wholly unconditional; and that without any reference to reasons cognizable by us for such discrimination.

Yet this also is, doubtless, according to that good pleasure of his will, which essentially consists with the most perfect wisdom, justice, and mercy.

To the subjects of His conditional dealings, which are the whole bulk of mankind, under very different terms of probation, His ancient declaration appears to be still directed: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man; for that he also is flesh." And as the duration or renewals of such strivings, such visitations of his Light and love are among those secret things, which belong exclusively to Himself; so it may be justly affirmed, that "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth:" that is by the withdrawing of those resisted operations of his grace, which, whenever totally withdrawn, must leave the human spirit in a state of hardness and impenitency.

A state of hardness and insensibility may be incurred by disobedience, which in the inscrutable riches of redeeming mercy, may not be suffered to prove final. What highly additional motive is hereby administered, that we should "work

out our salvation with fear and trembling," under an awful sense that the qualification which is essential to our being enabled so to do, is not only bestowed in love and mercy wholly unmerited by us ; but is liable to be taken from us, if like the man in the parable who received but the one talent, we should despise, neglect, or resist the talent or talents of Divine Grace, with which we are entrusted for purposes the most blessed, as they respect both time and eternity !

From the preceeding view of these scriptural premises the following summary of doctrinal and practical conclusion, appears to be clearly deducible.

The remarkable and encouraging portion of Holy Scripture, introduced at the commencement of the last Lecture, contains express reference to two distinct operations, of a character indeed immeasurably distant ; but by virtue of that original relation by which mankind are designated the offspring of their blessed Creator, they are here represented as acting in harmonious conjunction, so far and so long as creaturely agency becomes dependent, and wholly subordinate to the Divine power.

The medium or agency of the Divine operation in this conjunction, is most justly denominated the principle of *Grace*; that is unmerited favour. The medium of creaturely agency or operation, may not unfitly be denominated *Duty*. Not that the human agent is capable of any act, even of the will, that can in any measure assume the character of duty or of virtue, without such a preparatory Influence of Divine Grace as shall qualify it for a probationary exercise; though such preparatory Influence may for a time, in its primary instances, be irresistible as well as unconditional.

Such are the convictions of sin, and such are also the sensibilities of Divine love and favour awakened in the mind; by which experience a capacity is acquired, to distinguish increasingly between what is conformable with the Divine Will, and what is at variance with it. Thus duty commences its exercise by passive submission, followed by active obedience to the dictates of that Grace by which the Lord works in us, enabling, disposing, and instructing us, to "will and to do" according to "His good pleasure." Every Christian virtue, or the whole of that which appears to be intended by the

Righteousness of Faith, * consists of two parts, Grace and Duty.

Grace is the operation of a Divine principle influencing and strengthening, sanctifying and actuating the soul. And duty is such a degree of concurrence on the part of the creature as is required in order to the free and unobstructed operation of Divine Grace. This concurrence on the creature's part is either passive or active, according to the nature of the duty required: "Be still and know that I am God." This is the passive submission of the will; in which state the Lord is pleased to exalt his own power and authority in the soul, giving it a sense of the majesty and purity of the Divine Nature; under which all that is of the earth and earthly in man, is prostrated in increasing degrees of subjection, and made to bow in holy silence before Him.

Every good thought, feeling, word, and purpose that can arise in the heart, can be referred

* "The Righteousness of Faith" appears to be the righteousness of the Gospel Dispensation in the most extensive view of the subject; and this as distinguished from every kind of perfect

only to the primary and secret operation of Divine Grace; nor is the right ability to pursue these suggestions to be ascribed to any other than the prime agency of this Divine principle. But it is easy for man, yea most naturally incident to him, either to refuse submission to its first impressions, or to neglect and lose their availing effect; though if cherished and obeyed they would gradually produce and enlarge a new formed and spiritual capacity, both of understanding the wondrous things of the Lord's law, and also of active and even outward compliance with his Will; which worketh more and more powerfully in those who yield themselves thereto, enabling them to "*will and to do* of his good pleasure." Thus repentance is both a grace and a duty—faith is both a grace and a duty—love or charity is both a grace and a duty—and so is, in a greater or less proportion, every fruit of the Spirit.

The primary fruits of the Spirit, may have no more of Duty in them than a watchful attention against whatever might have a tendency to

righteousness, either as the procuring cause of the Divine acceptance, or as a substitute for that righteousness which can proceed only from a Divine principle or source.

interrupt their growth and ripening into perfection. There are many others that evidently include not only the passive, but the active submission of the creature, in a greater degree, to the influences and dictates of Divine Grace. An instance of this union is clearly expressed in this text: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the Truth through the Spirit;—see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

The principle of Divine Grace, in whatever measure imparted, and whether considered as exemplified in an outward dispensation or an inward operation, of the love and goodness of the Supreme Being, is ever represented in Scripture as a free, gratuitous gift; which may, nevertheless, be in different instances conditionally, as also unconditionally bestowed.

The conduct of the Heavenly Parent toward his visited children, may be faintly illustrated in that of tender, wise, and pious earthly parents towards their offspring. During the term of helpless infancy, all things necessary to their state within the power of such parents, are provided for them without condition or requisition. When capable of fulfilling such requisitions as are suited

to their tender age, and intended for their present or more remote benefit, they are exercised in the performance of them by the hope of reward or fear of punishment, though such reward and punishment may extend no further than the expression of pleasure or displeasure, approbation or condemnation, according to the fulfilment or neglect of the terms on which such results were suspended.

In the conduct thus prescribed, no regard or estimate would be attached by the parents, to the value of the compliance, except as it should respect the welfare of the child and the dispositions of his mind ; yet the recompence, whatever it might be, which had been annexed to obedience, would be fairly claimed, not indeed of debt, but according to the proportion of a gracious estimate. And if the punishment should be remitted, this also would be of Grace, not of debt or desert.

There is no real merit in the performance of duty ; which, whether passive or active, can be justly ascribed only to Divine Grace as its originating principle, and continually operative cause, and that whether proximate or remote—whether clearly perceptible or not to the mind thus

influenced and qualified. Yet may it be resisted, rejected, and neglected, which constitutes the dereliction of duty; as would the resistance of the legitimate instincts of our nature become a dereliction of reason. Self-preservation is a primary instinct of this description, implanted in the very constitution of our nature, though subject to the regulation of higher principles both of nature and grace, which would teach us, that there may be duties requiring our relinquishment of it, as an unconditional principle of action.

There can be no duties requiring our relinquishment of the authority of Divine Grace when clearly understood, because our submission and conformity to its dictates constitutes the *highest* duty. There is this further essential difference between the requisitions of Grace and those of instinct, or rather between our concurrence with their respective dictates, that, in the latter case, there is nothing to oppose our compliance with them, unless it be the claims of a superior principle; like that of laying down our lives for the brethren. Whereas in yielding to the Influences and requisitions of Grace, we have to oppose and contend with the evil propensities of fallen nature, and often with inveterate evil habits; but even

in these constant or frequent cases, Grace will be found ultimately and often immediately sufficient.

Every degree of ability to cease from evil and to do good, may be truly ascribed to either the undiscerned or the sensible operation of Divine Grace, whether vouchsafed through the medium of external, Divinely authorised instruction, or conveyed in a purely internal manner. Even the most external act of the outward man, if proceeding from a right motive, is an effect, however remote, of Divine Grace; so that it is a truth evident to reason, that—"by grace are we saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works," &c. "for we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works," &c.; even by the operation of a new and living principle, more copiously bestowed under the Gospel than under the law; more copiously extended under some peculiar circumstances than others. This Grace then is afforded to the creature by his adorable Creator, without any claim or merit but that of man's urgent necessities; though in proportion as these become mercifully supplied, further degrees of Divine Grace may be conferred, on conditions with which the receiver is made capable of complying.

Thus such a course of conformity in willing and doing, as the creature according to the Divine pleasure is qualified to yield, or is capable of withholding, constitutes the exercise of Duty. The sphere of such Duty may be at first a most contracted one; extending only, as its utmost natural scope, to passivity or non-resistance; for the very sense of our obligations to yield such passive obedience, becomes known to us only by the visitations and operations of Divine Grace, in however secret a manner made known; and it is only by degrees the receiver is made sensible that the requisitions of Grace in doing or forbearing, proceed from this Divine power and influence. Hence though the human soul, with the utmost extension of its natural powers alone, is insufficient of itself for any "good word or work;" yet being actuated by Divine Grace, it can become an instrument in the Divine Hand, of working out its own salvation, in conjunction with the Divine Agency of Grace; but never without it.

Hence the human faculties, whether of the inward or of the outward man, in the part which they effect, let it be remembered, are, in the highest sense, only and altogether instrumental.

But of what nature is such instrumentality? Is it mechanical, insensible, inanimate? No, it is intellectual, sensitive, and conscious. It is therefore susceptible of attractive and even of impulsive influence; which may be irresistible whensoever and for whatsoever purpose it may please Infinite Wisdom to extend an Influence sufficient to such an effect. And there certainly appear to be especial instances in which this may be presumed to be the case; particularly as already instanced, in convictions of guilt, and reproaches from conscience, which for a season are irresistible by the creature.

To ascertain the boundaries between Grace and Duty, or between those operations in the soul which are wholly the effect of Divine Grace, and those in which the concurrence of the creature, either passively or actively, have their appropriate share, is a task not within the compass of human ability; neither can it rightly concern us to attempt it. Enough it appears to be to know these two important points, and to be duly attentive to them: *first*, that without the effective visitations, operations, and interpositions of Divine Grace, both insensibly and sensibly, both gratuitously and conditionally afforded, we should

remain incapable of the accomplishment of the Divine Will, both in us and through us;—and *secondly*, that without the due exercise of the power which is thus communicated to us, of believing and acting, of willing and doing, according to the Lord's good pleasure, we have no just ground for confidence that we can escape the danger of frustrating the Grace of God, and of making shipwreck of faith.

Since however this unspeakable gift of "Grace to help in time of need," and to supply whatsoever is lacking, is either to be identified with the adorable gift of the Son of God, or to be considered as purchased by that gracious boon, and proceeding from it; and since also this gift has no limitation as to its efficacious extent in the salvation of the soul, but that which remains in the inscrutable councils of the Most High; so no individual, however unhappily remote he may have been from obedience unto the Truth, has just cause to despair of receiving the gift of repentance unto life, if there yet remains in his soul, the least spark of a living desire, to come unto Him who is "able to save to the uttermost."

Lecture VII.

ON FAITH AS TO ITS ESSENTIAL NATURE AND ORIGIN, AND ITS
APPROPRIATE OBJECTS.

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

This text whether distinctly considered, or taken in connexion with its context, is commonly understood only in the most limited and literal signification of which it is susceptible; as referring singly to the outward hearing and the outward preaching of the truths of the Gospel; though even in this signification it is a little difficult to apprehend in what sense it is supposed to assert—that “Hearing cometh by the Word:” whether the opportunity of hearing the Word preached, or the faculty of hearing aright is hereby intended. Whether an intimate knowledge of the original, might or might not throw a clearer light on this part of the passage, than is readily perceptible in our translation, it is, as it now stands, capable of conveying extensive instruction, from its comprehending two

subjects of such great importance as those of Faith and its essential nature and origin, and the appropriate objects or subjects on which Faith is exercised.

There are many assertions in Sacred Scripture which as proceeding from the Divine Source of inspiration, are of unquestionable truth, and which are yet not the whole of the truth that may essentially appertain to their respective subjects. Some readers however appear in danger of considering them only in this limited manner, or at least that nothing further requires to be taken into the scriptural account of such subjects, than those other texts which express precisely the same view of the same subjects. Hence there are those who conceive that Faith is only to be derived through the medium of testimony; and that nothing can be the subject of it, but what is conveyed to their outward hearing, or, it may be presumed, which they receive through the channel of such language as they believe to be the written words of inspiration, and which are therefore denominated by them "the word of God."

Such indeed as apprehend that the preaching of that written word, or rather of the

doctrines and duties contained in the Scriptures, may with propriety be termed, the "word of God," though such preaching is under merely human authority, and by the exercise only of the natural powers of man, will of course be ready to consider hearing, as well as preaching and reading, among the exclusive means of obtaining or receiving the gift of Faith. But we, my young friends, who, as a body of Christian believers, do humbly apprehend ourselves to have been in a more immediate sense "taught of God," agreeably to the Divine promise to the children of the New Covenant Dispensation in the latter days, are instructed to take a more comprehensive, yet a strictly scriptural view on this and many other subjects; and not to limit our ideas of Faith, or of the means of receiving it, exclusively to any single description of such means, that may have been held forth as prominent under any of the various dispensations of Divine Wisdom; because peculiarly consonant with them.

The preaching and hearing of the Word, as declared indeed "in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power," was, in the apostles' days, a prominent mode of introducing and promulgating the knowledge of the Christian

Dispensation, both among Jews and gentiles ; and this declaration of it they could not hear without a preacher ; nor could any be truly included in that character, according to the apostle's statement: " Except they be sent ;" so that the preaching and hearing of the Word, which was so eminently effectual in producing true faith, was altogether of Divine appointment, and under a Divine Influence. When however to this question—" Have they not heard ?" this apostle adds for the answer : " Their sound went into *all* the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world:" and subjoins also " but they have not *all* obeyed,"—it is not easy to confine the idea to outward or human preachers so authorised ; at least it can only be so construed in a qualified sense ; whereas some mental sound or sense of the Gospel influence, may be justly allowed to have been in some measure extended, as the universal gift of God to fallen man—the purchase of redeeming love.

This kind of transition from a particular existing state of things, to one more general, is very usual with the inspired writers, who were not merely experimental and authorised witnesses of what they affirmed ; but were under such a

measure of Immediate Inspiration, as often carried their assertions beyond the point of view from which they set out ; and possibly beyond their own present apprehension, as appears to be evidently the case with many of the inspired penmen of the Old Testament.

That the apostle did not mean to confine his general views of Faith, or of the manner of its reception, to that which cometh only by the outward hearing, is evident from the examples which he enumerates in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews ; according to some of the most memorable instances of which, this spiritual grace and duty have been received and exercised, and exhibited independently of the medium of outward hearing or instrumental preaching. Thus it appears that Noah, Abraham, Moses, &c., had no opportunity of hearing the word or command of the Lord *preached* by a fellow-creature, though they became by their faithful obedience to the immediate communication of the Divine Will, eminently preachers of righteousness unto others both by example and precept. That outward preaching, such as is authorised by Divine appointment, is nevertheless a consecrated medium, through which Faith is

received and strengthened, and its operation promoted, is an unquestionable truth; and was eminently verified in the apostles' days, when the promulgation of the Gospel Dispensation was ordained to be universally extended, by instruments Divinely appointed to that service.

Hence it is not surprising that the apostle should insist upon that generally established mode, by which Faith was produced in the great truths he was commissioned to deliver. This was not indeed merely by the outward senses, or hearing by the outward ear these great truths declared; but by receiving them under the operation of that Divine power, with which the preaching was accompanied, and to which alone can be justly ascribed, that opening of the spiritual ear to "hear as the learned," and that opening of the heart as in the case of Lydia, by which she "attended to the things that were spoken of Paul." His "speech and his preaching" he declares, were "not in the enticing words of man's wisdom;" and hence, the faith of his hearers stood not in "the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." The most therefore that can be made of the text with which this Lecture commences, as expressive of a universal

truth, is that hearing the Divinely authorised declaration of Sacred Truth, is one way and an eminent one, of receiving true Faith therein.

This Faith, in the apostolic sense of the word, may be defined to be the efficacious reception of Divine Truth, and is justly denominated, as it elsewhere is in Scripture: "Faith of the operation of God." It is an effect, a fruit of his Spirit both in preachers and hearers; and as it was and is such, in order to this effectual preaching and hearing of the saving Word of God; so the least message, or the least command of God, in all instances wherein it has been given forth through such a medium, remains to be produced in like manner, by the operation of the Holy Spirit on the heart; both in hearing these Sacred Truths, and in reading those Holy Records of Divine Revelation which were dictated by the same Spirit; as often as they are read with profitable impression.

Here then, is at least another medium, that of reading and meditating, through which Faith may be received. But what shall we say of the numerous instances recorded in Scripture, wherein also Faith has been received and eminently

exercised, independently of all instrumental mediums. We must contemplate the true nature of Faith in the universal sense in which it is alone described, not merely in conjunction with any of its specific mediums; and then consider the universal nature of its objects, whether generally or specifically described. This universal nature or characteristic description of all the objects of Faith—all the subjects and occasions on which Faith can be exercised, will then appear to be the Revelation of Divine Truth in all ages and under all dispensations; including our subjection to its duties, or the communication of the mind and will of the Most High to his creature man, according to its appropriate evidence, “the demonstration of the Spirit.”


This communication may accordingly be either immediate or instrumental; but the true revelation in either mode is afforded, only by an immediate spiritual impression of the real nature of what is made known; and hence this spiritual impression and therefore correspondent expansion of Divine Truth, whether the truth be immediately or instrumentally conveyed, is that which constitutes Revelation. And this is what it behoves us, dear young friends, to prize and cherish

as the distinguished privilege of the Gospel state or New Covenant in these latter days ; while it appears, that all the specific truths and important facts of the Gospel history, as well as those of the preceding dispensations of the Most High toward his creature man, have been conveyed to the bulk of mankind through instrumental mediums or verbal information, whether spoken or written ; and that by individuals who were either eye or ear witnesses of what they thus declared, or who received the intelligence of such truths and facts by immediate Divine Inspiration.


Of this New Covenant Dispensation it was prophetically declared : “They shall be all taught of God ;” and “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts so that no man should have need to say unto his brother, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know Me from the least of them unto the greatest of them.” It is nevertheless worthy to be reverently acknowledged, that since such a state appears not to be yet fulfilled in the extent in which it is predicted to prevail ; instrumental mediums are yet raised up to gather, confirm, and establish the church in its progressive state. Yet let your eye, your expectation be toward

the Lord, in receiving the ministrations of His Word; and most especially in waiting for the immediate effusions, influences, and teachings of the Holy Spirit. Few or none of you who are come to an age of religious reflection, are wholly ignorant, of some at least of his gracious restraints, convictions, and reproofs; and as you become reverently attentive and happily subject to these, He will become more and more manifest, by pouring forth upon you increasing and successive measures of that Spirit, which rested without measure on His well-beloved Son, the Holy Head and "High Priest of our profession Jesus Christ;" even "The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." And as you are thus qualified and made willing to be His disciples indeed; "the Spirit of glory and of God will rest upon you," and make you rich partakers of "the fulness of" the blessing of the "Gospel of Christ;" capable of bringing forth those fruits unto holiness, by which your Heavenly Father may be glorified.

Lecture VIII.



FAITH DISTINGUISHED FROM HISTORICAL BELIEF.



“But these things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his Name.”

It will be generally admitted by those who have known any thing of the efficacy of that Faith which worketh by love—which purifies the heart—which giveth us the victory over our soul's enemies—which unites us to Him, who is both the Author and the Finisher of it—that this Faith is not to be identified with a merely historical belief of the Truths of the Gospel. It is indeed evident to common observation, that many who give their unhesitating assent to these truths, as being unquestionably such, are far from giving proof of the sufficiency of this assent, to the production of the fruits appropriate to Faith, or of the efficiency of such an assent in producing “a belief to the saving of the soul.” Yet it is to be

feared that many who profess the Christian name, are disposed to content themselves in the persuasion, that to admit the truths of attested revelation; and especially to aim at such a general conformity to the precepts of the Gospel, as may be attainable in external conduct without a change of heart, is the sum and substance of that Faith, which is held forth in the Holy Scriptures as the indispensable condition of salvation and Eternal Life.

Others indeed profess to hold a more powerfully influential and correct idea of Faith, by limiting the subjects of it to those prominent Truths of the Gospel which proclaim the grounds of salvation; not perhaps sufficiently considering, that true Faith has for its subject every revealed truth—every Divine communication of the mind and will of God, with which we may be favoured; and, for its efficacious exercise, such a measure of the operation of a Divine Influence, as that it may be truly said to stand, not “in the wisdom of men, but in the POWER of God;” which is called in Scripture: “The Faith of the operation of God.”

When it is remembered, that “without Faith it is impossible to please God,” and that even

in these constant or frequent cases, Grace will be found ultimately and often immediately sufficient.

Every degree of ability to cease from evil and to do good, may be truly ascribed to either the undiscerned or the sensible operation of Divine Grace, whether vouchsafed through the medium of external, Divinely authorised instruction, or conveyed in a purely internal manner. Even the most external act of the outward man, if proceeding from a right motive, is an effect, however remote, of Divine Grace; so that it is a truth evident to reason, that—"by grace are we saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works," &c. "for we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works," &c.; even by the operation of a new and living principle, more copiously bestowed under the Gospel than under the law; more copiously extended under some peculiar circumstances than others. This Grace then is afforded to the creature by his adorable Creator, without any claim or merit but that of man's urgent necessities; though in proportion as these become mercifully supplied, further degrees of Divine Grace may be conferred, on conditions with which the receiver is made capable of complying.

Thus such a course of conformity in willing and doing, as the creature according to the Divine pleasure is qualified to yield, or is capable of withholding, constitutes the exercise of Duty. The sphere of such Duty may be at first a most contracted one; extending only, as its utmost natural scope, to passivity or non-resistance; for the very sense of our obligations to yield such passive obedience, becomes known to us only by the visitations and operations of Divine Grace, in however secret a manner made known; and it is only by degrees the receiver is made sensible that the requisitions of Grace in doing or forbearing, proceed from this Divine power and influence. Hence though the human soul, with the utmost extension of its natural powers alone, is insufficient of itself for any "good word or work;" yet being actuated by Divine Grace, it can become an instrument in the Divine Hand, of working out its own salvation, in conjunction with the Divine Agency of Grace; but never without it.

Hence the human faculties, whether of the inward or of the outward man, in the part which they effect, let it be remembered, are, in the highest sense, only and altogether instrumental.

But of what nature is such instrumentality? Is it mechanical, insensible, inanimate? No, it is intellectual, sensitive, and conscious. It is therefore susceptible of attractive and even of impulsive influence; which may be irresistible whensoever and for whatsoever purpose it may please Infinite Wisdom to extend an Influence sufficient to such an effect. And there certainly appear to be especial instances in which this may be presumed to be the case; particularly as already instanced, in convictions of guilt, and reproaches from conscience, which for a season are irresistible by the creature.

To ascertain the boundaries between Grace and Duty, or between those operations in the soul which are wholly the effect of Divine Grace, and those in which the concurrence of the creature, either passively or actively, have their appropriate share, is a task not within the compass of human ability; neither can it rightly concern us to attempt it. Enough it appears to be to know these two important points, and to be duly attentive to them: *first*, that without the effective visitations, operations, and interpositions of Divine Grace, both insensibly and sensibly, both gratuitously and conditionally afforded, we should

remain incapable of the accomplishment of the Divine Will, both in us and through us;—and *secondly*, that without the due exercise of the power which is thus communicated to us, of believing and acting, of willing and doing, according to the Lord's good pleasure, we have no just ground for confidence that we can escape the danger of frustrating the Grace of God, and of making shipwreck of faith.

Since however this unspeakable gift of "Grace to help in time of need," and to supply whatsoever is lacking, is either to be identified with the adorable gift of the Son of God, or to be considered as purchased by that gracious boon, and proceeding from it; and since also this gift has no limitation as to its efficacious extent in the salvation of the soul, but that which remains in the inscrutable councils of the Most High; so no individual, however unhappily remote he may have been from obedience unto the Truth, has just cause to despair of receiving the gift of repentance unto life, if there yet remains in his soul, the least spark of a living desire, to come unto Him who is "able to save to the uttermost."

Lecture VII.

ON FAITH AS TO ITS ESSENTIAL NATURE AND ORIGIN, AND ITS
APPROPRIATE OBJECTS.

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

This text whether distinctly considered, or taken in connexion with its context, is commonly understood only in the most limited and literal signification of which it is susceptible; as referring singly to the outward hearing and the outward preaching of the truths of the Gospel; though even in this signification it is a little difficult to apprehend in what sense it is supposed to assert—that “Hearing cometh by the Word:” whether the opportunity of hearing the Word preached, or the faculty of hearing aright is hereby intended. Whether an intimate knowledge of the original, might or might not throw a clearer light on this part of the passage, than is readily perceptible in our translation, it is, as it now stands, capable of conveying extensive instruction, from its comprehending two

subjects of such great importance as those of Faith and its essential nature and origin, and the appropriate objects or subjects on which Faith is exercised.

There are many assertions in Sacred Scripture which as proceeding from the Divine Source of inspiration, are of unquestionable truth, and which are yet not the whole of the truth that may essentially appertain to their respective subjects. Some readers however appear in danger of considering them only in this limited manner, or at least that nothing further requires to be taken into the scriptural account of such subjects, than those other texts which express precisely the same view of the same subjects. Hence there are those who conceive that Faith is only to be derived through the medium of testimony; and that nothing can be the subject of it, but what is conveyed to their outward hearing, or, it may be presumed, which they receive through the channel of such language as they believe to be the written words of inspiration, and which are therefore denominated by them "the word of God."

Such indeed as apprehend that the preaching of that written word, or rather of the

doctrines and duties contained in the Scriptures, may with propriety be termed, the "word of God," though such preaching is under merely human authority, and by the exercise only of the natural powers of man, will of course be ready to consider hearing, as well as preaching and reading, among the exclusive means of obtaining or receiving the gift of Faith. But we, my young friends, who, as a body of Christian believers, do humbly apprehend ourselves to have been in a more immediate sense "taught of God," agreeably to the Divine promise to the children of the New Covenant Dispensation in the latter days, are instructed to take a more comprehensive, yet a strictly scriptural view on this and many other subjects; and not to limit our ideas of Faith, or of the means of receiving it, exclusively to any single description of such means, that may have been held forth as prominent under any of the various dispensations of Divine Wisdom; because peculiarly consonant with them.

The preaching and hearing of the Word, as declared indeed "in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power," was, in the apostles' days, a prominent mode of introducing and promulgating the knowledge of the Christian

Dispensation, both among Jews and gentiles ; and this declaration of it they could not hear without a preacher ; nor could any be truly included in that character, according to the apostle's statement: " Except they be sent ;" so that the preaching and hearing of the Word, which was so eminently effectual in producing true faith, was altogether of Divine appointment, and under a Divine Influence. When however to this question—" Have they not heard ?" this apostle adds for the answer : " Their sound went into *all* the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world : " and subjoins also " but they have not *all* obeyed,"—it is not easy to confine the idea to outward or human preachers so authorised ; at least it can only be so construed in a qualified sense ; whereas some mental sound or sense of the Gospel influence, may be justly allowed to have been in some measure extended, as the universal gift of God to fallen man—the purchase of redeeming love.

This kind of transition from a particular existing state of things, to one more general, is very usual with the inspired writers, who were not merely experimental and authorised witnesses of what they affirmed ; but were under such a

measure of Immediate Inspiration, as often carried their assertions beyond the point of view from which they set out ; and possibly beyond their own present apprehension, as appears to be evidently the case with many of the inspired penmen of the Old Testament.

That the apostle did not mean to confine his general views of Faith, or of the manner of its reception, to that which cometh only by the outward hearing, is evident from the examples which he enumerates in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews ; according to some of the most memorable instances of which, this spiritual grace and duty have been received and exercised, and exhibited independently of the medium of outward hearing or instrumental preaching. Thus it appears that Noah, Abraham, Moses, &c., had no opportunity of hearing the word or command of the Lord *preached* by a fellow-creature, though they became by their faithful obedience to the immediate communication of the Divine Will, eminently preachers of righteousness unto others both by example and precept. That outward preaching, such as is authorised by Divine appointment, is nevertheless a consecrated medium, through which Faith is

received and strengthened, and its operation promoted, is an unquestionable truth; and was eminently verified in the apostles' days, when the promulgation of the Gospel Dispensation was ordained to be universally extended, by instruments Divinely appointed to that service.

Hence it is not surprising that the apostle should insist upon that generally established mode, by which Faith was produced in the great truths he was commissioned to deliver. This was not indeed merely by the outward senses, or hearing by the outward ear these great truths declared; but by receiving them under the operation of that Divine power, with which the preaching was accompanied, and to which alone can be justly ascribed, that opening of the spiritual ear to "hear as the learned," and that opening of the heart as in the case of Lydia, by which she "attended to the things that were spoken of Paul." His "speech and his preaching" he declares, were "not in the enticing words of man's wisdom;" and hence, the faith of his hearers stood not in "the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." The most therefore that can be made of the text with which this Lecture commences, as expressive of a universal

truth, is that hearing the Divinely authorised declaration of Sacred Truth, is one way and an eminent one, of receiving true Faith therein.

This Faith, in the apostolic sense of the word, may be defined to be the efficacious reception of Divine Truth, and is justly denominated, as it elsewhere is in Scripture: "Faith of the operation of God." It is an effect, a fruit of his Spirit both in preachers and hearers; and as it was and is such, in order to this effectual preaching and hearing of the saving Word of God; so the least message, or the least command of God, in all instances wherein it has been given forth through such a medium, remains to be produced in like manner, by the operation of the Holy Spirit on the heart; both in hearing these Sacred Truths, and in reading those Holy Records of Divine Revelation which were dictated by the same Spirit; as often as they are read with profitable impression.

Here then, is at least another medium, that of reading and meditating, through which Faith may be received. But what shall we say of the numerous instances recorded in Scripture, wherein also Faith has been received and eminently

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This communication may accordingly be either immediate or instrumental ; but the true revelation in either mode is afforded, only by an immediate spiritual impression of the real nature of what is made known ; and hence this spiritual impression and therefore correspondent expansion of Divine Truth, whether the truth be immediately or instrumentally conveyed, is that which constitutes Revelation. And this is what it behoves us, dear young friends, to prize and cherish

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Of this New Covenant Dispensation it was prophetically declared : "They shall be all taught of God ;" and "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts so that no man should have need to say unto his brother, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me from the least of them unto the greatest of them." It is nevertheless worthy to be reverently acknowledged, that since such a state appears not to be yet fulfilled in the extent in which it is predicted to prevail ; instrumental mediums are yet raised up to gather, confirm, and establish the church in its progressive state. Yet let your eye, your expectation be toward

the Lord, in receiving the ministrations of His Word ; and most especially in waiting for the immediate effusions, influences, and teachings of the Holy Spirit. Few or none of you who are come to an age of religious reflection, are wholly ignorant, of some at least of his gracious restraints, convictions, and reproofs ; and as you become reverently attentive and happily subject to these, He will become more and more manifest, by pouring forth upon you increasing and successive measures of that Spirit, which rested without measure on His well-beloved Son, the Holy Head and " High Priest of our profession Jesus Christ ;" even " The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." And as you are thus qualified and made willing to be His disciples indeed ; " the Spirit of glory and of God will rest upon you," and make you rich partakers of " the fulness of" the blessing of the " Gospel of Christ ;" capable of bringing forth those fruits unto holiness, by which your Heavenly Father may be glorified.

Lecture VIII.

FAITH DISTINGUISHED FROM HISTORICAL BELIEF.

"But these things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his Name."

It will be generally admitted by those who have known any thing of the efficacy of that Faith which worketh by love—which purifies the heart—which giveth us the victory over our soul's enemies—which unites us to Him, who is both the Author and the Finisher of it—that this Faith is not to be identified with a merely historical belief of the Truths of the Gospel. It is indeed evident to common observation, that many who give their unhesitating assent to these truths, as being unquestionably such, are far from giving proof of the sufficiency of this assent, to the production of the fruits appropriate to Faith, or of the efficiency of such an assent in producing "a belief to the saving of the soul." Yet it is to be

feared that many who profess the Christian name, are disposed to content themselves in the persuasion, that to admit the truths of attested revelation; and especially to aim at such a general conformity to the precepts of the Gospel, as may be attainable in external conduct without a change of heart, is the sum and substance of that Faith, which is held forth in the Holy Scriptures as the indispensable condition of salvation and Eternal Life.

Others indeed profess to hold a more powerfully influential and correct idea of Faith, by limiting the subjects of it to those prominent Truths of the Gospel which proclaim the grounds of salvation; not perhaps sufficiently considering, that true Faith has for its subject every revealed truth—every Divine communication of the mind and will of God, with which we may be favoured; and, for its efficacious exercise, such a measure of the operation of a Divine Influence, as that it may be truly said to stand, not “in the wisdom of men, but in the POWER of God;” which is called in Scripture: “The Faith of the operation of God.”

When it is remembered, that “without Faith it is impossible to please God,” and that even

which comprehends a right sense both of their Divine nature and authority, and a correspondent conformity with their sacred dictates both in willing and doing.

The Faith so strenuously contended for by the apostle Paul, and placed in opposition to works, is the Faith of the Gospel or New Covenant Dispensation, as characterised by the terms of this Covenant in contradistinction to the terms of the old. The works therefore which he opposes to this Faith, are not the works proceeding from it, or from the obedience of the Gospel; but the mere performance of the works of the law given under the sanctions of either dispensation. There is a difference therefore to be observed between the genuine works of Faith, as distinguished from good works simply so considered, or works of mere morality. The works of the law according to the conditions annexed to them, are the procuring cause of their promised reward, as a failure in them is the forfeit of it. But the Faith of the Gospel which includes its appropriate works, is a spiritual reception of Christ, a Faith which so apprehends Him both in his outward and inward appearance, by partaking of his redeeming virtue and power, as to

be enabled to do whatever He commands, and to abstain from whatever He forbids. It is the introduction to an experimental acquaintance with a new and living principle, which as it is yielded to, will cleanse the conscience from all sin.

It is not easy to dismiss the impressive subject of this Lecture without a more express advertence to its practical importance, particularly in relation to a specific object of Faith, which however erroneously supposed by some parties to be its exclusive characteristic, is nevertheless confessedly entitled to peculiar distinction, consistently with apostolic testimony, viz.: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." To believe in Christ and to believe the Gospel, are the prominent characters of Christian Faith: indeed they are virtually the fundamental subjects of all true Faith; and may be so, where the knowledge of the history has not been extended. And though these characters are included in the general appropriate objects of all true Faith, which, as defined in a previous Lecture, are every manifestation of the Divine nature, every communication of the Divine Will, every revelation or

intimation of Divine Truth, admitted through the immediate operation of Divine Light and Grace on the soul, yet it may be proper to consider them more specifically ; not only with a view to inform the understanding, but also as being in themselves peculiarly calculated to affect the heart.

A profitable estimate of the high value, of a belief in Christ and in the Gospel of Christ, as well as of the distinguished rank of these prominent characteristics of the Christian Faith, may be derived from considering the place they hold in the Divinely inspired records, from the commencement to the consummation of Scripture testimony, viz. Christ the agent,—Salvation the act extended to fallen man, progressively proclaimed throughout the Old and New Testaments, from Genesis to Revelations. What indeed is the essential nature of the Everlasting Gospel, but, “glad tidings” intimated or fulfilled of “the power of God unto salvation,” “ordained in the hand of a Mediator !” Hence every true believer, in every progressive stage or unfolding of this heavenly mystery, as manifested to his spiritual apprehension, is a believer of the Gospel, and consequently a partaker of this power ; and every

believer in Christ, who is obedient according to the measure of the manifestation of this Divine nature to the soul, though only as a principle of Divine Life and Light, whether from the least and lowest to the most august characters of His appearance and His offices, is a true believer in His Name, and consequently a partaker of the salvation which is by Him.

But a justly impressive, and duly extended sense of His redeeming virtue and power, must be preceded by a deep conviction of the soul's indispensable need of the experience of it. For to whom is the Gospel "glad tidings of great joy," but to the "weary and heavy laden;" the poor in spirit; the contrite and broken hearted? Even this "faithful saying which is worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," appears incapable of an efficacious reception, except where the heart is humbled under the sense of its own inability to save itself, from the conscious desert of condemnation in the sight of Infinite Purity and Perfection.

To such a condition, how consolatory is the sound of the Gospel promises! how readily is the spiritual ear open to receive it! "I have laid

help upon One that is mighty," who is declared to be "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him:" and who has Himself declared: "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." What encouragement and comfort in the contemplation of His character and offices, as prophetically indicated and evangelically displayed; from the first and most obscure, to the last most comprehensive and express! The Bruiser of the serpent's head—the Seed and offspring of David—the bright and morning Star—the Son of God and Son of man—The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world—the Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world—who hath loved us and washed us in His blood! Only in a living sense of this stupendous mercy, can any creature be qualified to unite in the song of the redeemed, saying: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

In a state of mind in any degree susceptible of this experience, there is little disposition to object in the language or spirit of the Pharisees: "We were never in bondage—how sayest thou ye shall be made free?" or in other words, to say

we need no redemption; we know nothing of a Mediator; we understand not the occasion for a propitiatory sacrifice: we deny, because we comprehend not, this mystery of godliness. And yet it is a mystery which angels desire to look into; but which becomes unfolded to mortal man, only according to his sensible want, or his actual experience of the atoning virtue and redeeming power of the dear Son of God.

By those who are rich and full, and needing nothing, according to their own apprehensions, and who are not duly aware that the nature which they inherit from Adam, their fallen primogenitor, is such as cannot enter the kingdom of heaven till renovated by the second Adam, "the Lord from heaven," "the quickening Spirit"—by those who are not willingly convinced of their actual transgressions, which require repentance, forgiveness, and remission—by such this utmost display of Divine love and mercy, the Gospel Dispensation, is undiscernible, and its language like unto idle tales. "Christ crucified, is to the Jews" and jewish self-righteous spirit, "a stumbling block, and to the Greeks," wise only in the wisdom of this world, "foolishness; but to those

who are called," those to whom the universal call is become effectual by their receiving it, "both Jews and Greeks," He is still found to be "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God;" and that unto salvation: and these are they who witness the joy and peace of believing.

May He who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all His works; who sent His Son into the world "to seek and to save that which was lost," continue to visit and revisit by His day-spring from on high, them who still "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; being bound in affliction and iron," the bonds of their own iniquities and perverted wills; till they become prepared through the discipline of judgment mixed with mercy, to receive the glad tidings of the Everlasting Gospel, which remain to be "the binding up of the broken-hearted; the proclaiming of liberty to the captives; and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; the proclaiming of the acceptable year of the Lord:" and thus may they be enabled to acknowledge that there is no joy like unto the joys of God's salvation; which is evidenced wherever it prevails, by the exemplification of

its original angelic proclamation : "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace good will toward men."

Lecture X.

THE FALL AND REDEMPTION OF MAN.

“Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.”

“That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

These two fundamental articles of Christian doctrine, the universal condemnation of mankind to a participation both in the natural effects and the penal consequences of Adam's transgression, and in the universality of that redemption from them which, in unmerited mercy is provided, and which is effected only through the mediation and the righteousness of Christ, are best contemplated in that intimate conjunction in which they are exhibited in these several texts: being justly understood only in this their proper combination; though each subject

is worthy to be deeply pondered according to the scriptural view of its respective character. The doctrine of redemption by Christ has however so inseparable a relation to that of the fall in Adam, that no adequate apprehensions of the former can be received, independently of its connexion with the latter: and utterly imperfect must be every view that can be formed of the depth of that fall which has involved the whole human race, if it embrace not, for its counterpart, the extent of that most costly and most efficacious sacrifice, which, according to the counsels of Infinite Wisdom, was ordained in order to a final and complete restoration from the fall.

How great must be the depth of that fall—the extent of that loss, which has required so gracious, yet so awful a display of Divine interposition, to effect its complete, though conditional reparation! To say that it did not require it, or that a less stupendous process might have been equally effectual to the purpose, would be in effect, however undesignedly, to “charge the Almighty foolishly,” by intimating a disproportion between the means and the end; which is utterly inconsistent with the consummate

wisdom that is manifested in all His works. And to say as some have unwarrantably done, and betrayed their own partial blindness by confessing, that they could see no connexion between the sufferings of Christ and the salvation of mankind, is indeed to afford an humiliating proof, that even when the attention has been much employed on religious subjects, we are liable to be left in darkness respecting sacred truths, when we lean to our own understandings, in opposition to the most express and variously multiplied declarations of Divine revelation.

That the utmost depth, and utmost extent of the cause and of the effect of the Redeemer's process, may be unfathomable and immeasurable to finite comprehension, will be found to be acknowledged in the course of these Lectures. But while the most unskilled in spiritual science must be sensible, that the fall and the redemption of mankind, are subjects which exhibit an indissoluble connexion in the scriptural characters of each, the more deeply exercised in religious experience, are enabled to discern a real harmony between the unperverted views of mediatorial redemption, and that fallen condition of human nature to which it was adapted.

It is not denied that a virtual and practical experience of both these important truths, may in some degree be attainable by those who have admitted inadequate ideas, or who may be destitute of correct or even discursive information, on either subject. For the knowledge which is essential to the efficacious operation of these truths, consists not in a speculative apprehension of them, but in such a sensibility of that depraved nature inherited from Adam, as convinces us of our absolute need of that Divine Grace which is the gift and purchase of redeeming love, and which alone is effectual to our regeneration. But though this experimental knowledge is not the infallible result of the most correct verbal delineation; yet when the words dictated by inspiration, are accompanied by a measure of that holy Influence from whence they have proceeded, how forcible are they found in imparting right impressions to the simple-hearted! how confirming to the more advanced disciple! and how fitly adapted to evince to those who have not yet received them, that something is still lacking on their part, in order more effectually to remove from their heart that veil, which prevents their seeing eye to eye with the Divinely instructed and commissioned promulgators of evangelical truth!

It may indeed be allowed that the manner in which many of these truths are treated by the inspired writers, especially by the apostle Paul, is not such as to render them easily intelligible to any class of superficial readers. It requires a deep insight into the nature of spiritual subjects; a discernment of their true connexion one with another, and a correspondent acquaintance with that mode of communicating them, which is neither derived from, nor directed to the understanding of the natural man, in order to qualify him to perceive and embrace their real import; but which to the humble, patient disciple in the School of Christian experience, may become progressively unfolded.

That some aids may be communicated from one such disciple to another is however admitted; and with such a view, as well as with an earnest desire that "the truth as it is in Jesus," may be maintained concerning spiritual subjects, the present observations are offered to the attentive consideration of the serious reader.

The inadequate or exaggerated apprehensions which have been formed respecting the fall and redemption of man, have, in many instances,

originated from an attempt to separate them as facts wholly independent of each other. Under such a statement, it is not surprising that philosophic minds, not subordinated to the light of revelation, should discern no necessity for tracing to the transgression and fall of Adam, the lapsed state of his posterity.

Whether Adam fell from a more exalted state of being than that in which we find ourselves placed as probationers for immortality, is, in the opinion of such minds of little consequence to his descendants; as is also the correspondent inquiry, whether we derive from him, as the federal head and father of the whole human race, that corrupted nature and disordered system in which we find ourselves involved. But the same reasoning which would thus invalidate the express declaration of the inspired apostle in one instance, would be no less confidently employed in reducing its extent and comprehensiveness in the other; that of the great propitiatory sacrifice, which is stated as essential, and alone effectual to the present remission and final removal of the consequences incurred by sin, whether as originating in a remote or in a proximate cause. That two such causes are combined, in constituting the

temporal condition of all who have attained to a capacity of responsibility, and that one of them extends to every individual of the human race, are positions which when duly considered, may afford a most conclusive explanation of that two-fold operation of complete redemption, of which the Son of God is the blessed Mediator.

Let us then examine what these causes are, and what their effects, which according to the counsels of Infinite Wisdom have obtained this two-fold process of mediatorial redemption: the first is that frail, fallible, and disordered nature, subject to sin, disease, and death, which has been transmitted by our first progenitor to his whole posterity. But is this a state of actual or real sinfulness? On the application of the term sin, by the apostle Paul, it seems needful to observe a distinction, which though not marked by a diversity of epithet, appears to designate a diversity of state in the subject chargeable with it.

Thus sin is represented either as *inherent* or as *actual*. Under the first description must be arranged those texts which assert its unexceptionable universality: "All have sinned and

come short of the glory of God." "He hath included all under sin, that He might have mercy upon all." This can be asserted only of that nature derived from Adam, which considered without relation to Divine Grace, is destitute of any degree of essential goodness. Thus it has been observed by an excellent theologian* among our early reformers: "Original sin, or what might be more properly termed inherent sin, considered in the posterity of Adam, is the want of original, or inherent righteousness." Hence it is evident that a superadded qualification must be conferred on every human subject, in order to fit him for a state of acceptable service, in the church militant on earth, or for a state of glory in the church triumphant in heaven. What this qualification is, we are informed by our blessed Lord's declarations, made to Nicodemus, and the Jews: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you; whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath Eternal Life, and I will raise him up at the

* Melancthon.

last day, for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." Here then is a real participation of the spiritual substance, Divine nature, and living virtue of the Son of God; commencing in that principle of Divine Life which was received in Adam; and is communicated by the "Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever," to all his posterity, as the "incorruptible Seed" of which all must "be born again:" and they can be nourished up to a state of maturity and expansion in righteousness and true holiness, only by the continued visitations and operations of that creative Word.

Another class of expressions employed by the apostle Paul on the subject of sin, describes it as becoming exceeding sinful, having derived its strength, not its existence, from the law, which being holy, just, and good, discovered the contrariety of sin to its own Divine purity. But sin is not imputed where there is no law; for sin, in its actual state, is the transgression of the law; and "where no law is, there is no transgression."

Thus the states of infancy and idiotism are plainly included in this exception; but it does

not follow that they stand less in need of the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in order to their receiving that principle of Divine life through which they may inherit a blessed immortality. Of such a transformation, infancy and childhood may be supposed peculiarly susceptible, without a probationary process, the hearts of such not having been hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, in opposition to better knowledge. Hence therefore it was, may we not conclude, as being fit recipients of the Divine nature, that the blessed Master said : "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

The Redemption effected for lost man appears to be of a two-fold kind, correspondently with the effects exhibited in his fallen state, viz. *unconditional* and *conditional*. The degenerated nature inherited by all the posterity of Adam, is an unconditional effect to which they are subjected, not involving any regard to conditions on their part ; and so also is the redemption provided ; that is the renewed state or covenant with God, into which they are admitted for His Name's sake.

The whole creation, or "The creature," says the apostle, "was made subject to vanity ; not

willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope." Even He who doth all things well, and according to the counsel of His own all-perfect will, saw meet to pronounce a curse on that fair order of things which had come forth in unmixed perfection from His holy hand; so that all creatures both sensitive and inanimate, were brought under the influence of that evil principle, which had first found an entrance into beings of the highest order of intelligence in this new world, through their voluntary admission of its malignant power.

Thus "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together," as saith the apostle, even "until now; and not only they," that is all the inferior creatures, "but ourselves also," &c. Should this statement be denied or questioned, may it not be asked, *When* did this begin to be the case if not at that awful juncture when the sentence of condemnation was pronounced on man? At the same momentous period was the first intimation also given of the Deliverer who should finally bruise the serpent's head, and who, as more explicitly foretold in the subsequent records of prophecy, should become not only an effectual Deliverer from all the power of the

enemy, but the all-sufficient Leader into the paths of righteousness and peace, the "Repairer of breaches, the Restorer of paths to dwell in."

Hence may be traced the affinity which subsists between these two important subjects, or rather in the distinct branches of the subject, which embrace a commensurate view of the disastrous malady and the effectual remedy. As the malady is two-fold, being respectively both the unconditional and the conditional allotment of mankind; so also the gracious provision for its effectual relief is both unconditional and conditional—unconditional in its commencement, but conditional in its progress;—unconditional in the primary communication of a principle which is therefore most fitly denominated, the free gift, or gift of grace: and conditional in respect to those successive visitations of the same Divine Influence, which are nevertheless the effect of unmerited favour, therefore of grace and not of debt; though suspended on a probationary process, and consequently also conditional in the final result of such process. For though it should be admitted, that in the unfathomable depths of Infinite Wisdom, there may be such a diversity of operation in respect

to human subjects, that individuals may be elected, that is selected and prepared in a peculiar manner to become chosen vessels in the Lord's hand, for the extension of his benefits to others of the various families of the earth ; yet we are not warranted to conclude, that even these have been exempt from such a probationary process as might involve a forfeiture of their high calling.* This appears to have been the case with several characters mentioned in the Scriptures, and might have been that of the apostle Paul, according to his own instructive intimation : "Lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

Hence it is evident that all, though not partakers of the guilt, are yet of the natural effects and of the temporal punishment of Adam's transgression. Nor is this any impeachment of the Divine Goodness ; for God is able to compensate most enrichingly, for every degree and kind of suffering to which He may see meet to subject His creatures, during their temporary existence ;

* See Lecture XI. on "The Universality of the Consequences of Adam's Fall and of Redemption by Christ Jesus."

and even to make it subservient to purposes of His own glory, in the promotion of their ultimately highest interest. For surely it is not less consistent with that glory, in the future manifestation of His mercy and Truth, to raise to a condition and capacity of perfect happiness, such beings as have never voluntarily incurred a forfeiture of his favour, though subjected to a temporary privation of its highest privileges, than to have originally formed each individual in this imperfect state, with a capacity of emerging from it.

Wherein then consists the universality of Redemption which is correspondent with that of the Fall? It consists in the two distinct and most important particulars already stated, the first being unconditional, the latter conditional. The first liberating the whole human race from any eternal consequences of Adam's transgression, if not individually incurred by personal guilt. The second comprising such visitations of Divine Light and Life, as when duly received, may constitute the rudiments of a spiritual geniture or birth, capable of receiving every kind and degree of spiritual illumination and spiritual operation, which may be judged expedient and needful to our being fitted, not by desert, but

through the bounty awarded to "the obedience of faith," to become the subjects of Eternal Life and blessedness.

That rudiments of such a spiritual nature are imparted to every son and daughter of fallen Adam, comparable to a seed sown in the earthly heart, may be safely inferred, not only from the scriptural view already adverted to, of grace equivalent to the extent of spiritual exigency, but also from the evidences afforded of its growth and expansion, in some degree, in every variety of circumstances under which human subjects may be found. Its development may however be retarded, interrupted, or even totally checked, either by the volition of the individual, or by the intervention of occasional obstacles, which, though they cannot destroy this seed of the spiritual nature, may prevent its acquiring any conspicuous character.

Among those whose situation in human society, if not wholly inimical, is the least favourable to the expansion of this seed of life, the existence of it may be no less certainly recognised by experience and observation, than the propensities of unregenerate nature ; both principles

being indicated by their respective fruits, which, in whatever diversity of degree, are produced in every human subject in whom they have had opportunity to unfold themselves, and in whom the one has not obtained a distinguished prevalence over the other. Such an ascendancy of the evil, and also of the good, has been exemplified in the history of mankind in the Sacred Records, both of the Old and New Testaments. Of the first class, in whom the characters of evil have been most conspicuously brought to view, must be numbered Cain, the incorrigible antediluvians, the rebellious Babel-builders, Pharaoh, Judas, and all who, despising the forbearance and long suffering of a merciful Creator, which would have led them to repentance, have finally extinguished in themselves the Light of Divine Life.

Of the second class, in whom this holy principle has been suffered to obtain its efficacious operation, receiving continued supplies from the Fountain of life, may be numbered by way of eminence, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Job, Moses, David, and Daniel, the prophets, and all under both the former and latter Dispensations of Grace, who, believing in every manifestation

and declaration afforded them of the Saviour of the world, and being thus prepared to receive Him, from age to age, in every way of his coming, are truly of those who "love his appearing," and have waited for his salvation.

Such is the comprehensive object of this stupendous process of Divine wisdom, love, and mercy, effected for us by the Son of God ; who triumphing over death, hell, and the grave, "ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men ; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

Let us then who are called both internally and externally to glory and to virtue, deeply consider our high and holy vocation. We are called "to fight the good fight of faith" against the world, the flesh, and the wicked one ; and to lay hold on Eternal Life, not in our own strength, or through any merit of our own, but through the adorable merit, mercy, and power of Him, who "is able to make us more than conquerors," and to "save to the uttermost all those who come unto God by Him."

Lecture XI.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF ADAM'S FALL, AND OF REDEMPTION BY CHRIST JESUS.

"For as in Adam, all die; even so in Christ, shall all be made alive."

The preceding text is not adopted, as being clearly declarative of the subject to which it is affixed, but because it is evidently indicative of all universality in the most important consequences, both of the fall of Adam, and of the Redemption which is in Christ Jesus; even those of death and life.

That no other idea of death or of life, may be generally attached to these expressions, than what the context seems to imply as being chiefly if not exclusively in the view of the apostle, viz., the cessation of our temporal existence, and the resurrection to an eternal state, is not here disputed; it may not however be irrelevant to

remark, that *life eternal* is rarely, if ever, predicted of the wicked, whose resurrection to condemnation is more generally described as that second death, from which the righteous are mercifully exempted.

But allowing, in the present instance, that the expressions of the text have no positive or prominent allusion to any other death than that of the body, or any other life than that of the spirit after a separation from it, whether in re-union with a body or not, at the judgment seat of Christ, it is still worthy of observation, that the language of inspiration is so comprehensive as to be equally adapted to the illustration of different truths; and when separately considered, may be justly applied to different subjects which are intimately united, and frequently introduced in conjunction with each other by expressions suitable to both.

It would however be unsafe to use expressions in more than one, and that the most indisputable sense, unless their further application were fully warranted by scriptural authority; and without exceeding this restriction it may seem at least admissible to adduce the text before us, as fitly

describing *death* and *life* under a *two-fold signification*; for if we consider what that death was, which Adam died, and entailed on his posterity; and what that life is, of which Christ is declared to be the Restorer, we shall not greatly err in attributing a double meaning to the words death and life, in contemplating the present subject.

This double meaning may be so often inferred from the scriptural use of these terms, that the same epithets are frequently employed to denote both natural and spiritual life and death.

Now, in order to attain a scriptural apprehension of the two-fold death incurred by Adam, through his violation of a prohibition under so awful a sanction, it will be useful to take a view, both of that life to which he died, and of that death which was actually inflicted on the day of his transgression, according to the Divine warning. That this death was not that of the body, is sufficiently obvious, although subjection to such further death, together with a susceptibility of its painful concomitants and preparatory causes, is clearly inferrible, from the vast change which immediately took place in his physical as well as in his mental constitution, and in the

state of that external nature by which he was surrounded. It is affirmed by one of the Apocryphal writers, some of whom declared unquestionable truths, that "God made not death." May we not assuredly conclude it was no part of his original creation, as it now assails mankind; in which form it well deserves to be accounted "an enemy, the last that shall be destroyed;" and being, in that character, ascribed, to the power of the evil one as the wages of sin, we may rest satisfied that it was not so assigned to unfallen Adam. He like more than one of his redeemed posterity, might have known a glorious translation to that state of greater exaltation to which, it may be presumed, he was conditionally appointed; or otherwise he might have exchanged a terrestrial for a celestial body in that instantaneous manner in which it is affirmed the living saints will be transformed when summoned to appear, with those who are raised from the dead, at the last day; for we read not, that the sentence: "Unto dust thou shalt return," was pronounced concerning him, till after his transgression.

But whatever is the uncertainty in which we are left, respecting the temporal condition

of Adam, had he fulfilled his pristine destination; we are sufficiently informed of the privileges—the enjoyments—the endowments of that blessed state in which he was originally placed, as it is set forth in the brief yet comprehensive sketch of the inspired historian, to estimate the vast disparity which obtains, between such a condition, and that of his natural descendants. Of the extent of his intellectual powers, what an astonishing instance is presented to our consideration, in his giving to the various productions of the same Almighty hand, their true significant names, according to a real insight into their respective natures and properties. For, that this was not an effect of any superadded revelation, is implied by the fact that the creatures were brought before him by their Creator, to see what he would call them; and that he might thus give proof of the excellence of that knowing, with which his nature was endowed—a knowledge, or capacity of knowing which needed no increase, in order to his happiness, but by continued supplies from that Fountain of wisdom and strength, from which alone proceeded his perfection and blessedness.

Such knowledge was consequently altogether good, without any mixture of evil. Whatever

was necessary to his purest enjoyment of every object in the visible creation, to his complete dominion over the inferior creatures ; together with the full perception of all the properties of nature in their clearer manifestation of beauty and excellence appears to have been included in that image, or resemblance of his Maker, in which he is expressly declared to have been formed. But what most eminently characterised this Divine image, was that resemblance which enabled him to show forth of the moral attributes of the Deity, being "created in righteousness and true holiness." To these distinguished endowments, which were no part of his essential existence, was superadded that crown of glory and honour, which must have been essential to their preservation and enlargement, as well as to the highest happiness of his being—the blessing of immediate communion with his Maker. Deriving from Him such participation of the Divine nature, as should transform all that was of the earth and earthly in himself, into that which was heavenly, Adam would have been finally qualified to become an inheritor of inalienable blessedness.

But to the continuance of temporal felicity, and the consummation of eternal prospects he

died a present spiritual death. Yet this spiritual death was not that of the soul as to its natural existence, nor of those faculties which constituted its essential being. It was the extinction of that spiritual nature—that image and transcript of Divine affections, in which Adam was originally formed; an image which consisted in holiness and happiness—in capacities of a far more exalted kind than those which appertain to the mere natural man; which latter, however surpassing the capacities of the inferior animals, may be justly considered to be as much below the endowments of man's unfallen nature, as human capacities were superior to those of the brute creation.

Man had no longer Eternal Life abiding in him. And it is accordingly to be concluded, that in the event of the termination of his natural life, however long protracted, the dissolution of the body would leave his soul destitute of any qualification for appearing in the Divine Presence, except to that condemnation which awaited the forfeiture of the Divine Life; and that he must have been for ever separated from it, unless this principle had been renewedly communicated.

This blessed effect of infinite love, and mercy, we are fully warranted to believe, was immediately produced, when the gracious intimation was pronounced, that One who was called, "the Seed of the *woman*," a description which He should afterwards verify in a peculiar sense, "should bruise the serpent's head." As Adam's posterity participate in the consequences of his fall, so by the immediate communication of this "free gift" which secured to them the promised Redemption, Adam was also restored to a capacity of eternal life, in the most blessed sense of the expression. This was on renewed probationary terms, originating in this incipient principle of the Divine nature, sown in his earthly heart, and effecting a birth therein of a nature congenial with its own; which being sustained and nourished by continued communications from its Eternal Parent, might again render man susceptible of everlasting life in glory and blessedness.

Such an effect could result from nothing inferior to the merit and the mercy, the power and the efficacy of Redeeming Love; and was not the desert of any created being in his most approved state. In a still greater degree is such desert excluded from those who are "bought with

a price," and who can never possibly enter into the possession of Eternal Life, except as they are washed in the precious "blood of the Lamb."

Thus "as in Adam all die," and all are partakers of that two-fold death which sin had introduced with loss of paradise; so, in Christ, as the second Adam, ordained or undertaking to restore that which the first had lost or forfeited, and to destroy the works of the devil, "shall ALL be made alive:" ALL made capable of eternal existence in blessedness, through their participation in that seminal degree of Divine or spiritual life, which is the pledge as well as the principle of Life Eternal, in those who yield themselves to its effectual operation.

When, therefore, we take a view of man, as regarded in the fall, without any reference to the purchased Redemption by Christ, we may perceive the strongest scriptural description of that state, to be perfectly consistent with the realities to which it is subjected—a destitution of all good, and a capability of all evil.

Unmixed examples of such a horrible condition may not indeed fall under our observation,

or be realized in the experience of any, who, having happily become sensible of the efficacious counteraction of a spiritual principle, and having in any degree yielded to its influence, may only discern in themselves, and in others alike circumstanced, an evident mixture of good and evil; and painfully recognise the law in the members, "warring against the law in the mind." But wherever this salutary and blessed interposition of Divine Grace, is either wholly disregarded or wilfully resisted, we may evidently perceive the indubitable characters of that entire depravity, which becomes a fit vehicle and instrument of the destructive power of him, who rules in the children of disobedience, and who, indeed, may be often mournfully recognised by the progressively regenerate, as a roaring lion or a subtle serpent. Over these, however, he will not be suffered to prevail, if resisted in humble dependence on Him, "who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

At what period of our existence may be communicated to each individual, this seminal principle of Divine Life, and how soon it may begin to operate on the mental affections, we are not qualified to determine; but when we

consider that various instances are to be found in the records of religious experience, in which dispositions of a truly spiritual character, have discovered themselves in almost infant subjects ; as those of humiliation, contrition, and tender susceptibility of good impressions, even before the understanding has been so advanced or so instructed, as to discern from whence these feelings proceeded ;—and when we further consider that the enemy of all good is often successful in sowing his evil seed, and in exciting the worst dispositions of nature, in the infantile mind, through the medium of instruments whose propensities are imbibed, and examples imitated by children, at the earliest period of their perceptibility ; we can have no just cause to doubt, that the foundation of many future characters is laid in infancy ; though in neither instance, it may be presumed, will they receive an indelible stamp, or unchangeable habit, till after a term of just probation has been fully endured by those who attain to a capacity of rightly discerning between good and evil. Yet how awfully important is it that we should early avail ourselves of the ability afforded to depart from the latter, by receiving and embracing the influences of the former.

May we, who have attained to the exercise of this discriminating sense, ever cherish a due impression of those important truths affecting our present state, as witnessed both by scripture testimony, and by different degrees of correspondent experience !

Our high descent, our deep degradation, our individual departure from known duty, and our blessed hope, as probationers for eternal life, on conditions the fulfilment of which can alone be effectual to their final gracious purpose, furnish subjects for the most attentive and affecting contemplation. And how excellently does the apostle explain the nature and effect of that Redemption which is in Christ Jesus, by this language : " But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us ; by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of Eternal Life."

The like transcendent blessing, we are authorised to believe, He will continue to shed

abundantly upon all, who sincerely seek and ask for it ; and who, submitting to its soul searching, soul cleansing operations and successive holy Influences, may finally be included among those of whom it is affirmed : “ 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.”

Lecture III.



SALVATION BY CHRIST.



"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand before you whole. This is the Stone which was set at nought of you builders, which 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.

This Name of Jesus Christ, which literally signifies the anointed Saviour, and is indicative both of his Divine and human nature, is spiritually significant of the authority, the power, the virtue, by which He is able to forgive our iniquities, to heal all our diseases, and "to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him." It is, therefore, the virtue, the power, the authority of the Father, manifesting itself in and by the agency and mediation of the Son, in his Divine and human capacities. Hence it is declared, that "at the Name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and

things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ;" which is equivalent to a similar declaration in the Old Testament, viz.: "As I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess unto God."

The salvation of which Christ is the Author as the power of God, and of which He is the Agent as the Mediator between God and man, is the subject of deep consideration, in a two-fold point of view :

First, As He is the procuring cause of Salvation to fallen man, by what He did and suffered in that ineffable union of the Divine and human natures, in which He personally appeared among men, "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree."

And, *Secondly*, As He is the operative principle of Divine life within us, effecting our Salvation from the dominion and defilement of sin, and transforming us into the image and likeness of Himself.

Thus is He the Author and Mediator of unconditional Salvation or redemption, in a preparatory sense, to the whole of Adam's posterity ; the efficacy of his mediatorial process, being commensurate with all the consequences of Adam's transgression ; and conditionally, He is "the Author of eternal Salvation unto all them that obey Him."

Salvation thus procured by the love and mercy of God, to mankind, through Jesus Christ, both universally and individually, is also very generally and properly termed *Redemption* ; being the purchase of a *stupendous price* : and the term Redemption, like that of Salvation, is accordingly used in a two-fold sense ; that of the ransom paid, and that of the deliverance wrought. "He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." The former part of this quotation, may be considered as expressive of the universality of this gift of Himself ; *not* being accompanied with any restriction : the latter part is equivalent to the restriction observed in the text before quoted, viz. : "He is the Author of eternal Salvation unto all them that obey Him." These indeed will ever be, as they have been

through many successive ages, a peculiar people ; being prepared and qualified to become such, by a participation of those gifts and graces, which the Lord has seen meet to bestow, in different proportions, on different persons, individually and collectively, according to the good pleasure of his Will ; and according to the various scale of probationary duty, to which he has seen meet to subject the numerous families of mankind.

But the peculiarity of a people, prepared and endowed to become stewards of the manifold Grace of God, is not likely to remain so exclusively transcendent throughout the progress of time ; for though there may be different degrees of religious growth, both in individuals and communities, yet the distinction of a peculiar people must assuredly diminish or cease to be, when "the earth, shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Yet "the obedience of Faith," according to the proportion of this knowledge, and to the gift of grace vouchsafed, will ever remain to be the indispensable qualification for that Salvation of which Christ Jesus is the Author, as well as the Mediator, the Primary Agent or Operator, by his own Spirit in the soul.

The great error, which has obtained in various degrees, among professing Christians, on these cardinal points of Christian doctrine,* appears to arise from an unauthorised predilection for *one*, to the insufficient admission, if not to the exclusion of the *other*. Thus some have considered the work of Redemption and Salvation, so effectually accomplished for us, as to pay but little comparative regard to the internal process effected through the medium of the same Divine Agent. Others, deeply impressed with the importance of this internal essential process, have been tempted to overlook or disparage the wonders and the mercies of redeeming love, as manifested in the person of the blessed Saviour. Each of these may be justly considered as dividing the seamless garment of Christ, or as putting "asunder, that which God hath joined together."

Yet while it is to be sincerely hoped, that the number of such imperfect believers may be small, more especially in the latter instance; it is possible that this error may have originated in some well disposed minds, through a just opposition

* Faith and Works.

to another, which has been confessedly too generally prevalent among professing Christians; and may be attributed to a similar cause to that assigned by the blessed Master, for the Sadduces' denial of the resurrection: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."

The error alluded to, is the very general idea that none are saved or benefitted by the mediatorial sacrifice of Christ, but such as have received the knowledge of the Divinely authorised record of this momentous fact. As justly indeed might it be contended, that none are partakers of the effects of Adam's fall, but those who are acquainted with its history. Yet who can deny that his whole posterity is subjected to disease and suffering, sin and death, though but a small proportion of the whole bulk of mankind, are in possession of that attested revelation, by which such effects are explicitly ascribed to this cause? In like manner, and according to the same Divine Authority, we are instructed and encouraged to believe, that the great propitiatory sacrifice offered for the sins of the whole world, by Him "who tasted death for every man," had respect to the family of mankind universally; that "as

in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."

While those may well rejoice whose hearts can expand in this view of the universality of the love of God in Christ Jesus, may they ever cherish in their most interested consideration, the further purposes of his love and mercy toward all who have received a capacity of advancement in the scale of spiritual intelligence, in the superadded knowledge of the Christian Dispensation. This has been primarily communicated to a chosen or selected number, in order that it may be gradually introduced to all nations under heaven, as they become willing to receive it, through instruments rightly authorised and qualified by a measure of power from on high; for which even the primitive preachers of the Gospel were directed to wait, ere they entered upon the work appointed them, by the parting command of their Divine Master.

Though such an eminent measure of spiritual endowment as was imparted to them, for the first promulgation of the Gospel, may not be expected or required for its subsequent extension; it is only in humble dependence on a power superior

to all that is human, that the glad tidings of peace and Salvation will be effectually proclaimed to individuals or to nations sitting in gross darkness, and who have respectively rebelled against the power of that Light which has been at times secretly afforded them. Yet to such as these, the knowledge of the Scriptures often becomes the sanctified channel of an awakening and enlightening influence, reaching the witness for Truth which is placed in every human heart; though too often rendered ineffectual towards conversion by the love and prevalence of deeply involving and surrounding darkness.

The first appearances of Divine Light are fitly described by the apostle, as the "sure word of prophecy" or the word of inspiration, which he compares to "a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in the heart."

In every variety of situation, the heart is indeed a dark place, till visited by the day-spring from on high; and even the "Light of Life," may "shine in darkness, and the darkness comprehend it not," being too deep to yield to that small measure of illumination, which may at first be comparable to twilight in a clouded atmosphere.

But even in this state of ignorance, whether of the heart or understanding, and more especially in every successive degree in which the mind may be emerging from it, the outward knowledge of Christ and Him crucified for our sakes—of His gracious words—His beneficent deeds—His unparalleled example of the Beauty of Holiness—together with those prophetic notices of His appearances in the flesh and in the Spirit which are left on sacred record, comprises subjects to which all would do well to take heed; and that whatever may be their state of ignorance, or advancement in the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

As all have borne the image of the earthly man, even fallen Adam, so all are designed to bear the image of the Heavenly Man, Christ Jesus. And those who are in any considerable measure transformed into this image, by having yielded to the visitations and operations of Divine grace in the soul, and are thus become subjects of that kingdom which consisteth in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," will assuredly love the appearing of Christ, in all his manifestations, external as well as internal. Hence will they contemplate his most sacred character, as delineated

by those who were eye-witnesses of his glory, with deep reverence, gratitude, and love ; being enabled to behold Him, both as the Living Temple, in whom “ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” and also as that unparalleled, yet animating example of a perfect man, to which human nature is designed to be assimilated, through the reception and effectual operation of that redeeming virtue and power, of which He is the Author and the Administrator.

Salvation by Christ, and the outward knowledge of the Christian Dispensation as offered to our contemplation in the Holy Scriptures, appear, however, to have been too generally confounded by the supposition of their being essentially identified : but while it is sorrowfully observable, that the knowledge of the latter may subsist, without the experience of the former ; so it is to be hoped that the former may be happily effected, in an initial and progressive manner, independently of the latter. Yet is this outward knowledge, not only highly conducive to the formation of that which is essentially saving ; but peculiarly adapted by Divine appointment, to the perfecting of the man of God ; in the establishment of that kingdom, which though originating within, will

extend its blessed government over the outward man, both individually and collectively, until "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever."

When therefore it is affirmed, that the outward knowledge of the Christian Dispensation in its utmost extent, is not essential to the final Salvation of those to whom such knowledge has never been afforded, let it not be forgotten, that, according to all the evidence exhibited in the course of Divine Providence, it is essential and clearly adapted to the purpose of supplying to mankind, an adequate capacity of glorifying God, of manifesting the perfection of his nature, and the influence of his government, by doing his will on earth as it is done in heaven. Yet such a blessed result will be exhibited, even through the medium of the most extensive outward knowledge, only as it is accompanied by the experience of that Almighty power, that all-healing, all-restoring virtue, that Divine authority which is comprehended in the Name of Jesus. Those who thus know this Name, will know it to be as precious "ointment poured forth;" and being, through its efficacy, saved from their sins—

redeemed from the inordinate love of perishable objects—and from the corruptions of fallen nature, they will be fitted for the beatific vision, and everlasting enjoyment of His glorious presence, who is the adorable object of transcendent beauty and loveliness!

Lecture XIII.

THE EXTERNAL MANIFESTATION OF THE REDEEMER.

"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."

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His Grace, through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

The doctrine of mediatorial atonement rightly understood and impressively applied, though involving mysteries incomprehensible by human wisdom, exhibits not only a most important, but the most universally attractive and influential truth that can be held forth to fallen man; when convinced of his sinful state, and desirous of reconciliation with his offended Maker. Accordingly it may be observed to form a prominent feature, both in the testimony of prophecy, and that of apostolic communications; and though not identified with every view of faith in Christ, which

is presented to us in the Gospel, it is essentially, if not expressly connected with them all; and may be justly considered as the gradual entrance into that sacred edifice of doctrines, duties, and privileges, of which the apostles were the first Divinely appointed builders, and of which the "Chief corner stone," and only true foundation was, and is, Christ Jesus the Rock of ages.

Like "the beautiful gate of the temple" at which the lame man sat to ask alms, a belief in this doctrine, appears to be the station to which the spiritually infirm and helpless, may be most fitly directed, to wait for the effectual putting forth of that power, which alone through the medium of faith in its efficacy, heals the soul's maladies. And this entrance is not only a belief in Christ, but in Him "crucified"—Christ "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification"—"Jesus Christ the righteous"—who "is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only," saith the apostle, "but also for the sins of the whole world."

The astonishing fact, that an immaculate Being should suffer, for our sakes, the penalty due to sin, in order to avert from us the extent

and perpetuity of those penal consequences to which we are become subject, cannot but be deeply impressive on the minds of those who receive it as an indubitable truth of Divine revelation. And when they understand, that this Holy Person is not only *man* made like unto themselves in all things, sin excepted, but that He is in his Divine nature one with the Father ; and, when they also understand, that by virtue of the mysterious union of his Divine and human natures, He not only endured unparalleled sufferings in faithful submission and voluntary conformity to the Father's will ; but victoriously triumphed over death, hell, and the grave ; ascended to blessedness and glory unspeakable ; and thus effectually prepared a way for his faithful disciples to follow Him ; it is no marvel, that multitudes should have been converted by this doctrine, to a sincere profession of Christianity ; and made partakers, by the continued influences of Divine Grace, of all the blessings of the Gospel.

But as the grand enemy of mankind has been suffered to prevail, in those minds which gave him entrance, by various insinuations adapted to their different states ; so he has been too successful in sowing tares, either of actual unbelief in

this doctrine, or of such partial and corrupt representations of it, as greatly to obscure its true aspect.

It is confessed that in the form most justly expressive of its Divine character, mediatorial atonement is a doctrine much at variance with the self-sufficient spirit of the natural man; who, until deeply humbled under a sense of his own incapacity, to save himself from the dominion of sinful propensities, or to make reparation for his actual transgression of the pure and righteous law of the Lord, is not prepared to embrace an offered ransom, or to accept a deliverance for which he must be indebted to another; and which is adapted only to the condition of fallen, sinful, helpless human nature.

But as it may be assumed, that none who attain to an accountable state, are left wholly without some sense of the condemnation due to sin; so it is of great importance that the doctrine by which pardon and peace, indemnity and cure are authoritatively promulgated from above, should be divested of every unsanctified appendage, by which its salutary tendency or its efficacious operation, might be impeded. To

this end, a summary view of the perversions to which it has been subjected, is presented to the youthful reader.

Among these perversions may be first instanced, the gross misapprehension, that "Christ died for the ungodly" that they might continue in sin with impunity; or that the efficacy of the Redeemer's sacrifice was such, as to supersede the necessity of a correspondent operation of His mediatorial power in the soul. Consequently that a much less degree of holiness was requisite, under the Gospel Dispensation, than had been exemplified in many, who lived under an inferior manifestation of Divine Light. But though even unconscious deviations from perfect rectitude require expiation, by the purity of the Divine law, whether mosaic, or Christian; yet may it not be safely affirmed, on the highest authority, that through the gratuitous justification of mediatorial redemption, no abiding condemnation is incurred except by those, who, from a love of darkness rather than light, reject the terms of pardoning mercy; yet the permanent effects of this blessed redemption are ensured only on such conditions as are rendered practicable to the sinner, through the operation of Divine

Grace : viz. "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" even that repentance which is His gift, and that faith which giveth the victory over all our soul's enemies.

A yet more specious misrepresentation of this doctrine, appears to have obtained in some pious minds, even that the efficacy of the Redeemer's process, consists exclusively in His sufferings, without admitting to an equal share in the blessed mediatorial plan, His triumphant resurrection, and glorious ascension into heaven; whither He, as our "forerunner, is for us entered;" having "led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them:" and that thus "through Him who loved us, we also may be made more than conquerors" over the world, the flesh, and the wicked one.

Thus though it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, and to put Him to grief; yet, as was prophetically declared, "When He should make his soul an offering for sin, He shall see his seed, He shall prolong his days," even through the endless ages of eternity, "and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;" "He shall

see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied ;” so the progressive, though consequently yet partial accomplishment of this language is apparent in our view.

If this stupendous subject be not regarded in its true scriptural connexion, it cannot be considered as exemplifying the consolatory declaration, that “mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Nor could the assumption be verified, as assuredly it is, that “God is just; as well as the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.”

Could it be consistent with perfect justice, to transfer the punishment due to guilt to the purest innocence and most exalted merit, and that in a measure which might be supposed to include the same perpetuity of duration, as was implied in the condemnation of actual transgression, *without providing a bountiful recompence?*

Assuredly not ! It may be reverently, yet confidently asserted, that He who is infinitely wise, just, and gracious, and who makes a merciful distinction between the comparatively innocent and guilty among his creatures, would never

inflict on the Son of his love, in whom He declared Himself well pleased, an unparalleled weight of suffering *for which He did not ordain a rich compensation*, even a glorious exaltation proportioned to the depth of His humiliation.

And this compensation appears to be the intimate participation of His human with His Divine nature, in that glory which He had with the Father before the world was; and which distinct natures become identified in the Name of Jesus: as the crown of his rejoicing and reward, according to His petition in the days of His flesh, appears to be the admission of His faithful disciples to the beatific vision, and subordinate participation of the same glory, together with the restoration of the whole human race, to a state of conditional acceptance; He being "the Author of eternal salvation unto all them who obey Him."

Nevertheless it is reverently acknowledged, that the attributes of justice, righteousness, and truth, are also exemplified in the display of such an awful retribution for sin, even in the person of the sinless, as is offered to our deeply humbling contemplation, in the sufferings of our Holy

Redeemer; "who Himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree." But though He "was delivered for our offences," He was "raised again for our justification; and ever liveth to make intercession for us." Thus the justice, the righteousness, the truth, and the mercy of the Supreme Being, are to be equally magnified, as they are harmoniously united in all these blessed results, both to the Author, and to the subjects of that eternal salvation.

A no less important deviation from "the Truth as it is in Jesus," is the restriction of the atoning sacrifice, with all its blessed effects to a limited number of the human race; with the unconditional exclusion of thousands from a possibility of becoming sharers therein. But as this subject has been treated of in another place,* it may be here dismissed and a more generally received misconception introduced. This misconception is the restriction of every degree of its beneficial operation, to those who have received the sum of Christian Doctrine, as comprised in

* See Lecture XI. on "The Universality of the Consequences of Adam's Fall, and of Redemption by Christ Jesus."

verbal documents ; excluding from any share in its saving influence, all who are not prepared to acknowledge it in that extent in which it may be rightly embraced by some others. But when it is duly considered, that evangelical truths, especially those of a mysterious character, are only to be clearly discerned through the medium of spiritual Light, and efficaciously received through the successive applications of that holy anointing, which restored the man born blind, both to natural and spiritual sight ; it may be justly expected that an adequate conception of these comprehensive truths, should be the result of a gradual developement of the spiritual faculties.

It may be safely asserted, that the faith insisted on in the Gospel, does not consist in the comprehensive knowledge of all that has been revealed, and declared of its sacred truths ; but in the effectual reception of every portion of that truth, which has been communicated to each individual, under the qualification necessary to its being thus received ; and consequently *that* unbelief which is condemnable, does not consist in the absence of knowledge which has never been afforded, or brought within the compass of

the spiritual capacity ; but, as before observed, such unbelief consists in that wilful rejection of knowledge which proceeds from “a love of darkness rather than light ; because the deeds” and dispositions of the heart “are evil.”

The reception of the Truth in the love of it, is indeed an effect of the influences of that grace only which also came by Jesus Christ, as they impress with some sense of his Divine authority, the declarations and records of those revelations, with which He has been pleased to intrust his chosen instruments. Yet a frequent and solemn advertence to them, is an unequivocal obligation on those, who are favoured with the opportunity of learning of Him, who is the only effective Teacher ; through the medium of those very lessons of Scripture, which were primarily committed to such instruments ; and that for communication to all nations—even to the ends of the earth.

To encourage such advertence, these subjects are recommended to the youthful reader, not in an argumentative form, but merely as aids to the contemplation of them, under a concentrated view of their appropriate scriptural characters.

Consistently with these characters it must appear to be an indisputable fact, that the mediatorial process of the beloved Son of God considered under all its sacred aspects, is alone the Divinely ordained medium, through which all the mercies and blessings of redeeming love are conveyed to fallen man.

Among those several aspects, as exhibited in his assumption of our nature, are to be included his passing through the stage of infancy to manhood ; His fulfilment of all righteousness ; His temptations in the wilderness, and successful resistance of the tempter ; His invincible fidelity and perfect obedience, in doing and suffering the will of his Heavenly Father ; His agony in the garden and on the cross ; His matchless love to mankind in yielding his body to be crucified, and his soul to the horrors of that spiritual death, which He tasted for every man, and which is constituted, or rather consummated, by eternal separation from the presence of the Lord ; His deliverance from the dreadful jaws of this death ; and His triumphant resurrection, and glorious ascension into heaven, where He "sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Such is the comprehensive nature of the Redeemer's process, in the character of "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

If enabled to behold Him with the eye of faith, we may discern something of the wisdom and the mercy—the beauty and the glory of this Divine Dispensation. But those alone are qualified duly to appreciate its transcendent value, who, under deep humiliation of spirit, "have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope" of the Gospel; and who, experiencing it to be, not only "good tidings of great joy," but "the power of God unto salvation," are prepared to unite in the song of the redeemed, saying: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and blessing;" and such will also be prepared finally to join in the universal anthem of: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!"

Lecture XXV.

THE INTERNAL MANIFESTATION OF THE REDEEMER.

"According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest; and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the Everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."

"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the gentiles; which is Christ in you the hope of glory."

Agreeably to the import of these impressive texts, and in harmony with that of many other passages of Scripture testimony, it is evident that the apostles were commissioned to make known among the gentiles, not only "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus" in that external manifestation, in which was exhibited his holy life, doctrines, miracles, and promises; his mediatorial sufferings and death; his triumphant resurrection and ascension; but also the riches of the glory of this "mystery, which is," saith the apostle, "Christ in you the hope of glory."

In the preceding Lecture, there has been an attempt to set forth something of the beautiful proportion that is observable in the doctrinal parts of that sacred structure, which, according to its original design and ultimate consummation, may be identified with the character of the true Church given forth by the inspired writers: A Church "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" "The pillar and ground of the Truth;" "The spouse of Christ;" "A bride adorned for her husband." By these descriptions, something universal and externally conspicuous is evidently intended, as well as an internal beauty and excellence, which should exclude all imperfection and defect; a state which the professing Christian Church appears never to have fully displayed, since the apostles' days: yet were there bestowed and brought into harmonious operation, those spiritual gifts and graces, through which that glorious condition might have been preserved.

Many eclipses, both in doctrine and practice, have however been permitted to obscure the glory of her primitive visibility, and gradually to invest it with a veil of darkness which has been hitherto but partially removed. Yet may it be thankfully acknowledged, to the praise of that

grace which has visited and revisited those who sat in darkness, that much of this darkness is past, and that the true Light *now shineth*; and accordingly the Church of Christ, under her various subdivisions, may be considered in her progress from that wilderness state to which she had been long consigned. And though under every form of profession, there may still remain vestiges of her obscured comeliness, she is rejoicingly perceived to be making some advances in her spiritual character, towards that glorious condition in which, if faithfully "leaning upon her Beloved," she will finally be brought forth, clothed in all her beautiful garments—"fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

The gradual return and restoration of the Church from the depths of that wilderness state, it appears, will be effected, agreeably to the above description, by a more intimate, individual, dependance of her children on their Lord and Leader, than was generally maintained at her first establishment, when the instrumentality of peculiarly gifted human agents was more conspicuous. It is observable that it was through this channel principally, that the gifts and graces

of the Holy Spirit were conferred on others ; and of course those to whom they were primarily intrusted, received also especial qualifications to impart them, to which no others could lawfully pretend. And this instrumental communication of the good Word of life, with all its appropriate influences, appears to have been the authorised means of introduction into the Christian Church, so long as she retained a degree of vitality in the way of her first establishment ; but which has been presumptuously and falsely assumed, even under the deepest state of her apostacy.

On the contrary it may be observed, that neither in the commencement, nor in the progress of the Church's restoration from that wilderness state, was affected, even among the most highly qualified reformers, the same sensible communication of spiritual gifts from one to another ; but rather there was experienced an individual reception from the great Author of every good gift, of such peculiar endowments as were proper to the particular calling of each member ; whether minister or receiver only of the manifold grace of God. And this revival of Gospel testimony, if not effectual "to the pulling down of all the strong holds" of sin and satan, appears

to have been attended with such a measure of Divine Influence, as was sufficient to direct and commend its testimony to the heart and conscience.

But if some portion of human activity and human imperfection, must be acknowledged to have mingled itself with the attempts of many zealous reformers from the summit of papal corruption; and has continued, at different periods with lamented increase, to retard the advancement of Gospel light, life, and liberty; there have also been raised up many witnesses to the efficacy of that immediate teaching, that converting and baptizing influence, which the ever living Head of his own Church is able to administer, not only with, but also without, the medium of human agency.

Thus has He been pleased to prepare and to form unto Himself, within the last two centuries, a people to whom He hath committed a convincing testimony, to the reality of this internal and immediate administration of his power and his glory; and which has proved to be the Divinely appointed means of inviting many, to come and "sit down under the shadow of the great

Teacher with delight, and to know his fruit to be sweet to the taste." And when this holy station is maintained by many, or even by two or three, with one accord in one place, there may be witnessed, and frequently is, not only the presence of the blessed Master in each individual ; but his being in the midst of them in that union and communion of spirit one with another, which is thus enjoyed through the circulation of spiritual life, conveyed as from vessel to vessel. Thus the visible Church of Christ in her highest spiritual capacity, does not consist of members independent one of another ; but of such as being *united* in holding " the Head, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Agreeably to these remarks, it will probably have occurred to some persons in reading the preceding Lecture, that however justly the doctrine of mediatorial atonement may be represented as the grand entrance into that holy temple, that spiritual house which is built on the Living Stone and "Rock of Ages," and in which the Divine

Presence is still manifested to the spiritual senses ; yet that the knowledge of this doctrine has not been the primary entrance to many individuals, who have been, nevertheless, admitted to an experience of the blessed principle of Divine communion, from having been favoured spiritually, to find access to "the sanctuary and true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man," and to that treasury of wisdom and knowledge, which is the living antitype of the ark of the covenant, even Christ Jesus. For though He is to be acknowledged the *only door*, the only way, as being essentially "the Truth and the Life," by which a participation of the blessings of the Gospel can be obtained, or any qualification received for an entrance into the "holy of holies ;" yet has He not been so clearly revealed to many who have sincerely waited for his salvation, in his external character and offices, as in his internal and purely spiritual manifestations ; so that to such individuals, the great and even fundamental truths of the Christian institution, have become the subsequent, rather than the primary subjects of spiritual impression and devout meditation.

In connexion with this fact, may it not be remarked as a correspondent circumstance, that

a people called to bear a distinguished testimony, to this His spiritual appearance and immediate government, have been more prominently directed to the advancing of the knowledge of Christ as a Divine principle in the soul, as our Holy High Priest, officiating at the altar of the heart, as our immediate Lawgiver, Judge, and King, than in the peculiar display of all these his unalienable characters, as exhibited or proclaimed concerning his assumption of that body which was prepared of the Father, as the appointed medium of all his gracious purposes towards lost mankind. Nevertheless it may be observed in the history and doctrines of this people, that those who have attained a maturity of Christian knowledge, have left ample testimony to the truth of this two-fold manifestation of the blessed Mediator.* And though it should appear in the course of their history, that some individuals have so far fallen into the snare of the great enemy, as to attempt the exaltation of the internal process, to the exclusion or disparagement of the external; it

* ¹ See a Collection of such Testimonies, by Henry Tuke.

² Since the Author's decease, a much more extensive Collection has been published, entitled, "An Exposition of the Faith of the Society of Friends," &c., by Thomas Evans. EDITOR.

has also been apparent in many instances, that such persons have not continued to be useful luminaries in the spiritual firmament, being either early dismissed from their temporal career, or otherwise disqualified by the loss of those special gifts with which they had been intrusted; if they have not manifestly fallen from grace, by producing fruits the reverse of those which are ascribed to the spirit of holiness.

It is admitted that such is the real harmony and vital connexion of all the precious truths of the Gospel, that if one or more essentially of this character be cordially and practically embraced, they may become the harbingers of more, and pave the way for the effective reception of all others. But if simplicity and godly sincerity, with deep humility, be not invariably maintained, the enemy of all righteousness is ready with a variety of his subtil baits, to catch the unwary; and at least to make a division in that holy garment of evangelical truth, in which the Head of his own Church, would clothe his ministers and all true members of his living body, as they become prepared to be invested with it. Let those, therefore, who feel themselves peculiarly called upon to exalt this most excellent knowledge,

that of "Christ in us the hope of glory," take diligent heed that they do not depreciate the correspondent knowledge of Him, in that mysterious process which angels desire to look into ; by which He hath obtained eternal redemption for us, though ensured to us in its ultimate effects only through "the obedience of faith :"
"Having by this one offering of Himself perfected for ever those who are sanctified."

But though the internal revelation of Christ is a subject, that can be rightly understood only by those who are conducted into a living experience of its truth ; it may be conducive to a due apprehension of its importance, to advert to those Scripture testimonies which are most explicit on the point. Accordingly it will be seen, that the knowledge of Christ thus inwardly revealed, is represented under various and distinct manifestations of his power and presence. In some of these He is described as a spiritually operative principle communicated by the Father of Spirits, to all the sons and daughters of Adam, viz. : "The true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"—"The Unspeakable Gift"—"The Incorruptible Seed" of which all must be "born by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth

for ever." Hence the apostle's expression to the Galatians, of "Christ being formed in them ;" and to the Corinthians: "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" As a tender seed He has been imparted to all ; but it is those only who suffer it to take root in the heart, and who, by yielding to the sacred Influence of Divine power, become assimilated to its nature, in whom the fruits of the Spirit are perfected.

Another view of this subject is, that by which it is represented as the more sensible manifestation of the Divine Author of our salvation, by the administration of all his offices, and the exemplification of all his characters. For though in his internal as well as in his external appearance, He is first known, as the "Child born ;" the "Son given ;" on whose shoulders the government of his people was to be ; yet when He is received in this comparatively infantile manifestation, and the government of the heart is yielded to his gentle sceptre, He exemplifies the title of "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

May this transcendent knowledge of Him and of his Heavenly kingdom, first established in the

souls of chosen individuals, but which is gradually extending to the whole human race, be diligently sought and sedulously waited for in the experience of all, as the "Light shining in a dark place;" as the "Seed sown;" as the "little Leaven"—"the leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened;" as the "Piece of silver lost," until with seeking, it was joyfully found; as the "Pearl of great price:" and thus will it become the "Day-star" arising with increasing brightness; the "Plant of renown" which shall be evidently seen to be of the Lord's own right hand planting; the spiritual substance which converts all things into its own Divine nature; the durable riches and righteousness, for the attainment of which, no earthly price can be too great to pay. Being thus submitted to in the blessed operation of progressive redemption, the promise will be from time to time fulfilled, even that He "is a Sun and shield" to his people—that He "will give grace and glory—and no good thing will He withhold from them who walk uprightly."

Should it be inquired, whether such a state can be attained, any otherwise than in conjunction with all that is outwardly revealed, or left on sacred record concerning the Redeemer's kingdom;

let it be considered that man is made an accountable agent for those talents *only* with which he is intrusted, be they few or many; and that the neglect of the least and lowest, as well as of the largest, is the only ground of his condemnation; as the right application and improvement of them is the ground of his gracious acceptance. And seeing that the whole human race, so far as they are partakers of the effects of Adam's fall, are proportionably included in the conditional restoration, provided for them by the second Adam, "the Lord from heaven," we are warranted to believe that a measure of saving grace is communicated to every individual, by the due occupation of which, the salvation of the soul may be obtained. Yet as has been before observed in the course of these Lectures, no conclusive evidence appears to have been afforded, of the establishment of a Church possessing spiritual gifts and graces, by an internal manifestation of Divine power, uncombined with a knowledge of those sacred oracles which contain the whole counsel of God, so far as it has been committed to successive generations.

Sufficient therefore as we must acknowledge the Lord Almighty and all-merciful to be, to save

every soul He has brought into existence, under whatever dispensation of probationary terms He may see meet to administer his redeeming virtue; yet a presumptive proof is hence obtained, that the external and internal revelation unitedly of Christ, who is "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins," will constitute that knowledge of his glory which is designed to "fill the earth as the waters cover the sea;" when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, who shall reign for ever and ever."

In the joyful anticipation of that blessed period, the believing soul is enabled at seasons to unite in the heavenly acclamation of "Amen Hallelujah!"

Lecture XV.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM, IN RELATION TO THE MEDIATORIAL PROCESS OF THE REDEEMER.

"Great is the mystery of Godliness."

There is assuredly no subject of this mysterious character, that more eminently demands our reverential contemplation, than that which is set forth by the inspired writers as the atoning and propitiatory sacrifice, offered up for the sins of the whole world, by the blessed Mediator; who is also styled "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

There cannot be found, throughout the whole of the Sacred Record, a fact more variously and cogently insisted on, by expressions the most emphatical that human language could supply, than that which is brought to our view under the foregoing description, as the

essentially procuring cause of salvation to fallen man, and as the Source of every spiritual blessing, or capacity of blessedness, which is renewedly bestowed upon him by his beneficent Creator.

It has been the unworthy endeavour of some individuals who would be disposed to style themselves philosophical writers, so to lower the sense of these Scriptural expressions, as to bring the subjects of them to a level with their own understandings. Some of this class represent the terms "Propitiation, and Propitiatory Sacrifice—" "Atonement," and "atoning blood,"—"blood of the everlasting Covenant," &c. as only adapted in accommodation to Jewish and even to Heathen practices and prejudices. In the attempt so to do, they shamefully overlook and pervert that Divine intention which is evident to the devoutly attentive reader, in prescribing with a wisdom so conspicuous, and a precision so remarkable, the whole Jewish ritual, for the purpose of indicating by the most impressive signs and symbols, the striking features of an all-important fact, further illustrated in the language of prophecy, and ultimately fulfilled in the person of the blessed Jesus.

It has been the equally erroneous practice of some pious persons, to limit their signification precisely to the sole import, which such expressions must literally convey, and thus to expel from the Christian school, every idea of mystery, at least of such sort as must remain inexplicable on every human hypothesis. Such persons are disposed to consider Christianity a *system* or *scheme*, by which every difficulty may be explained, though at the expense of a deduction from the perfections of the Divine attributes; by resolving into the principle of *vindictive wrath*, or *retributive justice*, the whole process of the Redeemer's sufferings; which, whether considered as inflicted on Him, or undertaken by Him, was an effect of love unspeakable, in the Author, and in the Agent or subject of that mysterious process; whereas the Divinely appointed human teachers of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, not only bear express testimony to the subsistence of such mystery in reference to the present subject, but distinguish it, as being pre-eminent among those things which "angels desire to look into." Hence then it is certainly the indispensable duty of mortal man, to be humbly advertent to things which so importantly

concern himself, by involving his highest interests, both temporal and eternal.

So far from lowering, or limiting to his own finite comprehension, the terms in which such dignified subjects are introduced by the inspired teachers, the true learner who sits at the feet of the same blessed Master, will readily apprehend that the subjects of these expressions are in some respects *lowered*, or at least limited, in order to be adapted through the medium of language, typical or literal, to the reception of the human mind; and that the expressions adopted for that purpose, must therefore be *inadequate* and *insufficient* to convey the full extent of such subjects; which are indeed but faintly indicated by them, or exhibited only in some one prominent point of view.

Accordingly we find that merely human attempts, however piously intended, to circumscribe within the terms thus employed, the whole sense and import of these sacred mysteries, serve only to involve them in deeper obscurity, by representing the unfathomable counsels of Divine Wisdom, as wholly incongruous in their results, with that precious transcript of their essential character,

afforded us in various parts of the inspired volume, and deeply engraven by the Divine finger on the tables of the human heart ; or else such attempts involve the subject in a cloud of equal darkness, by treating those counsels as being fully explained by comparison with human conduct, in proposing and accepting a substitute for the payment of a just debt, or the infliction of a deserved penalty.

All comparisons must however fall short of a clear illustration of the subject ; which may nevertheless be considered as including every idea that could be suggested by the most exalted human benevolence, combined with the most accurate measure of human equity ; and also as extending itself into depths of justice and mercy, which must ever be impenetrable to mortal scrutiny, with regard to the sphere and effect of its utmost operation. To such of those ideas as come within the range of human experience, or Christian observation, it behoves us to give devout attention ; especially to this incomprehensible truth, that the complicated sufferings and the death of the immaculate Lamb—the Son of the Highest, were the only means appointed by the Father, by which mankind could be

delivered from the final consequences of Adam's fall both on himself and his posterity ; and that He who is styled "Son of God," and "Son of man," has in that mysterious union, ascended and prepared a way for reconciliation, for the whole bulk of mankind, with the Source of Infinite Purity and Perfection ; from which they had become alienated, and eventually liable to eternal separation.

By such as view these subjects through their proper medium, the terms propitiation—atonement—sacrifice—will be admitted strongly to present the blessed results intended by them, rather than a complete development of all the principles, on which these results are established. Thus "propitiation in its genuine import," says a learned and pious author, "signifies drawing nigh unto, or the means of drawing nigh to"—"atonement means reconciliation or agreement, being synonymous to concord—*at-one-ment*." The same author well observes, that man being, since the fall of our first parents, separated from God, the Divine power in the person of a Mediator, was necessary, at least we find it was appointed, to reunite the human nature to the Divine. Jesus Christ is the medium of that union, and as such

called the atonement and propitiation for our sins ; He is therefore the only power by which we can be reconciled unto God.

Consider the various Scripture testimonies, which forcibly combine to establish this mysterious truth, as those of the whole of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, with the correspondent accomplishments of that prophetic language, recorded in the testimonies of the apostles and the evangelists : consider also these still more explicit declarations, viz. "There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Then the Name, the power of Jesus, the same power which having manifested itself in raising Him from the dead, in leading captivity captive, and in triumphing over death, hell, and the grave, is that which alone can quicken us to spiritual life, and raise us up at the last day unto life everlasting.

Less than a power purely Divine, the same which breathed into man, at his creation, the breath of lives, * could not restore such a

* * Law.

measure of Divine Life to fallen man, as might become a germinating principle—a seed of the Divine Nature—capable of future expansion unto Life Eternal, through the continued operation of the same power. And no other or higher nature could be assumed by this Divine Agent, than that which is *essentially human*, though free from every taint of sin, in which He could become so perfectly the second Adam, as, in his own person, not only to exhibit the pure unbroken image in which the first had been created ; but also, by His mediatorial agency, to undo and make void all that the first Adam had done, towards subjecting himself and his posterity to a state of inevitable misery.

That it would not comport with either infinite justice or mercy, to have left myriads of the human race, who had never sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, in this deplorable condition without a remedy, we may presume to affirm ; as we are constrained to admit, on equally cogent evidence, that nothing short of that mysterious process which is of Divine appointment, is held forth to our humbling consideration, as sufficient to ensure our escape from the final penalty of sin and transgression : or from

the destructive influences of that depraved nature of which we are all partakers.

If any thing less than the mediatorial sufferings of the blessed Jesus, in order to the redemption of our fallen race, could have equally consisted with the infinite wisdom, justice, and mercy of the Supreme Being, would He in whom all those attributes are equally perfect, have subjected the beloved image of His own perfections, brought forth in the person of an immaculate human being, to sufferings so intense, so complicated, so unparalleled, as to induce his earnest prayer, that if it were possible that cup might pass from Him! and also the subsequent most affecting apostrophe: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" The evidence that perfect filial obedience, and filial submission, were triumphantly exhibited in each of these affecting instances, furnishes the utmost proof of the ascendancy of the Divine over the human nature, in our Holy Head; and affords an earnest of that victory, which the same Divine power alone is able to accomplish, in the souls of those who yield themselves wholly to its effectual operations. Such will be qualified, with the apostles to exclaim from blessed experience: "Thanks be

to God who giveth us the victory through
our Lord Jesus Christ."

Lecture XVI.



CONTINUATION OF THE MEDIATORIAL PROCESS OF THE REDEEMER.



"Great is the mystery of Godliness."

Whoever rightly contemplates the depth of this subject, if only so far as it is discernible by the lowest degree of spiritual intelligence, as set forth in the appropriate and most impressive language of Sacred Scripture, will readily confess, that it is among the most prominent of those Divine mysteries, which deeply interest the human race. As such it has been rejected by many of the wise and prudent in different ages of the world, as it was by the Jews and Greeks at the period of its first promulgation; especially that important part of it, which embraces the doctrine of Christ's sufferings, and ignominious death on the Cross, as an essential part of his mediatorial office, in the redemption and salvation of mankind.

By many of those who have embraced this doctrine, it appears also to be not only imperfectly understood, as must, in a greater or less degree, remain to be the case with all mysteries till fully revealed in their blessed results; but it appears also to be in some instances so misapprehended, so perverted in the explanation attempted to be given of it, that even when admitted as an undeniable truth, it sometimes fails of being efficaciously received or communicated, from the unsatisfactory tenour and influence, of those adjuncts of human construction with which it is combined.

These remarks particularly attach to that division of the subject, which relates to the propitiatory sacrifice of the blessed Jesus; for it is important to observe, that this mysterious subject involves two distinct considerations: that which embraces what was done and suffered in the person of the Messiah, on behalf of fallen man; and that which relates to what is effected by Christ in the soul, in order to man's individual salvation.

These two equally scriptural and important points, are to be contemplated in intimate

connexion with each other ; and, certainly, do not appear to have been eminently illustrated in human experience, or under human observation, except in this their proper conjunction : yet have they been separated in theory and profession, in a manner disgraceful to the Christian name ; but it has been by such as wrest Scripture to their own great loss. Such as these, having only the *form* of Godliness, and either denying, or being ignorant of the *power*, fix their hope of salvation exclusively on the great propitiatory sacrifice, while disclaiming those spiritual associations, “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ;” without which, Christ has declared, none can see the kingdom of God. But this is a less surprising perversion than that which is adopted by another class, who deny the efficacy of that blessed atonement ; yet assume that the whole process of sanctification and salvation may be witnessed, independently of that Divinely appointed and only procuring cause of such experience. This latter perversion has been most unjustly imputed to the Society of Friends, who have defended themselves from time to time, from the falsity of such charges, in the course of their various writings and controversies. Should such a misapprehension still subsist, it may be attributed

to the want, in those who so mistake our principles, of rightly understanding the distinction which the Society always maintain, between *the essential efficacy* of this atoning sacrifice; and the *indispensible necessity* of KNOWING the Scriptural declarations concerning it, in order to experience ANY DEGREE of such efficacy.

In observing such distinctions, the Society differ from a large majority of Christian professors, who hold the *outward* knowledge of this mysterious Truth, to be so indispensable a concomitant of its effectual operation, as that the *latter cannot subsist* in any measure, without an *obvious connexion with the former*.

It is freely acknowledged on the part of Friends, that the blessed effects designed towards mankind, by the glorious Gospel Dispensation, have not been manifest in any conspicuous measure, where the outward knowledge of this its true Foundation has not been also received;—that no collective body, deserving the character of a Christian church—a church endowed with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit—or at least maintaining a consistency of Christian doctrines and Christian morality, has been found to exist;

which was not also in possession of some portion of the knowledge derived from evangelic and apostolic testimony.

Such has evidently appeared to be the course of Divine Dispensation towards the children of men, that whenever the establishment of a church, or gathering of a people, is designed, among whom the Lord would place his Name and manifest his power, in a distinguished manner, He has seen meet to commit to such church and people, the records of his former dealings towards mankind universally, and towards every select family or individual, who has previously shared the distinguished revelations of his will, for the purpose of its communication through such instruments. This is indeed most remarkably exemplified in the qualifications and commissions conferred on his eminently favoured servant Moses ; not only as the appointed leader, legislator, and instructor of his chosen people, the Jews ; but as their faithful, their *inspired historian* of former times and transactions, human and Divine ; and in many instances, their highly endowed prophet in relation to those which were still future.

Accordingly, we may observe, it was to a people thus prepared by the knowledge of His dealings and designs, and who thence became the repositories of those lively oracles, that the Christian Dispensation, was in the first place most peculiarly directed and proposed ; and from among whom issued those sons of the morning, the light of whose instructive testimony and holy example, was diffused over the greatest part of the then known world. And when this dispensation was extended through them to the gentiles, who had not been previously acquainted with the records of Sacred History, is it not evident from the tenour of their writings, that their labours were accompanied by all the information, of a general nature and universal import, which this peculiar people had derived from their ancient Scriptures ?

This appears evident from the references made by evangelists and apostles, in their writings historic and epistolary, equally designed for the church universal, whether of Jew or gentile origin. Hence we are warranted to conclude, however effectual to individual salvation, may be the most obscure and circumscribed sphere of Divine revelation, to which human intelligence

has ever been confined, even to the knowing of it only as a light shining in a dark place, and the darkness comprehending it not, that where such darkness is not the voluntary choice of the soul, there cannot be a doubt of the same immediate administration of the Divine power, being as sufficient as ever, to raise up a church and people as from the stones of the street ; or otherwise to display itself as it was pleased to do in some distinguished instances on sacred record, in which no outward or humanly instrumental instruction appears to have been employed : yet are we not only warranted, but constrained to admit, that the appointed way of communicating the Gospel as "the power of God unto salvation," is through the knowledge of fundamental Gospel truths.

Such indeed is the real harmony, and beautiful connexion, of all the truths of Christian revelation, that if even a small portion only of that rich treasure be received, in the sincere love of its transcendent excellency, that portion might serve, like an important link of a chain, connecting itself so effectually with other imperceptible links, as for the benefit of the whole to be virtually, though gradually, brought into action ; yet if

rejected in any one of those links, such wilful rejection might *endanger*, if not *ensure*, the breaking of this golden chain, so as to destroy the operation of its efficacy.

May it then be duly remembered, that no one soul-interesting truth, which has been proclaimed and established on Divine authority, can be justifiably dismissed from reverential acceptance, any more than those other revelations of the Divine mind and will, which may more readily be comprehended within the narrow compass of human conception. And what, indeed, has been brought before our spiritual contemplation, as more "worthy of all acceptance," than the apostolic assertion, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners! of whom" said converted Paul, "I am chief?" What more "worthy of all acceptance," also than this other Scripture confirmation, that Christ having tasted "death for every man," all have been made partakers, in some degree, of the benefit of his propitiatory sacrifice, offered "for the sins of the whole world?" Inadequate, indeed, must be their conception of the valued virtue of this stupendous sacrifice, who would limit its beneficial operation to any exclusive portion of the human race, or deny

the extension of its blessed influence, at least in an *initial degree*, to the whole bulk of mankind. How can they consistently admit the universality of the consequence of Adam's fall, as evidenced in the condition of all his posterity, and at the same time refuse a belief in the full sufficiency, and correspondent extension of the Divinely appointed means of restoration, from such effects as have been thus incurred !

As certainly as all have died in Adam a spiritual death, and have been born into this world bearing the image of the earthly man, and have accordingly become subject to a natural death ; so surely also has Christ, "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, the quickening Spirit," tasted of that two-fold death. As certainly by this sacrificial process, all shall be not only raised from the state of natural death, but also restored, during their temporal existence, to a capacity of spiritual life ; by being made partakers of that vital principle, which is susceptible of expansion or extinction, according to the reception given or refused to its sanctifying operations ; and which may be considered as the earnest of the Redeemer's promise and power, of raising up at the last day, to life everlasting,

the subjects of that complicated death, which has been the universal lot of Adam's posterity.

The fulfilment of that promise, though suspended on the condition of *belief* and *faith*, and the obedience of it, cannot justly be alleged to exclude those to whom the opportunity of believing and obeying has never been afforded; or at least only in that initial, that seminal degree, of the internal dawning of the Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and whose sphere of probation must be accordingly limited to the measure of light bestowed; whether accompanied by all the high purposes and privileges, to which, in its full ministration, it is capable of conducting the willing and the obedient; or whether confined to that internal operation of the Spirit of the Lord, which, as the word quick and powerful, can divide between the precious and the vile, in every human heart.

But seeing, beloved Friends, we are of that distinguished number, who possess all the privileges of this outward knowledge; and are instructed, as well as experimentally exercised, in that which is communicated in the secret of the soul, in a far more extensive manner than

it has ever appeared to be vouchsafed to those, who have not *also* shared these external privileges, let us be aware lest we fall short of experiencing the full effects of this double portion of enriching blessing, by a disposition to depreciate the intrinsic value of any of its parts.

Lecture VIII.

ON THE MYSTERIES OF THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM IN RELATION TO THE HOLY THREE.

"Great is the mystery of Godliness."

It has been a favourite position with the infidel, and the superficial believer in Divine revelation, that "where mystery begins religion ends." A position that sufficiently proves on the face of it a voluntary ignorance of the nature and origin of all true religion, as most copiously and intelligently set forth by its faithful votaries and Divinely commissioned promulgators, in different ages of the world; and as it remains to be indicated by some degree of correspondent experience, in every stage of true discipleship. Indeed it is not more repugnant to the cause of true religion, than to that of sound natural philosophy, to exclude from the phenomena of the latter, and the authorised testimonies of the

former, the existence of many unfathomable depths, which may be justly denominated mysteries.

In natural philosophy there are facts and principles imperfectly understood ; in true religion there are sublime and eminent truths, authoritatively, though partially declared, having especial relation to subjects purely Divine ; but important in their influence on the highest of human interests ; and which, though contemplated through a veil, are designed to be ultimately revealed, and even progressively unfolded, to such degrees of spiritual intelligence as may be conferred on the mind that is susceptible of Divine tuition, and is humbly subject to its influence.

That all mysteries, as hidden things of the heavenly kingdom, are, thus only, truly received, we have an impressive evidence in the devout acknowledgment of the blessed Jesus to this purport : "I thank Thee, O Father ! Lord of heaven and earth ! that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : even so Father ! for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The mysteries of the kingdom which appear most importantly connected with those high interests of the human soul, are those included in that chain of scriptural truths, which have a peculiar, and indeed inseparable relation to each other; a relation which if not at once discerned by the sincere inquirer, will become gradually perceptible by the spiritually illumined and enlarged understanding, when those truths are received in the childlike simplicity of true discipleship.

These mysterious truths are distinguishable from precept, practice, and obviously miraculous fact, though recognized in many express declarations and commands of the Author of our religion, as well as by many cogent testimonies, historic, prophetic, and epistolatory, of the inspired writers. These mysteries may be enumerated under the following heads, as subjects successively brought under contemplation in this, and the connecting Lectures.

First, The Holy Three of whom eminent testimony is borne, in the Sacred Scriptures, as being included in the comprehensive Name of God.

Second, The essential Deity of the Eternal Word or Son of God, and his consequent pre-existence before his appearance in the flesh.

Third, The incarnation of this Eternal Word.

Fourth, The miraculous origin of his immaculate human nature, and its union with the Divine.

Fifth, His mediatorial offices in the whole process of man's redemption, sanctification, and final salvation.

Sixth, His purely spiritual appearance, or His appearance as the Holy Spirit, in the administration of his immediate government in the soul : as the believer's hope of glory.

The first of the foregoing heads can scarcely be introduced to our contemplation in words more fitly adapted to a subject, of which no human language is adequately descriptive, than those of the following text : "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit ; and these Three are One"—for though it is justly considered as of doubtful

authority, from the latter part of the seventh to the beginning of the eighth verse, viz., from the word "*record*," to the word "*spirit*," because not to be found in any of the most ancient manuscripts, it nevertheless asserts a truth to which unequivocal testimony is borne in various parts of Sacred Scripture. That there are Three in heaven, or who are announced to mankind from the heavenly kingdom, who *bear record*, is indeed exemplified in many Scripture passages, as will be obvious to every reader, when informed that the word translated "*record*" in this text, is the same in the original Greek, as is elsewhere translated "*witness*" and "*testimony*." * Thus it is indisputable that the Father bare witness of the Son when there came a voice from the excellent Glory, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

It is no less evident that the Son bare witness of the Father during the whole course of his ministry, of which such *witness*, declaration, and revelation, was a principle object; and that, He so

* John i. 1. 7. 19. Revelations xii. 11. xix. 10.

See Annotations of Thomas Scott.

bare witness in conjunction with the assertion, "I and my Father are one". It is no less undeniable that the Holy Spirit bare witness of the Son in conjunction with the Father, when descending in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, that testimony was accompanied by the same voice from the Father, saying: "This is *my* beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

That the Father and the Son bare witness of the Holy Spirit, is equally apparent; when the promise of the Father was announced by the Son: that the disciples should "be baptized with the Holy Ghost;" for which they were directed to wait at Jerusalem; and which was accordingly accomplished, on the day of Pentecost, by the pouring forth of that Holy Influence on the assembled believers, in miraculous gifts; particularly in that of tongues, which was denoted by a visible appearance of "cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." And most eminently the Father and the Son bare witness to the Holy-Spirit, in its more purely spiritual and abiding character, as the Comforter—the Spirit of Truth—sent to guide the believers into all truth; and especially to *testify of Christ*.

To this may be added as a correspondent evidence of such reciprocal testimony, the apostle's assertion, that no man can call God Father, or "say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Thus are these *august Three* truly affirmed to *bear* testimony; of whom it may without controversy be also affirmed, that abundant testimony is likewise borne in various other parts of Holy Scripture.

The first indication of this mystical truth which occurs in the sacred writings, is the name ELOHIM,* ascribed by Moses, in his account of the creation, to the Divine, eternal, self-existent Being. This Name in our translation is rendered God,* but in the original Hebrew it is a noun of the plural number, connected with a verb and pronoun in the singular; which at least conveys an intimation, that some kind of plurality is to be understood of his incomprehensible nature, as well as its proper *unity* or *oneness*.

The second appellation by which God was pleased to be proclaimed to Moses and to

* See Adam Clarke's, and Thomas Scott's Annotations on the place. The Name "ELOHIM" and the like translation of it frequently occur.

his peculiarly chosen people, and which was "JEHOVAH"—"LORD"—comprehends, though perhaps not literally, that enumeration of characteristics attached to it, which at once embraces all the Divine attributes of the Father and the Son: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty," &c. &c.

It is further worthy of remark, that this Name, "ELOHIM," is applied to various manifestations and appearances of the Divine Being to that people, though many of those appearances are also described to have been in the form of an angel: but that is evidently the angel and great messenger of the Covenant, which is Christ—the image of the invisible God;* for it is affirmed by this great Mediator of the new and everlasting Covenant, that "no man hath seen God at any time"—that is the Father in his unveiled Majesty—but that "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

* See Isaac Penington on the three-fold appearance of Christ.

That the offices of the Holy Spirit towards this people, are, in many instances, identified with the government and guidance of the Father and the Son, is also evidenced by many Scripture passages of the Old Testament, viz. "Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them." *Nehemiah* ix. 20. And David said: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit; and whither shall I flee from thy *presence*;" terms here used as being equivalent. We also find it written: "And now the Lord and his Spirit hath sent Me." Sent whom? even the blessed Messiah, represented by anticipation, under the type of the prophet Isaiah, to whom could not literally belong what is predicted in the following verses,* and which is applicable only to Christ in his mediatorial and human appearances. The same evangelical prophet says: "They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit."

That this Divine energy, this putting forth of Divine Power into agency, though not into visibility, is identified of the Word and Son of God in his purely Divine and essential character,

* Isaiah xlviii. 17, 18, 19.

is to be justly inferred from the declaration that :
"All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made." Thus scriptural testimonies compared together, mutually reflect an additional and corroborating light on each other ; which the same texts, singly considered, might fail to exhibit with equal force. But the most eminent of all testimonies committed to scripture record, and which designates the Holy Three as inseparably united, as in the creation so also in the redemption of man, is that of the blessed Jesus, in his command to his disciples : "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in" or into, or unto "the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST."

This is a proof of the Divine authority, and consequently of the Divine nature which is included in each of these denominations. Could this august association, in which the Eternal God was pleased to announce his supremacy to mortal man, be reasonably supposed to include a *created being* as thus equalized with Himself and the Holy Spirit. That any should admit the unfounded idea, that in such an association, the Son of God should be justly considered of a

nature and origin inferior to the Holy Spirit, indicates a want of consistency in the knowledge of Divine things, which plainly discovers such imperfect knowledge to be the product of only the carnal, unenlightened mind.

Of this description must be the conclusions of those, who maintain the doctrine of the merely human nature of the Son of God, seeing none ever affirmed of the Holy Spirit, that it was less than *purely Divine*.

To be baptized in, or into, or as some have rendered that particle, unto the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is to be introduced into a sense of the power, the nature, the authority of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and those who know, in truth, any measure of this baptism, and who abide under its successive operations, cannot hesitate to believe, that the power, nature, and authority, thus manifested to their souls are wholly Divine. May nothing short of this experience be rested in by those who disclaim the use of water baptism; that is immersion in elementary water. This though a significant appendage to that *baptism in spirit* which the primitive preachers of the Gospel were qualified

to administer, we apprehend was never designed to be perpetuated in the Christian Church ; and though practised by some of Christ's disciples during the remaining prevalence of the former shadowy dispensation, was no express part of the subject of the foregoing command.

May all who are persuaded that the obligation to water baptism ceased with the termination of the Legal Dispensation, be ardently concerned not to fall short of witnessing those heart cleansing, heart searching, and all sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, which are still mercifully administered, both in an immediate and in an instrumental manner, to those who believe and who obey the Gospel, according to the capacity and opportunity afforded them for the reception of its truths.

In the experience of such, the benediction of the apostle continues to be fulfilled: " Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Lecture XVIII.

CONTINUATION
ON THE MYSTERIES OF THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM, IN RELATION
TO THE HOLY THREE.

“Great is the mystery of Godliness.”

The reflections suggested by the foregoing Lecture, and with which the present may be fitly introduced, conduct us to this conclusion: that as *finite* cannot comprehend *infinite*, nor any *created* object furnish an entirely correspondent likeness of that which is *increate*, so the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead, under the several relative distinctions of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, must remain a mystery incapable of being adequately conceived, or fully expressed by words. Even the words employed by Divine authority, to convey that which is indispensably important to be received as truth concerning this doctrine, appear to be selected rather as most nearly approaching the nature of the subjects designated by them, than as comprehending a full description of such subjects. Thus, as a pious writer observes,

the terms denoting the relation of Son-ship, are adopted as depicting the nearest resemblance which could be afforded to human conception, of the ineffable union which subsists between the unseen and incomprehensible Source of all natures and beings, and such a personal manifestation of Deity, as might be rendered visible or cognizable to angels and to men. To angels through the medium of a spiritual body or appearance, suited to their spiritual faculties—to men, as clothed with the garment of spotless human nature, even “in the likeness of sinful flesh ;” but discerned also by the spiritually minded, through that veil, as “the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth ;” and as He is revealed still in his purely spiritual character, to the spiritual perceptions of the human soul.

In merely natural apprehension, we have no idea of a Son, but as of a distinct agent, deriving his being from an earthly parent, and capable of acting independently of parental authority and influence ; not as continuing absolutely One with his Father, so as to be identified with Him, either in existence, will, or operation ; but, in the application of that epithet to Him who proceeded forth and came from God, we are taught

to receive the idea of an abiding and indissoluble union ; so entire and so intimate, as to verify the expressions of identity, appropriated by Christ with respect to his Divinity : " I and my Father are One." " He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father."

Correspondent with these expressions of Christ, is the testimony of John concerning the Deity : " No man hath seen God at any time ;" [in unveiled glory ;] " the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." But with respect to his humanity, though derived from the same Divine original after a miraculous manner, and entitled on that account to be also especially considered—" the Son of the Highest," yet therein is likewise implied a separability between the Father of Spirits and the Son, in that mode of existence which had its commencement in time ; as there is also implied a separability of volition, which could become one in operation, only by the surrender of the human to the Divine will : " O my Father ! Not as I will but as Thou wilt !"

It is therefore in his Divine, Eternal character, that this indissoluble union invariably subsists.

There is, however, even in his purely Divine character, a distinction of epithet observed between the Father and the Son, which is not to be confounded. Thus Christ is called "the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God." He is also figuratively termed, "the Arm of the Lord;" being the putting forth of the Divine attributes; not only those of power and wisdom, but especially of mercy and truth, into visibility and personality, as the Son and *Sent* of the Father; whose "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

If the words dictated by inspiration, are inadequate to convey entirely accurate or correspondent ideas, on those deeply mysterious subjects, all human explanation must fail to effect such a purpose. Hence the term person, as usually applied, though not improperly used as denoting the manifestation of the Divine nature in a body of flesh, is justly declined by our Society as inapplicable to unveiled Deity; and as circumscribing that which has no limits.

That manifestation which is circumscribed, or is capable of being properly considered under the limitation of such a complex state of being, is, in the conjunction of the Divine and human, declared

to be inferior to Him who is, in the highest sense of the term, an Omnipotent Spirit. Thus the blessed Jesus said: "My Father is greater than I;" and yet, of Christ it is also declared: "IN HIM dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Hence the Divine attributes of the Father, were manifested in and by the Son; and particularly that of Omniscience, which was no faculty even of his Divinely descended *human* nature; and which He accordingly disclaimed, in reference to *that* nature, when, speaking of the times and seasons which the Father had put in His own power, He said: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Yet when our Lord was exemplifying the Divine attribute of Omniscience, by virtue of his spiritual union with the Father of Spirits, as in the case of Nathaniel, and when obtaining from Him that appropriate acknowledgment: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God—Thou art the King of Israel;" * we may

* Though no other instance than this of Nathaniel is here adduced, in proof of the Omniscience so unequivocally displayed in the Divine character of the Saviour, while it is confessedly disclaimed in his purely human capacity or personal commission;

observe that Christ denied not the ground of this acknowledgment, which was the conviction of his possessing Omniscience ; but pronounced Nathaniel "an Israelite indeed ;" because he was so truly prepared to receive the impression of Divine Truth, on the comparatively slender intimation of it then afforded him, as to be a fit subject for the subsequent promise : "Thou shalt see greater things than these."

But insufficient as are all human attempts to explain that high mystery of the Divine nature, according to which Three are properly and inseparably One ; and One is essentially comprehensive of Three distinct objects of our faith ; it may be allowable to refer to a comparison, sanctioned in many instances by Scripture authority, whereby this truth admits of some illustration. "The glorious Lord" is designated as "a place of broad rivers and streams"—"the Fountain of Living Waters ;" and water is an emblem employed, both in the Old and in the New Testaments, in

yet a succession of the most impressive instances may be seen in Thomas Scott's Annotations on the Old and New Testament, and also in a forcible and more concentrated point of view, in J. J. Gurney's Essays.

language and practice, as most fitly symbolical of the operations of the Holy Spirit. Let us then consider the relation of a mighty and conspicuous Fountain, to that hidden, that unfathomable Source from whence it springs; consider the issues from that Fountain into various streams and channels, and the relation of each of them to the Fountain and its Source; are not the substance, the properties, the virtues of the water *one and the same*, whether considered in the profound Abyss, in the refulgent Fountain, or in its fertilizing rivers and streams; and is not the water obtained from either, equally derived from each? and is not the union of one with the other indivisible and indissoluble?

Yet something may be affirmed of the Abyss, which cannot be said of the Fountain, even that the former is invisible and inaccessible. And something also may be said of the Fountain, which cannot of the streams, even that the Fountain is unparalled in visible exaltation and magnificence, whether discerned through an appropriate transparent medium, or perceived in its original splendour; while, of the streams it may be predicated, that, though wholly derived from the Fountain and its Source, and precisely

of the same substance, they are nevertheless liable to expansion and contraction, according to the channels prepared for their reception ; although of the same essential nature, with that which is unfathomable, immeasurable, and inconceivable.

Whether we admit this illustration of the foregoing doctrine, as justly elucidatory of the position which may have appeared to the superficial enquirer, to contain a contradiction in terms ; or whether we simply receive this mysterious doctrine, in that Scriptural authority, which will increasingly establish itself on due investigation, under an humble dependence on Divine illumination, those only can rightly receive it, to whom, from their willing acquiescence to believe, the following benediction of the apostle appears to be equally applicable in all its parts : "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."

Lecture XX.

ON REVELATION AND INSPIRATION.

The gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit may be divided into common and special, or ordinary and extraordinary. The first are those which are common, in some degree, to all believers; being the spontaneous productions of the Spirit, which when cultivated and matured become its fruits. These are primarily a capacity of believing, that is of discerning and embracing spiritual truths, whether experimental, doctrinal, or practical. By experimental are to be understood those which being received by experience, are found to call forth the spiritual affections, as love, joy, peace, which are the ripened fruits of the Spirit; but which in their germ may be no less truly denominated, conviction, contrition, humiliation, repentance, and conversion.

Doctrinal truths are those which may be embraced by the enlightened understanding,

whether fully comprehended by it or not, from a perception of their congruity with that sense or faculty which is bestowed by the Spirit of Truth, in order to the efficacious reception of the truths which He has been pleased to reveal, in different ages, to different persons, in all the varieties in which He has been pleased to reveal them ; and which, however they may differ, can never be subversive one of another.

Practical truths are duties of a practical kind, not in the power of man to perform without the aids of the Spirit, in giving the disposition to will and to do ; but it is yet in his power to withhold the performance of them : by doing which, he would frustrate the Grace of God. At what seasons, or in what proportions, these common or ordinary gifts, graces, virtues, or still more properly, fruits of the Spirit, are brought forth, depends on causes which are out of the sphere of human ability to ascertain ; and these causes, as they are appointed both conditionally and unconditionally, can be known only by the Searcher of Hearts.

In like manner the special and extraordinary gifts, graces, and virtues, or the fruits of the

Holy Spirit, may be brought forth in proportions unascertainable by man. And He who undertakes to pronounce upon the measure in which only these supernatural qualifications will be afforded, is guilty of the presumption of attempting to limit the Holy One. But in this we may confide, that He knows how to give that which is good, which is needful and expedient, for every age and state of his Church and people ; and that whatever He is thus pleased to bestow, will have an harmonious relation and affinity with that which He has already bestowed ; so that no truth of Revelation, no gift of Inspiration, will contradict or frustrate any other.

Many appear to be the erroneous, discordant, and inadequate ideas entertained by speculative minds, on the subject of Inspiration. Like other subjects of a purely spiritual nature, it can never be duly apprehended by the faculties of the merely natural man, because it is only spiritually discerned ; that is, by a faculty which being adapted to the nature of the subject, can alone discern and receive it as an object of spiritual sensibility. Hence as the natural senses of hearing, seeing, feeling, tasting, are often figuratively used in Scripture, as fitly representing correspondent

senses, or a sensibility of a spiritual kind ; so that which we should call experimental knowledge, when applied to outward objects or natural science, as being the result of the evidence of the outward senses, under the superintendence and controul of the rational faculty, is eminently applicable to the objects of the spiritual senses. It is at least such a degree of experience of the nature of their objects, as will be correspondent with any higher degrees of the same kind of experience.

From a total disregard to this test, and an entire neglect of appealing to it, or, as may be supposed, from a total ignorance of it, have arisen the monstrous notions of Inspiration entertained by many of the Heathen, of which it might be superfluous to take notice in these times of Gospel light and knowledge, were it not, in great measure, retained in the minds of some classical scholars, by their early and most injudicious introduction, to an acquaintance with heathen mythology ; and who thus are prepossessed with false conceptions on a subject, which, if rightly understood, must be identified with important Truth. Some of these persons have accordingly no idea of Inspiration, but that of

a violent, irresistible impulse from some superior power ; and this idea though in degree corrected by a subsequent acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, appears to embrace only a very imperfect apprehension of the nature and extent of that Divine Influence, to which those Scriptures bear such eminent testimony.

It may be here objected, that if nothing short of experience can qualify the mind for just conceptions on this subject, it is no marvel that many, if not all, should remain incompetent to such conceptions. But though Inspiration in all its various degrees and distinctions, as those of common and special, or ordinary and extraordinary, is wholly a Divine gift ; yet in its most extensive sense it is universal, as being afforded, in a greater or less proportion, at some period, during the life of every individual who attains to maturity. So surely as there is a spirit in man ; in other words, so certainly as there is a spiritual, as well as a mortal part united in his present frame ; so certainly doth the "Inspiration of the Almighty give him an understanding." As the outward senses are called into action and operation by their appropriate objects, and the influence of those outward

mediums through which they are discerned ; so the spiritual faculties of man are called into some degree of action and operation, by the presentation of some objects commensurate with their own nature, and the renewed influences of that Eternal Spirit from whom those faculties are derived. The distinction is nevertheless to be duly observed, between the various measures in which this Divine gift has been, and in which it continues to be bestowed ; and between the various purposes, as immediate or mediate, ordinary or extraordinary, for which it has been communicated. An examination of these distinctions as they are exemplified in Sacred Writ, appears to be the right course of considering this subject.

IMMEDIATE REVELATION, whether communicated to mankind in an individual or collective capacity, must be acknowledged to be widely distinguished from the most authentic record of such Revelation. Immediate Revelation has been afforded to especially prepared instruments, in different ages, and at considerable distances of time ; and that not for their particular benefit alone, but principally that the knowledge and the benefit of such revealed truths and facts,

might be conveyed, through their instrumentality, to persons and to communities, who should also be, in different degrees, prepared to receive and gradually to extend them without limitation, as opportunity and ability might be afforded for the purpose. Thus not only Immediate Revelation itself, but a like authorised record of it, must be ascribed to the same Divine origin. And however disproportioned in their effects these may be justly considered, He who knows all that is in man, and all that is needed by him, is not wanting to supply all which this disparity makes requisite, by immediate communication of an evidence of Divine authority—a sense of spiritual influence, which renders the relation of a soul-interesting fact, or the impression of a Divine precept, doctrine, or prediction, “worthy of all acceptance,” and as capable of becoming a subject of “the obedience of faith” to the well-disposed mind, as though the outward eye or ear of the recipient, had been the primary channel of their first revelation to mankind.

Thus Revelation may be said to be Immediate, that is independent of human instrumentality, in a two-fold sense: not two-fold indeed as to the matter of it, which if it relates to an instance

of general or universal concern, appears not to be repeated or given forth as Primary Revelation, except to those who have been its originally appointed recipients; but is secondary in the communication of a capacity to discern and receive it on its own appropriate evidence; which is that on which true faith is ever built.

Evidence that is merely rational, though worthy of the acceptation of rational creatures, upon all subjects with which rational apprehension is commensurate, is not that Rock on which the Lord declared He would build his Church, and against which, the gates of hell should never be able to prevail. For it is not the Revelation which flesh and blood can either impart or embrace; but that which is ever the immediate work of the Father, in the manifestation of the nature of the Son, to the spiritual faculties of man; whether this manifestation may be discerned in its conjunction with that immaculate human body, which was miraculously prepared to receive "all the power of the Godhead;" or it be admitted on the authority with which it is proclaimed by prophets, evangelists, and apostles; or may be revealed in His own Eternal Nature, in the secret of the soul, as the quickening Spirit.

INSPIRATION in its most general and extensive sense, admits also of degrees and kinds ; that is it may be not only plenary and objective, immediately imparting new or particular truths to the individual soul ; such at least as are of individual importance, whereby it assumes the character of Revelation ; but it may be afforded only in such measure as to operate objectively, in the efficacious impression of truths already revealed and declared. "There is a spirit in man, and the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth him an understanding." The language of Inspiration under every Divine dispensation, is evidently adapted, not only to that particular dispensation under which it was given forth ; but, by direction of the same Spirit, is also applicable to other dispensations, though distinguished one from another in various respects. Thus that which principally applies to the church universal, may also be fitly applied, in some instances, to the whole bulk of mankind.

It is therefore very dangerous to attempt to limit the meaning of the Spirit of Truth according to contracted human views or interpretations, dictated only by the natural understanding. And no less dangerous is it to attempt the extension

of a scriptural passage, beyond the limits assigned to it by the Spirit of Truth ; which alone can truly unfold His own Divine design, and will do so, to such as are becoming wholly subject to Divine teaching and enlightening Influences. But if any, under this persuasion, are induced to adopt meanings and applications which are incongruous one with another, they may be well assured, under the authority of right reason, that they are following some other guidance than the pure Spirit of Truth, which can never contradict itself.

To seek the scriptural meaning of any text may be most safely attempted by a comparison of Scripture with itself, in all its different parts on the same subject ; still depending on a principle superior to that of human wisdom, for the discerning of their real relation one to another, and the consistency, thereby discoverable, of their joint result with the testimony of true spiritual experience.

Inspiration may be further described as the operations of a Divine Influence or energy on the human mind, in such proportions as are needful to qualify man for the fulfilment of the

religious duties required of him, whether of a passive or of an active nature.

Inspiration is usually divided into ordinary and extraordinary ; but it may perhaps be more properly characterised as common and special. The former indeed is synonymous to ordinary ; the latter is distinguished from extraordinary as being no other than that degree of this Holy Influence, which is requisite to the discharge of those special duties that are incumbent on certain individuals, but not generally so on all. In the number of these special duties may be included those of preaching, of praying in the name of a congregation, and of teaching and exhorting others. The qualifications for these duties, though they arise from special influences, are not the extraordinary, but the ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of Christ ; having been common to his own authorized ministers and teachers, in every age of the Church.

Those gifts which may be most properly denominated extraordinary, are such as it has pleased the Holy Head of his own Church, to dispense for extraordinary purposes ; as the

gift of healing, the working of miracles, the speaking with tongues, the gift of prophecy, &c. &c.

But there is yet another Divinely inspired channel of extraordinary, though of Mediate Revelation ; and one that claims a most distinguished place among the manifold gifts and privileges vouchsafed, not only to the Church and people of God, but which is evidently designed to be communicated by them to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people ; and this channel of Divine Revelation is the Holy Scriptures. But with what propriety of speech can they be called a present Revelation, when unaccompanied to the reader of them, by any measure of that Divine Influence or illumination, under which they were given forth ? Considered however, in their very lowest acceptation, they may be justly denominated a Divinely authorized record of revealed truths, and of highly important facts connected therewith ; which are “able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Jesus Christ ;” that is through the reception and operation of a living spiritual principle, of which Christ Jesus is both the Author and the object. Were the Holy Scriptures independently

of the Holy Spirit, strictly speaking, a present Revelation, how could they be subject to variety of contradictory interpretations ?

Immediate Revelation therefore from the Father of Lights and of Spirits, continues to be essential to the right understanding and efficacious application of Scripture, as well as to the preaching and receiving of the everlasting Gospel. The oral word or doctrine of Divine Truth, as well as the written word, may be equally void of power to quicken or nourish the soul up unto eternal life, except as either is accompanied by the Living, the Eternal Word.

It is not enough that we receive the testimonies of Truth as such, that we "Search the Scriptures, thinking that in them we have Eternal Life;" unless we receive Him in his spiritual appearance in the secret of our hearts, and come unto Him that we may indeed have life; even to the "Word quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and being a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." This and this only is the way

by which we become "born of the incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Lecture XX.

ON PRAYER, OR INDIVIDUAL DEVOTION.

"I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

Prayer which is equally the distinguishing privilege and duty of intelligent and accountable creatures, and which is enjoined and impressed on man by the highest authority and example, is the most sublime act in which he can be engaged.

It accordingly becomes us duly to consider, wherein the exercise of this united privilege and duty essentially consists, and what are the indispensable requisites for the performance of it. In this two-fold point of view, the obligation of Prayer originates, not only in the precepts and examples so amply furnished us in the writings of the evangelists and apostles, and so copiously

exemplified by the psalmist, but primarily in the relations in which we stand to Him who is the Creator of heaven and earth—of all things visible and invisible—the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

By original creation we are His offspring—by that redemption which is in Christ Jesus we are, conditionally, restored to that state of true filiation which had been forfeited by sin ; and “through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience,” “the obedience of faith,” we may be prepared to become fit recipients of eternal blessedness, and joint “partakers of an inheritance with the saints in light.”

By those who have arrived at an accountable state, these most important relations and results must be practically recognized in time, in order to their blissful consummation in eternity ; and to this end, no duty in which the human spirit can be engaged, is more eminently conducive than that of Prayer. Wherein then does this duty essentially consist, and what are the indispensable qualifications for the right performance of it ?

Prayer, according to the most general acceptance of the term, may be considered as comprehending every kind and degree of those devotional exercises, of which the Divine Being is exclusively the author and the object.

In the exercise of these affections, with or without the intervention of audible sound, may be enumerated not only aspirations, ejaculations, confessions, petitions, intercession, or adoration and praise; but also, as a Divinely sanctioned effusion of the latter, the act of "singing, and making melody in the heart unto the Lord." Hence is included in the most extensive idea of Prayer, every modification of that intercourse of the soul with its Maker, which is prompted by some sensibility of its relations to Him, and dependence upon Him as the Source of its existence, and as the Fountain of all its sure mercies, natural and spiritual.

It is at once the prostration of the spirit before the Father of Spirits, and the elevation of the soul towards Him on the wings of faith and love, by virtue of the mediation and intercession of the Son, both personally and spiritually administered; giving us access unto his throne of

Grace. Thus it is affirmed, that "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," and also: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

Prayer, in a more precise and limited use of the term, may be designated, an humble application of the creature to its Almighty and Beneficent Creator, under any degree of the awakening and the attractive influence of the same Eternal Spirit; whether by audible expressions suggested by that pure Influence, or by the silent aspirations only of those mental affections, from which alone such obvious effusions could rightly proceed.

The performance of this great duty, both individually and collectively, together with the preparatory exercises of watching and waiting, both in private, and in assemblies of believing brethren, is the reasonable service, and acceptable homage, of dependent creatures towards a Being of infinite power and goodness; from whom they derive life, breath, and all things.

Prayer can be effectually offered only through the mediation and operation of the Spirit of

the Redeemer, producing in the creature some sense of its wants and weakness, and some measure of living faith in Him who is able to heal our spiritual diseases, and to supply our various necessities. A true conviction of this His power and goodness, as alone adequate to all the exigences of conscious inbicity and unworthiness, however obscurely manifesting itself, and even through mistaken mediums, is an effect of the Spirit of Christ; though it may scarcely be discerned by man, in his fallen state, to be other than the production of His own nature.

True Prayer is accordingly distinguishable into many degrees or states, to which it may be useful to advert; lest, through misapprehension that the highest only is acceptable, we might despise and neglect such inferior capacities for this holy engagement, as may at seasons be best suited to our low condition; or otherwise, lest being sensible of Divine condescension, in accepting the feeblest aspirations of the soul, comparable as they may be, to the pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons, prescribed under the law in cases of poverty, we should omit to seek after ability to offer a more costly sacrifice comparable to that of a whole burnt offering,

from which might ascend the pure incense of adoration and praise.

For similar offerings of a spiritual character, the Lord is still graciously willing to qualify his people, by such fervent operations of his Holy Spirit, as are needful to purify the sons of Levi, even the spiritual priesthood, and to enable them, from time to time, to offer sacrifices in righteousness, well pleasing in his sight. The first or lowest state of Prayer may be accounted the prayer or cry of distress, whether of a temporal or spiritual kind, to that ALMIGHTY BEING who, we are persuaded, is able to save and to destroy. Such was that of the Israelites, under the various trials they had incurred through unbelief and disobedience, as affectingly set forth in the Psalms: "Then they cried unto the Lord in their troubles; and He delivered them out of their distresses." This assuredly was prayer, the prayer of faith; because it proved effectual, though not followed in every instance by its further legitimate evidence, the tribute of gratitude and increasing fidelity.

An advanced exercise of this solemn duty, may be more properly termed a prostration of

soul—a state of true self-abasement before Him, with whom we believe there is “mercy and plenteous redemption;” and which, if exhibited by words, could not be more fitly expressed than it was of old, in the contrite language of the poor publican: “Lord be merciful to me a sinner.” This degree of Prayer may be justly supposed to include something of the baptism of repentance; being accompanied by an effectual turning from the sins confessed, in humble contrition of spirit and through faith in pardoning grace; even before such a sincere penitent might be fully instructed in the knowledge of Him, through whom this grace is conferred: “The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.”

In the instance of the leper, and of the parent of the poor demoniac, a measure of faith was manifested in the power of the Saviour, sufficient to induce their respective applications to Him, though defective in the latter case, as implied by the humble language: “Lord I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.” Defective at least until this gift of faith was increased towards Him who is the true Author and object of it, as a Healer not only of natural maladies, but also

of spiritual infirmities ; and it is in the latter character, that He is to be sought and recognised by all sincere hearted, though it may be too diffident, believers in the present day. When this degree is adopted, under a true sense of the leprosy of sin, or of the temptations to which we are incident, from an unwearied enemy, it will be accompanied by some further process of the washing of regeneration, and of "the renewing of the Holy Ghost"—at least "the washing of water by the word"—the word of inspiration whether preached or written, or by the good Word of Life immediately operating in the secret of the soul. This water being purely spiritual and soul-cleansing, is that of which all must be born, in order to their entering into, or even seeing the kingdom of heaven.

A more extended spiritual understanding of the nature of Prayer, and an increased susceptibility of the dispositions which are essential to the due performance of it, and which are wrought only by the effectual, though, it may be, secret influences of the Holy Spirit, may constitute a further advanced stage of Prayer. Such may be supposed to be that for which the disciples were prepared, when instructed by their Divine Master,

both in its subject matter, and with respect to the condition on which alone it would be available, as exemplified in that beautiful, yet elementary composition, which is termed "The Lord's Prayer." This confessedly embraces the most glorious subject of a believer's faith and hope, that can be contemplated on earth: "Thy kingdom come;" and it describes the highest state to which created beings can attain: "Thy will be done;" and may therefore be adopted under the highest degree of advancement in the Christian course.

This Prayer is also adapted to a more initial state, and may be livingly employed by the true disciples, even without such a clear perception of the agency of the Holy Spirit, as is recognised by the more experienced Christian.

In this initial state also may be feelingly appropriated, other language of Inspiration already extant, when it is expressive of the present condition of the soul, or is correspondent with those spiritual sensibilities which may have been thereby called into existence. From the delineation of spiritual experiences, to be found in the devotional writings of the highly illuminated

Psalmist, and because of his eminently prophetic references to the Messiah, how desirable is it, that succeeding generations should be deeply conversant with that beautiful and comprehensive part of Sacred Scripture; transferring indeed, as Christianity will enable us to do, much of the imprecations and prophetic denunciations of Divine displeasure, which is by him directed against the outward enemies of the Church and people of God, to our spiritual enemies,* and

* It is observed by Bishop Horne, Thomas Scott, and other commentators on the Scriptures, that the use of the *Imperative Mood* is often improperly substituted in our English translation for the simple expression of the future tense, which latter would have implied only the prediction of a future event, or declaration of a Divine purpose. Whenever such imperative denunciation, is evidently the sense in the original, it may be presumed that it was dictated by the Holy Spirit, who is pleased to adapt His language to the various states of mankind, under the different and progressive dispensations of Divine Wisdom.

There is also another and a very instructive view to be taken of this subject, in those instances in which the *Imperative Mood* is clearly applicable. We have in such instances, in the person of David, a very decided proof of that inferiority of the Law contrasted with the Gospel, to which the apostle alludes when he says: "The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did." David, however honoured, accepted, and approved of God; and however beautifully instructed in many particulars to advance beyond the law, and to anticipate Gospel experience, was forbidden to build the House of God, "because he was a man of war, and had shed much blood." Hence as he

tracing the application of his illustrious views to the successive states of that Church : which, when fully brought into conformity with its Holy Head, through all preparatory dispensations, will

had done this even under the Divine sanction, we cannot marvel that he had not clearly attained to the experience enjoined in the Gospel : "Love your enemies; bless and curse not:" though obedience to both these precepts are essential in order now to fulfil the commands of Him, who "brought in that better hope by which we draw nigh unto God."

Thus the great duty of the forgiveness of our enemies and of pleading for mercy on their behalf, was not enforced on fallen man, till fully exemplified in the precepts and practice of Him who fulfilled all righteousness. Yet it is observable that some beams of the primeval light of the Gospel, appeared to break forth even in these relations among the spiritually minded, under the former dispensation; especially in Moses and David. It is however worthy of remark, that not only was this great Christian duty of the forgiveness of enemies, generally dispensed with; but as its necessary concomitant, the lawfulness of war was admitted; as were also solemn oaths, together with the practice of polygamy; all which are expressly prohibited by the blessed Author of the Gospel Dispensation.

Hence we must conclude that the low state of mankind was, in these instances, condescended unto for a season, by the adaptation to such a state, of a "Law which maketh nothing perfect;" but which was designed to be as a "schoolmaster to bring to Christ," those who should be exercised in obedience unto it; and to convince such by the injunction of those duties which were purely evangelical, contained in the first and second commandments, that nothing less than the aboundings of Divine Grace, accompanying the Truth which came by Jesus, could be sufficient to enable them to fulfil the perfect law of Light, and Life, and Love.

be found "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

It is comforting to consider, that many may be acceptably exercised in the stage of Prayer which has been just described, and may be enabled to unite in the language which they may hear livingly offered up in the assemblies of the Lord's people, who may not yet have attained to that degree of individual experience, in which the Spirit itself is known to make "intercession for us, according to the will of God;" who at times condescends thus to become, to such as are brought into subjection unto Him, as "mouth and wisdom, tongue and utterance," through the medium of his gifted and exercised servants, in a way that far transcends the degree of the initial state above described.

A still higher state of true Prayer appears therefore to be that, in which, "with the Spirit and the understanding also," we may supplicate for the increase of both, and for that of every other Christian Grace, with which we may have been in any measure endued.

Such only, indeed, can ask availingly, who have received so much of that sacred qualification,

as to authorize them to call God Father, in a living sense of that blessed relation; which none, we are assured, can do, nor can even say in truth, that "Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;" so that, unless it had pleased the Father, in the riches of his unmerited mercy, to impart a measure of his *unasked* gift, and especially of that in which all others are included, his Good Spirit—to instruct, direct, and sanctify us, we should be as unable to ask aright; as we are to come unto Christ the living, the elect, and precious Corner Stone and Rock of Ages, except as the Father who hath sent Him draw us.

In considering this subject, it is important that we bear in mind the comprehensive account of Prayer which is given by the apostle, as applicable to all the different stages of spiritual experience: "We know not what we should pray for as we ought;" "but the Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"—that is with fervent, living, internal aspirations, the sensible effect of that powerful cause, even the silent operation of the Spirit of Truth, showing

unto man, from time to time, his real condition as it stands in the Divine sight, and teaching him, immediately, both what to pray for, and how to pray aright.

This is indeed an eminent result of the meditation of the "Good Word of Life," that Eternal and Essential "Word which is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow ; and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Its operation therefore when fully admitted, is not only Prayer, but Baptism ; not only "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost ;" but that more fervent process of the latter which is illustrated by the comparison of fire ; and which is capable of so effectually purifying the temple of the heart, as to render it a fit receptacle of the Divine presence and glory. From such depths of self-abasement, and revelation of the Divine nature, a heart-felt confession arises, similar to that of Job : "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth Thee : wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Those who have attained to such a state, having their spiritual eyes thus progressively opened to behold wondrous things in the Divine law, and their hearts prepared to be intrusted with the immediate communications of Divine counsel, are at times favoured with an access to the throne of Grace, emboldening them to ask, on behalf of themselves or others, all things that are conformable to the Divine Will, according to the dictates and limitations of the Spirit of Jesus, sent into their hearts; and, indeed, not only to ask of the Most High or to approach Him in the language of supplication, but also to offer unto Him, under the same holy influence, the tribute of adoration, thanksgiving, and praise.

This favoured condition of mind, comprehends not only a high state of secret mental Prayer, but when prompted by a super-added motion of the Holy Spirit, that also which is audible.

A further description of Prayer, may be included in that state of entire acceptance, which was promised to the disciples of the blessed Jesus,

on the condition of their perfect love, and faithful attention to his commands, implying such an entire conformity of will with that of their Lord and Master, that there would subsist no contrariety or diversity between them; which He thus describes: "If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you."

But there is yet a higher degree of blessed communion with the Father and the Son, through the Eternal Spirit, in which all specific Prayers or praises may be suspended. This is essentially the Supper of the Lord, in which He freely communicates of his flesh and of his blood spiritually; —his Divine nature and living virtue feeding the soul with that bread, which nourishes it up to eternal life, and giving it to partake of the wine of the kingdom, as an earnest of that future blessedness, which is prepared for them, who are made worthy to be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb; at which glorious period, "the morning stars will sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy."

The several degrees of Prayer above described, are not supposed to bear an exact proportion to

the progressive state of any individual, being often exercised, not in regular succession, but in different stages of the religious process.

Thus the early convert to the Truth, may be favoured to witness a high degree of blessed communion with his Divine Master, to prepare and encourage him to steadfastness in submitting to all the probations and conflicts, with which he may be subsequently disciplined. For thus hath He said to all who have a willing ear, or a sincere desire for the knowledge of Him: "Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

While we have ground charitably to believe, that many such sincere hearted persons, may partake of a measure of this holy communion under those different forms through which they seek it, and also, at other seasons, more immediately; let *us* remember frequently and diligently, to avail ourselves of that simple mode, into which it has pleased the Lord to introduce us, as a distinct Society; and also memorably and eminently to bless and sanctify it: not only in times past,

to our worthy predecessors, but also in the present day, to all the spiritually awakened—that of humble, solemn, silent waiting upon God, both in the assemblies of his people and in private. To this exercise are the promises and testimonies of Holy Scripture abundantly extended; and most enrichingly do they continue to be fulfilled, by experimental introduction into all the degrees of blessed communion with the Father and the Son, which we are warranted in expecting to attain in this state of being.

There is also to be noted a further efficacy in this devout silent exercise, when duly performed, which is evident to those who practise it, even the effectual operation of the Spirit of Christ; though it may be rendered perceptible, only by producing an increase of its appropriate fruits, which are described to be love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

May the youthful readers of these pages, be incited to seek after an experimental acquaintance with the privileges here described, that they may “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;” and,

being thus enabled to bring forth much fruit, may glorify their Heavenly Father as the willing and obedient disciples of Him, who came into the world "not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent Him."

Lecture XXX.

ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

What is here presented to the reader on the subject of Public Worship, as well as in the preceding Lecture on Individual Prayer, is not intended to supercede, much less to contradict, any of those excellent instructions and descriptions, which are already extant, in the writings of Robert Barclay, Isaac Pennington, and latterly in those of J. J. Gurney, respecting these subjects; but rather to furnish supplementary views; with which it is believed, it may be profitable to many young persons to be conversant.

"We" saith the apostle "worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

The solemn exercise of Divine Worship, as thus exemplified in the early Christian Church, comprehends not only every degree and modification of true prayer; but also the preaching of the Word in a measure of its own Divine authority; and, in conjunction with these, the administration of every spiritual ordinance, in

which the commissioned servant of the Lord, can be instrumentally engaged.

For though it is thankfully admitted, that the truly spiritual worshiper, may be a partaker of the high and holy privileges of spiritual baptism, and the supper of the Lord, as immediately administered by the Head of his own Church ; yet it pleaseth Him also to unite and cement in precious fellowship, the members of his living body, by making them instrumental in the diffusion of these privileges, by the circulation of His pure life among them, conveyed as from vessel to vessel, with or without the medium of words. By such it may, with deep humility and reverent gratitude be acknowledged, in the language of the apostle : " Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," "and one with another in Him."

Public Worship, under every dispensation of the Most High towards mankind, may be properly designated that testimony of allegiance and subjection, of gratitude and obedience, to an Almighty Benefactor, which is due from intelligent accountable creatures, who are dependent upon Him for life, breath, and all things

temporal and spiritual—a duty which can be acceptably performed only in accordance with His own instructions and requisitions.

Whatever is distinguishable from these, and much more whatever is at variance with them, will not only fail of obtaining his gracious regard, but sooner or later, may justly incur a sentence of condemnation, similar to that denounced on those who were said to “kindle a fire, and compass themselves about with sparks: this shall ye have of mine hand,” saith the Lord, “ye shall lie down in sorrow;” at least, a rebuke such as this may be expected: “who hath required this at your hands?” This may equally apply to persons who persist in observances which, though originally of Divine appointment, are superseded by those of a more elevated and spiritual nature, ordained by the same Divine authority. Yet such rebuke or condemnation may be considered as certainly attaching, only to those who wrong their more enlightened conscience; or if in any measure extended to unconscious offenders, it would be in order to their being more effectually directed into the way of that perfect holiness, which becometh the Lord’s house for ever. For though a wilful departure from that degree

of Light, with which we may have been Divinely favoured, would be an evidence of our loving darkness rather than light; yet there may be thousands who, enthralled by prejudice derived from education and example, and confirmed by habit, have not been enabled clearly to discern that more excellent way, in which the Lord would lead his more fully prepared people, and conduct them from faith to faith; or bring them forth from spiritual bondage, as He did Israel of old, with a strong hand and a stretched out arm; not exclusively for their own sakes, but that they might be a blessing to others—"a dew from the Lord in the midst of many people."

Thus were the faithful among this people, admirably qualified to become the medium of that higher dispensation which was designed to be as a city set on a hill, giving light unto the world, and gradually extending its benign influence over all the nations of the earth. Such was the state of the Christian Church in its primitive excellence and glory. But there has been a wide difference in the condition of its members, at different periods; between the state of those sons of the morning who were eminently authorized to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints,"

and the condition of those, in subsequent times, who having been involved in the gradually increasing prevalence of antichristian darkness, which finally overspread the professing Christian Church, have been also gradually emerging from it whether in an individual or collective capacity.

On the behalf of these, and under their several imperfect views of evangelic purity and simplicity, there is ground to believe, that the Divine favour and acceptance have been vouchsafed, according to every degree of Light and Truth sincerely embraced by them. But though many of them may have been among the faithful witnesses and confessors in the Church's progressive restoration ; yet are they not to be wholly approved, or implicitly followed by such as have been invited to ascend some steps higher in the scale of spiritual vision, and enabled to discern more of the beauty of "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," even the true Church.

It is worthy of our serious consideration, that from the earliest ages of the world, since the fall of Adam to the introduction of the Christian Dispensation, the Most High has selected and

preserved a remnant from the disobedient and rebellious multitude, among whom He hath in a distinguished manner, vouchsafed the knowledge of Himself, and of that way in which He has been pleased to ordain the performance of religious Worship, according to that progressive state, through which He has led about and instructed them, preparatory to the revelation of the fulness of the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. This preparation was not only conducted through a course of outward institutions and manifestations, adapted as they were to open the understandings of those to whom they were dispensed, into something of the mystery of Godliness; but it was also promoted by more inward and spiritual visitations, conveyed both immediately, and through the medium of chosen instruments, especially the highly illuminated prophets. By the combined efficacy of all these appointed means, a small number only of that distinguished people, the Jews, appear to have been retained or reclaimed from the various species of idolatry, and other corruptions which prevailed in the world, and enabled to worship the only true God in the beauty of holiness.

The due qualifications for the exercise of this true Worship under the Gospel Dispensation,

though mercifully designed to become of universal extent, have been, as yet, but partially diffused since the apostles' days. This may be justly attributed to the great inaptitude of fallen man, to receive or abide under, that Divine discipline necessary to the reception of such qualifications; and hence they appear to be consigned only to a small number of peculiarly prepared individuals or societies, *primarily* in order to exemplify the excellence of this pure Worship; and, secondarily, by their authoritative instrumentality, to extend its blessed influence to others, even till "the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

The first devotional observances of Divine appointment after the fall, appear to have been chiefly those of animal sacrifices. This is to be presumed, from the manner in which the offerings of Cain and Abel were recognized by the Most High. That a preference might however subsist in the oblation respectively adopted by the two brothers, there may be some reason to apprehend, because we find in most other instances of approved and appointed sacrifice on Sacred Record, that animal sacrifice, was the kind Divinely prescribed as being, in most cases,

indispensable, with whatever adjunct accompanied; and the reason for this is sufficiently illustrated by the apostle in the ninth chapter to the Hebrews, in his comment on the practice, and his transfer of its figurative import to the accomplishment of its ultimate design, in the great Anti-type of all sacrifices—"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" in whom was eminently verified the apostle's assertion, that, "without shedding of blood is no remission."

Without question, as our Lord says of Abraham, He "saw my day and was glad;" so such sacrifices as that of Abel, devoutly and acceptably practiced by the faithful and enlightened patriarchs, and so circumstantially enjoined under the Mosaic Dispensation; might indicate to other spiritually minded individuals, some allusion to Him, who, alone could take away sin; for whose sake, and by virtue of whose propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, the human race, in the person of their fallen primogenitor, are reinstated into covenant with their gracious Creator, on renewed terms of probation; through a capacity conferred upon them by Christ, of "repentance unto life," by "the obedience of faith," "through sanctification of the Spirit." And

this covenant commenced its operation with the effective word of promise, communicated to our first parents, though not fully revealed in all its admirable characters, until accomplished by the incarnate Word—the Son of God. A measure and manifestation of his life-giving Spirit, in an initial degree, is accordingly afforded to every one to profit withal, as the purchased possession of his meritorious sacrifice, who “by the grace of God tasted death for every man.”

In all the early institutions of Divine Worship, (which appears to have been adapted to a generally low state of spiritual attainment, though also significant and indicative of the highest,) there is evidently this preparatory representation of the whole work of redemption and sanctification ; both as effected *for* us and to be operated *in* us. And therefore with the ordinance of sacrifice, were connected various typical rites and ceremonies, emblematical of internal purification, both from conscious, and unconscious or involuntary defilement ; and wonderful interpositions of Almighty power and goodness were afforded, tending to instruct and to inform His chosen people, both of the depraved condition of human nature universally, and of the procuring

cause of it; as well as of the appointed means of man's restoration and final salvation: even the love and mercy of his great Creator, proclaimed and shadowed forth, as well as secretly operating, under this figurative dispensation; but fully revealed and efficaciously obtained only in and through the mediatorial process of the blessed Redeemer; and finally exemplified, according to its utmost purpose, in the instance of those, who being "planted together in the likeness of His death," are partakers of the power of His resurrection; being "heirs of the righteousness which is by faith," whether living before or after, the outward accomplishment of that atoning sacrifice.

To the typical institutions under the patriarchal and mosaic dispensations, were occasionally added performances of a spontaneous and more spiritual nature, as the singing of songs of praise and triumph, which were doubtless prompted and accompanied by feelings of true devotion. To this vocal and simple expression of spiritual sensibility, were superadded some sorts of instrumental music, of which there is frequent mention, not only in the times of Moses, of Saul, and of the prophets who lived in his days, but even in the days of Job.

In the time of David, this attractive art attained to the degree of eminence and celebrity, in which it was by him devoutly exhibited, and rendered highly subservient to all the purposes of religious Worship, which were consistent with the nature of that dispensation. Such music being also the highest emblem of true devotion, and of the disposition necessary to it, yet being not essentially the thing itself, but of the nature only of an impressive sign, it may become separated from the substance, and even at variance with both, in the experience of those who are introduced to a higher degree of spirituality. Indeed, even while it remained the appropriate appendage of those "carnal ordinances," which were connected with "a worldly sanctuary," it could not avail any thing when unaccompanied by fidelity and true spirituality. Of this we have a mournfully abiding proof in the past, if not in the present state of the Jews, whose oblations and sacrifices, as well as other exercises, though of Divine institution, became an abomination to the Most High; and whose prayers and praises He alike refuses to hear, while their hearts remain insensible to the visitations of that Light and Life, which alone can open their blind eyes, and unstop their deaf ears, to receive

the testimonies of Truth on sacred record, so strikingly predictive of Christ, and exemplified in Him who alone could give them life.

As the outward visible signs of every inward spiritual grace, may be thus distinguished and separated from that vital principle, to which, in their right time and place, they were designed to conduct the faithful ; so we find the immediate Influence of the Spirit of grace and glory, was vouchsafed to those who were duly prepared for the reception of it, both independently of such outward means, and also in conjunction with them. Who among the children of men, previously to the coming of the Messiah, appear to have been more highly endowed with the gifts of the Spirit than the royal Psalmist ? He was invested with special qualifications to sustain at once the character of king, priest, and prophet ; as being an eminent type of Him, whose kingdom, whose priesthood, whose prophetic, mediatorial, and intercessory offices are of a Divine and eternal nature ; but in whom all typical rites and ceremonies, all signs and symbols, are brought to their final consummation. He declared when personally on earth :
“The hour cometh and now is, when the true

worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

This language, which at once indicates the abolishing of the ancient dispensation, and the introduction of the new, may furnish a proper conclusion to the first part of this subject, and form a proper commencement of the second. But, in dismissing the former, let us not forget what it was, and what it is, which alone can confer true sanctity on all our devotional performances, or truly hallow the place, whether it be of an outward and visible, or of an inward and spiritual description, where the worship of the Most High is acceptably performed ; and this is assuredly nothing less than a manifestation of his own presence, power, or Spirit, more or less sensibly vouchsafed.

It is only under the influence of this sacred qualification, that the true Jew could witness his "prayers to be set forth before the Lord as incense ; and the lifting up of his hands to be as" an acceptable "evening sacrifice." And it is only under the same Divine Influence, that the true Christian can affirm of himself and his fellow

disciples : "We worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Lecture XXX.

CONTINUATION ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

“ Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me! the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

This language of the Lord Jesus, addressed to the poor woman at Jacob's well, with whom He condescended to hold familiar, yet deeply instructive communication, is justly considered by all Christian professors, as predicting the near approach of the great change which was about to take place in the Divine Institutions. A change which principally consisted in the abrogation of all exclusively local and typical observances, and the introduction of such as should be of a substantial, abiding, and universal nature; while it divested of all claim to the title of true

worship, whatsoever had not originated in Divine appointment.

The Most High had been pleased to manifest his power and his glory, in a manner visible to mortal sight, in places consecrated to this august purpose ; and He was accordingly represented as “dwelling between the cherubim,” and rendering holy the ground wheresoever such indications of His presence were vouchsafed. Thus Moses was directed to take his shoes from off his feet, while standing to behold that marvellous spectacle of a bush burning with fire, yet unconsumed.

Not only was the Divine presence, under that dispensation, externally revealed, but the acceptable condition of true worshipers was instructively represented by external rites ; and the great propitiatory sacrifice to be accomplished in the person of the Saviour, was variously signified by appropriate emblems. Can it possibly be supposed that the true Jews or spiritually minded Israelites, were strangers to a measure of spiritual influence, correspondent with the nature and extent of those rituals ? and hence they might be justly included under the description of true worshipers. Such were assuredly those, however small the

number, who at the time of the birth of Jesus, are described as waiting for the consolation of Israel.

Previously to that distinguished era, when the minds of the faithful appear to have been signally prepared for the fulfilment of prophetic notices, pious individuals were qualified to testify, that "The Most High dwelleth not" essentially "in temples made with hands"—that even "the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Him." "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."

The great change therefore about to be established was not a transition from error to truth, but from external to internal—from representative to substantial—from carnal as being necessarily connected with bodily exercise, to purely spiritual, being no further dependent on the testimony of natural sense, or needing the instrumentality of the outward man, than as the intervention of these adjuncts might be immediately dictated by

the Spirit of Truth. In harmony with these distinctions, was the essential character of the New Covenant Dispensation, as proclaimed by the Almighty through the mouth of his prophet : "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah : not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers," &c. "But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel : After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother saying : 'Know the Lord ;' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord ;"

Thus all typical representations were to cease in the fulfilment of their ultimate design, which was to direct and prepare the faithful for the enlarged experience and enjoyment of the abiding substance indicated by such observances.

It is however obvious that the language of prophecy on this, as on many other subjects, was

not fulfilled in its utmost extent, even in the apostles' days; and certainly not in any subsequent period, especially with respect to the yet continued occasion of human instrumentality, in a general way, although there are some, who may have so far witnessed its accomplishment, as to have no absolute need of the teachings one of another; knowing the Anointing to be their Teacher—the Lamb to be their Leader into all the paths of righteousness. Yet such as these will be so far from undervaluing any productions of the same sacred origin, that they will hold them in high esteem and reverence, and delight to trace, in the testimonies and experience of others, the correspondent characters of a revelation mediate or immediate, derived from the same Divine Source.

But while those who know the Divine Anointing to be their Teacher, look for the still progressive accomplishment of the Divine design, toward the children of men universally, they can individually unite in the apostle's testimony to the state of true worshipers in his day: "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general

assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

You my dear young Friends to whom these discourses are peculiarly directed, are aware to what extent all the foregoing testimonies of Sacred Scripture, are understood by us who have been gathered into a distinct religious community, since the great apostacy from primitive Christianity; and who are accordingly distinguished in some circumstantial from the Church at its first establishment; though in all fundamentals and abiding essentials, we acknowledge no other Gospel than that which is acknowledged by all Christians; of which the blessed Messiah was the Author, and his apostles were the promulgators, to the ends of the earth. And if in any external instances our practice should be distinguishable from theirs, it is in such only as are in true accordance with those enlarged views, to which progressive experience conducted the apostles themselves, of the enduring spirituality of the Gospel Dispensation, beyond the temporary

service of those outward observances which accompanied its first introduction, and which were accommodated to the state of a people accustomed to external rites. Thus the use of water baptism, and that of the bread and wine in the typical and commemorative institution of the paschal supper, appear to have been continued, and even renewedly applied, by the *Divine Author* of our religion, *to the illustration* of the most important evangelical truths; as being peculiarly significant of them. Yet do not these rites appear, to the spiritually minded attentive observer of scriptural testimony, to be of perpetual obligation; either by Divine authority, or according to the sense of His most enlightened primitive ministers.

It is observable that no certain or express direction is left on holy record, as to the mode of Worship; and thus most of the reformed churches having detected many of the corruptions of the church of Rome, in this and other parts of her erroneous system, and for the most part retaining only what they consider to be of purer origin, content themselves with forming their devotional exercises upon the best model for imitation, which they conceive may be collected,

either from ancient practice, or the generally preceptive and practical tenour of Scripture; without waiting for that more immediate instruction, direction, and qualification, which we humbly apprehend may be relied on, by the true disciples of Christ, according to his own declaration: "Lo ! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

It is further to be noted that the practice of the primitive church, was not in all instances separated from that of the Jewish. Indeed the synagogue worship was that in which the apostles often united ; at least for the purpose of preaching to the Jews. And when Christian congregations became established among the Gentiles, it does not clearly appear what of those ancient usages were retained, and what abolished. It is worthy of remark also, that no mention is made, in the New Testament, of instrumental music as a part of Divine Worship ; nor even of the practice of vocal music, except as prompted by an immediate spiritual Influence.

That all typical ceremonials had ceased to be obligatory, is however sufficiently obvious, even though sometimes observed in condescension

to the prejudices of that ancient people. But the reading of portions of the law and the prophets, which was an instituted part of the Jewish ritual, with the addition of such parts of the New Testament, as in the course of fifty or sixty years were committed to writing, was likely long to continue an established practice in the Christian Church. And though as a society professing to be, in all its religious movements, taught and guided by the Holy Spirit, we have found this practice not enjoined upon us, as a part of our public religious service, let us not forget the obligation we have ever acknowledged ourselves under, of being "frequent in reading them" in our closets and families; being confirmed by experience in the truth of their own testimony, that they "are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

As the Holy Scriptures are the lively oracles of the Divine Will and purposes toward mankind, from the beginning to the consummation of all things, which concern our condition upon earth, so it has never yet appeared to be the Lord's good pleasure, to establish a church or raise up a people among whom to place his Name, and magnify the riches of his grace, without having

entrusted or caused to be communicated to them, those sacred records.

May we ever be sincerely concerned for the circulation of this sacred treasure; and, above all, solicitous for our own individual conformity to the high standard of evangelical truth and righteousness, which is thereby elevated to our contemplation; not only as a rule, but as a test, by which we may judge of our spiritual advancement. Thus shall we be enabled to prove, that we are indeed built and building upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of which foundation, "Jesus Christ himself was the Chief Corner Stone;" who is also the Rock of Ages; from whom alone ever was or is to be derived, spiritual meat and spiritual drink, life, strength, and nurture; by which we may become lively stones, fitted and prepared to be "built up a spiritual house," a holy temple, a royal priesthood unto the Lord.

With respect to the particular mode of Worship into which we as a Society have been led, that of collective as well as individual, silent, solemn waiting upon the Lord; it may be well for us to consider, that though it is a practice sufficiently

warranted by Scripture injunction, and Scripture example in various instances; yet not being anywhere prescribed, or exhibited as constituting at any time the whole of public Worship, silent waiting may be looked upon rather as a Divinely sanctioned preparation for it, than as an essential part of such worship. Yet this solemn waiting is not the less indispensable in our view, being that state into which we were introduced, on experiencing the insufficiency of every form and ceremony, either to reach or to express that spiritual exercise into which our minds have been brought, as were the minds of many of our worthy predecessors, by the immediate operation and teachings of the Spirit of God. In this waiting state we have been made sensible of the putting forth of Divine Power, in commanding a stillness and calmness of soul, as much beyond human power to produce, as was the effective word of "Peace be still" to the elementary winds and waves. It is a state in which a holy solemnity is known, like that authoritatively proclaimed by the commissioned prophet: "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him"—a state in which may be intelligibly perceived, His Divine voice who spake, and still "speaks, as never man spake"—a state in which also the true servants

of the Lord may prove their fidelity in "watchings and fastings," and in those baptisms for the dead which are found effectual to the raising of spiritual life, through the resurrective power of the blessed Redeemer. Yet when this state of silence is considered only in its external character, as that into which a whole assembly may be introduced under all the diversity of their individual condition, it resembles but the outward court of a more holy place; though it is the true way of access to that inmost temple of the heart, which through renewed "sanctification of the Spirit," may become a fit receptacle of Divine blessedness and glory.

Having been favoured in this reverent, waiting frame, to receive those gifts of the Spirit, both ordinary and special, which were not afforded us through the medium of any human institution or external ceremonial; and receiving also a qualification for the exercise of them when called for by the Master of Assemblies, we dare not "forsake the assembling of ourselves together" after this manner, nor adopt any of those different modes of worship which distinguish other denominations of Christian professors, though claiming to be built upon the example of the primitive Church;

a pattern worthy to be followed, where more immediate or certain direction has not been afforded.

In conclusion, may none of you, dear young friends, who have been mercifully made sensible of the high and holy vocation wherewith you are called, and who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, forsake Him the Living Stone, the Fountain of Living Water thus opened to your spiritual perception; but "follow on to know the Lord," in all the ways of his manifestations to your souls. So shall ye know more and more of his "goings forth to be prepared as the morning, and his coming unto you to be as the rain, as the latter and former rain upon the earth," causing you to bring forth fruit to His praise.

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A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW
OF THE
NATURE OF FAITH.

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53	14	enocourage	encourage
93	15	necessalily	necessarily
97	7	<i>From the Bottom</i> sight	light
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158	6	<i>From the Bottom</i> progressively	progressively
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